

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>

Introduction (paragraphs 1-18)

The Second Vatican Council did not address some important questions, such as the basic top-down, hierarchical structures of the Church. However, one of its most significant shifts in perspective was that regarding our universal call to holiness. By our common Baptism, God calls us each to grow in holiness, no matter our state or condition. Pope Francis' intent is to set out this call "in a practical way for our time, with all its risks, challenges, and opportunities." (§12)

We are born into encircling communities of family, culture, and faith: no one is born or survives alone. Francis speaks of the community of saints who by their particular example may inspire us on our journey back to the God, who is a community of immense love for each of us. Take a few moments, he suggests, to think about the people who have influenced your life. Did someone challenge you to learn something new? Take an unfamiliar path? Join a new group? Help you find a job? Support you in a crisis? All these are the saints who have walked with you and nurtured your growth in maturity and service.

In his document, Francis gives very simple and clear descriptions of how to be holy: "We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves" (§15).

All are called to be welcomed into God's circle of community, drawn by each one's unique gifts and needs.

—M. Gratia L'Esperance, RSM