

The Education Committee is delighted to share with you a resource on *Evangelii Gaudium* – “The Joy of the Gospel”. The following pages will provide an excellent means to share the highlights of the 5 chapters in this church document. In each of the chapters there is an overview, reflection, penetrating questions, a call to action and a word cloud. As the members of the committee reflected, discussed and reviewed the material in the exhortation written by Pope Francis, we decided that it would be beneficial to prepare a resource for use when meeting with our council sisters or alone in personal reflection. The members spent numerous hours contemplating the most practical means to develop this text.

Each section calls us, as Catholic women, to a deeper understanding of how we encounter our Lord Jesus in our everyday lives. The topics covered are: Transformation, Commitment, Proclamation, Evangelization, and Spirit-filled Evangelizers. All of these areas are important to the mission of NCCW.

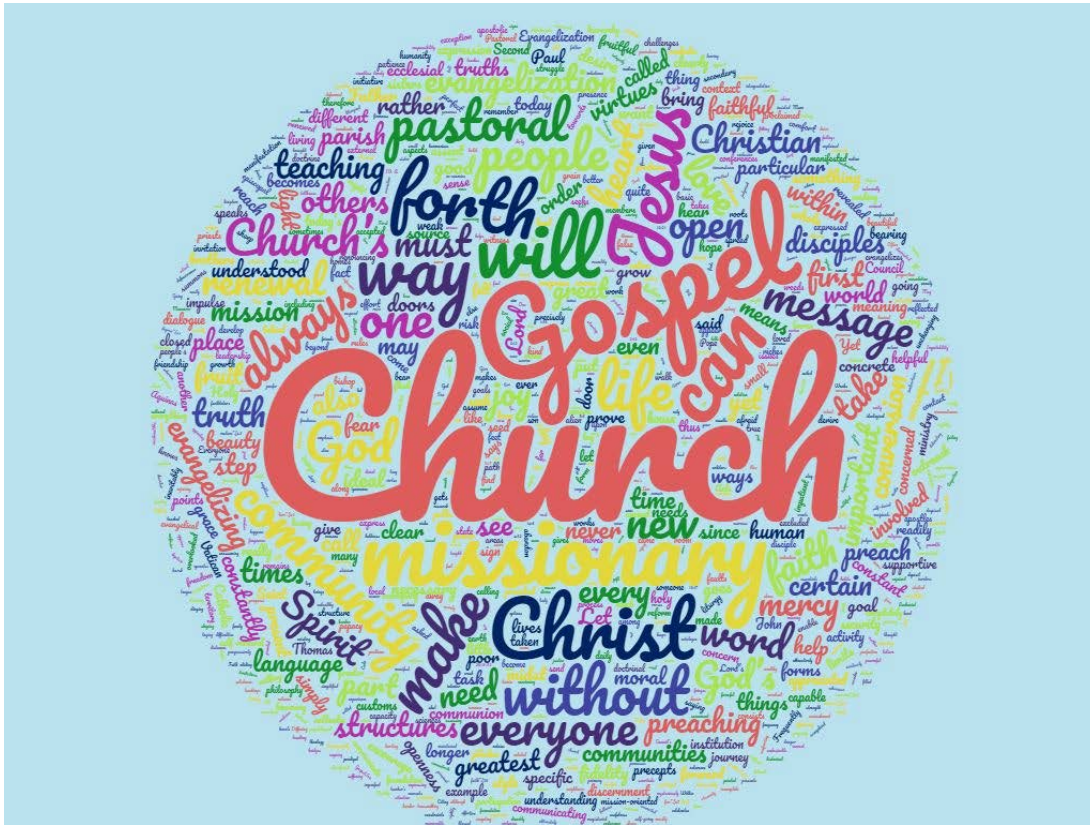
We, the committee members, invite you to take a moment to review the words and thoughts in this document. We hope you will utilize this resource and learn more about what the essential messages and teachings are in this meaningful and inspiring Apostolic Exhortation.

## *Joy of the Gospel*



# Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 1 – The Church’s Missionary Transformation

Submitted by Ellen Bachman and Sharon O’Brien



## Overview

In our day Jesus’s command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary – going forth. Pope Francis challenges us to think out of the box. He encourages each Church to undertake a process of discernment, purification and reform. We need a missionary asperation of reaching everyone. We have to abandon the attitude that says “we always did it this way”. We should be a church and people who are creative and can rethink our goals, structures, style and method of evangelization. We should be a Church which “goes forth” to everyone without exception. A Church with open doors so it is a place for everyone... with all their problems.

