

Pope Francis: Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People
(November 23rd 2014)

04. II. Expectations for the Year of Consecrated Life

1. Joy in living the Gospel and in attracting people to it.



Evangelii Gaudium (24 November 2013)

‘Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms ... God never tires of forgiving us’(n. 3).

‘If we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?’(n. 8).

‘Life grows by being given away’(n.10).

Evangelii Gaudium (24 November 2013)

‘Mission is first and foremost the Lord’s work’(n.12).

Keep Watch

(Letter from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life 8 September 2014).

‘Whenever the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, for all the House of Israel to see. And so it was for every stage of their journey’(Exodus 40:36-38, quoted n.2).

‘You gave your people a pillar of blazing fire, to guide them on their unk

The joy of the Gospel, n.4

‘Treat yourself well, according to your means ... Do not deprive yourself of the day’s enjoyment’(Sirach 14:11, 14). What tender paternal love echoes in these words.’

‘It is not by proselytising that the Church grows, but by attraction’(n.14).

Chapter One: The Church' must be transformed into a missionary church (nn. 19-49)

'The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded'(n. 23)

'Stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast'(n. 24)

'I encourage each particular local Church to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform'(n. 30)

'The message has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary'(n. 35)

'This holds true for the dogmas of faith as for the whole corpus of the Church's teaching, including her moral teaching'(n. 36)

'The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak'(n. 47)

Chapter Two: The challenges facing evangelisation in today's world (nn. 50-109)

I. Some challenges of today's world (nn. 52-75)

For most people **'it is a struggle to live,
and, often with precious little dignity'**(n. 52)

No to an economy of exclusion [53-54]

People left behind end up being **'a mere spectacle that fails to move us'**
(n. 54)

No to the new idolatry of money [55-56]

Reduced to our need to consume. The environment is fragile and defenceless.

No to a financial system which rules rather than serves [57-58]

No to the inequality which spawns violence [59-60]

Chapter Two: The challenges facing evangelisation in today's world (nn. 50-109)

Some cultural challenges [61-67]

Widespread indifference and relativism. Deterioration of cultures.

Individualistic spiritualities. Importance of community

‘We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach, as does a concentration on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization’(n. 63).

II. Temptations faced by pastoral workers (nn. 76-109)

Wonderful contribution of the church in today's world

Yes to the challenge of a missionary spirituality [78-80]

‘Practical relativism consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist. It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission’(n. 80).

No to selfishness and spiritual sloth [81-83]

‘priests obsessed with protecting their free time’(n. 81).

‘more concerned with the road map than with the journey’(n. 82).

No to a sterile pessimism [84-86]

‘My grace is sufficient for you.

My power is made perfect in weakness’(2Corinthians 12:9;n.85).

Yes to the new relationships brought by Christ [87-92]

‘True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness’(n. 88).

Importance of community (n. 92).

Other ecclesial challenges [102-109]

Formation of the laity. Need to create opportunities for contribution of women.

Youth ministry.

‘Lay involvement often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society’(n. 102).

‘Seminaries cannot accept candidates on the basis of any motivation whatsoever, especially if those motivations have to do with affective insecurity or the pursuit of power, human glory or economic well-being’(n. 107).

Chapter Three: The proclamation of the Gospel (nn. 110-175)

I. The entire people of God proclaims the Gospel (nn. 111-134).

“It is important always to know that the first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves into the divine initiative, only begging for this divine initiative, shall we too be able to become – with him and in him – evangelizers”(n. 112 quoting Benedict XVI)

‘The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel’(n. 114).

‘It is the Spirit who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony’(n. 117).

The evangelising power of popular piety (nn. 122-126).

II-III. The homily (nn. 135-159).

‘A preacher who does not prepare is not “spiritual”; he is dishonest and irresponsible with the gifts he has received’(n. 145).

IV. Evangelization and the deeper understanding of the Gospel we proclaim (nn. 160-175).

‘The centrality of the kerygma calls for stressing those elements which are most needed today: it has to express God’s saving love which precedes any moral and religious obligation on our part; it should not impose the truth but appeal to freedom; it should be marked by joy, encouragement, liveliness and a harmonious balance which will not reduce preaching to a few doctrines which are at times more philosophical than evangelical. All this demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental’(n. 165).

