

- Introduction
 - Exhortation on “the call to holiness in today’s world.” Fifth major teaching document.
 - Encyclical Lumen Fidei (June 29, 2013)
 - Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (Nov 26, 2013)
 - Encyclical Laudato Si’ (May 24, 2015)
 - Exhortation Amoris Laetitia (March 19, 2016, released April 8, 2016)
 - Published on April 9, the Solemnity of the Annunciation this year.
 - Reminder of the why of the Incarnation. God with us. Holiness.
 - Reminder of the pattern of holiness in the BVM.
 - Signed on March 19, the fifth anniversary of his Pontificate
 - Meant to be the key of any pontificate.
 - This is where mercy is meant to lead.
 - This is what evangelization is all about.
 - This is what reform of the Church is meant to lead to.
 - This is what St. Joseph himself shows us.
 - Initial words
 - The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created.
 - He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence.
 - The call to holiness is present in various ways from the very first pages of the Bible. We see it expressed in the Lord’s words to Abraham: “Walk before me, and be blameless” (*Gen 17:1*).
 - What follows is not meant to be a treatise on holiness. ... My modest goal is to repropose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities. For the Lord has chosen each one of us “to be holy and blameless before him in love” (*Eph 1:4*).
 - It is my hope that these pages will prove helpful by enabling the whole Church to devote herself anew to promoting the desire for holiness. 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
- Background to the Theme of Holiness in the midst of the world
 - Lumen Gentium, Chapter 5 (The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church)
 - 39. Church is holy as Christ’s body and bride. “Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others. Evangelical counsels.
 - 40. "Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect". Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength and that they might love each other as Christ loves them. ... In the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received. Thus it

is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society. In order that the faithful may reach this perfection, they must use their strength accordingly as they have received it, as a gift from Christ. They must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves with all their being to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history.

- 41. The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God, and who obey the voice of the Father and worship God the Father in spirit and in truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in His glory. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity. Bishops. Priests. Deacons. Clerics. Married couples and their children. Those suffering. All Christ's faithful. "All Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will."
- 42. The first and most necessary gift is [divine] love, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of God. Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. ... It is charity which guides us to our final end. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ. Martyrs. Observance of the counsels, celibate chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Poverty. Obedience. Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive.

○ Blessed Paul VI on holiness

- Ecclesiam Suam, 1964
 - If we can only stir up this awareness of the Church in ourselves and foster it in the faithful by the noble and pastoral art of education, many of the apparent difficulties which are today exercising the minds of students of ecclesiology will in fact be overcome. I mean such difficulties as how the Church can be at once both visible and spiritual, free and yet subject to discipline, claiming to be communal in character and yet organized on a sacred, hierarchical basis, already holy and yet still striving for holiness, at once both contemplative and active, and so on. All these matters will become clear through our actually living the Church's life. This is the best illustration and confirmation of its teaching.
 - Our intense desire is to see the Church become what Christ intended it to be: one, holy, and entirely dedicated to the pursuit of that perfection to which Christ called it and for which He qualified it. In its pilgrimage through the world the Church must really strive to manifest that ideal of perfection envisaged for it by the divine Redeemer. Here, therefore, we have the greatest problem confronting the living Church. It is a problem which shows how powerful and effective the Church really is. It goads it into action, submits it to searching criticism and keeps it true to its purpose. It engenders in the Church prayer and compunction, repentance and hope, toil and confidence, the spirit of adventure and achievement. It is a problem which

arises from the very nature of the truths revealed by God and their special relevance to our lives as human beings. For without reference to Christ's teaching handed on by the Church, it is not possible for man to pass judgment on himself and his own nature, his former state of perfection and the ruinous consequences of original sin, his capacity for good and his need for help in desiring and achieving what is good, the importance and purpose of this present life, the good that he seeks or already possesses, how best to acquire perfection and holiness, and how to attain to the highest degree of perfection and completeness.

- Hence the Church must be gripped with an intense and unfailing desire to learn the ways of the Lord. It is Our dearest wish that all those valuable discussions concerning Christian perfection which have gone on for so many centuries in the Church, shall once again receive the importance they deserve and arouse the faithful, not indeed to formulate new rules of spirituality, but to generate new energies in striving after the holiness which Christ has taught us. His own words and example, his guidance and assistance, have made it possible for us to know about this holiness and to desire it and achieve it. This method of spirituality that is confirmed by the custom and tradition of the Church, established by the united action of its members, and exemplified in the outstanding lives of the Saints. We must love and serve the Church as it is, wisely seeking to understand its history and to discover with humility the will of God who guides and assists it, even when He permits human weakness to eclipse the splendor of its countenance and the holiness of its activity. It is precisely this holiness and splendor that we are endeavoring to discover and promote.
- 113. We address Ourselves finally to the sons of God's house, the one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church of which the Roman Church is "mother and head." How greatly we desire that this dialogue with Our own children may be conducted with the fullness of faith, with charity, and with dynamic holiness. May it be of frequent occurrence and on an intimate level. May it be open and responsive to all truth, every virtue, every spiritual value that goes to make up the heritage of Christian teaching. We want it to be sincere. We want it to be an inspiration to genuine holiness. We want it to show itself ready to listen to the variety of views which are expressed in the world today. We want it to be the sort of dialogue that will make Catholics virtuous, wise, unfettered, fair-minded and strong.
- Evangelii Nuntiandi (Dec 8, 1975)
 - We exhort the laity: Christian families, youth, adults, all those who exercise a trade or profession, leaders, without forgetting the poor who are often rich in faith and hope- all lay people who are conscious of their evangelizing role in the service of their Church or in the midst of society and the world. We say to all of them: our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and, as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in its turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist.
 - The world which, paradoxically, despite innumerable signs of the denial of God, is nevertheless searching for Him in unexpected ways and painfully experiencing the need of Him- the world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible. The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially towards the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self-sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man.

○ John Paul I

- Catecheses on Pope John XXIII's "Seven Lamps of Sanctification," seven virtues (theological and cardinal).

