

HEADLINES of *Evangelii Gaudium* – Revd Gareth Leyshon, August © 2014 released as [BY-SA-3.0](#)

In November 2013, Pope Francis published his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* – the Joy of the Gospel. **This** document offers some headlines giving a flavour of each section of the Pope's document, which are themselves summaries of [my precis of the text](#). In a [further document](#) I summarise *Evangelii Gaudium*, rearranging those headlines into a narrative about the key teachings of the document. The headlines have been chosen to emphasise what Pope Francis himself wished to emphasise, or highlight themes not so commonly aired in previous papal documents.

Intro: I - We are infinitely loved and are called to love others. Joy is our response to being loved; today's culture tempts us to pursue our own pleasure.

Intro: II - Our starting point is what God has done for us in Jesus; we find contemporary ways to express this, but never with a scowl.

Intro: III - We must reach out to those who worship, those merely baptised, and those who have never engaged with the Church, whether in pre-Christian or post-Christian cultures. Each local culture will have its own best practice.

## CHAPTER ONE

C1 - I: We are called to be communities of missionary disciples. We leave our comfort zones, seek the lost, take on the "smell of the sheep", celebrate small victories, tend the wheat and do not fret unduly about the weeds. Our joy is expressed through beauty of the liturgy.

C1 - II: Are our Church structures fit for mission? Dioceses and parishes must ensure they draw close to the people they are called to serve, especially those on the margins. Movements have their own charism but most work in tandem with their local parish. Leaders must listen attentively to the Church's critics and some decentralisation of structures will be helpful.

C1 - III: We must focus on sharing the BASIC Gospel message, but not as mere sound-bites. Core doctrine is God's love revealed in Christ; core aspect of moral teaching is God's mercy and the virtues. Within the hierarchy of truths, give most attention to what matters most, and relate peripheral points back to these core values!

C1 - IV: How is it humanly possible to spread the Gospel when faith is a spiritual gift? If technical precision or longstanding customs don't communicate the core message, avoid them. Accommodate weakness and gradual understanding in the confessional and in other encounters; communicate something good.

C1 - V: We must have open doors on our buildings, maximum access to the sacraments, little regard for our institutional security, but a priority to move out to the poor with an offer of friendship with Jesus, a proclamation of meaning and purpose in life, and the support of a community of faith.

## CHAPTER TWO

C2 - I - (a) Economics: an ethos is needed which prioritises justice for all, especially the poor.

C2 - I - (b) Culture: We must promote the value of stable relationships, within and apart from marriage, relationships within which genuine conversation and growth can occur. But we oppose macho or fatalistic cultures. Our own church culture must be neither unwelcoming nor bureaucratic, avoiding devotional traps which don't foster growth, but finding new ways to bring people together in urban settings.

C2 - II - All members of the Church are called to share in this mission. As a church we must develop: affirmation/training, optimism, mutual support. Act, don't opine. Bless others. Overcome painful historical divisions. Pray for those who annoy us. Train laity (including women and young people) for leadership and give them opportunities; theologians may need to distance eligibility for governance from Eucharistic presidency. BUT beware: inferiority complex, sterile spiritual exercises, self-centred motivations (including personal glory and prosperity gospel), joyless pragmatism, retreating into a closed circle; seeking adherence to outdated Catholic forms, campaigning for liturgical or doctrinal purity, self-realisation programmes, busy-ness, criticising others.

## CHAPTER THREE

C3 - I: Salvation comes through the Church. We must ensure we communicate the Gospel rather than its remote cultural trappings. All the baptised are called to act, without delay, as missionary disciples. Tools we can use include: popular devotions; active listening; deliberate inculturation; ensuring charisms are integrated into the life of the church community; dialogue with science; the presence of Catholic educational institutions, both for young people and in higher education.

