## Introduction: Holiness is not for a select few… it is for you

Speaking about holiness in the 21st century can sound, to many, like an ancient concept reserved for medieval monks, heroic martyrs, or extraordinary souls with mystical experiences impossible to imitate. Many think that a saint is someone who lives separated from the world, who never falls, who almost seems to stop being human.

But that vision is profoundly incomplete.

Holiness is not an exclusive vocation for a spiritual elite. It is not a secondary option within Christianity. It is not an "extra" for the especially religious.

**Holiness is the normal destiny of the Christian.**

God did not create you simply to "be a good person," to morally survive, or to avoid evil as much as possible. God created you to participate in His very own life.

> *"Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).*

This command is not a poetic suggestion: it is a divine call.

The tragedy of modern man is not only sin, but having lowered his horizon. We have exchanged heaven for comfort, eternity for entertainment, virtue for appearance, the cross for immediate pleasure.

And yet, in the midst of all the noise, Christ continues to speak the same words:

**"Follow Me."**

And following Christ to the fullest has a name: **holiness**.

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# I. WHAT IS HOLINESS, REALLY?

## Union with God: the fullness of the human person

Holiness, in its deepest essence, does not simply consist of “doing good things.”

Holiness is the progressive transformation of the soul by the grace of God, until Christ lives within it.

Saint Paul expressed this with astonishing force:

> *“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).*

To be holy means allowing God to reign fully in the heart, mind, decisions, relationships, suffering, work, and hope.

## From a theological perspective:

Holiness is born from three foundations:

### 1. **Sanctifying grace**

Received in Baptism, it makes us children of God.

### 2. **Human cooperation**

God gives grace, but man must freely respond.

### 3. **A virtuous life**

Holiness develops through the constant exercise of the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance).

That is why holiness is not magic. It is grace + struggle + love.

Saint Teresa of Ávila understood this perfectly: holiness does not consist in thinking much, but in loving much.

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# II. HEALTHY JOY: THE FIRST SIGN OF TRUE HOLINESS

## “A sad saint is a sorry saint”

This famous phrase attributed to Saint Teresa summarizes an essential truth: authentic holiness does not produce bitterness, but profound joy.

We are not speaking of superficiality or empty optimism. Christian joy does not depend on everything going well, but on knowing that God reigns even in the midst of suffering.

Saint Paul insisted:

> *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).*

## Why is the saint joyful?

Because he lives in order.

### Healthy joy is born from:

- Having fulfilled one’s duties,
- Not worrying excessively about what is relative,
- Knowing how to enjoy everything God has given us,
- Living according to the order, wisdom, goodness, and beauty with which God created all things.

## The false joy of the world:

Today, joy is often confused with:

- consumption,
- escape,
- pleasure,
- social approval.

But all of that passes away.

Christian joy, on the other hand, remains even on the cross, because it springs from the certainty of being loved by God.

The saints laughed, sang, served, cried… but they never lived empty.

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# III. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOLINESS: THE PROFILE OF A SOUL THAT BELONGS TO GOD

## 1. To love radically

Holiness begins and ends in charity.

> *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart…" (Matthew 22:37).*

This includes:

- Loving God above all things,
- Loving one's neighbor,
- Loving one's enemy,
- Forgiving,

- Serving.

## 2. To live the virtues heroically

It is not enough to avoid grave sin. Holiness demands growth.

To be holy means struggling against:

- pride,
- lust,
- greed,
- lukewarmness,
- spiritual laziness.

## 3. To belong actively to the Church

There is no holiness isolated from the Body of Christ.

The Church is not a social club, but the ordinary place of sanctification through:

- sacraments,
- doctrine,
- prayer,
- community,
- mission.

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# IV. RENUNCIATION OF WORLDLINESS: TO BE IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD

## The great contemporary drama

We live in a culture that absolutizes the temporal:

- image,

- money,
- pleasure,
- success,
- power.