- St. John Paul II on holiness (NMI 30-41)
 - 30. First of all, I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to *holiness*. ... It is necessary therefore to rediscover the full practical significance of Chapter 5 of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, dedicated to the "universal call to holiness". The Council Fathers laid such stress on this point, not just to embellish ecclesiology with a kind of spiritual veneer, but to make the call to holiness an intrinsic and essential aspect of their teaching on the Church. ... To profess the Church as holy means to point to her as *the Bride of Christ*, for whom he gave himself precisely in order to make her holy (cf. *Eph* 5:25-26). This as it were objective gift of holiness is offered to all the baptized. But the gift in turn becomes a task, which must shape the whole of Christian life: "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Th 4:3). It is a duty which concerns not only certain Christians: "All the Christian faithful, of whatever state or rank, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity"
 - 31. At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning in which we are involved at the start of the new millennium. Can holiness ever be "planned"? What might the word "holiness" mean in the context of a pastoral plan? In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity. To ask catechumens: "Do you wish to receive Baptism?" means at the same time to ask them: "Do you wish to become holy?" It means to set before them the radical nature of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few "uncommon heroes" of holiness. The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each individual. I thank the Lord that in these years he has enabled me to beatify and canonize a large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*: the whole life of the Christian community and of Christian families must lead in this direction. It is also clear however that the paths to holiness are personal and call for a genuine "training in holiness", adapted to people's needs. This training must integrate the resources offered to everyone with both the traditional forms of individual and group assistance, as well as the more recent forms of support offered in associations and movements recognized by the Church.
- Pope Benedict XVI on holiness
 - April 13, 2011 Catechesis concluding two years of focus on saints
 - The whole of the Church's history is marked by these men and women who with their faith, with their charity, and with their life have been beacons for so many generations, as they are for us too. The saints expressed in various ways the powerful and transforming presence of the Risen One. They let Jesus so totally overwhelm their life that they could say with St Paul "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20).
 - At the end of this series of Catecheses, therefore, I would like to offer some thoughts on what holiness is. What does it mean to be holy? Who is called to be holy? We are often led to think that holiness is a goal reserved for a few elect. St Paul, instead, speaks of God's great plan and says: "even as he (God) chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph 1:4). And he was speaking about all of us.
 - In Christ the living God made himself close, visible, audible and tangible so that each one might draw from his fullness of grace and truth (cf. Jn 1:14-16). Therefore, the

whole of Christian life knows one supreme law, which St Paul expresses in a formula that recurs in all his holy writings: in Jesus Christ. Holiness, the fullness of Christian life, does not consist in carrying out extraordinary enterprises but in being united with Christ, in living his mysteries, in making our own his example, his thoughts, his behaviour. The measure of holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, in as much as with the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his. The Second Vatican Council, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, speaks with clarity of the universal call to holiness, saying that no one is excluded: “The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one — that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God’s Spirit and... follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, that they may deserve to be partakers of his glory” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 41).

- However, the question remains: how can we take the path to holiness, in order to respond to this call? Can I do this on my own initiative? The answer is clear. A holy life is not primarily the result of our efforts, of our actions, because it is God, the three times Holy (cf. Is 6:3) who sanctifies us, it is the Holy Spirit’s action that enlivens us from within, it is the very life of the Risen Christ that is communicated to us and that transforms us. To say so once again with the Second Vatican Council, “the followers of Christ, called by God not in virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold onto and perfect in their lives that sanctification which they have received” (*ibid.*, n. 40).
- Holiness, therefore, has its deepest root in the grace of baptism, in being grafted on to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, by which his Spirit is communicated to us, his very life as the Risen One. St Paul strongly emphasizes the transformation that baptismal grace brings about in man and he reaches the point of coining a new terminology, forged with the preposition “with”: *dead-with, buried-with, raised-with, brought to life-with*, with Christ; our destiny is indissolubly linked to his. “We were buried therefore with him by baptism” he writes, “into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). Yet God always respects our freedom and asks that we accept this gift and live the requirements it entails and he asks that we let ourselves be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit, conforming our will to the will of God.
- How can it happen that our manner of thinking and our actions become thinking and action with Christ and of Christ? What is the soul of holiness? Once again the Second Vatican Council explains; it tells us that Christian holiness is nothing other than charity lived to the full. “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him” (1 Jn 4:16). Now God has poured out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (cf. Rom 5:5); therefore the first and most necessary gift is charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbour through love of him. But if charity, like a good seed, is to grow and fructify in the soul, each of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will with deeds, with the help of his grace. He must frequently receive the sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist, and take part in the holy liturgy; he must constantly apply himself to prayer, self-denial, active brotherly service and the exercise all the virtues. This is because love, as the bond of perfection and fullness of the law (cf. Col 3:14; Rom 13:10) governs, gives meaning to, and perfects all the means of sanctification” (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 42).
- Perhaps this language of the Second Vatican Council is a little too solemn for us, perhaps we should say things even more simply. What is the essential means never leaving a Sunday without an encounter with the Risen Christ in the

Eucharist; this is not an additional burden but is light for the whole week. It means never beginning and never ending a day without at least a brief contact with God. And, on the path of our life it means following the “signposts” that God has communicated to us in the Ten Commandments, interpreted with Christ, which are merely the explanation of what love is in specific situations. It seems to me that this is the **true simplicity and greatness of a life of holiness**: the encounter with the Risen One on Sunday; contact with God at the beginning and at the end of the day; following, in decisions, the “signposts” that God has communicated to us, which are but forms of charity.

