Gaudete et Exsultate: we are all called to holiness

The Pope proposes a synthesis of his teaching expressed five years ago in a new apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world, published on the solemnity of the Annunciation and signed on March 19th, the feast of Saint Joseph. Entitled **Gaudete et Exsultate** *- "Rejoice and be glad" - it opens with the words of Jesus in the Discourse on the Mount (*Matthew 5, 12*).*

"The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence," writes Francis in the introduction, as if to redirect the entire Church onto the right path. "**My modest goal is to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities,**" the Pope comments, recalling that the Lord has chosen each of us to be "holy and unblemished before Him, in love," (*Ephesians 1, 4*).

In a globalized world where a destructive relativism hardens hearts, it is a question of staying the course: walking in the presence of God, whatever our condition and our state of life, **"each on his own path"** according to the Second Vatican Council expression.

"I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile," confides the author, who is passionate about this simple but powerful text, showing us how holiness is accessible to everyone. He encourages us not to try to copy models, to discern our own path, to highlight the best of ourselves, that is, what the Lord has transmitted of truly personal in us.

“Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation,” the Pope exhorts." “When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: ‘Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better’.” He points out that this holiness will “will grow through small gestures”. Among the witnesses mentioned, Francis speaks of Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyên Van Thuân, who was long held prisoner in Vietnam and who did not give in to an obsessive expectation of his liberation: his choice was **“to live the present moment, filling it to the brim with love**”; and the way in which this was realized was: “I will seize the occasions that present themselves every day; I will accomplish ordinary actions in an extraordinary way”.

In his apostolic exhortation, Francis points out two subtle enemies of holiness, Gnosticism and Pelagianism, old and ever present heresies. One transforms the Christian experience into a set of mental lucubration, a form of disembodied spirituality that distances itself from the freshness of the Gospel. The other is characterized by the adoration of the human will, which results in self-complacency, self-centred and elitist, devoid of true love: in this way, the Gospel is often reduced and repressed, robbed of its charming simplicity and its essence.

The Pope then develops on the long explanation of holiness, the Beatitudes proclaimed by Christ, which are like "the Christian’s identity card " (*Matthew 5, 3-12; Luke 6, 20-23*), after which the criterion based on to which we will be judged: ""I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me” (*Matthew 25: 35-36*).

In today's culture where “a sense of anxiety, sometimes violent, that distracts and debilitates; negativity and sullenness; the self-content bred by consumerism; individualism; and all those forms of ersatz spirituality – having nothing to do with God –“, he suggests some spiritual expressions that characterize an authentic love of God and neighbour: **endurance, patience and meekness; joy and having a sense of humour; audacity and fervour; the sense of community and the search for unity, as well as constant prayer.**

Finally he recalls that our journey towards holiness is a “constant struggle against the devil, the prince of evil”. “**Jesus himself celebrates our victories,”** says the Holy Father. The battle is fought through the spiritual **capacity of discernment**, which is a gift that must be asked. "Often **discernment is exercised in small and apparently irrelevant things,** since greatness of spirit is manifested in simple everyday realities”, the Holy Father notes, asking all Christians to make a "sincere examination of conscience" every day.

With him we **pray that the Holy Spirit "pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God’s greater glory,** and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us.”

François Vayne

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Send us a private message about your experiences of Christian life as Knights and Dames of the Order in the light of "Gaudete et Exsultate"!

They will be grouped within a document in perspective of the great assembly of the Order, the Consulta, which will be held next November in Rome...