Attend to the way of beauty (n. 167)

Chapter Four: The social dimension of evangelisation (nn. 176-258)

‘To believe in a Father who loves all men and women with an infinite love means realizing that “he thereby confers upon them an infinite dignity”. To believe that the Son of God assumed our human flesh means that each human person has been taken up into the very heart of God. To believe that Jesus shed his blood for us removes any doubt about the boundless love which ennobles each human being. Our redemption has a social dimension because “God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations existing between men”. To believe that the Holy Spirit is at work in everyone means realizing that he seeks to penetrate every human situation and all social bonds: “The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, even the most complex and inscrutable”.

(continued)

‘Evangelization is meant to cooperate with this liberating work of the Spirit. The very mystery of the Trinity reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfilment or salvation purely by our own efforts. From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization. Accepting the first proclamation, which invites us to receive God’s love and to love him in return with the very love which is his gift, brings forth in our lives and actions a primary and fundamental response: to desire, seek and protect the good of others.’(n. 178).

II. The Inclusion of the poor in society (nn. 186-216)

‘Solidarity presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few’(n. 188).

‘We should not be concerned simply about falling into doctrinal error, but about remaining faithful to this light-filled path of life and wisdom. For “defenders of orthodoxy are sometimes accused of passivity, indulgence, or culpable complicity regarding the intolerable situations of injustice and the political regimes which prolong them”(n. 194).

‘The poor have much to teach us’(n. 194).

‘The worst discrimination the poor have to suffer is the lack of spiritual care’(n. 200).

Prayer for politicians

‘I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. We need to be convinced that charity “is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor! It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare. Why not turn to God and ask him to inspire their plans? I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society’(n. 205).

Care for the vulnerable

‘We Christians are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth. But the current model, with its emphasis on success and self-reliance, does not appear to favour an investment in efforts to help the slow, the weak or the less talented to find opportunities in life’(n. 209).

‘I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. How beautiful are those cities which overcome paralysing mistrust, integrate those who are different and make this very integration a new factor of development! How attractive are those cities which, even in their architectural design, are full of spaces which connect, relate and favour the recognition of others!’(n. 210).

‘I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (*Gen* 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity’(n. 211).

III. The Common Good and Peace in Society (nn. 217-258)

‘The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges’
(n. 218).

‘What we need is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity’ (n. 223).

Chapter Five: Spirit-filled Evangelizers (nn. 259-288)

The spiritual savour of being a people (nn. 268-274).

‘We are committed to building a new world, we do so, not from a sense of obligation, not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives’ (n. 269).

Mary, Mother of Evangelization (nn. 284-288).

‘In the inspired Scriptures, what is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary ... In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God’s word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at one virginal and fruitful ... Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary’s womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church’s faith. He will dwell forever in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul’ (Blessed Isaac of Stella Sermo 51).

(n. 285).



*Among all
you are
blessed*

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*Among all
you are
blessed*

*and full of
grace
and holiness*

*Among all
you said Yes*

*to do God's will
with openness*



*O Lady
full of grace*

*Mary,
Mother of God,
be with us,
pray for us.*

You teach us to obey

*the living word
of God*



*You show us
how to listen
to his voice
that calls us
each by name.*



Ave Maria, gratia plena:
Dominus tecum.

Ecce ancilla
Domini:
Fiat mihi secundum
verbum tuum.

*Among all you are blessed
and full of grace and holiness*



*Among all
you said Yes*

*to do God's will
with openness*

*O Lady
full of grace*

*Mary, Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*



*You teach us
how to serve
God's Kingdom
here on earth*

*You bring to birth
a willingness
to share our lives
with joy and love.*



*Among all
you are
blessed*

*and full of
grace
and
holiness.*

*Among all
you said Yes*

*to do God's will
with openness*



*O Lady
full of grace*

*Mary,
Mother of God,
be with us,
pray for us.*



*You teach us
how to pray*

*with humbleness
of heart.*

*You
guide us
to be instruments
of peace and hope
for all the world*



*Among all
you are
blessed*

*and full of
grace
and holiness.*

*Among all
you said
Yes*

*to do
God's will
with
openness*



O Lady full of grace

*Mary, Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*



*That we may love
like Christ*

*Mary, Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*

That we may trust in God

*Mary, Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*



*For peace
in every land*

*Mary,
Mother of God,*

*be with us,
pray for us.*



*For courage
to forgive*

*Mary,
Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*

*That we may
spread God's word*

*Mary,
Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*



*That we may
share our gifts*

*Mary,
Mother of God,
be with us, pray for us.*

*O Lady
full of grace
pray for us.*



*O Mary
full of love
pray for us.*

*O Mother
full of peace
pray for us.*