## Reflection

Pope Francis states that the Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel, we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbors, but above all the poor and the sick, those are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (Lk

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14:14) Pope Francis prefers a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37)

**Penetrating Questions**

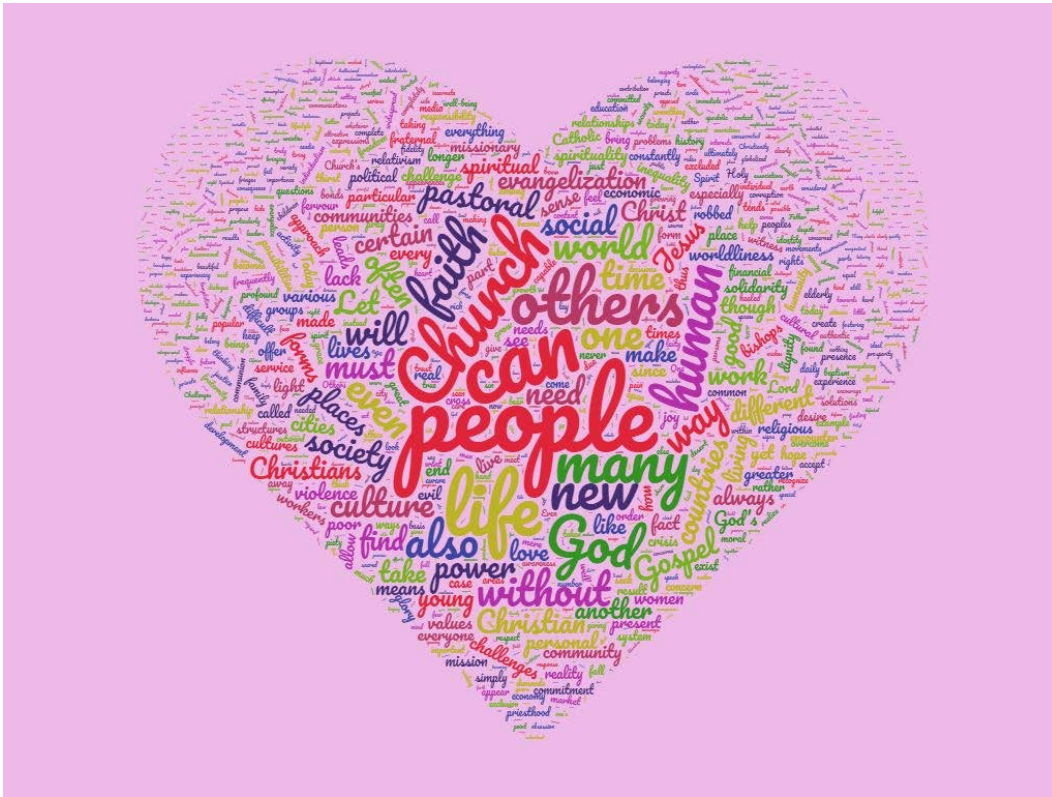
1. Pope Francis believes that Mercy is the greatest of all virtues. We should see God in others and go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others.  
**How do you, and how does the Church, in your opinion, seek out the good of others?**
2. It has always been difficult for the Church to change because accepting change is very difficult for people. Some people will see the need for change early on and go with the “new”; some will take awhile but eventually accept the change; others will refuse to accept the change and move in another direction (leave the Church). **How will you be part of the process of “Change”? Can you let go of practices as we know them today? Why or Why not?**
3. About twenty years ago I heard a Bishop say we should close all our Catholic Schools and make them a community base. A place for children to come after school and we take care of them; a place for families to gather, etc. He also said to look around your Church and if you don’t see the homeless, different cultures and races sitting with you, you are not living the Gospel message. This was certainly out of the box thinking and it planted a seed for many people. **In your out of the box thinking what should our Church look like? What seeds has Pope Francis planted in you that you want to bring forth.**

**Call to Action**

We are called to Evangelize to ALL people; those already in the Church, those seeking a relationship with God and those who have never heard of Him - ALL of God’s people. Begin by looking at yourself and how you can evangelize. Come up with two things you personally can do. Share your plan with others and invite them to join you in your outreach. Even if they don’t join you, your seeds were planted in them and eventually they may flourish.

## Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter Two – Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment

Submitted by Andrea Cecilli and Ruth Warren



### Overview

The take away for this chapter is twofold with the common theme of hope and a call to action. The underlying thread is to discern what is “of or for God” and what is not. Pope Francis is connecting our economic systems to the teachings of Jesus. How can we effect change if we do not tackle the inequity in our financial systems and unjust social structure. We are called to live ethically and morally while looking for opportunities to promote peace. The media and a decline in social norms are challenging our traditional values and exploiting minors, minorities and the elderly leaving many vulnerable to drugs and human trafficking. The contribution of the Church in today’s world is immeasurable. We have had failures. We help people live and die with dignity. We help people rise from poverty and escape enslavement. We educate and mentor our children and our young. We are called to join in solidarity with each other and find the face of Christ each day in the community of Church. We should not concern ourselves on how others perceive our involvement at Church events, but rather we should keep our mission focused on the needs of the poor. Men and Women are equal in dignity. We do not suggest that being ordained is more or less dignified. Service to the Lord is not more or less noble based on our genders. The youth need to feel connected and engaged in their faith. We need to listen to both old and young looking for inspiration and guidance.

### Reflection

I think the last sentence of chapter 2 wraps the chapter’s essence up in a few words, “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigor!” One must ask do I let others drain me of my

## **Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter Two – Amid the Crisis of Communal Commitment**

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love for Christ and Christ’s message, or on the other hand, do I drain others of theirs? Pope Francis illuminates several avenues that deprive us, or at best, limit our missionary spirit. When looking at these one can see a clear pattern of divisiveness amongst Christ’s followers. Francis acknowledges divisions such as the power of the ordained priesthood over the lay faithful and lay ecclesial ministers; the separation of faith from the workplace and family life and the magnification of secularism; the clinging to the past and inability to recognize the movement of the Spirit in an ever-changing world; and the “narcissistic and authoritarian elitism” often practiced by the faithful that leads to critical inspection of the religious praxis of other Catholics and the elevation of their personal and private devotions and practices. Pope Francis warns that these things are “evils of our world and our church” and although he is bringing these situations to light he advises that they are not to be used as excuses to diminish one’s personal spiritual life. We cannot take a defeatist attitude and separate ourselves from the community of believers and a “committed relationship with God.” Rather, we must develop a relationship with our fellow believers, a “fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur in our neighbor.”

As women, we often down play our spirituality and beliefs and incorporate those of others, especially the thoughts and beliefs of the ministerial priesthood. We have been taught to take a back seat and follow without question. Yet Pope Francis is reminding us that a woman, Mary, takes her place above all human beings and encourages us to emulate her as a role model, one that helps us to be recognized for the gifts that we can give our church community to further enhance and fortify it. We are challenged to find a perfect balance, one that is nonjudgmental and critical of others while at the same time having the confidence in our own practices and beliefs to use them to bring us closer to God and to benefit our community. This is a very difficult call, one that will take much discernment.