- “Hence the true disciple of Christ is marked by love both of God and of neighbour” (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 42). This is the true simplicity, greatness and depth of Christian life, of being holy. This is why St Augustine, in commenting on the fourth chapter of the First Letter of St John, could make a bold statement: “*Dilige et fac quod vis* [Love and do what you will]” And he continued: “If you keep silent, keep silent by love: if you speak, speak by love; if you correct, correct by love; if you pardon, pardon by love; let love be rooted in you, and from the root nothing but good can grow” (7,8 pl 35). Those who are guided by love, who live charity to the full, are guided by God, because God is love. Hence these important words apply: “*Dilige et fac quod vis*”, “Love and do what you will”.
- We might ask ourselves: can we, with our limitations, with our weaknesses, aim so high? During the Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to commemorate a host of saints, the ones, that is, who lived charity to the full, who knew how to love and follow Christ in their daily lives. They tell us that it is possible for everyone to take this road. In every epoch of the Church’s history, on every latitude of the world map, the saints belong to all the ages and to every state of life, they are actual faces of every people, language and nation. And they have very different characters. Actually I must say that also for my personal faith many saints, not all, are true stars in the firmament of history. And I would like to add that for me not only a few great saints whom I love and whom I know well are “signposts”, but precisely also the simple saints, that is, the good people I see in my life who will never be canonized. They are ordinary people, so to speak, without visible heroism but in their everyday goodness I see the truth of faith. This goodness, which they have developed in the faith of the Church, is for me the most reliable apology of Christianity and the sign of where the truth lies. In the Communion of Saints, canonized and not canonized, which the Church lives thanks to Christ in all her members, we enjoy their presence and their company and cultivate the firm hope that we shall be able to imitate their journey and share one day in the same blessed life, eternal life.
- Dear friends, how great and beautiful, as well as simple is the Christian vocation seen in this light! We are all called to holiness: it is the very measure of Christian living. Once again St Paul expresses it with great intensity when he writes: “grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.... His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:7, 11-13).
- I would like to ask all to open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we too, as small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine out in the fullness of its splendour. Let us not be afraid to aim high, for God’s heights; let us not be afraid that God will ask too much of us, but let ourselves be guided by his

Word in every daily action, even when we feel poor, inadequate, sinners. It will be he who transforms us in accordance with his love.

- September 17, 2010 to Catholic Students of England, Wales and Scotland at St. Mary's University College in London
 - There is something I very much want to say to you. I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness. Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be?
 - When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places. The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.
 - Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. You all know what it is like when you meet someone interesting and attractive, and you want to be that person's friend. You always hope they will find you interesting and attractive, and want to be your friend. God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints.
 - A good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school, over and above this, should help all its students to become saints.
- St. Francis de Sales
 - When God the Creator made all things, he commanded the plants to bring forth fruit each according to its own kind; he has likewise commanded Christians, who are the living plants of his Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each one in accord with his character, his station and his calling. I say that devotion must be practiced in different ways by the

nobleman and by the working man, by the servant and by the prince, by the widow, by the unmarried girl and by the married woman. But even this distinction is not sufficient; for the practice of devotion must be adapted to the strength, to the occupation and to the duties of each one in particular. Tell me, please, my Philothea, whether it is proper for a bishop to want to lead a solitary life like a Carthusian; or for married people to be no more concerned than a Capuchin about increasing their income; or for a working man to spend his whole day in church like a religious; or on the other hand for a religious to be constantly exposed like a bishop to all the events and circumstances that bear on the needs of our neighbor. Is not this sort of devotion ridiculous, unorganized and intolerable? Yet this absurd error occurs very frequently, but in no way does true devotion, my Philothea, destroy anything at all. On the contrary, it perfects and fulfills all things. In fact if it ever works against, or is inimical to, anyone's legitimate station and calling, then it is very definitely false devotion.

- The bee collects honey from flowers in such a way as to do the least damage or destruction to them, and he leaves them whole, undamaged and fresh, just as he found them. True devotion does still better. Not only does it not injure any sort of calling or occupation, it even embellishes and enhances it. Moreover, just as every sort of gem, cast in honey, becomes brighter and more sparkling, each according to its color, so each person becomes more acceptable and fitting in his own vocation when he sets his vocation in the context of devotion. Through devotion, your family cares become more peaceful, mutual love between husband and wife becomes more sincere, the service we owe to the prince becomes more faithful, and our work, no matter what it is, becomes more pleasant and agreeable.
- It is therefore an error and even a heresy to wish to exclude the exercise of devotion from military divisions, from the artisans' shops, from the courts of princes, from family households. I acknowledge, my dear Philothea, that the type of devotion which is purely contemplative, monastic and religious can certainly not be exercised in these sorts of stations and occupations, but besides this threefold type of devotion, there are many others fit for perfecting those who live in a secular state.
- Therefore, in whatever situations we happen to be, we can and we must aspire to the life of perfection.

○ St. Josemaria Escriva

- The saints were not abnormal beings: cases to be studied by a 'modernistic' doctor. They were — they are — normal: of flesh, like yours. And they won
- A secret, an open secret: these world crises are crises of saints. God wants a handful of men 'of his own' in every human activity.
- St. John Paul II: “With supernatural intuition, Blessed Josemaria preached untiringly the universal call to holiness and to apostolate. Christ calls everyone to be holy through all the circumstances and events of everyday life. Work becomes a means of personal holiness and apostolate when it is lived in union with Jesus Christ, the Son of God who, through his Incarnation, has in a certain way united himself with the whole reality of man and with the whole of creation (cf. *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 50). In a society where the unbridled craving for material things becomes man's sole object, causing him to draw away from God, the new Blessed reminds us that these same realities, God's creation and fruits of human industry, if used rightly for the glory of the Creator and in service of one's brothers and sisters, can be a way for men and women to meet Christ”. (Ceremony of the Beatification of Josemaria Escriva, May 17, 1992)

• Structure of the Exhortation

○ Five Chapters

- The Call to Holiness
 - The Saints who encourage and accompany us
 - The Saints “Next Door”
 - The Lord Calls

- For You Too
 - Your Mission in Christ
 - Activity that Sanctifies
 - More alive, more human
- Two Subtle Enemies of Holiness
 - Contemporary Gnosticism
 - An intellect without God and without flesh
 - A doctrine without mystery
 - Contemporary Pelagianism
 - A will lacking humility
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 - In fidelity to the Master
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 - The worship acceptable to God
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 - Perseverance, Patience and Meekness
 - Joy and a Sense of Humor
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 - In Community
 - In Constant Prayer
- Spiritual Combat, Vigilance, and Discernment
 - Combat and Vigilance
 - More than a myth
 - Alert and Trustful
 - Spiritual corruption
 - Discernment
 - An urgent need
 - Always in the light of the Lord
 - A supernatural gift
 - Speak, Lord
 - The logic of gift and the cross
- Mary
- The Call to Holiness
 - The Saints who encourage and accompany us
 - These witnesses may include our own mothers, grandmothers or other loved ones (cf. 2 *Tim* 1:5). Their lives may not always have been perfect, yet even amid their faults and failings they kept moving forward and proved pleasing to the Lord.
 - The saints now in God's presence preserve their bonds of love and communion with us. Intercession.
 - The processes of beatification and canonization recognize the signs of heroic virtue, the sacrifice of one's life in martyrdom, and certain cases where a life is constantly offered for others, even until death.
 - The Saints "Next Door"
 - The Holy Spirit bestows holiness in abundance among God's holy and faithful people

