



The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission for Social Justice Issue 27, April 2018

## Summary of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on Holiness

***GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE ("Rejoice and be Glad")***



“My modest goal is to re-propose the call to **holiness** in a **practical** way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities. ... A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness. This path has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him...holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full... In the Beatitudes Jesus explains with great simplicity what it means to be holy.... Holiness is not based on prayer alone but on also serving those in need and in self-control” (Pope Francis).

**INTRODUCTION BY CCSJ'S CHAIR, LEELA RAMDEEN:** In this issue of Parish Link, CCSJ shares with you the official summary of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation **GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE** ('Rejoice and Be Glad'), with the subtitle "On the call to holiness in the contemporary world." It was distributed by the Holy See on Mon 9 April, 2018 but is dated March 19, 2018 which marks the fifth anniversary of the Holy Father's inaugural Mass on the Feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 2013. The exhortation is Pope Francis's fifth major document. He has issued two prior exhortations: *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel") in 2013 and *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love") in 2016. He has also issued two papal encyclicals: *Lumen Fidei*, which was begun by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI; and "*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home," which focused on environmental issues. In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, he reminds us that God wants us "to be holy, as He is holy" (1 Pet 1:15).

As Catholic News Agency says: "The 44-page exhortation explains that holiness is the mission of every Christian, and gives practical advice for living out the call to holiness in ordinary, daily life, encouraging the practice of the Beatitudes and performing works of mercy...Francis said that all Catholics that, like the saints, 'need to see the entirety of your life as a mission,' and explained that this is accomplished by listening to God in prayer and asking the Holy Spirit for guidance in each moment and decision.

"A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness,' he stated, explaining that this path has its 'fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him.' Using the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Francis wrote that 'holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full.' As a result, the measure of our holiness stems not from our own achievement, but 'from the stature that Christ achieves in us.'

"Therefore, Pope Francis said, to walk the path of holiness requires prayer and contemplation alongside action; the two cannot be separated...The pope explained that


'the Church has repeatedly taught that we are justified not by our own works or efforts, but by the grace of the Lord, who always takes the initiative,' and that even our cooperation with the gift of divine grace is itself 'a prior gift of that same grace.'

"Some may be asked, through God's grace, for grand gestures of holiness – as can be seen in the lives of many of the saints, Francis said – but many people are called to live the mission of holiness in a more ordinary way, and in the context of their vocation. However large or small one's call seems, Francis said that acts of charity are always undertaken 'by God's grace,' not as people 'sufficient unto ourselves, but rather as *good stewards of the manifold grace of God* (1 Peter 4:10),' he said.

"The pope offered several practical recommendations for living out these 'small gestures.' In addition to the frequent reception of the sacraments and attendance at Mass, he said that in the Beatitudes Jesus explains 'with great simplicity what it means to be holy.' He also said that a way to practice holiness is through the works of mercy, though he warned that to think good works can be separated from a personal relationship with God and openness to grace is to make Christianity into 'a sort of NGO.'

"The saints, on the other hand, show us that 'mental prayer, the love of God and the reading of the Gospel' in no way detract from 'passionate and effective commitment to their neighbours.' The pope highlighted several qualities he finds especially important for living holiness in today's culture, including: perseverance, patience, humility, joy, a sense of humour, boldness, and passion."

*Leela Ramdeen*

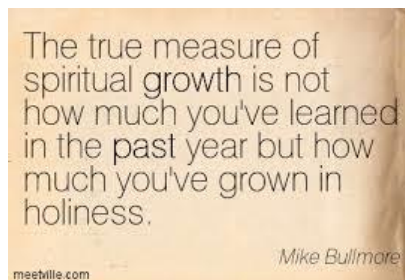
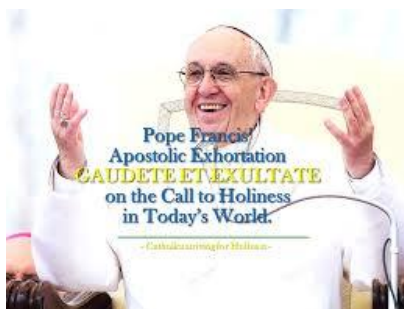
  
Call to Holiness "To be saints is not a privilege for the few but a vocation for everyone." (Pope Francis)

