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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JONATHAN

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Last week I included several paragraphs of Pope Francis' most recent apostolic exhortation (a pastoral letter) to all Catholics and people of good will. It is called "Rejoice and be Glad" and is a treatise on God's call to each of us to be holy. This week I would like to include two more paragraphs for our continued meditation. Before doing so, I wish to share with you what two of our school children told me when I asked them what it means to be holy. The first told me that it means to be like the saints. The second told me it means to be best friends with God. Both of them were right. We can look to the saints (the canonized but those around us who live holy lives) as examples to follow, while at the same time we pursue holiness as unique individuals who are simply called to be best friends with God, each in our own way.

Here are two more paragraphs from "Rejoice and be Glad":

10.".....Yet with this Exhortation 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" (*Lev 11:44*; cf. *1 Pet 1:16*). The Second Vatican Council stated this clearly: "Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord – each in his or her own way – to that perfect holiness by which the Father himself is perfect".^[10]

11. "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. We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.^[11] Indeed, when the great mystic, Saint John of the Cross, wrote his *Spiritual Canticle*, he preferred to avoid hard and fast rules for all. He explained that his verses were composed so that everyone could benefit from them "in his or her own way".^[12] For God's life is communicated "to some in one way and to others in another".

Yes, we are all called to be holy as God himself is holy, and each in our own way, because he made us like no other!

God bless, Fr. Jonathan