- 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. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness"
- Real history is made by so many of them. The most decisive turning points in world history are substantially co-determined by souls whom no history book ever mentions. ... The decisive turning points in our personal lives on the day when all that is hidden is revealed
- Holiness is the most attractive face of the Church.
- Holiness outside the Church
- The Lord Calls
 - I would like to insist primarily on the call to holiness that the Lord addresses to each of us, the call that he also addresses, personally, to you: "Be holy, for I am holy"
 - "Each in his or her own way" the Council says. 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.
 - I would stress too that the "genius of woman" is seen in feminine styles of holiness, which are an essential means of reflecting God's holiness in this world.
- For You Too
 - 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.
 - Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.
 - Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life
 - This holiness to which the Lord calls you will grow through small gestures. Not gossiping. Listening with patience and love to children. Praying the Rosary. Being kind to the poor on the street.
 - At times, life presents great challenges. Through them, the Lord calls us anew to a conversion that can make his grace more evident in our lives, "in order that we may share his holiness" (*Heb* 12:10).
 - Led by God's grace, we shape by many small gestures the holiness God has willed for us.
 - Just to try to love as Christ loved us shows that Christ shares his own risen life with us. In this way, our lives demonstrate his power at work – even in the midst of human weakness"
- Your Mission in Christ
 - A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness, for "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (*1 Thess* 4:3).
 - 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. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him.

- 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. But it can also entail reproducing in our own lives various aspects of Jesus' earthly life: his hidden life, his life in community, his closeness to the outcast, his poverty and other ways in which he showed his self-sacrificing love.
- Every saint is a message that the Holy Spirit takes from the riches of Jesus Christ and gives to his people.
- Not everything a saint says is completely faithful to the Gospel; not everything he or she does is authentic or perfect. What we need to contemplate is the totality of their life, their entire journey of growth in holiness, the reflection of Jesus Christ that emerges when we grasp their overall meaning as a person
- 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. 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.
- Activity that Sanctifies
 - Just as you cannot understand Christ apart from the kingdom he came to bring, so too your personal mission is inseparable from the building of that kingdom: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (*Mt 6:33*). Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. Christ himself wants to experience this with you, in all the efforts and sacrifices that it entails, but also in all the joy and enrichment it brings. You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavour.
 - Everything can be accepted and integrated into our life in this world, and become a part of our path to holiness. We are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action, and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission.
 - Anything done out of anxiety, pride or the need to impress others will not lead to holiness.
 - The presence of constantly new gadgets, the excitement of travel and an endless array of consumer goods at times leave no room for God's voice to be heard. We are overwhelmed by words, by superficial pleasures and by an increasing din, filled not by joy but rather by the discontent of those whose lives have lost meaning. How can we fail to realize the need to stop this rat race and to recover the personal space needed to carry on a heartfelt dialogue with God?
 - The same distractions that are omnipresent in today's world also make us tend to absolutize our free time, so that we can give ourselves over completely to the devices that provide us with entertainment or ephemeral pleasure. As a result, we come to resent our mission, our commitment grows slack, and our generous and ready spirit of service begins to flag.
 - We need a spirit of holiness capable of filling both our solitude and our service, our personal life and our evangelizing efforts, so that every moment can be an expression of self-sacrificing love in the Lord's eyes. In this way, every minute of our lives can be a step along the path to growth in holiness.
- More alive, more human
 - 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 the extent that each Christian grows in holiness, he or she will bear greater fruit for our world.
- 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. For in the words of León Bloy, when all is said and done, "the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint".
- Two Subtle Enemies of Holiness — "two false forms of holiness that can lead us astray" that "continue to plague us," "deceptive ideas that reflect an anthropocentric immanentism disguised as Catholic truth."
 - Contemporary Gnosticism
 - An intellect without God and without flesh
 - Gnosticism presumes "a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings".
 - A person's perfection is measured not by the information or knowledge they possess, but by the depth of their charity.
 - "Gnostics" ... judge others based on their ability to understand the complexity of certain doctrines. They think of the intellect as separate from the flesh, and thus become incapable of touching Christ's suffering flesh in others, locked up as they are in an encyclopaedia of abstractions
 - It can be present within the Church, both among the laity in parishes and teachers of philosophy and theology in centres of formation. Gnostics think that their explanations can make the entirety of the faith and the Gospel perfectly comprehensible.
 - A doctrine without mystery
 - While unduly exalting knowledge or a specific experience, it considers its own vision of reality to be perfect.
 - It can become all the more illusory when it masks itself as a disembodied spirituality.
 - They may well be false prophets, who use religion for their own purposes, to promote their own psychological or intellectual theories.
 - If we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit rather than our own preconceptions, we can and must try to find the Lord in every human life. This is part of the mystery that a gnostic mentality cannot accept, since it is beyond its control
 - The limits of reason
 - We cannot claim that our way of understanding this truth authorizes us to exercise a strict supervision over others' lives
 - It is true that "for those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion".
 - Doctrine, or better, our understanding and expression of it, "is not a closed system, devoid of the dynamic capacity to pose questions, doubts, inquiries
 - A dangerous confusion can arise. We can think that because we know something, or are able to explain it in certain terms, we are already saints, perfect and better than the "ignorant masses".
 - Saint Bonaventure, on the other hand, pointed out that true Christian wisdom can never be separated from mercy towards our neighbor.
 - As time passed, many came to realize that it is not knowledge that betters us or makes us saints, but the kind of life we lead.

