

Pope Francis Exhortation: Gaudete ex Exsultate

Chapter 2 Two

Two Subtle Enemies of Holiness (Gnosticism and Pelagianism)

36 & 37 Gnosticism: an intellect without God and without flesh. Thanks be to God, throughout the history of the Church it has always been clear that a person's perfection is measured not by the information or knowledge they possess, but by the depth of their charity.

41 & 42 When somebody has an answer for every question, it is a sign they are not on the right road. ... Nor can we claim to say where God is not, because God is mysteriously present in the life of every person, in a way that he himself chooses, and we cannot exclude this by our presumed certainties.

#43 Here I would note that in the Church there legitimately coexist different ways of interpreting many aspects of doctrine and Christian life; in their variety, they "help to express more clearly the immense riches of God's word".

Contemporary Pelagianism

#48 The same power that the gnostics attributed to the intellect, others now began to attribute to the human will, to personal effort. This was the case with the pelagians. Now it was not intelligence that took the place of mystery and grace, but our human will. It was forgotten that everything "depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy" and that "he first loved us".

#50 Grace acts in history; ordinarily it takes hold of us and transforms us progressively. If we reject this historical and progressive reality, we can actually refuse and block grace, even as we extol it by our words.

#52 The Church has repeatedly taught that we are justified not by our own works or efforts, but by the grace of the Lord, who always takes the initiative.

#54 Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality. His friendship infinitely transcends us; we cannot buy it with our works, it can only be a gift born of his loving initiative.

#59 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.

#60 To avoid this, we do well to keep reminding ourselves that there is a hierarchy of virtues that bids us seek what is essential. The primacy belongs to the theological virtues, which have God as their object and motive.

#61 In other words, amid the thicket of precepts and prescriptions, Jesus clears a way to seeing two faces, that of the Father and that of our brother. He gives us two faces, or better yet, one alone: the face of God reflected in so many other faces.