

INTRODUCTION

As we continue to pray and deepen the Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Pope Francis entitled **'Evangelii Gaudium'(The Joy of the Gospel)**, we continue to pray and look at some of the things that affect us deeply as evangelizers and as missionary disciples. Although Jesus said that we do not belong to the world, we are still in the world. There are many things that affect us in the world and most of them start from within the Church. What will be the solution for this? As Pope Francis said, *We need to avoid it by making the Church constantly go out from herself, keeping her mission focused on Jesus Christ, and her commitment to the poor. God save us from a worldly Church with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings! This stifling worldliness can only be healed by breathing in the pure air of the Holy Spirit who frees us from self-centredness cloaked in an outward religiosity bereft of God. (Evangelii Gaudium 97)*

EASTER MONDAY

They do not belong to the world anymore

¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the things freely given us by God. **(1 Corinthians 2:12)**

¹⁶ They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. **(John 17:16)**

² Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. **(Romans 12:2)**

EASTER TUESDAY

Jesus sees differently

⁵ Looking up, Jesus saw the crowds approaching and said to Philip, 'Where can we buy some bread for these people to eat?' ⁶ He said this only to put Philip to the test; he himself knew exactly what he was going to do. ⁷ Philip answered, 'Two hundred denarii would not buy enough to give them a little piece each.' ⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said, ⁹ 'Here is a small boy with five barley loaves and two fish; but what is that among so many?' ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, 'Make the people sit down.' There was plenty of grass there, and as many as five thousand men sat down. ¹¹ Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed them to those who were sitting there; he then did the same with the fish, distributing as much as they wanted. ¹² When they had eaten enough he said to the disciples, 'Pick up the pieces left over, so that nothing is wasted.' ¹³ So they picked them up and filled twelve large baskets with scraps left over from the meal of five barley loaves. **(John 6:5-13)**

As he went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?' ³ 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him. **(John 9:1-3)**

EASTER WEDNESDAY

We see grace abounding more

84. The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone

or anything (cf. Jn16:22). The evils of our world – and those of the Church – must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, **we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that “where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20). Our faith is challenged to discern how wine can come from water and how wheat can grow in the midst of weeds... (Evangelii Gaudium 84)**

85. One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a **defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, “sourpusses”**. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to Saint Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor12:9). **Christian triumph is always a cross, yet a cross which is at the same time a victorious banner borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil**. The evil spirit of defeatism is brother to the temptation to separate, before its time, the wheat from the weeds; it is the fruit of an anxious and self-centred lack of trust.

(Evangelii Gaudium 85)

EASTER THURSDAY

Challenge of commitment

88. The Christian ideal will always be a summons to overcome suspicion,

habitual mistrust, fear of losing our privacy, all the defensive attitudes which today's world imposes on us. Many try to escape from others and take refuge in the comfort of their privacy or in a small circle of close friends, renouncing the realism of the social aspect of the Gospel. For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, **the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction**. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness. **(Evangelii Gaudium 88)**

91. One important challenge is to show that the solution will never be found in fleeing from a personal and committed relationship with God which at the same time commits us to serving others. This happens frequently nowadays, as believers seek to hide or keep apart from others, or quietly flit from one place to another or from one task to another, without creating deep and stable bonds. “Imaginatio locorum et mutatio multos fefellit”. This is a false remedy which cripples the heart and at times the body as well. **We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right**

attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity.

(Evangelii Gaudium 91)

EASTER FRIDAY

Spiritual worldliness

93. **Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being.** It is what the Lord reprimanded the Pharisees for: "How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (Jn5:44). It is a subtle way of seeking one's "own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:21). It takes on many forms, depending on the kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps...

(Evangelii Gaudium 93)

94. This worldliness can be fuelled in two deeply interrelated ways. One is the attraction of gnosticism, a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings. The other is the self-absorbed prometean neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain

intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past. **A supposed soundness of doctrine or discipline leads instead to a narcissistic and authoritarian elitism, whereby instead of evangelizing, one analyzes and classifies others, and instead of opening the door to grace, one exhausts his or her energies in inspecting and verifying. In neither case is one really concerned about Jesus Christ or others.** These are manifestations of an anthropocentric immanentism. It is impossible to think that a genuine evangelizing thrust could emerge from these adulterated forms of Christianity. *(Evangelii Gaudium 94)*

EASTER SATURDAY

Attitudes of spiritual worldliness

95. This insidious worldliness is evident in a number of attitudes which appear opposed, yet **all have the same pretence of "taking over the space of the Church"**. In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church's prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God's faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In others, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programmes of self-help and self-realization. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with management,

statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution. The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervour is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence.

(Evangelii Gaudium 95)

96. This way of thinking also feeds the vainglory of those who are content to have a modicum of power and **would rather be the general of a defeated army than a mere private in a unit which continues to fight.** How often we dream up vast apostolic projects, meticulously planned, just like defeated generals! But this is to deny our history as a Church, which is glorious precisely because it is a history of sacrifice, of hopes and daily struggles, of lives spent in service and fidelity to work, tiring as it may be, for all work is "the sweat of our brow". Instead, we waste time talking about "what needs to be done" – in Spanish we call this the sin of "habriaqueísmo" – **like spiritual masters and pastoral experts who give instructions from on high. We indulge in endless fantasies and we lose contact with the real lives and difficulties of our people.** *(Evangelii Gaudium 96)*

EASTER SUNDAY

Week 6

First Reading: **Acts 8:5-17**
Psalm: **Psalm 66:1-20**
Second Reading: **1 Peter 3:15-18**
Gospel: **John 14:15-21**

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world.

May 19-25, 2014



Objective of the week:

To be able to help the Church and each other to constantly go out from ourselves and live out our identity as missionaries.