

REFLECT

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Ursuline Sisters
Generalate
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A Call to Holiness

No longer do town criers announce big news with "Hear ye, hear ye!" Nowadays, myriad voices complicate what news to focus on. Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate/ Rejoice and Be Glad*, addressing the holiness and happiness of a Christian life, is big news.

How can we compare the joy of the Gospel and the superficial happiness of our world? Is joy focused on what we already have or what we want to acquire?

In April 2018 *Gaudete et Exsultate / Rejoice and Be Glad* brought a media blitz, but how tangible has its impact been on the world and Church and on us as Ursulines? "Impact" is harder to measure for anything beyond the headlines. What is parrhesía (spiritual boldness)? Is our boldness in proclaiming the Gospel different from our boldness elsewhere?

The image of the Beatitudes as "the identity card of Christians" in Chapter 3 could serve as a foundation for a study of holiness. Which one of the beatitude touches you the most? Which can you apply to your own life today? Which do you need to grow most in?

"Impact" is recognized in the actions and decisions of those who journey towards the Lord and discern his call daily. Is discernment only needed in grave times or in everyday situations? How can we practice it daily?

When I entered the convent as a postulant, I was intent on becoming a saint by imitating the "holy" novices and being faithful to each prescribed religious practice. I saw signs of holiness and tried hard to imitate each one, but six months later I still wasn't holy. "Why is it taking so long?" I asked Sr. Genevieve, our Postulant directress. She explained that the process was slow and required patience. I'm still trying.

Who are the people who might care about how the Holy Father speaks of holiness? I hope all in leadership, mentors of young sisters in formation programs and peace and justice groups as well as Sisters working at the UN will take the time to read this document and benefit from a serious study of it. God calls us all to holiness: this is the main message of *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

It is in the family that love of God and seeds of prayer are first planted. Forming children in holiness is essential. Homilies, seminars, youth ministries, and the media can ignite interest in *Gaudete et Exsultate* but it's up to us to bring the exhortation to life and to reach seekers ready for service and involvement.

Many today thirst for meditation and silence. I recall a moment of inner awareness that came to me as I entered the Cathedral in Lubumbashi, D. R. Congo. The silence inside contrasted strikingly with the street noise outside. People adoring the Blessed Sacrament seemed oblivious of all around them. I realized that prophetic witness stems from our solitude and inner silence. At Easter time it is good to stop and allow ourselves to be amazed by the Resurrection of Christ.

"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" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 174).

For personal study and reflection

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. (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 26).

How can we be prophetic witnesses to the reign of God, despite our shortcomings? 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. (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 31).

As we "step along the path to growth in holiness", do we realize we are called to be joyful witnesses?



Pope Francis urges us to be aware of the environment and some of the problems faced by humans. You are probably aware of his encyclical letter *Laudato si'*, (*On Care for Our Common Home*) written in 2015. The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) Campaign *Sowing Hope for the Planet* has initiated a Campaign based on a study of the encyclical letter. We Ursulines are joining the Campaign whose aim is to draw attention of sisters to take better care of creation and



to work against environmental degradation that threatens all of God's creation and to live the message of the encyclical letter.

The theme of the Campaign is "walking together." "In walking together, we follow the role of Jesus, who walked with friends on the roads around Jerusalem."

We are inviting each Sister in the Congregation to participate in the Campaign. Our hope is that each Sister will stay informed and make concrete changes in how she cares for our planet earth.

Each Province will receive a study guide based on our recent Ursuline texts and each community and individual is encouraged to read and take prayerful actions around environmental issues to demonstrate good stewardship of God's creation.

Members of the Congregation Leadership Team

Holy Week with Fr. John Lambertz

Father Henri Saintrain author of *Jean-Corneille Martin Lambertz*



describes the deep significance the Pascal Mystery had for the Curé during his life and as he neared his death. The following passages from his biography give us thoughts for reflection.

