



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 22 January 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

The Gospel from today's liturgy (*Mt* 4:12-23) narrates the call of the first disciples who, along the lake of Galilee, *leave everything to follow Jesus*. He had already met some of them, thanks to John the Baptist, and God had placed the seed of faith within them (cf. *Jn* 1:35-39). And this is when Jesus goes back to look for them where they live and work. The Lord always looks for us. The Lord always draws near to us, always. This time, he extends a direct call to them: "Follow me!" (*Mt* 4:19). And "immediately they left their nets and followed him" (v. 20). Let us take a moment to reflect on this scene: it is the moment of the decisive encounter with Jesus, one they would remember their entire lives and that would be included in the Gospel. From then on, they follow Jesus. And in order to follow him, they leave.

To leave so as to follow. It is always like this with Jesus. One can begin in some way to feel his appeal, perhaps because of others. Then the awareness can become more personal and can kindle a light in the heart. It becomes something beautiful to share: "You know, that passage from the Gospel struck me... That experience of service touched me..." — something that touches your heart. And this is what the first disciples might have done (cf. *Jn* 1:40-42). But sooner or later, the moment comes in which it is necessary *to leave so as to follow* (cf. *Lk* 11:27-28). And this is when a decision has to be made: Do I leave behind some certainties and embark on a new adventure, or do I remain where and as I am? This is a decisive moment for every Christian because the meaning of everything else is at stake here. If one does not find the courage to set

out on the journey, the risk is to remain a spectator of one's own existence and to live the faith halfway.

To stay with Jesus, therefore, requires the courage to leave, to set out on the journey. What must we leave behind? Certainly, our vices and our sins, which are like anchors that hold us at bay and prevent us from setting sail. To begin to leave, it is only right that we begin by asking forgiveness — forgiveness for the things that were not beautiful. I leave these things and move forward. But it is also necessary to leave behind what holds us back from living fully, for example, fear, selfish calculations, the guarantees that come from staying safe, just getting by. It also means giving up the time wasted on many useless things. How beautiful it is to leave all this in order to experience, for example, the tiring but rewarding risk of service, or to dedicate time to prayer so as to grow in friendship with the Lord. I am also thinking of a young family who leaves behind a quiet life to open themselves up to the unpredictable and beautiful adventure of motherhood and fatherhood. It is a sacrifice, but just one look at a child is enough to understand that it was the right choice to leave behind certain rhythms and comforts to have this joy. I am also thinking of certain professionals, for example, doctors or healthcare workers, who gave up a lot of free time to study and prepare themselves, and who do good, dedicating many hours day and night, and spend so much physical and mental energy for the sick. I think of workers who leave behind convenience, leave pleasant idleness in order to put food on the table. In short, to live life, we have to accept the challenge of leaving. Today Jesus extends this invitation to each of us.

And with regards to this, I leave you with some questions. First of all: Can I remember a “strong moment” in which I have already encountered Jesus? Each of us can think of their own story — in my life, has there been a significant moment when I encountered Jesus? And, is there something beautiful and significant that happened in my life because I left other less important things? And today, is there something Jesus asks me to give up? What are the material things, ways of thinking, attitudes I need to leave behind so as to truly say “yes”? May Mary help us to respond with a total “yes” to God, like she did, to know how to leave behind so as to follow him better. Do not be afraid to leave if it is to follow Jesus. We will always find that we are better.

After the Angelus, the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, this Third Sunday of Ordinary Time is dedicated in a special way to the Word of God. Let us rediscover with awe the fact that God speaks to us, especially through the Sacred Scriptures. Let us read them, study them, meditate on them, pray over them. Let us read a passage from the Bible every day, especially from the Gospel. Jesus speaks to us there, he enlightens us, he guides us. And I remind you of something I have said other times: Keep a small Gospel, a pocket-size Gospel, to take in your bag, always with us. And when there is a moment during the day, read something from the Gospel. It is Jesus who accompanies us; a small pocket-

size Gospel always with us.

Today I would like to express my wish for peace and every good to all those in the Far East, and in various parts of the world, who are celebrating the Lunar New Year. Nevertheless, on this joyous occasion, I cannot fail to mention my spiritual nearness to those who are going through difficult times due to the coronavirus pandemic, with the hope that these present difficulties may soon be overcome. Lastly, I hope that the kindness, sensitivity, solidarity and harmony that are being experienced in these days as families traditionally reunite, may always permeate and characterize family and social relationships, so as to live a serene and happy life. Happy New Year!

With sadness, my thoughts turn in particular to Myanmar, where the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption in the Village of Can Thar — one of the most ancient and important places of worship in the country — was set on fire and destroyed. I am close to the helpless civilian population subject to severe trials in many cities. May it please God that this conflict will soon come to an end, opening a new period of forgiveness, love and peace. Let us pray together to Our Lady for Myanmar. [Hail Mary...]

I also invite you to pray that the acts of violence in Peru may cease. Violence quenches the hope for a just solution to problems. I encourage all parties involved to undertake the path of dialogue as brothers of the same nation, in full respect for human rights and the rule of law. I join the Peruvian Bishops in saying: *¡No a la violencia, venga de donde venga! ¡No más muertes!* [No to violence wherever it comes from! No more deaths!] There are Peruvians in the Square....

Positive signs are coming from Cameroon that bring the hope of progress toward the resolution of the conflict in the English-speaking regions. I encourage all the parties who have signed the Agreement to persevere on the path of dialogue and mutual understanding, for only through encounter can the future be designed.

I extend my greeting to all of you, those from Italy and other countries. I greet the pilgrims from Split, Warsaw — there are many Poles, I can see the flags — and Mérida-Badajoz, Spain, as well as those from Ascoli Piceno, Montesilvano and Gela; the group from Guardian Angel School, Alessandria; those from Gioventù Ardente Mariana [Fervent Marian Youth] from Rome; and members of the Association of Catholic Psychologists.

In these days, as we pray in particular for the full unity of all Christians, please let us not forget to pray for peace for war-torn Ukraine. May the Lord comfort and sustain that people who are suffering so much! They are suffering so much!

I wish all of you a happy Sunday. Also to the young people of the Immaculata. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

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