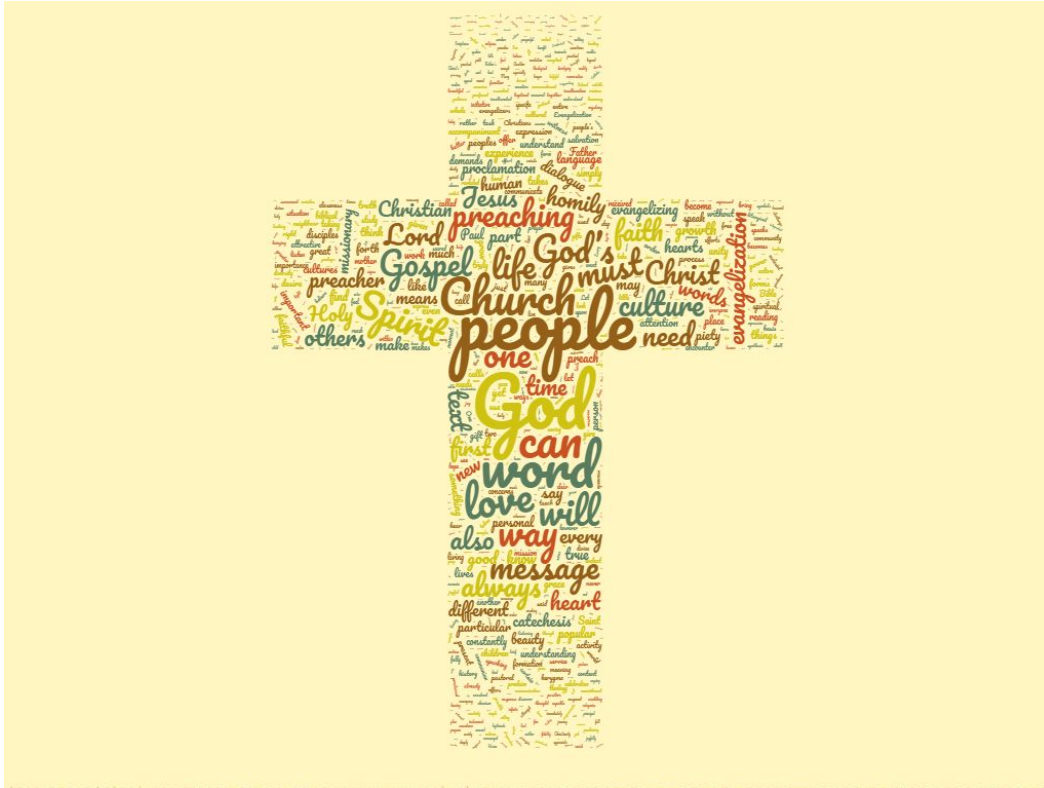
### **Penetrating Questions**

1. Have you experienced a lack of enthusiasm in your faith? How have you overcome this?
2. Do you recognize the female genius and role model Mary plays in our lives? How have you said, yes to the Lord recently?
3. Pope Francis invites us to engage in conversations about the challenges he sees in pastoral ministry. How does your parish respond? What changes can you see or recommendations can you make in your parish to these challenges?
4. What experiences have you had in meeting the poor, either in person or by hearing of a situation in the news?
5. Looking back over the key points above, do any have any resonance or seem vital to you?
6. How does our Catholic social teaching reflect the Gospel in our world today?

### **Call to Action**

Do not be afraid to share your talents, thoughts, and beliefs with your community. Go out and speak freely about God with confidence and passion. Be ready to learn from others and be accepting of their interpretations that enrich their spiritual life as these unexpected treasures may further develop your joy and love of God.

## Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 3 – The Proclamation of the Gospel Submitted by Bernadette Corso and Kathleen Penno



### Overview

In virtue of baptism, all the members of the People of God are missionary disciples, impelled by the Holy Spirit, to be agents of evangelization. All of us are called to mature in our work as evangelizers. Each of us should find ways to communicate Jesus wherever we are, offering others an explicit witness to the saving love of Jesus who gives meaning to our lives. Jesus said “Go and make disciples of all nations”. We are to proclaim and bring God’s salvation into our world. Evangelization demands familiarity with God’s word. We need to be constantly trained in hearing the word through ongoing study of the sacred Scriptures, with prayerful individual and communal reading.

### Reflection

Many of us tend to define our sins by what we have done, rather than what we **didn’t** do. How many of us have experienced looking back on a situation and thinking “I should have said this.” or “I should have done that.” God calls us to a radical, risky love of our neighbor. Pope Francis confronts the faithful, saying “Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love.” (120) The time to reach out to others is here and now, realizing our universal call to evangelization. If we put our trust in God, we will not fail, knowing that the Spirit guides us in the truth (119). Recalling the parable of the talents, notice that none of the servants who invested and risked the talent they were given **failed**. Only the servant who “played it safe” and buried his talent was the one who lost everything. If we are willing to take a risk for God, our actions will always bear fruit through Him. All of us are created by virtue of Love, and we are all called to give that love. As Catholic

**Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 3 – The Proclamation of the Gospel  
Submitted by Bernadette Corso and Kathleen Penno**

women, we also have a special call when it comes to evangelization, channeling the “maternal spirit” that Pope Francis talks about in a special way (140). Our Lady should be the example we emulate as we utilize our unique feminine gifts to reach out to others and bring them to her Son. In this way, we can become mirrors of Christ’s love in our world, and bring others to Him.

**Penetrating Questions**

1. Inspired by the “maternal spirit” (140) that Pope Francis talks about, what do you think that we as Catholic women bring to the table uniquely in regard to evangelization?
2. What can I do “here and now” to share the gospel with others? How can I be an example of Christ’s love?’
3. Have you ever accompanied others in their walk with the Lord? What did it require? If you were the one being accompanied, what did you most appreciate about the person mentoring you?

**Call to Action**

Share your own story of God’s love in your life with others. Pray with family, friends and strangers! Prepare your heart each Sunday so that you are disposed to listen, both the biblical readings and to the homily. Practice Lectio Divina and ask, “Lord, what does this text say to me?”

# Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 4 – The Social Dimension of Evangelization

Submitted by Ellen Bachman and Sharon O’Brien



## Overview

Pope Francis exhorts us to live our baptismal call to evangelize in “words, attitudes, and deeds” (177, 258). To appreciate his teachings, consider the headings in this four-part chapter: Part I: Communal and Societal Repercussions of the Kerygma (Confessions of Faith and Commitment to Society, The Kingdom and its Challenge, and The Church’s Teaching on Social Questions); Part II: The Inclusion of the Poor in Society (In Union with God, We Hear a Plea; Fidelity to the Gospel, Lest We Run in Vain; The Special Place of the Poor in God’s People; The Economy and Distribution of Income; and Concern for the Vulnerable); Part III: The Common Good and Peace in Society (Time is Greater than Space; Unity Prevails Over Conflict; Realities are More Important than Ideas; and The Whole is Greater than the Part) and the Part IV: Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace (Dialogue Between Faith, Reason and Science; Ecumenical Dialogue; Relations with Judaism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Social Dialogue in the Context of Religious Freedom).

## Reflection

Pope Francis states that God’s word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us: “As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). It corresponds to the mercy which God has shown us: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you...



## **Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 4 – The Social Dimension of Evangelization**

**Submitted by Ellen Bachman and Sharon O’Brien**

for the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Lk 6:36-38). An authentic faith which is never comfortable or completely personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. Pope Francis talks about the poor in society and our responsibility to serve the poor. We are a global society. There are enough resources to serve the world, yet there are people starving; people deprived of medical attention; homeless people. The problem is made worse by the generalized practice of wastefulness. Pope Francis asks God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simple the appearances – of the evils in our world. He prays for 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. Peace can only come when there is equality for all people. Pope Francis says that friendly and sincere attention must always be paid to the bond between dialogue and proclamation, which leads the Church to maintain and intensify her relationship with non-Christians. There is a bond with the Jewish faith, similarities with the Muslim faith, and a bond with our Christian brothers and sisters. We must always respect freedom of religion. Dialogue is the path to peace in our troubled world. To dialogue with believers and non-believers...

### **Penetrating Questions**

1. Pope Francis has a great love for the poor of the world. Sometimes we focus on our community, but overlook the larger need. Mother Theresa once said that we as Americans give our crumbs to those in need. Is there more we can do to reach our own society and the larger society? What could you do? How would you implement it? Will it be sacrificial offerings or the crumbs that are leftover?
2. The third area Pope Francis talks about in this Chapter is religious freedom, and dialoguing with other faiths. Do you connect with other religions? Some examples are doing a Seder meal with the Jewish faith; there is a diocese that has a service each year with the Jewish community to remember the Holocaust. The High School children are involved. One parish does the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday with a neighboring Protestant church. Think outside of the box as Pope Francis asks and find a way to connect with other believers.

### **Call to Action**

Meet with your legislators and ask them what you can do to help them serve the poor. Meet with your Pastor and Council to see how you can reach out even further to help the poor. Suggest the parish tithes five percent of the Sunday collection into a Charity Account to be given to the needy in the parish and community. Do the same with your Council income. You may want to consider Catholic Relief Services or find a parish you can adopt in a third world country. Every step we take to make life better for others is a step closer to God.



**Evangelii Gaudium “The Joy of the Gospel” Chapter 5 – Spirit-filled Evangelizers**  
**Submitted by Bernadette Corso and Beth Mahoney**

up – a reflection on the resurrection of Christ that is still continuing to affect change in the world. (276). So true within our own lives. We are reminded that trust in the Holy Spirit is critical in these times. Mary, as the first evangelizer, can trace God’s spirit in the great and small events in her life. Pope Francis calls us to be a true missionary – which means that our ultimate motivation to evangelize should be to bring about the greater glory of our loving God (267)

**Penetrating Questions**

1. How do we bring the love of God to others? What is our understanding of Mary as the 1<sup>st</sup> evangelizer?
2. What are some ways that we can “touch the wounds” of Christ when we evangelize (270)? How can we get out of our comfort zone as missionary disciples?
3. As Catholic women, how can we emulate Mary, the “Star of the New Evangelization”, in our interactions with those around us (287-88)?

**Call to Action**

When looking for projects to initiate or develop within our local councils – gather together to pray, to call on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the inspiration of Mary, Our Lady of Good Counsel before beginning a project.