



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 16 December 2018*

Multimedia

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On this third Sunday of Advent, the liturgy invites us to *joy*. Listen carefully: to *joy*. The prophet Zephaniah addresses these words to a small group of the people of Israel: “Sing aloud, O Daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!” (3:14) Shout with joy, rejoice, exult: this is this Sunday’s invitation. The inhabitants of the Holy City are called to rejoice because the Lord has taken away his judgments against them (cf v. 15). God has forgiven, he did not wish to punish! As a result the people no longer have any reason for sadness. There is no longer reason for desolation, but rather, everything leads to joyful gratitude toward God who always wishes to deliver and save those he loves. And the Lord’s love for his people is endless, tantamount to the tenderness of a father for his children, of a groom for his bride, as Zephaniah again says: “he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing” (v. 17). This is — so it is called — *the Sunday of joy*: the third Sunday of Advent, before Christmas.

This appeal by the prophet is particularly appropriate during the Season in which we are preparing ourselves for Christmas, because it can be applied to Jesus, the Emmanuel, the God-with-us: *his presence is the wellspring of joy*. Indeed, Zephaniah proclaims: “The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst”, and a little later he repeats: “The Lord your God is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory” (vv. 15, 17). This message finds its full meaning in the moment of the Annunciation to Mary, narrated by the evangelist Luke. The words addressed to the Virgin by the Angel Gabriel are like an echo of those of the prophet. What does the Archangel Gabriel say? “Hail, full of grace, the

Lord is with you! (Lk 1:28). He tells Our Lady to “Rejoice”. In an isolated hamlet of Galilee, in the heart of a young woman unknown to the world, God kindles the spark of happiness for the entire world. And today, the same announcement is addressed to the Church, called to receive the Gospel so that it may become flesh, concrete life. He says to the Church, to all of us: “Rejoice, little Christian community, poor and humble but beautiful in my eyes because you ardently desire my Kingdom, you hunger and thirst for justice, you patiently weave the fabric of peace, you do not pursue the powerful of the moment but remain faithfully beside the poor. And thus you fear nothing but your heart is in joy”. If we live like this, in the presence of the Lord, our heart will always be in joy — when there is ‘high-level’, full joy, and the humble everyday joy, which is peace. Peace is the smallest joy, but it is joy.

Saint Paul, too, exhorts us today to have no anxiety, to have no despair about anything, but rather, in every circumstance, to make our requests, our needs, our worries known to God “by prayer and supplication” (Phil 4:6). The awareness that we can always turn to the Lord in our difficulties, and that he never rejects our invocations, is a great reason for joy. No worry, no fear will ever be able to take away this serenity which comes not from human things, from human comforts, no: the serenity that comes from God, from knowing that God lovingly guides our lives, and he always does so. Even in the midst of problems and suffering, this certainty fosters hope and courage.

However, in order to receive the Lord’s invitation to joy, it is necessary to be people willing to call ourselves into question. What does this mean? Just like those who, after listening to the preaching of John the Baptist, ask him: You preach this, but we, “What then shall we do” (Lk 3:10). What should I do? This question is the first step for the conversion that we are called to carry out during this Season of Advent. Let each of us ask ourself: what should I do? A very small thing, but “what should I do?”. And may the Virgin Mary, who is our mother, help us to open our heart to the God-who-comes, so that he may shower our whole life with joy.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, last week in Marrakech, Morocco, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which aims to be a reference framework for the entire international community, was approved. I thus hope that thanks to this instrument too, [the international community] will be able to work with responsibility, solidarity and compassion toward those who, for various reasons, have left their own country, and I entrust this intention to your prayers.

I greet you all, families, parish groups and associations who have come from Rome, from Italy and from many parts of the world. In particular I greet the pilgrims from Seville, Hamburg, Munich and Chapelle, Belgium. I greet the faithful from Pescara, Potenza, Bucchianico, Fabriano and Blera; the Comboni Lay Missionaries and the Scouts from Jesolo and Ca’ Savio.

And now I especially address you, dear children of Rome, who have come for the blessing of the '*Bambinelli*' (Baby Jesus figurines), accompanied by Auxiliary Bishop Ruzza. I thank the *Centro Oratori Romani* and the volunteers. Dear children, when you gather together in prayer before the Nativity scene in your homes, fixing your gaze on Baby Jesus, you will feel the wonder.... You may ask me: what does 'wonder' mean? It is a stronger feeling, it is more than a common emotion. It is seeing God: the wonder of the great mystery of God made man; and the Holy Spirit will place the humility, tenderness and goodness of Jesus in your heart. Jesus is good; Jesus is tender; Jesus is humble. This is the true Christmas! Do not forget this. May it be so for you and for your family members. I bless all the '*Bambinelli*'.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday and a happy third week of Advent, with joy, much joy, and much peace when joy is not possible. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!