

October 23: Joyful Evangelizers

Today's Gospel includes an interesting assertion; Jesus says: "Happy is that servant whom his master upon arrival finds him engaged in his mission" (Lk 12:43). Jesus is commending all missionaries who constantly engage in the task of evangelization; they are indeed blessed, happy, and fortunate. Jesus' words prompt us to recall that Pope Francis constantly affirms that missionary evangelization is to be a joyful undertaking; this theme echoes constantly through Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*). We listen to some of Francis' insights.

"The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.... With Christ joy is constantly born anew.... I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy" (1). "I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord'" (3). Francis invites us all to "enter into this stream of joy" (5).

The Pope employs several creative expressions that challenge us to be joyful evangelizers. "An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral" (10). "There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter" (6). Evangelizers are not to be "disillusioned pessimists, 'sourpusses'" (85). We must avoid a "tomb psychology ... [that can] transform Christians into mummies in a museum" (83). We do not accept the negativities of those who act like "prophets of doom" (84).

Pope Francis constantly encourages us: "Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization" (83)! Indeed, only *joyful evangelizers* are effective missionaries!