

# The Joy of Just Living

Living justly. Just living simply.  
Just living so that others may also live.

## Introduction

In 2013, Pope Francis published his first Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* or, in Latin, *Evangelii Gaudium*.



In it, he laid out a plan for Christians, Catholics, and all people of good will, a plan to live more simply, sustainably, & in greater solidarity with the poor. This exhortation is a true call to action. Action!

*The Joy of the Gospel* is bold and thrilling. Pope Francis is inviting the People of God to make a clear choice between small-minded faith which is content with things as they are (#83) and passionate faith that results in a real mission to change the world in light of the teachings of Jesus Christ. He calls us to become “spirit-filled” people, inviting and welcoming in God’s name, energized by a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ. And he asks us to reject the heartless pursuit of wealth-by-any-means and an economic system that leaves many behind.

He points to the need for reform both in the church and its structures, as well as in the everyday lives of Christians who may easily fall into what Pope Francis calls “spiritual worldliness” which “consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being” (#83). This reform, when taken up personally

by Christians and all people of good will, results in the need to systematically disengage from accumulating too many things, consuming too much food, or filling our days and nights with so much activity, media, and empty pleasures.

In other words, Pope Francis calls us to “walk the walk” of our faith and live according to the teachings and values of Jesus. He wants us to reform the economic systems of the world and, at least in part, to start with ourselves.

And why? Pope Francis reminds us in *The Joy of the Gospel* that this renewal of faith and lifestyle is the only true pathway to human fulfillment and happiness, otherwise known as “joy.” True and deep joy, he reminds us, isn’t a result of having everything we need in place, being wealthy, or even being healthy. “Sometimes we are tempted to find excuses and complain,” he says in article 7, “acting as if we could only be

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happy if a thousand conditions were met.”

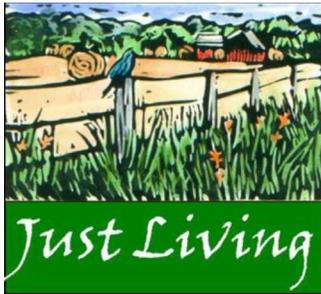
For us, then, who wish to follow Jesus more closely, who wish to experience the joy of the Gospel, and who struggle to do this in a society that is saturated with advertising, consumption, and

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weight loss programs, we need a tool, a resource that can guide us to live more simply, sustainably on the earth, and in ever-greater solidarity with the poor, a solidarity that leads us to work for the justice that ends poverty and eliminates the need for war.

We need to discover the joy of just living. Just living simply, just living



happily, living justly so that others may also live comfortably. As Pope Francis reminds us, there is great joy in such living. There is the deep knowledge that just living is right living. That happiness is possible, even in the midst of difficult, pain, illness, and death. “I can say that the most beautiful and natural expressions of joy which I have seen in my life were in poor people who had little to hold on to,” he said in article 7. “I also think of the real joy shown by others who, even amid pressing professional obligations, were able to preserve, in detachment and simplicity, a heart full of faith.”

How can we discover this joy and fashion lives in which such joy can come to the surface? That is the purpose and goal of this short resource. Meant for families, groups of friends, small faith sharing groups, classes of students, and individuals, it provides fourteen steps,

echoing the fourteen stations of the cross. As we take each step we die a little to ourselves but we come out on the other end of this in the light of resurrected faith.

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Indeed, we are raised up from the drudgery and death of pursuing power, wealth, and empty, fleeting happiness. We are raised up into a sense of well-being as we learn the detachment and simplicity of which Pope Francis spoke. This sense of well-being, we discover, opens the doorway to faith. It sweeps away all that keeps us from encountering Christ and walking with him in our daily lives. This encounter is the key.

“Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God’s love,” Pope Francis tells us in article 8, “which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being.”

**Let’s get started!**