# Summary of Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on holiness, Gaudete et Exsultate

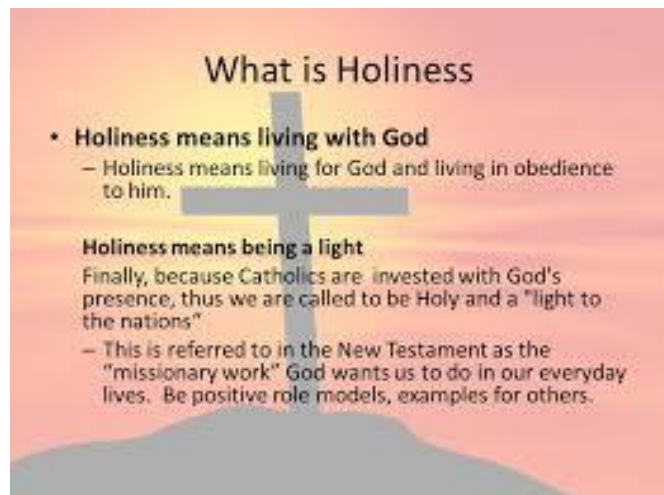
## CHAPTER 1: THE CALL TO HOLINESS

There are many kinds of saints. Besides the Church's officially recognized saints, many more ordinary people have been hidden from history books yet have been decisive in changing the world. They include many Christian witnesses whose martyrdom is a feature of our time. "Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel." Holiness is experiencing the mysteries of Christ's life, "constantly dying and rising anew with him", and reproducing aspects of his earthly life: his closeness to the outcast, his poverty, his self-sacrificing love. "Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world", in a mission to build the kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.

Holiness is as diverse as humanity; the Lord has in mind a particular path for each believer, not just the clergy, the consecrated, or those who live a contemplative life. We are all called to holiness, whatever our role, "by living our lives with love and bearing witness", and in the everyday turning to God. Among ways of bearing witness are "feminine styles of holiness", of famous women saints and the "unknown and forgotten" women who daily transform their communities. As well as through big challenges, holiness grows through small gestures: refusing to gossip, listening with patience and love, saying a kind word to a poor person.



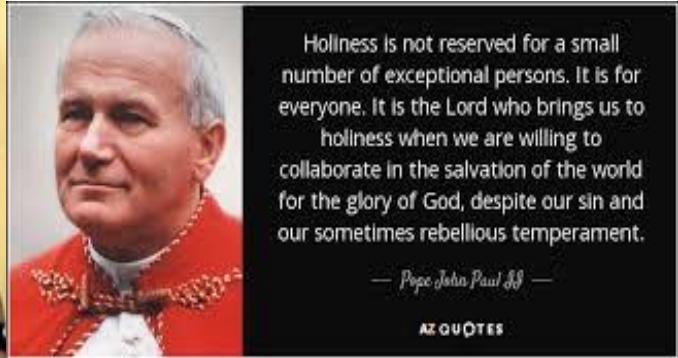
Holiness keeps you faithful to your deepest self, free from every form of enslavement, and bearing fruit for our world. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. But we need moments of solitude and silence before God, to face our true selves and let the Lord enter.



## **CHAPTER 2: TWO SUBTLE ENEMIES OF HOLINESS**

Gnosticism and Pelagianism, two “false forms of holiness” from early Church history, still lead us astray. These heresies propose “an anthropocentric immanentism disguised as Catholic truth” by exaggerating human perfection without grace.

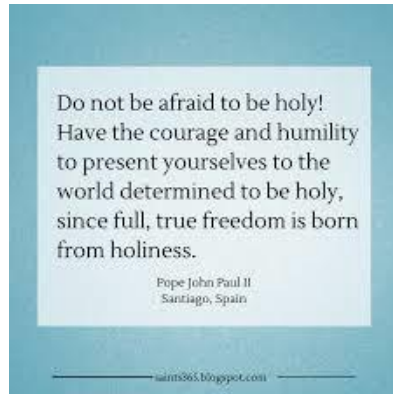
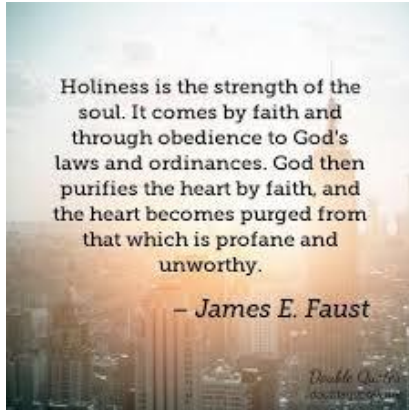
Gnostics fail to realize that our perfection is measured by the depth of our charity, not by information or knowledge. Separating intellect from the flesh, they reduce Jesus's teaching to a cold and harsh logic that seeks to dominate everything. But doctrine “is not a closed system, devoid of the dynamic capacity to pose questions, doubts, inquiries”. Christian experience is not a set of intellectual exercises; true Christian wisdom can never be separated from mercy towards our neighbour.



