



Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is meant to lead us into the richness of Pope Francis' *Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*. I have prepared 24 pastoral reflections as I see gems in this document from the perspective of being a pastor and a Vicar in the Diocese of Rockville Centre.

2. ENVISIONED OUTCOMES

- Students will demonstrate an awareness of Pope Francis' *Apostolic Exhortation: Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel*.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to lead discussion groups within their own parishes on the *Apostolic Exhortation*.

3. COURSE PLAN

Each week you are asked to read the reflections I have prepared as well as the pertinent sections from *The Joy of the Gospel*. I will be available on line each week for discussion with you. I also encourage you to enter into conversation with one another. There is more wisdom in our conversations together than in my reflections alone. Forty-three years as a priest has taught me the value of conversation and the importance of listening in order to learn. So let us begin with the wisdom of Pope Francis and let us remember the counsel of St. Francis of Assisi. "Preach the Gospel always. If necessary, use words."

MODULE 1: Maintenance vs. Mission: Be Bold and Creative

Readings:

- Reflections 1 - 5
- *The Joy of the Gospel*: Sections 1 - 47
- Be Bold/Creative
- Proper Perspective

Discussion/Activity:

- Please go to the discussion board and offer a reflection of about 400 words concerning the challenge of maintenance vs. mission. Pope Francis asks us to be bold and creative in rethinking the goals, structures, style and method of evangelization. We spend a lot of time maintaining what is and feeding the active parishioners. The challenge of evangelization is not only a challenge to us as priests. It is also our task to challenge our people, some of whom resent losing their parking space or giving up their seat because "those people showed up."
- What are your thoughts about being bold and creative? You might reflect on this personally and/or professionally?

MODULE 2: Economic Systems: Exclusivity and Equality

Readings:

- Reflections 6 - 12
- The Joy of the Gospel: 48 – 128; 53 – 59; 78 – 128

Discussion/Activity:

Please choose one of the following topics and write a reflection (400 words) about it from your pastoral experience. What applications do you see for parish life today and for your ministry?

1. In section 53 - 59 Pope Francis reflects upon the economy and the effects upon those on the fringe. He speaks especially about exclusivity and inequality. He specifically discusses the trickle down theories of capitalism. What implications do you see for preaching and for seeking justice on a global context? Are we willing to rock the boat or are we afraid the boat will sink due to lack of funds?
2. As we age we become more concerned about money. This is true of people in general but it is particularly true of priests in a time of the church when parishioners are leaving and parishes are closing. In sections 95 - 96 in particular Pope Francis offers some very poignant challenges.

Maintenance vs. Mission

Museum keepers vs. evangelizers

Let us not allow ourselves

- To be robbed of missionary enthusiasm
- To be robbed of hope
- To be robbed of community
- To be robbed of the Gospel
- Of the ideal of fraternal love
- Of missionary vigor.

“The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to a revolution of tenderness” #88

3. We cannot impose our culture upon other people yet we must be faithful to the truth of the Gospel. This is not easy to do.

In sections 118 - 120 Pope Francis comments on the issue of culture and faith. Please comment.

MODULE 3: The New Evangelization: The Preacher and the Homily

Readings:

- Reflections 13 - 16
- The Joy of the Gospel 146 – 169

Discussion/Activity:

The homily is a precious and vitally important part of our ministry a priests and deacons. Pope Francis takes on the role of the preacher quite directly and frankly. He says the homily should be brief and fit rhythmically into the entire liturgy. He emphasizes the importance of preparation and gives a detailed description of how to prepare.

Superficiality has no place in peaching. Humor and personal stories should serve the task of evangelization. It is not a forum for us as preachers to be popular. We can forget the weekly shtick of sports or food or even humor.

We must decrease so that Christ can increase. Pope Francis also encourages us to always be positive even

when we are challenging our people or addressing difficult matters. He also speaks of The Art of Accompaniment 169 - 175. In about 400 words, please reflect upon your experience. Where are you most challenged by Pope Francis' thoughts? What do you need to do differently to be a true bearer of the Good News?

MODULE 4: Spirit-filled Evangelizers

Readings:

- Reflections 17-24
- The Joy of the Gospel: 178 – 208; 260 – 288

Discussion/Activity:

Please choose one of the following topics and write a reflection of about 400 words for the discussion board.

- The Social Dimension of Evangelization
- This ties in with Pope Francis' reflection on economic systems in chapter two. It reflects his concern for those abandoned by economic systems: the inclusion of the poor in society and peace and social dialogue. Sections 190, 202 - 204 and 208 are particularly challenging. What implications do you see for preaching? How does especially the reflection in #202 challenge how we do charitable work?
- Sections 250 and following speak about interreligious dialogue and Muslims in particular. Do you experience these challenges in your ministry? What approaches have you found helpful?
- In the last chapter Pope Francis speaks about spirit filled evangelizers. Would you comment on the need for prayer in order to sustain one's fervor for evangelization? Are you filled with hope? Do you believe the dawn is near?

4. REQUIRED READING

- Evangelii Gaudium – The Joy of the Gospel
- Reflections from Msgr. James McNamara

5. ABOUT THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR



Msgr. James McNamara is Pastor of Miraculous Medal Church in Point Lookout and Episcopal Vicar of the Central Vicariate of the Diocese of Rockville Centre.