

Consecrated Life - a life of joy

John 15 - Bear the fruit of joy

”Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”

The world is missing joy, joy is fragile (Paul VI)

Pope Francis’s Letter

“That the old saying will always be true: **“Where there are religious, there is joy”**. We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfilment.

None of us should be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for “a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom”. Like everyone else, we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover “perfect joy”. For it is here that we learn to recognize the face of Christ, who became like us in all things, and to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross.

In a society which exalts the cult of efficiency, fitness and success, one which ignores the poor and dismisses “losers”, we can witness by our lives to the truth of the words of Scripture: “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).

A Nun who doesn’t smile is missing something

”There are also monasteries which spend a half hour a day, an hour a day giving food to those who come asking for it; and this does not run counter to being hidden

in God. It is a service; it is a smile. A nun's smile opens the heart! A nun's smile is more filling than bread for those who come! This week, it is up to you to feed a half hour of your time to the poor, who may ask for a sandwich as well. This one, the other: this week it's up to you to smile to those in need! Do not forget this. A nun who doesn't smile is missing something." (FRAN ADR Religious of Rome, 2015-05-16)

Bl. Paul VI Gaudete in Domino

Joy - possession of the good (St Thomas, Paul VI, Francis)

- "As everyone knows, there are several degrees of this "happiness." Its most noble expression is joy, or "happiness" in the strict sense, when man, on the level of his higher faculties, finds his peace and satisfaction in the possession of a known and loved good.(7) Thus, man experiences joy when he finds himself in harmony with nature, and especially in the encounter, sharing and communion with other people. All the more does he know spiritual joy or happiness when his spirit enters into possession of God, known and loved as the supreme and immutable good." (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino #1)
- "True joy does not come from things or from possessing, no! It is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, it is born from feeling accepted, understood and loved, and from accepting, from understanding and from loving; and this is not because of a passing fancy but because the other is a person. Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! It is hearing someone say, but not necessarily with words: "You are important to me". This is beautiful.... And it is these very words that God makes us understand. In calling you God says to you: "You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you". Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us." (FRAN ADR Seminarians, Novices 2013-07-06)
- "God's infinite love for each of us is fully seen in Jesus Christ. The joy we are searching for is to be found in him. We see in the Gospel how the events at the beginning of Jesus' life are marked by joy. When the Archangel Gabriel tells the Virgin Mary that she is to be the mother of the Saviour, his first word is "Rejoice!" (Lk 1:28). When Jesus is born, the angel of the Lord says to the shepherds: "Behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a Saviour has been born for you, who is Messiah and Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). When the Magi came

in search of the child, “they were overjoyed at seeing the star” (Mt 2:10). The cause of all this joy is the closeness of God who became one of us. This is what Saint Paul means when he writes to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near” (Phil 4:4-5). Our first reason for joy is the closeness of the Lord, who welcomes me and loves me.” (BXVI MSG World Youth 2012)

Joy in meditating on Jesus and joy in sharing Him (St Francis)

”Blessed is that religious who takes no pleasure and joy except in the most holy words and deeds of the Lord and with these leads people to the love of God in joy and gladness. Woe to that religious who delights in idle and frivolous words and with these provokes people to laughter.” (Admonition 20)

Inexhaustible joy

”Paschal joy is not just that of a possible transfiguration: it is the joy of the new presence of the Risen Christ dispensing to His own the Holy Spirit, so that He may dwell with them. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as the inexhaustible principle of her joy as the bride of the glorified Christ. ... And the Christian knows that this Spirit will never be quenched in the course of history. The source of hope manifested at Pentecost will never be exhausted.” (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino, #3)

Unending joy in the Spirit, the Possession of the Trinity

”...we can experience joy which is properly spiritual, the joy which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.(42) It consists in the human spirit’s finding repose and a deep satisfaction in the possession of the Triune God, known by faith and loved with the charity that comes from Him. Such a joy henceforth characterizes all the Christian virtues.” (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino, #3)

All Joy in Mary, Cause of our Joy

”With Christ, she sums up in herself all joys; she lives the perfect joy promised to the Church: Mater plena sanctae laetitiae. And it is with good reason that her children on earth, turning to her who is the mother of hope and of grace, invoke her as the cause of their joy: Causa nostrae laetitiae.” (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino #4)

Joy and the Vows (Paul VI Gaudete in Domino, #1)

"This paradox, and this difficulty in attaining joy, seem to us particularly acute today. This is the reason for our message. Technological society has succeeded in multiplying the opportunities for pleasure, but it has great difficulty in generating joy. For joy comes from another source. It is spiritual.

- poverty "Money, comfort, hygiene and material security are often not lacking; and yet boredom, depression and sadness unhappily remain the lot of many."
- obedience "These feelings sometimes go as far as anguish and despair, which apparent carefreeness, the frenzies of present good fortune and artificial paradises cannot assuage. Do people perhaps feel helpless to dominate industrial progress, to plan society in a human way? Does the future perhaps seem too uncertain, human life too threatened?"
- chastity "Or is it not perhaps a matter of loneliness, of an unsatisfied thirst for love and for someone's presence, of an ill-defined emptiness?"
- EXAMPLE - My brother, Mike's visit on Feb 6
 - very different experience than the program committee meeting he had been to
 - the program committee was a bit depressing - too much to do, people weren't there to help go through all the papers, had to reject papers without sufficient discussion...
 - sisters had "ready smiles" and were open and free and found it hard to leave.

