

Joy to the World

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation entitled *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”), Pope Francis writes: “The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. **Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor.** The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.”



It is not wrong to want to live better; what is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards ‘having’ rather than ‘being’, and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.

It is therefore necessary to create life-styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.

**-Blessed John Paul II
Centesimus annus**

*Encyclical written to mark the
100th anniversary of Rerum Novarum*

We feel powerless and distant in the face of the overwhelming suffering in the world and the poverty statistics in our own state, yet we think the newest smart phone will “empower” us.

The rush to BUY -BUY -BUY can turn the holy waiting of Advent into nothing more than the “holiday shopping season.” The celebration of the Incarnation of God-Made-Flesh is reduced to fist-fights over plasma televisions sold by clerks making poverty wages in Big Box stores. What could be less joyous?

We can do better than this, as individuals, as a society, as the Church. We do not have to be deadened, as Pope Francis wisely describes it, by self-centered, pointless acquisition, particularly at this time of year. The Holy Father reminds us that through Christ we are “set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness.” This should not only make us joyful, it should inspire us to create a world that includes everyone in that joy.

Advent gives us the opportunity to find and share the true joy of the Gospel. Here are a few suggestions inspired by the “Advent Conspiracy” movement on how to proceed: (See <http://www.adventconspiracy.org/>)

- 1) **Worship Fully**—See page 2 for one special prayer for this season; Check your church bulletin for other opportunities; Visit <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-resources/advent/index.cfm> for ideas for your family.
- 2) **Spend Less**—Buy one less gadget, fewer plastic gizmos, all those things your loved ones don’t need and won’t remember.
- 3) **Give more**— Give homemade gifts and gifts that encourage spending time together; See page 2 for ideas on spending money in ways that increase, not diminish, joy and justice in the world.
- 4) **Love All**—Donate the money you save to Catholic Charities or other efforts supporting poor and vulnerable people; Spend time with lonely, elderly and bereaved folks; Make that call to your Representative in support of immigration reform; Register for the March for Life bus to Washington DC; Sign a petition against sweatshops.... Find new ways to bring Christ’s joy to the world.



one human family, food for all ✱

Pray with Pope Francis and the Whole World

On **Tuesday, December 10**, join Pope Francis, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA and the network of Catholic international relief agencies called Caritas Internationalis in praying for an end to hunger.

At noon local time, a **global wave of prayer** will begin in Tonga, a small nation in the South Pacific, and will progress around the world until it reaches that same island some 24 hours and more than 164 countries later.

Please pray the prayer (see box to the right) at NOON on Tuesday December 10. Go to <http://crs.org/food-for-all/index.html> to learn more and to RSVP for the prayer wave.

“Truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others...”

Using Money for the Common Good

Use your spending power to build up the reign of God that Jesus came to establish. Don't buy products made in sweatshops that exploit workers and destroy their dignity and health. Don't increase the gap between rich and poor. Instead ...

***Support small, locally owned businesses and artisans**

They're your neighbors and they keep wealth local.

***Purchase from “union shops” which respect American workers' rights**

For example: <http://www.unionmadeclothing.com>
<http://ethixmerch.com/> and <http://www.theunionshop.org/about-us/>
 You'll be surprised how many items are still made in the USA!

***Buy Fair Trade items.** These are products made by workers in poor countries who receive a just wage under safe working conditions. They can be found at parishes' *Work of Human Hands* sales (in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services), Ten Thousand Villages stores, the web sites listed below, and many other places.

<http://www.crsfairtrade.org/crafts/> <http://www.enjoykarma.com/>
<http://www.fairindigo.com/> <http://www.haenow.com>

PRAYER to END HUNGER

O God, you entrusted to us the fruits of all creation so that we might care for the earth and be nourished with its bounty. You sent us your Son to share our very flesh and blood and to teach us your Law of Love. Through His death and resurrection, we have been formed into one human family. Jesus showed great concern for those who had no food – even transforming five loaves and two fish into a banquet that served five thousand and many more.

We come before you, O God, conscious of our faults and failures, but full of hope, to share food with all members in this global family.

Through your wisdom, inspire leaders of government and of business, as well as all the world's citizens, to find just, and charitable solutions to end hunger by assuring that all people enjoy the right to food. Thus we pray, O God, that when we present ourselves for Divine Judgment, we can proclaim ourselves as “One Human Family” with “Food for All”.

AMEN.

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