

# Gaudete et Exsultate!

(Gow-day-tay ett Egg-sul-tah-tay)

## Rejoice and be glad!



Remember – as a leader you do not need to do everything! Invite others to do things such as:

- Prepare and serve refreshments.
- Create a focal point for your session.
- Read the scripture or extract from the exhortation.
- Set up prayer stations.
- Choose background music.

### Introduction

Earlier this year, Pope Francis published an exhortation which opens with the words, “**REJOICE AND BE GLAD**” (Mt 5:12). He goes on to say that this is what ‘*Jesus tells those persecuted or humiliated for his sake,*’ and ‘*The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence.*’

Throughout history, God has called people to go beyond what is bland and mediocre. He sent prophets – who did find themselves persecuted and humiliated. In the fullness of time, God sent his Son to show humanity the way to eternal life. This is a cause for great joy and gladness – though many people in our world have yet to hear of it – and many of those who do, do not always bear witness to it!

During this Advent, we will look at some aspects of *Gaudete et Exsultate* and reflect on the joy of this Season and of Christmastime which is its fulfilment.

## Suggested Outline for an Evening of Reflection (1 ½ hours)

The timings are based on a 7pm start – adjust to your own group’s needs.

- 7pm Welcome  
Introduction – you might like to use the words above – or your own.  
Depending on the size of the group, you might like to invite people to introduce themselves.  
Opening Prayer  
Reflecting on the Second Reading for Third Sunday of Advent
- 7.30 From *Gaudete et Exsultate*  
7.50 Personal time  
8.10 Sharing the Joy!  
Closing Prayer  
8.30 Departures

## Opening Responses

- Reader We gather in the name of the Father:  
**All Who created his children for joy and delight in his presence.**
- Reader We gather in the name of the Son:  
**All Who promised a joy that the world could not take away.**
- Reader We gather in the name of the Holy Spirit  
**All Who bears the fruit of joy in the lives of all who are open to his gifts.**

## Scripture Reading

This is taken from the Second Reading for the Third Sunday of Advent – sometimes called Gaudete Sunday. We have used the New Revised Standard Version of the scripture – in Mass, you will hear the Jerusalem translation. Sometimes, using a different translation helps us to have new insights into something that can become overly familiar.

In the Letter to the Philippians, St Paul writes:  
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.  
Let your gentleness be known to everyone.  
The Lord is near.  
Do not worry about anything,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving  
let your requests be made known to God.  
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

*Philippians 4: 4-7*

### Then use these or your own words.

Read through – or just listen to St Paul’s words again. Then think about the following questions...

- Do we feel that Paul is being realistic about joy and not worrying about anything?
- Do we find his words helpful or do they make us feel guilty when we cannot always rejoice or not worry?

Give a few minutes for people to share their reflections on the questions. Discourage any sense of judging people – allow them to be honest but, equally, do not allow people to wallow!

## From *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

Use these or your own words.



We have a handout with more words from this section of the Pope's document – called *Joy and a Sense of Humour* – for you to take away and to reflect on at home. For now, we will focus on one section and think about how it applies to us during this Season of Advent.

Let's listen to it first (*you do not need to include the references!*):

Saint Francis of Assisi could be overwhelmed with gratitude before a piece of hard bread, or joyfully praise God simply for the breeze that caressed his face. This is not the joy held out by today's individualistic and consumerist culture. Consumerism only bloats the heart. It can offer occasional and passing pleasures, but not joy.

Here I am speaking of a joy lived in communion, which shares and is shared, since *"there is more happiness in giving than in receiving"* (Acts 20:35) and *"God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Cor 9:7). Fraternal love increases our capacity for joy, since it makes us capable of rejoicing in the good of others: *"Rejoice with those who rejoice"* (Rom 12:15). *"We rejoice when we are weak and you are strong"* (2 Cor 13:9). On the other hand, when we *"focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence"* (Amoris Laetitia, 110).

Use these or your own words...

Let's think about what Pope Francis says – and how it might apply to us here today.

- How do Pope Francis' words echo what St Paul said?
- How easy is it to avoid consumerism – especially at this time of year?
- What might help us to focus on the good of others – and find joy in doing it?

After a few minutes of reflecting together, invite people to spend some time in personal reflection. You might find quiet music in the background helpful.

**Ideas for the quiet time might include:**

- If you are meeting in or near a church, invite people to a time with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.
- Set Prayer Stations around the room or the church for people to sit quietly next to and use senses or other ways of praying.
- The invitation to think about how your group can share the joy of faith – individually and, perhaps, as a group.

## Sharing the Joy

Invite people to share ideas as to how they might share joy with others. Suggest that they – and/or the group – choose just one to really focus on over the next few weeks.

## Closing Prayer

Reread the scripture passage.

Allow a pause then

**All**                    **Loving God,  
the prophets spoke of the joy the coming of your Son would bring.  
Help us to show that this joy has come into the world –  
in the simple ways that make big differences to people's lives.  
Amen.**

Reader                And may God bless us this night and all nights (*or* today and all days)  
**All**                    **The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

Reader                And until we meet again may God hold us and those we love in the palm of his hand.  
**All**                    **Amen.**