- Contemporary Pelagianism
 - A will lacking humility
 - The same power that the gnostics attributed to the intellect, others now began to attribute to the human will, to personal effort. This was the case with the pelagians and semi-pelagians. Now it was not intelligence that took the place of mystery and grace, but our human will.
 - Those who yield to this pelagian or semi-pelagian mindset, even though they speak warmly of God's grace, "ultimately trust only in their own powers."
 - When some of them tell the weak that all things can be accomplished with God's grace, deep down they tend to give the idea that all things are possible by the human will, as if it were something pure, perfect, all-powerful, to which grace is then added. They fail to realize that "not everyone can do everything, and that in this life human weaknesses are not healed completely and once for all by grace, for no room is left for bringing about the potential good that is part of a sincere and genuine journey of growth. Grace, precisely because it builds on nature, does not make us superhuman all at once. That kind of thinking would show too much confidence in our own abilities.
 - The lack of a heartfelt and prayerful acknowledgment of our limitations prevents grace from working more effectively within us,
 - An often overlooked Church teaching
 - 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. The Second Synod of Orange taught with firm authority that nothing human can demand, merit or buy the gift of divine grace, and that all cooperation with it is a prior gift of that same grace. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also reminds us that the gift of grace "surpasses the power of human intellect and will."
 - Like the supreme commandment of love, this truth should affect the way we live, for it flows from the heart of the Gospel and demands that we not only accept it intellectually but also make it a source of contagious joy.
 - Only on the basis of God's gift, freely accepted and humbly received, can we cooperate by our own efforts in our progressive transformation. We must first belong to God, offering ourselves to him who was there first, and entrusting to him our abilities, our efforts, our struggle against evil and our creativity, so that his free gift may grow and develop within us
- New pelagians
 - Some Christians insist on taking another path, that of justification by their own efforts, the worship of the human will and their own abilities. The result is a self-centred and elitist complacency, bereft of true love.
 - Some groups of Christians give excessive importance to certain rules, customs or ways of acting. The Gospel then tends to be reduced and constricted, deprived of its simplicity, allure and savour. This may well be a subtle form of pelagianism, for it appears to subject the life of grace to certain human structures. It can affect groups, movements and communities, and it explains why so often they begin with an intense life in the Spirit, only to end up fossilized... or corrupt.
 - Once we believe that everything depends on human effort as channeled by ecclesial rules and structures, we unconsciously complicate the Gospel and become enslaved to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace.
- The summation of the law

- There is a hierarchy of virtues that bids us seek what is essential. The primacy belongs to the theological virtues, which have God as their object and motive. At the centre is charity.
- In other words, amid the thicket of precepts and prescriptions, Jesus clears a way to seeing two faces, that of the Father and that of our brother. He does not give us two more formulas or two more commands. He gives us two faces, or better yet, one alone: the face of God reflected in so many other faces.
- May the Lord set the Church free from these new forms of gnosticism and pelagianism that weigh her down and block her progress along the path to holiness! These aberrations take various shapes, according to the temperament and character of each person. So I encourage everyone to reflect and discern before God whether they may be present in their lives.
- In the Light of the Master —
 - Going against the flow
 - The Beatitudes
 - Nothing is more enlightening than turning to Jesus' words and seeing his way of teaching the truth.
 - Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes
 - The Beatitudes are like a Christian's identity card.
 - In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives.
 - Although Jesus' words may strike us as poetic, they clearly run counter to the way things are usually done in our world. Even if we find Jesus' message attractive, the world pushes us towards another way of living.
 - They demand a real change in the way we live. Otherwise, holiness will remain no more than an empty word.
 - Being poor of heart: that is holiness.
 - Usually the rich feel secure in their wealth, and think that, if that wealth is threatened, the whole meaning of their earthly life can collapse.
 - Indeed, once we think we are rich, we can become so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God's word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. In this way, we miss out on the greatest treasure of all.
 - This spiritual poverty is closely linked to what Saint Ignatius of Loyola calls "holy indifference", which brings us to a radiant interior freedom
 - Luke does not speak of poverty "of spirit" but simply of those who are "poor" (cf. *Lk* 6:20). In this way, he too invites us to live a plain and austere life, like Jesus, who, though rich, made himself poor.
 - Reacting with meekness and humility: that is holiness
 - Ultimately, it is the reign of pride and vanity, where each person thinks he or she has the right to dominate others.
 - Christ says: "Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls"
 - Paul speaks of meekness as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:23). Even when we defend our faith and convictions, we are to do so "with meekness" (cf. *1 Pet* 3:16). Our enemies too are to be treated "with meekness" (*2 Tim* 2:25).
 - In the Church we have often erred by not embracing this demand of God's word.

- Meekness is yet another expression of the interior poverty of those who put their trust in God alone. The meek “shall inherit the earth”, for they will see God’s promises accomplished in their lives. In every situation, the meek put their hope in the Lord, and those who hope for him shall possess the land... and enjoy the fullness of peace
- Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness
 - The world tells us exactly the opposite: entertainment, pleasure, diversion and escape make for the good life. The worldly person ignores problems of sickness or sorrow in the family or all around him; he averts his gaze. The world has no desire to mourn; it would rather disregard painful situations, cover them up or hide them. Much energy is expended on fleeing from situations of suffering in the belief that reality can be concealed. But the cross can never be absent.
 - A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness.
 - He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief.
- Hungering and thirsting for righteousness: that is holiness
 - Starving for justice.
 - Jesus offers a justice other than that of the world, so often marred by petty interests and manipulated in various ways.
 - Some give up fighting for real justice and opt to follow in the train of the winners.
 - . True justice comes about in people’s lives when they themselves are just in their decisions; it is expressed in their pursuit of justice for the poor and the weak. While it is true that the word “justice” can be a synonym for faithfulness to God’s will in every aspect of our life, if we give the word too general a meaning, we forget that it is shown especially in justice towards those who are most vulnerable
- Seeing and acting with mercy: that is holiness
 - Mercy has two aspects. It involves giving, helping and serving others, but it also includes forgiveness and understanding.
 - Giving and forgiving means reproducing in our lives some small measure of God’s perfection, which gives and forgives superabundantly.
 - “The measure you give will be the measure you get back” (6:38). The yardstick we use for understanding and forgiving others will measure the forgiveness we receive.
 - We need to think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven. All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion. “Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?”
- Keeping a heart free of all that tarnishes love: that is holiness.
 - This Beatitude speaks of those whose hearts are simple, pure and undefiled, for a heart capable of love admits nothing that might harm, weaken or endanger that love. The Bible uses the heart to describe our real intentions, the things we truly seek and desire, apart from all appearances.
 - Guard your heart with all vigilance”
 - The Lord expects a commitment to our brothers and sisters that comes from the heart. From the heart’s intentions come the desires and the deepest decisions that determine our actions.

