

Introduction from Fr Gerry

What does it mean to be holy?
Do you know anyone who is holy?
Are you holy?
Who can help us to be holy in everyday life?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows us.

Jesus says in John's Gospel Chapter 10 that he is the Good Shepherd, that he is the gate for his sheep, that he calls us by name as we know his voice, and lead us out to find pasture, that he came that we may have life abundantly.

Here is a Papal guideline, a brief video and 21 quotes I've chosen to help us recognize the voice of Jesus every day. And to follow Jesus in every moment of every day, in every challenge, in every blessing. Jesus leads us to living a holy life.

I invite you to reflect on the recent small publication by Pope Francis. He wrote it for all of us.

Pope Francis published his exhortation 'Rejoice and Be Glad' on April 9th 2018. It has 177 numbered paragraphs on holiness. You are invited to read the full writing at <http://bit.ly/FrancisRejoice>

For those who would like to ease their way into the Pope's reflection, perhaps start with the short 2m 36s video <http://bit.ly/YouTubeRejoice>.

Or 21 days of quotes from Pope Francis which I've placed below and given each one a title. The paragraph number follows the quote.

A parish member has placed on our Parish Facebook at

www.facebook.com/stjosephsbrackenridge/ and drawn them together on our parish website at <http://bit.ly/FrancisQuotes>

Whether we are a parent or grandparent or carer,
We are called to holiness.

Whether we are working or searching for work,
We are called to holiness.

Whether we are studying in school or TAFE or university or online bridging courses,
We are called to holiness.

Whether we work in an office or from home,
Whether we are retired or on time-off,
We are called to holiness.

Whether we are cleaning the dishes or car,
Whether we are stressed or bored,
Whether we are motivated or lost,
We are called to holiness.

Let us grow in holiness each day.

Fr Gerry

21 Daily Reflections from 'REJOICE AND BE GLAD'

Day 1

Holiness and Freedom

"Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self. To depend on God sets us free from every form of enslavement and leads us to recognize our great dignity." #32

Day 2

An Encounter between our weakness and God's grace.

"Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace." #34

Day 3

God calls each of us in our uniqueness to holiness

"We should not grow discouraged before examples of holiness that appear unattainable. There are some testimonies that may prove helpful and inspiring, but that we are not meant to copy, for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness." #11

Day 4

Genius of Woman

"The 'genius of woman' is seen in feminine styles of holiness, which are an essential means of reflecting God's holiness in this world. Indeed, in times when women tended to be most ignored or overlooked, the Holy Spirit raised up saints whose attractiveness produced new spiritual vigour and important reforms in the Church. We can mention Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Saint Bridget, Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. But I think too of all those unknown or forgotten women who, each in her own way, sustained and transformed families and communities by the power of their witness." #12

Day 5

Silence of Prayer

"The Lord speaks to us in a variety of ways, at work, through others and at every moment. Yet we simply cannot do without the silence of prolonged prayer, which enables us better to perceive God's language, to interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, to calm our anxieties and to see the whole of our existence afresh in his own light. In this way, we allow the birth of a new synthesis that springs from a life inspired by the Spirit." #171

Day 6

The little details of life

*"Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details.
The little detail that wine was running out at a party.
The little detail that one sheep was missing.
The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins.
The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay.
The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had.
The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak." #144*

Day 7

Challenges bring us back to God of tenderness.

"Like the prophet Jonah, we are constantly tempted to flee to a safe haven. It can have many names: individualism, spiritualism, living in a little world, addiction, intransigence, the rejection of new ideas and approaches, dogmatism, nostalgia, pessimism, hiding behind rules and regulations. We can resist leaving behind a familiar and easy way of doing things. Yet the challenges involved can be like the storm, the whale, the worm that dried the gourd plant, or the wind and sun that burned Jonah's head. For us, as for him, they can serve to bring us back to the God of tenderness, who invites us to set out ever anew on our journey." #134

Day 8

Setting out anew to the fringes of life.

"God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded, where men and women, beneath the appearance of a shallow conformity, continue to seek an answer to the question of life's meaning." #135

Day 9

Finding Jesus in the fringes of society.

“God is not afraid! He is fearless! He is always greater than our plans and schemes. Unafraid of the fringes, he himself became a fringe (cf. *Phil* 2:6-8; *Jn* 1:14). So if we dare to go to the fringes, we will find him there; indeed, he is already there. Jesus is already there, in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh, in their troubles and in their profound desolation. He is already there.” #135

Day 10

Freeing ourselves from Seductive Complacency

“Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do, because this is the way things have always been and yet we always manage to survive. By force of habit we no longer stand up to evil. We “let things be”, or as others have decided they ought to be. Yet let us allow the Lord to rouse us from our torpor, to free us from our inertia. Let us rethink our usual way of doing things; let us open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are, but unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord.” #137