Our deprivation in the vows does not preclude joy

"There is also needed a patient effort to teach people, or teach them once more, how to savor in a simple way the many human joys that the Creator places in our path: the elating joy of existence and of life; the joy of chaste and sanctified love; the peaceful joy of nature and silence; the sometimes austere joy of work well done; the joy and satisfaction of duty performed; the transparent joy of purity, service and sharing; the demanding joy of sacrifice. The Christian will be able to purify, complete and sublimate these joys; he will not be able to disdain them. Christian joy presupposes a person capable of natural joy. These natural joys were often used by Christ as a starting point when He proclaimed the kingdom of God." (Paul VI, Gaudete in Domino #1)

Joy diffuses itself (Francis on joy and chastity)

- We can only keep it by giving it away; bonum est diffusivum sui - the good diffuses itself
- Motherhood (joy shared is life-giving)
- "when you meet a seminarian who is excessively serious, too sad, or a novice like this, you think: but something has gone wrong here! The joy of the Lord is lacking, the joy that prompts you to serve, the joy of the encounter with Jesus which brings you to encounter others to proclaim Jesus. This is missing! There is no holiness in sadness, there isn't any! St Teresa...said: "a saint who is sad is a sad saint". It is not worth much.... When you see ... a sister ... with a long face, gloomy, who seems to have thrown a soaking wet blanket over their life, one of those heavy blankets... which pulls one down.... Something has gone wrong! But please: never any sisters... with faces like "chilis pickled in vinegar" — never! The joy that comes from Jesus." (FRAN ADR seminarians, novices 2013-07-06)
- "what is at the heart of this lack of joy? It is a matter of celibacy. I will explain to you. You... sisters, consecrate your love to Jesus, a great love. Your heart is for Jesus and this leads us to make the vow of chastity, the vow of celibacy. However the vow of chastity and the vow of celibacy do not end at the moment the vow is taken, they endure.... A journey that matures, that develops towards ... pastoral motherhood, and ... when a sister is not a mother to all those with whom she works, he or she becomes sad. This is the problem. For this reason I say to you: the root of sadness in pastoral life is precisely in the absence of ... motherhood that comes from living this consecration unsatisfactorily which on the contrary must lead us to fertility. It is impossible to imagine ... a sister who [is] not fertile: this is not Catholic! This is not Catholic! This is the beauty of consecration: it is joy, joy." (FRAN ADR seminarians, novices 2013-07-06)
- **Joy in being with the poor** "All the brothers should strive to follow the humility and the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ and remember that we should have nothing else in the whole world except, as the Apostle says, having something to eat and something to wear, we be content with these (1Tim 6:8). And they must **rejoice** when they live among people who are considered to be of little worth and who are looked down upon among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside." (Chapter 9:1-2 of the Earlier Rule)

Joy in suffering (poverty)

- Scripture "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. So you also are now in anguish. But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you." (John 16:20-22)
- Example "Closer to us in time is Chiara Badano (1971-1990), who was recently beatified. She experienced how pain could be transfigured by love and mysteriously steeped in joy. At the age of eighteen, while suffering greatly from cancer, Chiara prayed to the Holy Spirit and interceded for the young people of the movement to which she belonged. As well as praying for her own cure, she asked God to enlighten all those young people by his Spirit and to give them wisdom and light. "It was really a moment of God's presence. I was suffering physically, but my soul was singing" (Letter to Chiara Lubich, Sassello, 20 December 1989). The key to her peace and joy was her complete trust in the Lord and the acceptance of her illness as a mysterious expression of his will for her sake and that of everyone. She often said: "Jesus, if you desire it, then I desire it too". (BXVI MSG World Youth 2012)
- **Like Lent without Easter** "6. There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realize of course that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially at moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress: "My soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is... But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness... It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam 3:17, 21-23, 26)." (Evangelii Gaudium #6)
- **Joy in challenges** "109. Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!" (Evangelii Gaudium #109)

- **Joy purifies poverty (St Francis)** "Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither covetousness nor avarice." (Admonition 27)
- **Joy in Simplicity and the Eucharist (St Francis)** "Therefore, I firmly advise you, my lords, to put aside all care and preoccupation and receive with joy the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in holy remembrance of him." (LTR to Rulers)
- **Perfect joy (obedience/humility/poverty)** "Brother Leo, write what true joy is: a messenger comes and says that all the masters in Paris have entered the Order; write: this is not true joy. Or that all the prelates beyond the mountains have entered the Order, as well as the archbishops and bishops; or, that the king of France and the king of England have entered the Order; write this is not true joy. Again that my brothers have gone to the nonbelievers and converted all of them to the faith; again that I have so much grace from God that I heal the sick and perform many miracles: I tell you that true joy does not consist in any of these things." "What then is true joy?" "I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night; and it is winter time, muddy and so cold that icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs, and blood flows out from such wounds. And all covered with mud and cold, I come to the gate and after I have knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: "Who are you?" I answer "Brother Francis" And he says "Go away; this is not the proper hour for going about; you may not come in. And when I insist, he answers "Go away, you are a simple and a stupid person; we are so many and we have no need of you. You are certainly not coming to us at this hour!" And I stand at the door and say "For the love of God, take me in tonight." And he answers "I will not. Go to the Crosiers' place and ask there.

I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, there would be true joy in this and true virtue and the salvation of the soul.

Joy in asking (obedience)

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete." (John 16:23-24)

Joy in mercy (community life)

"We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace." (Misericordiae Vultus #2)

EXAMPLE - building a snowman - always ready to play

Psalm 33 "Our soul is waiting for the Lord. * The Lord is our help and our shield. In him do our hearts find joy. * We trust in his holy name.

May your love be upon us, O Lord, * as we place all our hope in you."