



Catholic Schools Week 2018

Moment Four: Families of Joy

Boards of Management

Introduction

It is interesting to note that in Pope Francis' encyclical letters (*Lumen Fidei* and *Laudato Si'*) and apostolic exhortations (*Evangelii Gaudium* and *Amoris Laetitia*) the word joy appears two hundred and twenty-one times. As Christians, joy is of central importance in our lives. While joy can often be associated with fun, it is not the same as 'having fun'. Rather joy is something more; it is something deeper. Pope Francis affirms this point by reminding us that joy 'is a gift from God'. In this context, joy is best understood as 'the certainty that Jesus is with us and with the Father'. This joy is a definitive characteristic of what it means to be a Christian as each of us is 'a man, or woman, of joy: a man and a woman with joy in their heart'. In this way, joy, akin to an anointing of the Spirit, fills us from within.

Pope Francis tells us that 'the Christian identity card is joy, the Gospel's joy, the joy of having been chosen by Jesus, saved by Jesus, regenerated by Jesus; the joy of that hope that Jesus is waiting for us, the joy that – even with the crosses and sufferings we bear in this life – is expressed in another way, which is peace in the certainty that Jesus accompanies us, is with us.' This joy is not something that we can keep to ourselves: 'Joy cannot be held at the heel: it must be let go.' Pope Francis speaks of joy as being a 'pilgrim virtue'. He says that joy 'is a gift that walks, walks on the path of life, that walks with Jesus: preaching, proclaiming Jesus, proclaiming joy, lengthens and widens that path'. As members of boards of management in Catholic schools, we have a responsibility to ensure that the paths of all members of our school family are lengthened and widened by joy.

Pope Francis says that joy 'is the virtue of the Great, of those Great ones who rise above the little things in life, above human pettiness, of those who will not allow themselves to be dragged into those little things within the community, within the Church: they always look to the horizon.' When understood in this way it becomes clear that members of boards of management, in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, should be open to being filled by the virtue of joy. When filled with the grace of joy, our school family transforms into a family of joy, a place of intimate encounter with God's love. This joy is a shared joy for 'the joy of love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church'. Therefore, in this final moment of the Catholic Schools Week 2018 resource series, members of boards of management should pray to the Lord and ask him to fill them with the grace of joy so that they too can become the great ones who look to the horizon in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.



Reflections

- Are there any ways in which the Board of Management could do more to encourage openness to the grace of Christian joy among members of the board as well as the whole school family?
- Can you identify any way in which the Board of Management could better adopt a perspective that is more reflective of 'the virtue of the Great, of those Great ones' in carrying out its duties?
- In what way can the Board of Management find support and encouragement from their Christian joy when faced with difficult and challenging times?
- Recognising and celebrating the joy of daily school life is integral to what it means to be a Catholic school family. Could the Board of Management better assist the school family with the recognition and celebration of the joy of daily school life? If so, how?

Prayer

Prayer to Celebrate Joy

Ever-living God,
help us to celebrate our joy
in the Resurrection of the Lord
and to express in our lives
the love we celebrate.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

(Prayer from the website of the Cathedral of Saint Matthew:
www.cathedralofsaintmatthew.com/LifeResources/Prayers/PrayersForJoy.htm)

W Watch

Video by the Vatican Television Centre (CTV) of Pope Francis' homily about understanding Christians as people of joy, delivered at morning Mass in Santa Marta on 13 May 2013: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey6VnQTCQHw

R Read

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), 57, 65, 73, 86, 88, 110, 115, 126–30, 147–9: w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Pope Francis, encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* (*On Care for our Common Home*), 222–7: w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf

Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), 1–17: w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.pdf

Pope Benedict XVI, encyclical letter *Deus Caritas Est*, 3, 9, 17: w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.pdf

John Paul II, apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 52–3, 74, 86: w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.pdf



Staff to Staff

Introduction

In assisting Catholic parents in their duty to educate their children in the faith, teachers in Catholic schools aspire towards forming their students in Christian joy. Pope Francis tells us that 'the Christian grows in joy through trusting in God'. He reminds us that 'God always remembers his covenant', and in this way, 'the Christian knows that God remembers him, that God loves him, that God accompanies him, that God is waiting for him'. This is Christian joy, the divine gift that flows from God's love. As teachers in Catholic schools, we strive to create an environment that rejoices in the Gospel, one in which all members of the school family can experience God's love. Pope Francis teaches us that it is in this encounter with God's revelation and love that the Christian feels 'joy and amazement ... emotions stirred by the Holy Spirit'. In this way Christian joy can only come 'through the power of God, with the strength of the Holy Spirit'.

Christian joy is not something that can be discovered through the acquisition of material belongings. Rather, such material treasures can shackle us and act as stumbling blocks to joy. In this way, Pope Francis highlights that Christian joy engenders an 'ability to be saved from worldly attachments'. Today young people are bombarded by the myth of consumerist culture, the illusion that ultimate happiness can be attained through the ownership of goods. Conscious of the destructive effects that this fable can exert on young people's lives, Pope Francis calls on us to 'enter a different way of thinking, a different way of behaving'. He reminds us that Jesus 'gives everything of himself, because the fullness of God is a fullness emptied on the cross'. This is the ultimate gift of God's love, 'a fullness that is emptied out'.

Pope Francis teaches us that 'this is also the Christian's way of being, to seek and receive a fullness which is emptied out'. As teachers in Catholic schools we know that following this path is not easy, but we recognise the importance of nurturing an appreciation of the spiritual treasures given to us by God in our students. By doing so, the hearts of each member of our school family can be filled with the grace of authentic Christian joy. Pope Francis notes that if ever we need a sign to tell us that we are following 'this path of all and nothing, of fullness emptied out', we need only look and see if we bear 'cheerful faces and eyes full of joy'. Therefore, in this final moment of the Catholic Schools Week 2018 resource series, teachers should take the time to reflect on and discuss the concept of Christian joy with their colleagues and discern the various responsibilities that Christian joy carries for them in their work as teachers in Catholic schools.





Reflection

'Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' (1 Pt 1:8–9)

'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.' (Rm 15:13)

- The above scriptural references are concerned with the concept of Christian joy. Write a diary entry for one day of the week. Try to account for the various ways in which your activity that day expressed joy and account for the impact your activity had on your students or colleagues. Having completed the diary entry, reflect on the concept of Christian joy and the responsibility it carries for your work as a Catholic educator. Could your daily activity have given richer expression to your Christian joy?
- Watch the following video of Pope Francis' homily at morning Mass (31 May 2013) www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFY5ugSCz-A. Discuss Pope Francis' mediation on the importance of joy with other members of staff. From your discussion, discern two ways in which members of staff could nurture the joy of daily school life.

Prayer

Prayer To Reach Out With Joy

Father, our source of life,
you know our weakness.

May we reach out with joy to grasp your hand
and walk more readily in your ways.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

*(Prayer from the website of the Cathedral of Saint Matthew:
www.cathedralofsaintmatthew.com/LifeResources/Prayers/PrayersForJoy.htm)*