



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 13 December 2015*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In today's Gospel, there is a question posed three times: "What shall we do?" (Lk 3:10, 12, 14). It is raised to John the Baptist by three categories of people: First, the crowd in general; second, the publicans or tax collectors; and, third, some soldiers. Each of these groups questions the prophet on what must be done to implement the conversion that he is preaching. John's reply to the question of the crowd is sharing essential goods. He told the first group, the crowd, to share basic necessities, and therefore says: "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (v. 11). Then, he tells the second group, the tax collectors, to collect no more than the amount owed. What does this mean? No taking 'bribes', John the Baptist is clear. And he tells the third group, the soldiers, not to extort anything from anyone and to be content with their wages (cf. v. 14). There are three answers to the three questions of these groups. Three answers for an identical path of repentance, which is manifested in concrete commitments to justice and solidarity. It is the path that Jesus points to in all his preaching: the path of diligent love for neighbour.

From John the Baptist's admonitions, we understand the general tendencies of those who at that time held power, in various forms. Things have not changed very much. However, no category of people is excluded from following the path of repentance to obtain salvation, not even the tax collectors, considered sinners by definition: not even they are excluded from salvation. God does not preclude anyone from the opportunity to be saved. He is — so to speak — anxious to show mercy, to show it towards everyone, and to welcome each one into the tender embrace of reconciliation and forgiveness.

We feel that this question — “*What shall we do?*” — is ours also. Today’s liturgy tells us, in the words of John, that it is necessary to repent, to change direction and take the path of justice, solidarity, sobriety: these are the essential values of a fully human and genuinely Christian life. *Repent!* It sums up the message of the Baptist. And the Liturgy of this Third Sunday of Advent helps us to rediscover a special dimension of repentance: *joy*. Whoever repents and approaches the Lord, feels joy. The prophet Zephaniah says to us today: “Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion!”, addressing Jerusalem (Zeph 3:14); and the apostle Paul exhorts the Christians of Philippi: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Phil 4:4). Today, it takes courage to speak of joy, which, above all, requires faith! The world is beset by many problems, the future is burdened by uncertainties and fears. Yet, Christians are a joyful people, and their joy is not something superficial and ephemeral, but deep and stable, because it is a gift from the Lord that fills life. Our joy comes from the certainty that “the Lord is at hand” (Phil 4:5): he is close with his tenderness, his mercy, his forgiveness and his love.

May the Virgin Mary help us to strengthen our faith, so that we are able to welcome the God of joy, the God of mercy, who always wants to live in the midst of his children. May our Mother teach us to share tears with those who weep, in order to be able to also share a smile.

After the Angelus:

The climate conference has just ended in Paris with the adoption of an agreement, which many are defining as historic. Its implementation will require concerted commitment and generous dedication by each one. With the hope that it may guarantee special attention to the most vulnerable populations, I urge the entire international community to continue with solicitude the path taken, in a sign of solidarity that will become more and more active.

Next Tuesday, 15 December, the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization will begin in Nairobi. I address the countries that will participate, so that the decisions that will be taken will consider the needs of the poor and the most vulnerable, as well as the legitimate aspirations of developing countries and the common good of the entire human family.

In all the cathedrals of the world, the Holy Doors are opening, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be fully experienced in the particular Churches. I hope that this important time may inspire many to become instruments of God’s tenderness. As an expression of the works of mercy, “Doors of Mercy” are being opened in places of hardship and marginalization. In this regard, I greet the inmates of prisons around the world, especially those of the Padua prison, who today are spiritually united with us at this time to pray, and I thank them for the gift.

I greet all of you, pilgrims from Rome, from Italy, and from many parts of the world. In particular, I greet those from Warsaw and Madrid. A special thought goes to the Santa Marta Dispensary

Foundation in the Vatican: to parents and their children, to the volunteers and to the Daughters of Charity; thank you for your witness of solidarity and welcome! I also greet the members of the Focolare Movement together with friends from some Islamic communities. Go forward! Go forward with courage on your path of dialogue and fraternity, because we are all children of God!

To all, I offer cordial wishes for a happy Sunday and a good lunch. Please, do not forget to pray for me. *Arrivederci!*