C3 - II: The homily proclaims God's salvific deeds and the demands made upon us as people in covenant. Not a lecture on doctrine, morals or exegesis, it uses beautiful images to encourage good praxis; it offers an inculturated synthesis, not a detached idea. It reminds the listeners that they are already members of the Body of Christ, preparing for the Father's eternal embrace, and is a balanced part of a liturgical celebration, drawing participants into communion with Christ.

C3 - III: A homily is a concise invitation to positive action, rooted in a particular scripture. Ask God's help. Study the text: what did the original author intend, in message and effect? Do *lectio divina* - how is this passage challenging me? Consider what it says to issues which the congregation are facing. Use images, avoid jargon. How does it mediate God's love?

C3 - IV: All catechesis must re-emphasise the kerygma: "Jesus loves you, died for you, walks with you to enlighten, strengthen and free you." Today we need to develop these themes: God loved us of his own volition; we do not impose truth but appeal to freedom; a joyful and harmonious balance, not preaching philosophical stances. Make use of the arts. Moral catechesis should emphasise the virtuous life, so our rejection of evil can be better understood in the context of being called to be a good person. We must develop one-to-one accompaniment and encourage Bible study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

C4 - I: Because Jesus demonstrated the infinite dignity of human beings, Christians are compelled to work, locally, to make the world a better place. This requires transforming structures as well as helping individuals.

C4 - II: Pope Francis wants a church which IS poor, and is FOR the poor. The poor make incarnate the suffering Christ, and so evangelise the wider church. We must listen to them, speak for them, and place them at the heart of the church. Every Christian must act for the poor, not only by campaigning, but personally. Scripture makes it clear that our acts of mercy and almsgiving contribute to the way God will have mercy on us when we are judged. Our priorities are: less able children; trafficked workers; vulnerable women; the unborn child; the global ecosystem. Our lofty aim is education, healthcare, and employment for all. Structural change is also needed so global economic and political leaders prioritise the common good, not maximum profit. Society becomes 'alienated' when the way it organises itself, the way it produces and consumes goods, obstruct interpersonal communication. Society needs a better distribution of income, job creation, and promotion of the poor.

C4 - III: Peace has to be built by a daily decision to seek justice for all. This needs political engagement, including learning about other facets of local culture. Building a better society takes time (inimical to short-term political gain). Acknowledge conflict, resolve it, and make it a link in the chain of peace. Under Christ, all good things will be gathered together, a redeemed diversity. Be guided by incarnate realities, not unachievable theoretical ideals. Work locally while remaining aware of global issues. Human society is meant to be multifaceted, not uniform; the Gospel must extend to every facet.

C4 - IV: The Church enters dialogue. With States, about the common good and human dignity, asking for the avoidance of crude generalisations about religion, but the upholding of religious freedom which allows religious behaviour in public. With culture, respecting established scientific principles. With other Christians, towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness. With Jews, acknowledging their depth of reading the Hebrew Scriptures. With all religions, in pursuit of peace. With other religions, seeking the stirrings of the Spirit who provokes mutual love. With all people who seek truth, goodness, and beauty, in the Court of the Gentiles. Muslim immigrants must be welcomed by Christians and their religious rights respected; we ask for the same courtesy in return. We must avoid labelling the majority of Muslims by the actions of a violent fringe.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Only the Holy Spirit can impel us to heartfelt evangelisation; we call upon Him!

C5 - I: Let us avoid sterile prayer; let us beware of anything which hides us from social engagement. As true missionaries, let us remind ourselves of how Jesus enriches our life and take this message joyfully to others, answering the questions their hearts are asking. Let our motive be the Father's glory. We must enter into the lives of others, doing so humbly, gently and peaceably. Let us put our faith in God's help, even when fruitfulness seems unlikely. Let us pray for the help of the Holy Spirit; let our prayer include intercession and thanksgiving for those we serve.

C5 - II: Mary is mother of the Church, a praying presence and our intercessor. She is our model of triumphing through darkness and tiredness, as one who is a humble handmaid defeating powerful foes. Many cultures have recognised her as their own.