Every Sunday of Lent, Fr. Lambertz preached a sermon on the Passion. He did so with such smoothness and with such a

penetrating tone that the neighbouring parishes, for many kilometres around, streamed to him so that the church was full to capacity. He could not treat this touching subject without shedding tears; his emotion was quickly passed on to his listeners, who wept with him and never tired of hearing him, though he sometimes spoke no less than two hours. pg. 112

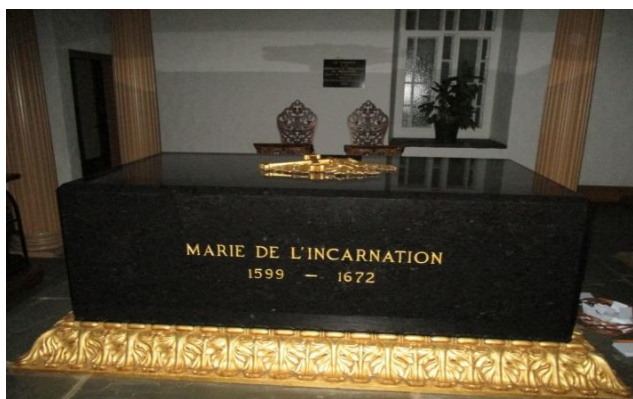
The most proper exercise for honouring the mystery of a suffering God is the Way of the Cross...The Tildonk church did not enjoy this advantage when Fr. Lambertz was first sent there; the nearest Way of the Cross was in a chapel about 8 km from his house. He did not hesitate to make this trip every Friday of the year, to satisfy his devotion to Jesus crucified and to gain indulgences. pg. 112

Now we will consider the great affection he bore for the Passion of the Redeemer. The mysteries of Holy Week held an indescribable attraction for him. Exhausted by age and infirmity, he had retired to the convent. During those days that were so dear to his piety, it almost required doing violence to him to get him to leave the chapel and restore his strength a little. Thus, in the year when he was to die, and less than two months before his death, after having attended all the solemnities of Holy Thursday, the courageous old man chose to remain in adoration in the sanctuary until well into the hours after dinner; like Mary Magdalene, he could not tear himself away from the Holy Sepulchre where lay his

beloved Saviour, immolated for humankind. And the Superior of the house had to beg him to leave, at least long enough to have something to eat. pg. 111

He loved to converse with the sisters about the Resurrection, in which, more than anywhere else, he said, Our Lord had revealed his tenderness towards his friends the disciples. The holy man noted the smallest details of the mystery and drew from them a host of reflections and practical applications. pg. 111

Saint Angela Merici's charism in St. Mary of the Incarnation



The Church celebrates the life and missionary zeal of St. Marie of the Incarnation on April 30.

Mary of the Incarnation inherited Saint Angela's charisms without being aware of it, perhaps, but she would live according to the plan God had for her, linked to Saint Angela's spirituality. When we compare Saint Angela's prayer and Blessed Mary of the Incarnation's we notice that the same spirit gave life to these two women. Then we can find great humility, a deference and admiration for the "great God" which

expresses itself in deep worship and a strong desire to work for the coming of God's kingdom.



Saint Angela introduced a new form of religious life into the world (the Ursuline Order) and Mary of the Incarnation, an Ursuline, became the first female religious missionary in America, a hundred years later. Some wonderful mystic graces follow in the way of these two "Brides" of God. Their sure confidence in God and their devotion to the kingdom of God follow similar paths. Mary of the Incarnation's work began in Québec and developed in many regions in Canada and in Japan, in the Philippines and in Peru.

As for their charisms, Saint Angela's sacred virginity and her desire for the development of God's kingdom, operate all over the world. This development is an answer to Mary of the Incarnation's apostolic prayer, which expresses itself in this way: "I travel round the world in spirit to look for the souls redeemed by the very Precious Blood of my divine Bridegroom".

Gabrielle Noel, o.s.u of the Canadian Union of Ursulines