- A heart that loves God and neighbour (cf. *Mt* 22:36-40), genuinely and not merely in words, is a pure heart; it can see God.
- Sowing peace all around us: that is holiness.
 - This Beatitude makes us think of the many endless situations of war in our world. Yet we ourselves are often a cause of conflict or at least of misunderstanding.
 - Peacemakers truly “make” peace; they build peace and friendship in society.
 - He told his disciples that, wherever they went, they were to say: “Peace to this house!” (*Lk* 10:5).
 - It is not easy to “make” this evangelical peace, which excludes no one but embraces even those who are a bit odd, troublesome or difficult, demanding, different, beaten down by life or simply uninterested.
 - Nor can it attempt to ignore or disregard conflict; instead, it must “face conflict head on, resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process.”
 - We need to be artisans of peace, for building peace is a craft that demands serenity, creativity, sensitivity and skill.
- Accepting daily the path of the Gospel, even though it may cause us problems: that is holiness
 - Jesus himself warns us that the path he proposes goes against the flow, even making us challenge society by the way we live and, as a result, becoming a nuisance. He reminds us how many people have been, and still are, persecuted simply because they struggle for justice, because they take seriously their commitment to God and to others.
 - “Whoever would save his life will lose it”
 - In living the Gospel, we cannot expect that everything will be easy, for the thirst for power and worldly interests often stands in our way.
 - When the New Testament tells us that we will have to endure suffering for the Gospel’s sake, it speaks precisely of persecution
 - Here we are speaking about inevitable persecution, not the kind of persecution we might bring upon ourselves by our mistreatment of others.
 - . Persecutions are not a reality of the past, for today too we experience them, whether by the shedding of blood, as is the case with so many contemporary martyrs, or by more subtle means, by slander and lies.
- The Great Criterion — *Mt* 25. If we seek the holiness pleasing to God’s eyes, this text offers us one clear criterion on which we will be judged.
 - In fidelity to the Master
 - Holiness is not about swooning in mystic rapture. It is a call to recognize Jesus in the poor.
 - Given these uncompromising demands of Jesus, it is my duty to ask Christians to acknowledge and accept them in a spirit of genuine openness, *sine glossa*. In other words, without any “ifs or buts” that could lessen their force. Our Lord made it very clear that holiness cannot be understood or lived apart from these demands, for mercy is “the beating heart of the Gospel”
 - If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity, and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian! Can holiness somehow be understood apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being?

- For Christians, this involves a constant and healthy unease.
- Ideologies striking at the heart of the Gospel
 - Ideologies lead us at times to two harmful errors.
 - Christians who separate these Gospel demands from their personal relationship with the Lord, from their interior union with him, from openness to his grace.
 - Those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist. Or they relativize it, as if there are other more important matters, or the only thing that counts is one particular ethical issue or cause that they themselves defend. ... We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.
- The worship acceptable to God
 - We may think that we give glory to God only by our worship and prayer, or simply by following certain ethical norms. 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.
 - Prayer is most precious, for it nourishes a daily commitment to love. Our worship becomes pleasing to God when we devote ourselves to living generously, and allow God's gift, granted in prayer, to be shown in our concern for our brothers and sisters.
 - Similarly, the best way to discern if our prayer is authentic is to judge to what extent our life is being transformed in the light of mercy.
 - Mercy does not exclude justice and truth
 - We will find it hard to feel and show any real concern for those in need, unless we are able to cultivate a certain simplicity of life, resisting the feverish demands of a consumer society, which leave us impoverished and unsatisfied, anxious to have it all now.
 - Christianity is meant above all to be put into practice. It can also be an object of study and reflection, but only to help us better live the Gospel in our daily lives.
- Signs of Holiness in Today's World — "signs or spiritual attitudes that... are necessary if we are to understand the way of life to which the Lord calls us" beyond "the means of sanctification already known to us: the various methods of prayer, the inestimable sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, the offering of personal sacrifices, different forms of devotion, spiritual direction, and many others as well."
 - Perseverance, Patience and Meekness
 - Solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us. This source of inner strength enables us to persevere amid life's ups and downs, but also to endure hostility, betrayal and failings on the part of others.
 - "If God is for us, who is against us?" (*Rom* 8:31): this is the source of the peace found in the saints.
 - Such inner strength makes it possible for us, in our fast-paced, noisy and aggressive world, to give a witness of holiness through patience and constancy in doing good. It is a sign of the fidelity born of love, for those who put their faith in God (*pístis*) can also be faithful to others (*pistós*). They do not desert others in bad times; they accompany them in their anxiety and distress, even though doing so may not bring immediate satisfaction.
 - Inner strength, as the work of grace, prevents us from becoming carried away by the violence that is so much a part of life today, because grace defuses vanity and makes possible

meekness of heart. 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. Saints hesitate to treat others harshly; they consider others better than themselves