The same power that Gnosticism attributed to the intellect, Pelagianism attributed to the human will, to personal effort. Though modern Pelagians speak warmly of God's grace, they suggest that human will is something pure, perfect, all-powerful, to which grace is then added. They fail to realize that in this life human weaknesses are not healed completely and once for all by grace.

Grace builds on nature. It does not make us superhuman but takes hold of us and transforms us progressively. If we reject this historical and progressive reality, we can actually refuse and block the grace of the Lord. His friendship infinitely transcends us: we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative. Only this permits us to cooperate by our own efforts in our progressive transformation.

When they overvalue human will and their own abilities, some Christians can tend towards obsession with the law; an absorption with social and political advantages; punctilious concern for the Church's liturgy, doctrine and prestige; vanity about the ability to manage practical matters; and an excessive concern with programmes of self-help and personal fulfilment as well as certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The life of the Church can become a museum piece or the possession of a select few. This deprives the Gospel of its simplicity, allure and savour, and reduces it to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace.

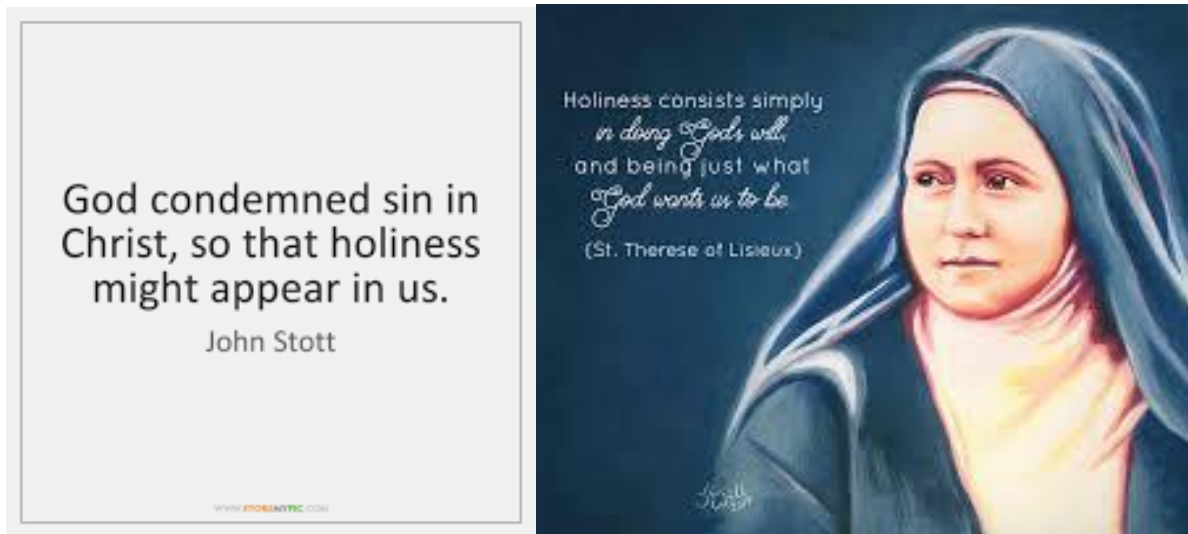


### **CHAPTER 3: IN THE LIGHT OF THE MASTER**

The Beatitudes are Jesus's portrayal of what it means to be holy in our daily lives. Here "happy" and "blessed" become synonymous with "holy". We gain true happiness by faithful practice of the Beatitudes. We can only practice them if the Holy Spirit fills us with his power and frees us from our weakness, selfishness, complacency and pride.

