

Rejoice in the Lord

**By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark**

Forward in Faith Together

More than 40 years ago, I answered God's call to become a missionary. When I professed my perpetual vows as a member of the Congregation of the Society of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists) in 1976, I had no idea where the road ahead would take me. Since that time, I served in parishes here in the United States from 1979 until 1991, and afterward, I traveled to more than 70 countries as a representative of my religious order. I also worked in the Vatican from 2010 to 2012, where I was privileged to serve the many consecrated women and men who minister to our Church so faithfully throughout the world. Finally, I have served as the archbishop of two archdioceses that are very close to my heart: The Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Indiana, and The Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey.

What all these experiences over the past four decades have in common can be summed up in Pope Francis's term "missionary discipleship." In many different places and circumstances, I have been called to follow Jesus and to become his disciple in communion with many others. I also have been called to engage in missionary activity – proclaiming the Good News, healing the sick, comforting those who are in distress, caring for the poor and vulnerable, and speaking the truth in love even when it is unsettling and unwelcome.

My visits to parishes, schools, and other Catholic organizations throughout our Archdiocese during the past three years, and my meetings with individuals, families, and groups, have shown me how blessed we are as a local church. They have also revealed the deep wounds caused by the sex abuse scandals and by our leaders' failure to respond appropriately. The hurt is real, and the wounds are deep, but there is also a great resilience among the people of our Archdiocese. More than one victim of sexual abuse has said to me, "I'm still a Catholic because my loyalty is to the Church and not to any individual."

I believe that our response to these horrible scandals – especially the criminal and gravely sinful actions of those who have abused children or covered up these crimes – must be to keep the victims at the center of our awareness. We must never lose sight of their suffering or forget how we failed them. Much has been accomplished here in our Archdiocese in the past two decades to ensure the safety and protection of our children. But much more needs to be done, including putting in place credible structures for holding bishops accountable for our pastoral care of the children, youth, young adults, adults, and senior members of our community.

Through our comprehensive new initiative, **Forward in Faith Together: The Road Ahead**, we are now putting in place new structures for pastoral planning and communication whose primary purpose is to engage the people of the Archdiocese in the mission and ministries of the Church in northern New Jersey. We want to hear what you think. More importantly, we want you to play an active role in changing the way we do business at the archdiocesan and parish levels.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus and our mother, inspire us to listen carefully and, as missionary disciples, to respond generously to the words of the Lord, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Staying Young at Heart As We Age

By Sister Constance Veit, LSP

When writing, I generally try to reach as broad an audience as possible, but, as we begin this new year, I'd like to address myself to those who feel they are growing old.

“Aren't we all growing old?” you might wonder. Well, yes and no!

Although Pope Francis often expresses his esteem and appreciation for the elderly, he also speaks of “growing old” as something to avoid at all costs. He refers to a certain kind of aging: “growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure,” of being “encased in the past,” and letting one's horizons shrink.



In his book on aging, *Sharing the Wisdom of Time*, the pope laments older people who have become cynical. “They become unwilling to share their experience,” he writes. “They look down on young people. They are always complaining. They cannot share wisdom. They can only look back fruitlessly on earlier times.”

At the same time, Pope Francis affirms the biblical admonition to “to accept the authority of those who are older” (1 Pet 5:5). “The Bible never ceases to insist that profound respect be shown to the elderly, since they have a wealth of experience,” he writes. “In the silence of their heart, they have a store of experiences that can teach us not to make mistakes or be taken in by false promises.”

“Jesus tells us that the wise are able to bring forth from their store things both new and old (cf. Mt 13:52),” Francis continues. Herein lies the key to aging without growing old – to remain flexible, to accumulate wisdom, and to know how to bring forth from one's store both old and new.

I think this wisdom and flexibility are crucial today if we hope to reverse the vocation crisis and the tide of young people leaving the church. Sociologist Sister Mary Johnson, S.N.D. de N. writes, “Staying mentally flexible enough to communicate across any cultural boundary – whether of ethnicity, class or generation – is hard work. As a result, most people do not bother to do it very often. We tend to choose our friends from those like us. The older we get, therefore, the more twenty-somethings seem foreign to us, and we to them unless we make concerted attempts to bridge the gap.”

Twenty-somethings are showing us just how foreign we are to them. Recent surveys indicate that 50 percent of young people who were brought up Catholic now self-identify as “nones,” meaning they do not espouse any religion. As we set off on this new year, let’s ask ourselves what we can do to stem this tragic exodus!

In *Christus Vivit*, the document Pope Francis wrote following the 2018 Synod on Youth, he advises us to return to the sources of our Catholic faith. “Jesus is risen, and he wants to make us sharers in the new life of the resurrection. He is the true youthfulness of a world grown old, the youthfulness of a universe waiting ‘in travail’ (Rom 8:22) to be clothed with his light and to live his life. With him at our side, we can drink from the true wellspring that keeps alive all our dreams, our projects, our great ideals, while impelling us to proclaim what makes life truly worthwhile.”

The Holy Father said that when he began his ministry as pope, God broadened his horizons and granted him a renewed youthfulness. “The same can happen to a couple married for many years, or to a monk in his monastery,” he writes. “An institution as ancient as the church can experience renewal and a return to youth at different points in her age-old history. Indeed, at the most dramatic moments of her history, she feels called to return with all her heart to her first love.”

What is this “first love”?

Pope Francis tells us: “more of his friendship, more fervor in prayer, more hunger for his word, more longing to receive Christ in the Eucharist, more desire to live by his Gospel, more inner strength, more peace, and spiritual joy.”

He challenges us to “let go of” whatever is holding us back, and to be open to receive new gifts from God. “True youth means having a heart capable of loving,” he exclaims.

In this new year, let’s shake off whatever is weighing us down and limiting our horizons so that we can reach out with open arms and hearts to welcome the younger generations into the church and to show them how much God loves them and is waiting for them.

Sister Constance Veit is director of communications for the Little Sisters of the Poor.

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



[Peace] entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; and it has three inseparable aspects:

- 1) Peace with oneself, rejecting inflexibility, anger and impatience; in the words of Saint Francis de Sales, showing “a bit of sweetness towards oneself” in order to offer “a bit of sweetness to others;”
- 2) Peace with others: family members, friends, strangers, the poor and the suffering, being unafraid to encounter them and listen to what they have to say;
- 3) Peace with all creation, rediscovering the grandeur of God’s gift and our individual and shared responsibility as inhabitants of this world, citizens and builders of the future (Message for World Day of Peace, January 2019).

My Prayer for You

As Pope Francis tells us, “Good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations.” Lord, we pray: May all our political leaders be women and men of peace. May they respect human rights above all other considerations and be servants of justice and peace. †



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