- Humility can only take root in the heart through humiliations. Without them, there is no humility or holiness. If you are unable to suffer and offer up a few humiliations, you are not humble and you are not on the path to holiness. The holiness that God bestows on his Church comes through the humiliation of his Son. He is the way. Humiliation makes you resemble Jesus; it is an unavoidable aspect of the imitation of Christ. Here I am not speaking only about stark situations of martyrdom, but about the daily humiliations of 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. I am not saying that such humiliation is pleasant, for that would be masochism, but that it is a way of imitating Jesus and growing in union with him. This is incomprehensible on a purely natural level, and the world mocks any such notion. Instead, it is a grace to be sought in prayer. To act in this way presumes a heart set at peace by Christ, freed from the aggressiveness born of overweening egotism.
- Joy and a Sense of Humor
 - 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).
 - Jesus himself “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit”
 - “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (*Jn* 15:11).
 - Hard times may come, when the cross casts its shadow, yet nothing can destroy the supernatural joy
 - 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. Sadness can be a sign of ingratitude. We can get so caught up in ourselves that we are unable to recognize God’s gifts
 - 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.
 - Fraternal love increases our capacity for joy, since it makes us capable of rejoicing in the good of others
- Boldness and Passion
 - Holiness is also *parrhesia*: it is boldness, an impulse to evangelize and to leave a mark in this world. To allow us to do this, Jesus himself comes and tells us once more, serenely yet firmly: “Do not be afraid” (*Mk* 6:50). “I am with you always, to the end of the world” (*Mt* 28:20).
 - These words enable us to go forth and serve with the same courage that the Holy Spirit stirred up in the Apostles, impelling them to proclaim Jesus Christ. Boldness, enthusiasm, the freedom to speak out, apostolic fervour, all these are included in the word *parrhesia*. The
 - Paul VI spoke of a lack of *parrhesia* that comes from within. 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.
 - Jesus was not hesitant, timid or self-conscious, as often happens with us. Quite the opposite. His compassion made him go out actively to preach and to send others on a mission of healing and liberation. God 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. God is not afraid! He is fearless! He is always greater than our plans and schemes.

- *Parrhesía* is a seal of the Spirit; it testifies to the authenticity of our preaching
- 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.
- We are inspired to act by the example of all those priests, religious, and laity who devote themselves to proclamation and to serving others with great fidelity, often at the risk of their lives and certainly at the cost of their comfort. Their testimony reminds us that, 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.
- Let us ask the Lord for the grace not to hesitate when the Spirit calls us to take a step forward. Let us ask for the apostolic courage to share the Gospel with others and to stop trying to make our Christian life a museum of memories. In every situation, may the Holy Spirit cause 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
- In Community
 - Growth in holiness is a journey in community, side by side with others. We see this in some holy communities
 - The common life, whether in the family, the parish, the religious community or any other, is made up of small everyday things. This was true of the holy community formed by Jesus, Mary and Joseph, which reflected in an exemplary way the beauty of the Trinitarian communion. It was also true of the life that Jesus shared with his disciples and with ordinary people
 - 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.
 - Contrary to the growing consumerist individualism that tends to isolate us in a quest for well-being apart from others, our path to holiness can only make us identify all the more with Jesus' prayer “that all may be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you” (*Jn 17:21*).
- In Constant Prayer
 - Holiness consists in a habitual openness to the transcendent, expressed in prayer and adoration. The saints are distinguished by a spirit of prayer and a need for communion with God.
 - For one to pray always, some moments spent alone with God are also necessary. In that silence, we can discern, in the light of the Spirit, the paths of holiness to which the Lord is calling us. Otherwise, any decisions we make may only be window-dressing that, rather than exalting the Gospel in our lives, will mask or submerge it.
 - For each disciple, it is essential to spend time with the Master, to listen to his words, and to learn from him always. Unless we listen, all our words will be nothing but useless chatter.
 - 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? 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.

- Prayerful silence is not a form of escape and rejection of the world around us.
- Nor does history vanish. Prayer, because it is nourished by the gift of God present and at work in our lives, must always be marked by remembrance. The memory of God's works is central to the experience of the covenant between God and his people. God wished to enter history, and so our prayer is interwoven with memories.
- Prayer of supplication is an expression of a heart that trusts in God and realizes that of itself it can do nothing.
- Our prayer will be all the more pleasing to God and more effective for our growth in holiness if, through intercession, we attempt to practise the twofold commandment that Jesus left us.
- Meeting Jesus in the Scriptures leads us to the Eucharist, where the written word attains its greatest efficacy, for there the living Word is truly present. In the Eucharist, the one true God receives the greatest worship the world can give him, for it is Christ himself who is offered. When we receive him in Holy Communion, we renew our covenant with him and allow him to carry out ever more fully his work of transforming our lives.
- Spiritual Combat, Vigilance, and Discernment
 - Combat and Vigilance
 - More than a myth
 - The Christian life is a constant battle. We need strength and courage to withstand the temptations of the devil and to proclaim the Gospel.
 - We are not dealing merely with a battle against the world and a worldly mentality that would deceive us and leave us dull and mediocre, lacking in enthusiasm and joy. Nor can this battle be reduced to the struggle against our human weaknesses and proclivities (be they laziness, lust, envy, jealousy or any others). It is also a constant struggle against the devil, the prince of evil.
 - We will not admit the existence of the devil if we insist on regarding life by empirical standards alone, without a supernatural understanding. It is precisely the conviction that this malign power is present in our midst that enables us to understand how evil can at times have so much destructive force.
 - In leaving us the Our Father, Jesus wanted us to conclude by asking the Father to "deliver us from evil". That final word does not refer to evil in the abstract; a more exact translation would be "the evil one". It indicates a personal being who assails us. Jesus taught us to ask daily for deliverance from him, lest his power prevail over us.
 - Hence, 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.
 - Alert and Trustful
 - God's word invites us clearly to "stand against the wiles of the devil" (*Eph* 6:11) and to "quench all the flaming darts of the evil one" (*Eph* 6:16). These expressions are not melodramatic, precisely because our path towards holiness is a constant battle. Those who do not realize this will be prey to failure or mediocrity. If we become careless, the false promises of evil will easily seduce us.
 - For this spiritual combat, we can count on the powerful weapons that the Lord has given us: faith-filled prayer, meditation on the word of God, the celebration of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, sacramental Reconciliation, works of charity, community life, missionary outreach. Along this journey, the cultivation of all that is good, progress

in the spiritual life and growth in love are the best counterbalance to evil. Those who choose to remain neutral, who are satisfied with little, who renounce the ideal of giving themselves generously to the Lord, will never hold out.