Day 11

The power of the face of Jesus Christ

“We need to remember that “contemplation of the face of Jesus, died and risen, restores our humanity, even when it has been broken by the troubles of this life or marred by sin. We must not domesticate the power of the face of Christ”. [113] So let me ask you: Are there moments when you place yourself quietly in the Lord’s presence, when you calmly spend time with him, when you bask in his gaze?” #151

Day 12

The fire of Jesus inflaming our hearts

“Do you let his fire inflame your heart? Unless you let him warm you more and more with his love and tenderness, you will not catch fire. How will you then be able to set the hearts of others on fire by your words and witness? If, gazing on the face of Christ, you feel unable to let yourself be healed and transformed, then enter into the Lord’s

heart, into his wounds, for that is the abode of divine mercy.” #151

Day 13

Always ask the Spirit

“You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today’s world.” #23

Day 14

God speaking to the world through your life.

“May you come to realize what that word is, the message of Jesus that God wants to speak to the world by your life. Let yourself be transformed. Let yourself be renewed by the Spirit, so that this can happen, lest you fail in your precious mission. The Lord will bring it to fulfilment despite your mistakes and missteps, provided that you do not abandon the path of love but remain ever open to his supernatural grace, which purifies and enlightens.” #24

Days 15 to 21 Joy and Humour

Over the next few days we will explore what Pope Francis says about Joy and a Sense of Humour in his church teaching in ‘Rejoice and Be Glad’.

Day 15

Being Realistic and Joyful

“Far from being timid, morose, acerbic or melancholy, or putting on a dreary face, the saints are joyful and full of good humour. Though completely realistic, they radiate a positive and hopeful spirit. The Christian life is “joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Rom* 14:17), for “the necessary result of the love of charity is joy; since every lover rejoices at being united to the beloved... the effect of charity is joy”. Having received the beautiful gift of God’s word, we embrace it “in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit” (*1 Thess* 1:6). If we allow the Lord to draw us out of our shell and change our lives, then we can do as Saint Paul tells us: “Rejoice in the Lord always; I say it again, rejoice!” (*Phil* 4:4). #122

Day 16

The Old Testament prophets and Joy

'The prophets proclaimed the times of Jesus, in which we now live, as a revelation of joy.

"Shout and sing for joy!" (*Is* 12:6).

"Get you up to a high mountain, O herald of good tidings to Zion; lift up your voice with strength, O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem!" (*Is* 40:9).

"Break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and he will have compassion on his afflicted" (*Is* 49:13).

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he" (*Zech* 9:9).

Nor should we forget Nehemiah's exhortation:

"Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!" (8:10). #123

Day 17

The joy of Jesus in us.

Mary, recognizing the newness that Jesus brought, sang: "My spirit rejoices" (*Lk* 1:47), and Jesus himself

"rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" (*Lk* 10:21).

As he passed by, "all the people rejoiced" (*Lk* 13:17).

After his resurrection, wherever the disciples went, there was "much joy" (*Acts* 8:8). Jesus assures us:

"You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy...

I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (*Jn* 16:20.22).

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you,

and that your joy may be full" (*Jn* 15:11). #124

Day 18

We are infinitely loved – let us rejoice!

'Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy that "adapts and changes, but always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved". That joy brings deep security, serene hope and a spiritual fulfilment that the world cannot understand or appreciate. #125

Day 19

Joy and humour

'Christian joy is usually accompanied by a sense of humour. We see this clearly, for example, in Saint Thomas More, Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Philip Neri. Ill humour is no sign of holiness. "Remove vexation from your mind" (*Eccl* 11:10). We receive so much from the Lord "for our enjoyment" (*1 Tim* 6:17), that sadness can be a sign of ingratitude. We can get so caught up in ourselves that we are unable to recognize God's gifts. #126

Day 20

Content and overwhelmed with joy

'With the love of a father, God tells us:

"My son, treat yourself well... Do not deprive yourself of a happy day" (*Sir* 14:11.14).

He wants us to be positive, grateful and uncomplicated: "In the day of prosperity, be joyful... God created human beings straightforward, but they have devised many schemes" (*Eccl* 7:14.29).

Whatever the case,

we should remain resilient and imitate Saint Paul:

"I have learned to be content with what I have" (*Phil* 4:11).

Saint Francis of Assisi lived by this; he could be overwhelmed with gratitude before a piece of hard bread, or joyfully praise God simply for the breeze that caressed his face. #127

Day 21

Increasing our capacity for joy

This is not the joy held out by today's individualistic and consumerist culture. Consumerism only bloats the heart. It can offer occasional and passing pleasures, but not joy. Here I am speaking of a joy lived in communion, which shares and is shared, since "there is more happiness in giving than in receiving" (*Acts* 20:35) and "God loves a cheerful giver" (*2 Cor* 9:7). Fraternal love increases our capacity for joy, since it makes us capable of rejoicing in the good of others:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice" (*Rom* 12:15).

"We rejoice when we are weak and you are strong" (*2 Cor* 13:9).

On the other hand, when we "focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence". #128