Pope Francis describes each of the Beatitudes and their invitation, concluding each section

- "Being poor of heart: that is holiness."
- "Reacting with meekness and humility: that is holiness."
- "Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness."
- "Hungering and thirsting for righteousness: that is holiness."
- "Seeing and acting with mercy: that is holiness."
- "Keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes love: that is holiness."
- "Sowing peace all around us: that is holiness."
- "Accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems: that is holiness."



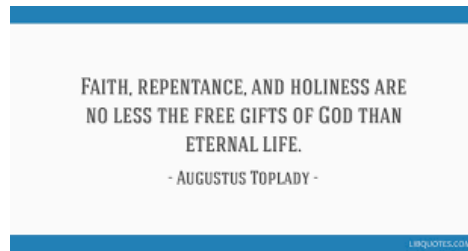
In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel (vv. 31-46), Jesus expands on the Beatitude about mercy. "If we seek the holiness pleasing to God's eyes, this text offers us one clear criterion on which we will be judged." When we recognize Christ in the poor and the suffering, we see into the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices. "Our Lord made it very clear that holiness cannot be understood or lived apart from these demands".

Misleading ideologies can lead us on the one hand to separate these Gospel demands from their personal relationship with the Lord, so that Christianity becomes a sort of NGO stripped of the luminous mysticism so evident in the lives of saints. On the other hand, there are those who dismiss the social engagement of others as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist; their own particular ethical preoccupation outweighs all others.

Our defence of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. But "equally sacred" are the lives of the poor, the destitute, the abandoned and underprivileged; the infirm and elderly



exposed to covert euthanasia; victims of human trafficking and new forms of slavery. Nor should the situation of migrants be a lesser issue compared to “grave” bioethical questions. For a Christian “the only proper attitude is to stand in the shoes of those brothers and sisters of ours who risk their lives to offer a future to their children.”



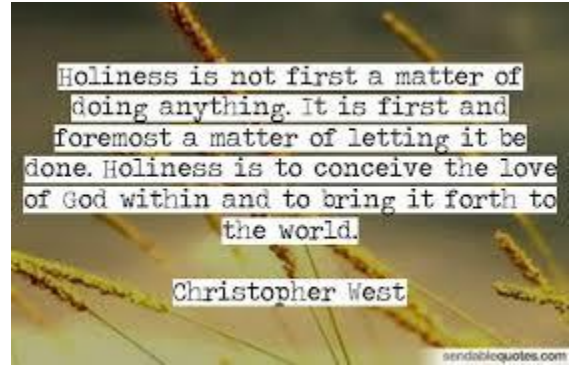
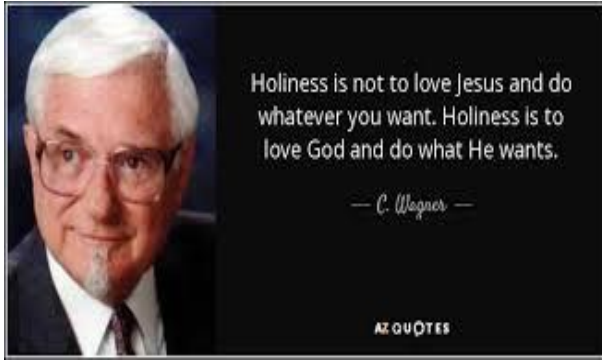
#### **CHAPTER 4: SIGNS OF HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD**

The Pope speaks next about “certain aspects of the call to holiness that I hope will prove especially meaningful”, in the form of “five great expressions of love for God and neighbour that I consider of particular importance in the light of certain dangers and limitations present in today’s culture.”

##### 1) *Perseverance, patience and meekness.*

This describes the inner strength, grounded in God, that makes it possible to give a witness of constancy in doing good. We need to recognize and combat our aggressive and selfish inclinations. Christians “can be caught up in networks of verbal violence through the internet and the various forums of digital communication.” Even in Catholic media, limits can be overstepped, defamation and slander can become commonplace. “It is striking that at times, in claiming to uphold the other commandments, they completely ignore the eighth, which forbids bearing false witness or lying, and ruthlessly vilify others.”

It is not good when we look down on others like heartless judges, lording it over them and always trying to teach them lessons. That is itself a subtle form of violence.



Being on the path to holiness means enduring “daily humiliations”, e.g. “those who keep silent to save their families, who prefer to praise others rather than boast about themselves, or who choose the less welcome tasks, at times even choosing to bear an injustice so as to offer it to the Lord.” To act in this way “presumes a heart set at peace by Christ, freed from the aggressiveness born of overweening egotism.”