- Spiritual corruption
 - The path of holiness ... demands that we keep “our lamps lit” (*Lk* 12:35) and be attentive. “Abstain from every form of evil”
 - Those who think they commit no grievous sins against God’s law can fall into a state of dull lethargy. Since they see nothing serious to reproach themselves with, they fail to realize that their spiritual life has gradually turned lukewarm. They end up weakened and corrupted.
 - Spiritual corruption is worse than the fall of a sinner, for it is a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Everything then appears acceptable: deception, slander, egotism and other subtle forms of self-centredness. So Solomon ended his days.
- Discernment
 - An urgent need
 - Discernment calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment.
 - The gift of discernment has become all the more necessary today, since contemporary life offers immense possibilities for action and distraction, and the world presents all of them as valid and good. Without the wisdom of discernment, we can easily become prey to every passing trend. It enables us to examine what is within us – our desires, anxieties, fears and questions – and what takes place all around us – “the signs of the times” – and thus to recognize the paths that lead to complete freedom.
 - Always in the light of the Lord
 - Discernment is necessary not only at extraordinary times, when we need to resolve grave problems and make crucial decisions. It is a means of spiritual combat for helping us to follow the Lord more faithfully. We need it at all times, to help us recognize God’s timetable, lest we fail to heed the promptings of his grace and disregard his invitation to grow.
 - I ask all Christians not to omit, in dialogue with the Lord, a sincere daily “examination of conscience”. Discernment also enables us to recognize the concrete means that the Lord provides in his mysterious and loving plan, to make us move beyond mere good intentions.
 - A supernatural gift
 - Spiritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them. Nor are the Church’s sound norms sufficient. We should always remember that discernment is a grace. Even though it includes reason and prudence, it goes beyond them, for it seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has for each of us, which takes shape amid so many varied situations and limitations.
 - 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.
 - Speak, Lord

- Prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas, our usual habits and ways of seeing things. In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life. It is not enough that everything be calm and peaceful. God may be offering us something more, but in our comfortable inadvertence, we do not recognize it.
- This attitude of listening entails obedience to the Gospel as the ultimate standard, but also to the Magisterium that guards it, as we seek to find in the treasury of the Church whatever is most fruitful for the “today” of salvation.
- It is not a matter of applying rules or repeating what was done in the past, since the same solutions are not valid in all circumstances and what was useful in one context may not prove so in another. The discernment of spirits liberates us from rigidity
- The logic of gift and the cross
 - An essential condition for progress in discernment is a growing understanding of God’s patience and his timetable, which are never our own.
 - 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. This entails a readiness to make sacrifices, even to sacrificing everything.
 - When, in God’s presence, we examine our life’s journey, no areas can be off limits. In all aspects of life we can continue to grow and offer something greater to God, even in those areas we find most difficult. We need, though, to ask the Holy Spirit to liberate us and to expel the fear that makes us ban him from certain parts of our lives. God asks everything of us, yet he also gives everything to us. He does not want to enter our lives to cripple or diminish them, but to bring them to fulfilment.
 - Discernment, then, is not a solipsistic self-analysis or a form of egotistical introspection, but an authentic process of leaving ourselves behind in order to approach the mystery of God, who helps us to carry out the mission to which he has called us, for the good of our brothers and sisters.
- Mary
 - I would like these reflections to be crowned by Mary, because she lived the Beatitudes of Jesus as none other. She is that woman who rejoiced in the presence of God, who treasured everything in her heart, and who let herself be pierced by the sword. Mary is the saint among the saints, blessed above all others. She teaches us the way of holiness and she walks ever at our side. She does not let us remain fallen and at times she takes us into her arms without judging us. Our converse with her consoles, frees and sanctifies us. Mary our Mother does not need a flood of words. She does not need us to tell her what is happening in our lives. All we need do is whisper, time and time again: “Hail Mary...”
- Controversies?
 - Some thought that the Holy Father was attacking those who take the liturgy seriously.
 - 57. Some Christians insist on taking another path, that of justification by their own efforts, the worship of the human will and their own abilities. The result is a self-centred and elitist complacency, bereft of true love. This finds expression in a variety of apparently unconnected ways of thinking and acting: an obsession with the law, an absorption with social and political advantages, a punctilious concern for the Church’s liturgy, doctrine and prestige, a vanity about the ability to manage practical matters, and an excessive concern with programs of self-help and personal fulfilment. Some Christians spend their time and energy on these things, rather than letting themselves be led by the Spirit in the way of love, rather than being passionate about communicating the beauty and the joy of the Gospel and seeking out the lost among the immense crowds that thirst for Christ

- The word translated “punctilious,” however, is “ostentation” in the liturgy. He was in fact criticizing show-offs, not those who are faithful.
 - Others thought the Holy Father was equating the fight against abortion with the fight against poverty and other ills.
 - 101. 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. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.
 - The Holy Father, however, wasn’t equating abortion with these other issues, but equating the sacred dignity of the unborn with the sacred dignity of those in other circumstances.
 - Others criticized him for equating the situation of migrants with grave bioethical issues.
 - 102. We often hear it said that, with respect to relativism and the flaws of our present world, the situation of migrants, for example, is a lesser issue. Some Catholics consider it a secondary issue compared to the “grave” bioethical questions. That a politician looking for votes might say such a thing is understandable, but not a Christian, for whom 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. Can we not realize that this is exactly what Jesus demands of us, when he tells us that in welcoming the stranger we welcome him (cf. *Mt 25:35*)? Saint Benedict did so readily, and though it might have “complicated” the life of his monks, he ordered that all guests who knocked at the monastery door be welcomed “like Christ”, with a gesture of veneration; the poor and pilgrims were to be met with “the greatest care and solicitude.” ... This is not a notion invented by some Pope, or a momentary fad.
 - The Holy Father was, in fact, making sure we know just how important the issue of defending the dignity of migrants is. There are many aspects of questions of migration that are opinable — quota numbers, the way to secure borders, the difference between regular and irregular pathways — but what every Catholic needs to believe is that Christ takes the way we treat migrants personally, and if we wouldn’t treat Christ that way, we shouldn’t treat migrants that way.

- Questions