But Christ was clear:

> *"What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36).*

## Renouncing the world does not mean physically fleeing from it

It means rejecting the worldly mentality:

- relativism,
- hedonism,
- pride,
- self-sufficiency.

## Christian spirituality teaches:

Use things, do not worship them.

Possess goods, but do not be possessed by them.

Live here, while looking toward heaven.

Saint John of the Cross taught that disordered attachment, even to small things, can prevent the soul's flight.

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# V. APOSTOLIC LIFE: EVERY BAPTIZED PERSON IS SENT

## “Go into all the world…”

There is no authentic Christian without mission.

Confirmation is not a cultural ceremony; it is a spiritual empowerment to fight for Christ.

## Lay apostolate today:

### In the family:

- Educate in the faith,
- Defend truth,
- Be an example.

### At work:

- Honesty,
- Coherence,
- Dignity.

### In society:

- Defend life,
- Protect the family,
- Combat cultural dechristianization.

## The great problem today:

Many Catholics have privatized their faith.

But faith that does not transform the world weakens.

# VI. CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE: THE HIDDEN POWER THAT SUSTAINS THE WORLD

In a civilization obsessed with productivity, contemplative life seems useless.

But theologically, the opposite is true.

Monasteries, convents, and consecrated souls are the spiritual lungs of the Church.

## Two dimensions:

### Passive contemplative life:

- Cloister,
- Silence,
- Adoration,
- Sacrifice.

### Active contemplative life:

- Hospitals,
- Schools,
- Missions,
- Service to the poor.

## A great truth:

Without deep prayer, apostolate becomes empty activism.

Jesus first ascended the mountain to pray… and then descended to preach.

# VII. THE VIRGIN MARY: THE PERFECT MODEL OF HUMAN HOLINESS

Mary is not merely a devotional figure. She is the perfect ideal of cooperation with grace.

## Immaculate:

Preserved from original sin.

## Virgin:

Completely given to God.

## Mother:

Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church.

## Assumed into heaven:

The glorious firstfruit of redemption.

> *"Let it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).*

In that phrase is condensed the entire path of holiness:
**Absolute availability to God.**

Mary teaches that holiness does not consist in protagonism, but in docility.

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# VIII. THE SEARCH FOR HOLINESS: A PRACTICAL PASTORAL GUIDE FOR TODAY

## 1. Desire to be holy

Without desire, there is no path.

## 2. Serious sacramental life

- Frequent confession,
- Worthy Eucharist,
- Daily prayer.

## 3. Fight lukewarmness

Revelation warns:

> *"Because you are lukewarm… I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16).*

## 4. Form yourself doctrinally

One cannot love what one does not know.

## 5. Practice mortification

Saying "no" to oneself strengthens the soul.

## 6. Persevere

Holiness does not consist in never falling, but in always rising again.

# IX. HOLINESS IN TIMES OF CRISIS: MORE URGENT THAN EVER

Today, holiness is countercultural.

To be holy today means:

- Defending truth when it is mocked,
- Living purity in an eroticized culture,
- Being humble in a narcissistic society,
- Having faith in a secularized world.

It has never been easy. Nor has it ever been impossible.

Every era produces its saints.

The question is not whether this world is too dark.

The question is: **Are you willing to be light?**

# Conclusion: Holiness is not perfectionism… it is belonging

God does not call the perfect; He perfects the called.

Holiness does not mean the absence of struggle, but fidelity in the midst of it.

It is not about having no wounds, but about allowing Christ to reign even within them.

The world needs saints:

- holy fathers,
- holy mothers,
- holy young people,
- holy workers,
- holy priests.

Not tomorrow. Today.

Because every holy soul becomes a silent revolution.

## In the words of Saint Leo the Great:

**“Christian, recognize your dignity.”**

You were created for more.

Not merely to survive.
Not to conform.
Not to be mediocre.

**You were created to be holy.**