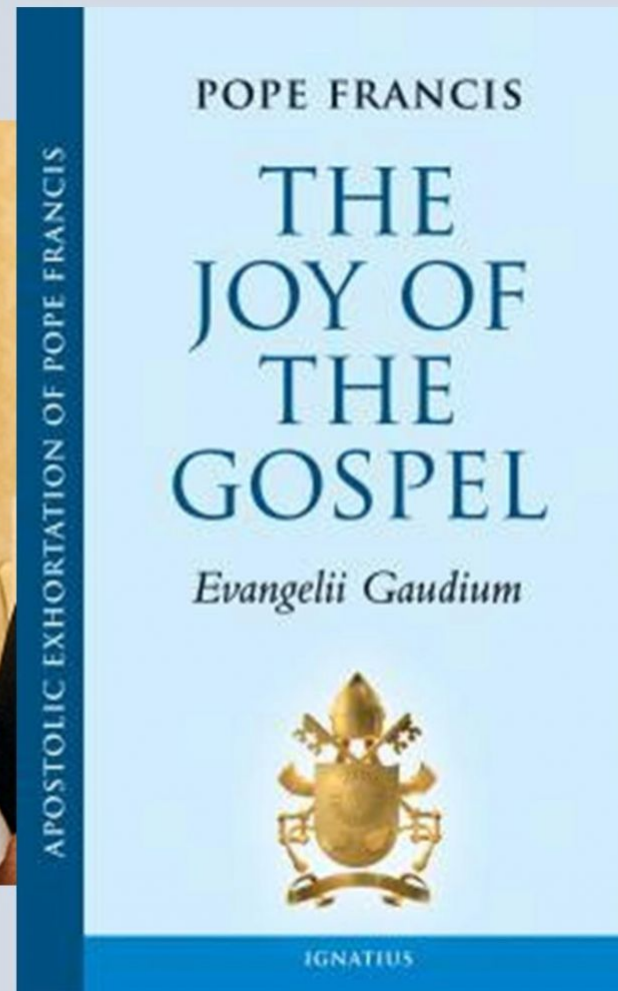


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It is his first apostolic exhortation, and it is devoted to the theme of the new evangelization.

It was written in response to the most recent meeting of the Synod of Bishops, which took place in October, 2012.

It was devoted to the subject of the new evangelization, so that is the subject of *Evangelii Gaudium*.

This synod took place before Pope Francis was elected in March 2013.

It sometimes happens that a synod is held and the pope who presided over it leaves office before the exhortation is released. His successor may then choose to go forward with the project.

What is Pope Francis’ main message in *Evangelii Gaudium*?

As suggested by the name, the principal theme involves the need for a joyful proclamation of the Gospel to the entire world.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who presented the document at a Vatican press conference, summarized its main message this way:

If we were to sum up Pope Francis's *Evangelii Gaudium* in a few words, we could say that it is an Apostolic Exhortation written around the theme of Christian joy in order that the Church may rediscover the original source of evangelization in the contemporary world.

Pope Francis offers this document to the Church as a map and guide to her pastoral mission in the near future.

It is an invitation to recover a prophetic and positive vision of reality without ignoring the current challenges.

Pope Francis instills courage and urges us to look ahead despite the present crisis, making the cross and the resurrection of Christ once again our "the victory banner".

What particularly noteworthy things does the pope have to say in the document?

There is a mountain of them. The document is 51,000 words long, which means that it is the length of a novel and takes at least 5 hours to read. There are numerous important things that the pope says, some of which I will endeavor to unpack in future blog posts.

However, Archbishop Fisichella offers a summary of seven main themes that it covers:

The following seven points, gathered together in the five chapters of the Exhortation, constitute the fundamental pillars of Pope Francis' vision of the new evangelization:

1. the reform of the Church in a missionary key,
2. the temptations of pastoral agents,
3. the Church understood as the totality of the People of God
which evangelizes,
4. the homily and its preparation,
5. the social inclusion of the poor,
6. peace and social dialogue,

7. and the spiritual motivations for the Church's missionary action.

The cement which binds these themes together is concentrated in the merciful love of God which goes forth to meet every person in order to manifest the heart of his revelation: The life of every person acquires meaning in the encounter with Jesus Christ and in the joy of sharing this experience of love with others.

[YOU CAN READ THE FULL DOCUMENT HERE.](#)

Can you give a specific example of something notable he says?

Sure. It's hard to pick just one! Pro-lifers will be heartened to read what he has to say concerning unborn children and abortion:

213. Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us.

Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this.

Frequently, as a way of ridiculing the Church's effort to defend their lives, attempts are made to present her position as ideological, obscurantist and conservative.

Yet this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right.

It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development.

Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems.

Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be.

Reason alone is sufficient to recognize the inviolable value of each single human life, but if we also look at the issue from the standpoint of faith, "every violation of the personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offence against the creator of the individual".

214. Precisely because this involves the internal consistency of our message about the value of the human person, the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question. I want to be completely honest in this regard. This is not something subject to alleged reforms or "modernizations".

It is not "progressive" to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life.

On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?

JJimmy Akin - National Catholic Register