

Each week for the summer, a parishioner will reflect on a section of Pope Francis' Call to Holiness: his new Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad)*, which you can read at <http://w2.vatican.va>

Subtle Enemies of Holiness: Pelagianism

In responding to the universal call to holiness, Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad)* warns us of two pitfalls: gnosticism and pelagianism. Reflecting on the former last week, I now turn to the latter. When we fall prey to pelagianism, we conceive ourselves as radically autonomous individuals who are capable of saving ourselves, without recognizing that, at the deepest level of being, we derive from God and from others. As such, salvation depends on the strength of the individual or on purely human structures, which are incapable of welcoming the newness of the Spirit of God.

In reality, however, only a heartfelt and prayerful acknowledgement of our limitations allows grace to work within us to bring about the good that is part of our transformational journey of faith. As Pope Francis states, "Unless we can acknowledge our concrete and limited situation, we will not be able to see the real and possible steps that the Lord demands of us at every moment, once we are attracted and empowered by his gift" (no.50). This can be detrimental to the life of the church: "Once we believe that everything depends on human effort as channeled by ecclesial rules and structures, we unconsciously complicate the Gospel and become enslaved to a blueprint that leaves few openings for the working of grace" (no.59).

As a corrective, Pope Francis calls us to let ourselves be led by the Spirit in the way of love, and to be passionate about communicating the beauty and joy of the Gospel and seeking out the lost among the immense crowds that thirst for Christ (no.57). Holding to the greatest commandment, we seek the face of God reflected in the face of so many others whom we love as ourselves. Lastly, Pope Francis invites us to reflect and discern before God whether either pelagian or gnostic aberrations might be present in our lives.

—Fr. John