

Chapter 3: Gaudete et Exsultate

As we continue to explore Pope Francis' most current Apostolic Exhortation: *On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*, this month we reach chapter three. This chapter is at the center or heart of the exhortation both literally and figuratively. Chapter Three: *In the Light of the Master*, focuses on the life lessons Jesus shared during the Sermon on the Mount. After explaining how to live a blessed life, Jesus says, "Rejoice and be glad!" (MT 5:12) This is the title of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on holiness in everyday life.

Living our faith is a lifelong journey. The Beatitudes are a roadmap that steer us towards holiness. Also referred to as Blessed are..., the Beatitudes demonstrate what it means to be blessed or holy. Pope Francis uses these to remind us of the practical ways we are called to holiness in our everyday life while doing so joyfully. Let's review the Beatitudes. While reading, call to mind that Jesus spoke these words to his people who were being persecuted and judged on his behalf. This was a difficult and challenging time:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
(MT 5: 1-12)

Jesus is encouraging all of us to give ourselves to God and live a life that is filled with virtue. When we do so, we receive true life: the happiness which we were created for. If humankind would live out these Beatitudes, life would be simpler, just, peaceful, empathetic, loving, and joyful. People would put their trust in God first and foremost. Today this continues to be a path that "goes against the flow" and is often opposite to society's message. We are constantly called to challenge this and live our lives with mercy and forgiveness. This involves serving others and it also includes forgiveness and understanding. These are two central themes to Pope Francis' papacy and reach the heart of this exhortation.

Pope Francis' Exhortation encourages us to look deep within and ask the questions:
Where am I on the path to holiness?
How do I rejoice and be glad in my faith journey?

God Bless,
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