

# *Walking with Francis*

A Journey of Gratitude,  
Grief, and Gospel Hope

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# Session 2 - Joy in the Gospel, Joy in the Struggle



## Opening Prayer

*God of joy and justice, you call us not to a life of ease but to one of meaning, mercy, and mission. In Pope Francis, you gave us a leader who taught us that joy is not the absence of hardship but the presence of hope. As we reflect today, fill our hearts with that gospel joy that refuses to give up, that rises in laughter through tears, and that sings even in the shadows. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*



## Scripture: John 15: 9-11 (That your joy may be complete)

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”



## Wisdom of Pope Francis

*“An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!”*  
– Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*



## Reflection: The Audacity of Joy

Pope Francis has often said that a Christian without joy is not truly Christian. Yet he doesn’t speak of a superficial smile or a naïve optimism. The joy he proclaims is deeper—it’s rooted in the Gospel and revealed even in the face of suffering.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis writes:

“The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus...  
With Christ, joy is constantly born anew.”

That’s a powerful promise—but also a challenging one, because Francis never denied the presence of pain. He simply insisted that joy and struggle aren’t opposites; they are companions. We can weep for the world and still believe in its redemption. We can carry crosses and still dance along the road.

Pope Francis calls us to live joy as resistance—against apathy, against fear, against the temptation to give in to cynicism. Joy, he reminds us, is not an escape from the world, but a commitment to transform it. And that joy becomes contagious when lived in community, especially with the poor, the excluded, and the wounded.

His laughter, his lightness of being—even in dark times—was never disconnected from his call to justice. Rather, it was rooted in a deep trust that the Spirit is always at work.





## Faith-Sharing Questions

1. Where have you experienced joy in your faith—either in celebration or in struggle?
2. How does Pope Francis' understanding of joy challenge or inspire you?
3. What role can joy play in renewing our Church and our communities today?



### Invitation to Action

- Practice joy as a spiritual discipline this week. Write down three moments of joy each day—especially those that surprise you in the midst of difficulty.
- Bring joy to someone else—a call, a note, a shared memory. Choose joy, not because things are perfect but because God is present.



### Closing Prayer

*God of boundless joy, you have shown us, through Pope Francis, that joy is not reserved for the comfortable, but belongs to those who hope, who serve, who trust. Let us not be robbed of this joy. Let us not grow weary in our journey. Instead, fill our spirits with your gladness, especially in times of darkness or doubt. May our joy be real, rooted, and radiant—a testimony to the Gospel we proclaim. We ask this through Christ, our Joy. Amen.*

