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The Joy Of The Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium (Publication / United States Conference Of Catholic Bishops)



Synopsis

The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium) is the long-awaited teaching of Pope Francis on the proclamation of the Gospel. Pope Francis is calling upon the Church and the world with encouragement to begin a new chapter in evangelization. This dynamic document is written in the plain, everyday language for which the pope has become famous.

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Customer Reviews

I am an evangelical protestant but it is my fervent hope that this "exhortation" will be widely read across the community of Christ throughout the world. The Bishop of Rome has written a powerful call to all Christians reminding us of our common mission and our common faith. He has called upon us to embrace that mission with joy, passion, and love for all. Following in the tradition of John Chrysostom, Francis' exhortation is overflowing with a deep and abiding concern for the marginalized while revealing that both the political right and left have embraced two varieties of the identical sin: idolatry of self. As an aside, accounts of this "exhortation" in the popular press could hardly be more misleading in their emphasis. Many news stories have focused on a fragment of a single sentence that says inviting women into the Priesthood is "not open for discussion." (To be clear, this subject is not addressed beyond this small portion of this single sentence.) Nor is this exhortation merely - or even mostly - a road map for the Roman Church. From the very first page, Francis makes clear that he is reaching out to the entirety of Christ's body on earth: "I invite all

Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ..." It certainly speaks to Catholics, but it is simultaneously aimed at all Christians everywhere. Francis begins with the most precise description I have ever seen of the ravine in which the modern West has become trapped: "The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience." His approach to escaping this ravine is the same as it ever was: follow the steep and narrow path cut by the Joy of the Gospel. And for my Protestant friends, Francis could not be clearer that this is an unmerited gift: "The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift..." or "No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. "Francis reminds us that, "Christian morality is not a form of stoicism, or self-denial, or merely a practical philosophy or a catalogue of sins and faults. Before all else, the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us ... All of the virtues are at the service of this response of love." If I have any discomfort with this exhortation, it is at those (thankfully few) moments when Francis seems to shift from calling upon Christians to calling upon governments to redress the plight of the marginalized. Here, we would do well to remind ourselves of Chrysostom's warning with respect to this. We would also do well to remember that governments by their nature always serve the selfish needs of their kings and courts (God warned us of this in 1 Samuel chapter 8). This is not to say that I disagree with the ends the Pope seeks, only that governments are a fundamentally flawed instrument for furthering God's Kingdom. Nonetheless, we can and should join with him in praying that politicians will receive appropriate guidance. There is a great deal here which all Christians ought to embrace. To be sure, many Protestants will feel discomfort at the Marian language near the end of the exhortation, and those reared to distrust the Deuterocanonical Books/Apocrypha will bristle at quotations from Tobias, Sirach, and others. Thankfully, Francis takes time to ground each major theme in sources deemed authoritative by all, as if to remind the Protestant reader at each turn that he and we remain standing on common ground (a point which he makes very explicit in discussing the evangelization of non-Christian cultures). Pope Francis' exhortation stands as a challenge to all Christians to embrace the Joy of the Gospel and to live as if the world depended upon it - because it does. It has certainly rankled specific groups with specific agendas (from traditionalists to progressives, from economic liberals to social liberals) but in all of the discussion about one sentence or another, I hope and pray that the message does not get lost: it is time for all Christians - the clergy, the laity, women and men across denominations - to joyfully embrace the missionary mandate of the Gospel through our words, our actions, and our whole selves.

Pope Francis, like Pope John XXIII, like Jesus is a bit of a scandal to his own hierarchy. He is a fully human being, with experiences which make him compassionate with the poor, with the handicapped, with the downtrodden and with the sinners; yet with an education and a Jesuit training and a Franciscan Spirituality at odds with a Church which may have become ossified in its approach to the modern world. He is willing to break with convention to tell his Church, "Who am I to judge them", I want to go to them with compassion, forgiveness and love...as Jesus would have done. But the Gospel and the Eucharist are not going to receive much appreciation from the media as much as the Encyclical on Global Warming seems to be having. That's too bad, for faith itself is that which is so essential for an understanding of the messages of Francis, John and Jesus.

It's hard to write a review on a pope's book because it's so much more than just a literary effort. It's inspired by the Holy Spirit and goes to a level much deeper. Pope Francis is really calling all Catholics to a deeper faith including spreading the gospel through works of mercy, yet he does it in a way that upholds the church's teachings. In learning about the early church, one of the things that always comes through is that people were converted to Christianity because of the joy of Christians. This is how I see Pope Francis. People (Catholics, Christians and non-believers) are attracted to him because he is a walking example of the joy of Christ Jesus. This book is a wonderful testimony to that faith and joy. I recommend it highly.

This is a document rather than a book. It's the masterpiece of a man of great humility, holiness and spiritual insight. It's a written statement of one man's spiritual life, a life of faith, prayer, deep reflection, discipline and Jesuit formation. He anchors his work on the inspired words and example of Jesus and the gospel. Francis maps out the way to a full and happy personal, social and spiritual life. His basic reference is the gospel and works of Jesus "love one another as I have loved you"...."by this shall all people know that you are my disciples in the love you have for one another"...."do to no one what you would not want them do to you...". Pope Francis points us to the need for all to be mindful of our place in the wider community and our rights and responsibilities for the wellbeing and needs of social order, the implications of globalization on the lives of people and especially how the poor are victimized. He covers the various social systems, the role of capitalism in a world that sees more of world wealth and resources being in the hands of the elite and an ever increasing number of the dispossessed. He points out the false idols we worship today, serving Mammon instead of God and the needs of others. The writer links this false worship to many of our

modern evils of war, social unrest, terrorism, the extremes of which are often linked to our own making. Pope Francis assures us that we need to return to the simplicity of gospel living and reflect anew on the Word of God and the teachings of Jesus. Learn anew the mystery of life that God wished all to live in faith, peace, love and harmony of a social family, and realize that we are born to love and not to violence and death. I highly recommend this reading. It will help people reflect on life and our purpose in living. A good buy also. Jerry O'Mahony

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