## 2) *Joy and a sense of humour*

The saints are joyful and full of good humour. They radiate a positive and hopeful spirit, even in hard times. Ill humour is no sign of holiness. Sadness can be a sign of ingratitude for God’s gifts. Today’s individualistic and consumerist culture does not dispense real joy; consumerism only bloats the heart.

## 3) *Boldness and passion*

Holiness is also *parrhesía*: boldness, an impulse to evangelize and to leave a mark in this world. “Boldness and apostolic courage are an essential part of mission.” If we dare to go to the fringes, we will find Jesus already there, in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh, their troubles and their profound desolation.

More than bureaucrats and functionaries, the Church needs passionate missionaries, enthusiastic about sharing true life. The saints surprise us, they confound us, because by their lives they urge us to abandon a dull and dreary mediocrity. The Holy Spirit allows us to contemplate history in the light of the risen Jesus. In this way, the Church will not stand still, but constantly welcome the Lord’s surprises.



#### 4) *In community*

Growth in holiness is a journey of living and working in community with others. Sharing the word and celebrating the Eucharist together fosters fraternity and makes us a holy and missionary community. It also gives rise to authentic and shared mystical experiences.

Such experiences, however, are less frequent and important than small everyday things. Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to small details: wine running out at a party, a missing sheep, a widow's two small coins. Sometimes we are granted, amid these little details, consoling experiences of God.

#### 5) *In constant prayer*

Trust-filled prayer of any length is a response of a heart open to encountering God face to face, where the quiet voice of the Lord can be heard. In that silence, we can discern the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us. For each disciple, it is essential to spend time with the Master, to listen to his words, and to learn from him always.

God enters our history, and so our prayer is interwoven with memories. Think of your own history when you pray, and there you will find much mercy.



Every other spiritual gift will lose value if the spirit of holiness is not in place. (It's just a matter of time). Solomon had a unique gift of the spirit of wisdom but he lacked the spirit of holiness...and he crashed; Samson had the spirit of might but the spirit of holiness was not there ... and he crashed.

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Great holiness consists in carrying out the 'little duties' of each moment

Saint Josemaría Escrivá

kasanaluweerodiocese.com

Prayer of *supplicationis* an expression of a heart that trusts in God and realizes that it can do nothing of itself. Prayer of *petition* often calms our hearts and helps us persevere in hope. Prayer of *intercessionis* an act of trust in God and, at the same time, an expression of love for our neighbour.

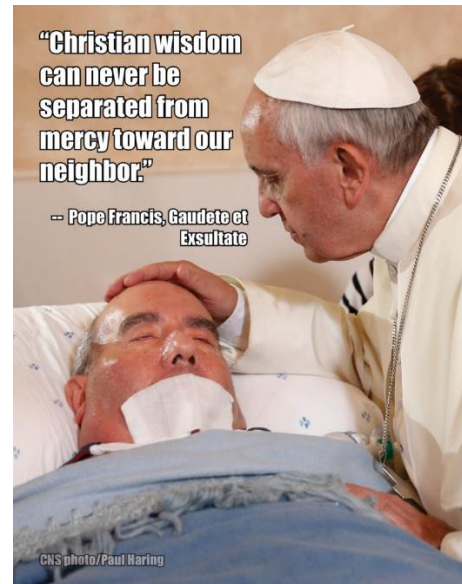
In the Eucharist, the written word attains its greatest efficacy, for there the living Word is truly present.

## **CHAPTER 5: SPIRITUAL COMBAT, VIGILANCE AND DISCERNMENT**

Evil is present from the very first pages of the Scriptures. We should not dismiss the devil as a myth, a figure of speech or an idea, lest we let down our guard and end up more vulnerable.

Our path towards holiness is a constant battle for which the Lord equips us with prayer, the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, etc.

The path of holiness is a source of peace and joy, given to us by the Spirit. How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit, not from the spirit of the world or the devil? By discernment, which differs from intelligence and common sense. The gift of discernment is all the more necessary today because contemporary life proclaims so many distractions as equally valid and good.



Discernment is a grace. It is not only for the more intelligent or better educated. It requires no special abilities, but it does require listening: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Listening frees us to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas, our usual ways of seeing things. We need to discern God's timetable, lest we disregard his invitation to grow. For this reason, I ask all Christians to examine their conscience daily in sincere dialogue with the Lord.

