

Gaudete et Exultate of the Holy Father Francis: A Call to Holiness in Today's World
Chapter One - The Saints Who Encourage and Accompany Us

In March 2018, Pope Francis released an Apostolic Exhortation on the Call to Holiness in Today's World. In that Exhortation, Pope Francis commends "parents who raise their children with immense love, men and women who work hard to support their families, the sick, the elderly religious who never lose their smile" (7), as people who are living out their holiness. The Pope guides us in the direction of the Saints, who like us, were not perfect, but who never stopped trying to live out their call to holiness. When reflecting on these Saints' lives we need to focus on the big picture of what they accomplished rather than on their fragile, and at times imperfect, existence.

Here are a few highlights from the Exhortation that led way to some 'Aha' moments:

"Let us be spurred on by the signs of holiness that the Lord shows us through the humblest members who share a living witness by means of faith and charity" (8).

"We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable" (11).

For us, God's lay faithful, this means that we are to follow our own path and use the unique and special gifts He has given **each** of us. Pope Francis stresses that we are not meant to copy others' acts of holiness, but to create our own. These acts can be subtle or grand, but both have value, and both are essential in today's world.

"A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness"(19).

The saints lived their lives by following their various paths, and sometimes not everything they did was authentic or perfect; it is their lives in totality that need to be contemplated. Our lives too, need to be seen as a mission that we allow to be transformed by listening to God. Our lives may not always be perfect, but their totality will demonstrate our call to holiness.

"Our lives do not have a mission; our lives are a mission" (27).

Friends, in our lives we are often called to many tasks; being a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, friend, daughter, son, boss, etc. As such, we tend to live our lives in a hurried and busy manner! Pope Francis asks us to slow down and remember that rushing through our lives is not living our lives as a mission, but that it is living our lives to the fullest that is our mission! It is how we carry out our day to day tasks, how we do our jobs, and how we raise our children or how we care for our aging parents, just to name a few.

Sometimes it might feel as if we are living our lives as a *mission impossible*, but with faith and dedication to Christ, our lives can become a **mission possible** – "Go and make disciples baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (MT 28:19).

God Bless,

Susanna Kaup
Secondary Religious Education Consultant
Edmonton Catholic Schools