We need the silence of prolonged prayer to better perceive God's language, interpret the real meaning of the inspirations we believe we have received, calm our anxieties and see the whole of our existence afresh in God's own light.

Our attentive discernment entails obedience to the Gospel as the ultimate standard, but also to the Magisterium that guards it, as we seek in the treasury of the Church for whatever is most fruitful for the "today" of salvation; for rigidity has no place before the perennial "today" of the risen Lord.

God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us. He does not want to enter our lives to diminish them but to bring them to fulfilment. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God's greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort. In this way, we will share a happiness that the world will not be able to take from us. (Rome, 19 March 2018 (distributed on Mon 9 April, 2018))

**Here is a selection of quotations from “Gaudete et Exsultate” (“Rejoice and Be Glad”), Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation on holiness:**

— “I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile...Holiness is the most attractive face of the church.”

— “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, rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them.”

— “In times when women tended to be most ignored or overlooked, the Holy Spirit raised up saints whose attractiveness produced new spiritual vigor and important reforms in the church.”

— “We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case.”

— “We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves...This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures...Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy.”

— “Thanks be to God, throughout the history of the church it has always been clear that a person’s perfection is measured not by the information or knowledge they possess, but by the depth of their charity.”

— “Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23)...Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God’s perfection, which gives and forgives superabundantly.”

— “We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion...The saints are not odd and aloof, unbearable because of their vanity, negativity and bitterness. The Apostles of Christ were not like that...In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate.”

— “It is true that the primacy belongs to our relationship with God, but we cannot forget that the ultimate criterion on which our lives will be judged is what we have done for others...The saints do not waste energy complaining about the failings of others; they can hold their tongue before the faults of their brothers and sisters and avoid the verbal violence that demeans and mistreats others.”

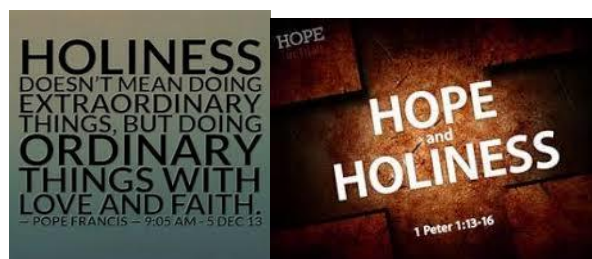
— “Christian joy is usually accompanied by a sense of humour...The saints surprise us, they confound us, because by their lives they urge us to abandon a dull and dreary mediocrity.”

— “A community that cherishes the little details of love, whose members care for one another and create an open and evangelizing environment, is a place where the risen Lord is present, sanctifying it in accordance with the Father’s plan.”

— “I do not believe in holiness without prayer, even though that prayer need not be lengthy or involve intense emotions...We should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech or an idea. This mistake would lead us to let down our guard, to grow careless and end up more vulnerable.”

— “The devil does not need to possess us. He poisons us with the venom of hatred, desolation, envy and vice. When we let down our guard, he takes advantage of it to destroy our lives, our families and our communities...Discernment is not about discovering what more we can get out of this life, but about recognizing how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism.”

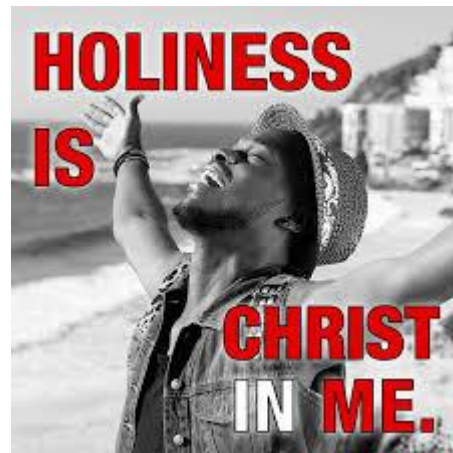
— “Let us ask the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us a fervent longing to be saints for God’s greater glory, and let us encourage one another in this effort.”  
<http://www.catholicvirginian.org/?p=7262>





At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord's death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him.... The contemplation of these mysteries, as Saint Ignatius of Loyola pointed out, leads us to incarnate them in our choices and attitudes" (Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate: "Rejoice and be glad, No. 20).

Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness. (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)



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