



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

Fourth Sunday of Lent, 11 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent, called “*laetare*”, that is, “rejoice”, because this is the opening antiphon of the Eucharistic liturgy that invites us to joy: “Rejoice, Jerusalem” — thus, it is a call to joy — “Be joyful, all who were in mourning”. This is how the Mass begins. What is the reason for this joy? The reason is God’s great love for mankind, as today’s Gospel passage tells us: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). These words, spoken by Jesus during the encounter with Nicodemus, summarize a theme that lies at the centre of the Christian message: even when the situation seems desperate, God intervenes, offering man salvation and joy. Indeed, God does not remain apart from us, but enters the history of mankind; he “meddles” in our life; he enters, in order to animate it with his grace and save it.

We are called to listen to this message, rejecting the temptation to value our own self-confidence, to think we can do without God, to claim absolute freedom from him and from his Words. When we find the courage to recognize ourselves for what we are — this takes courage! — we realize we are people called to take our weaknesses and our limitations into account. So it may happen that we are gripped by anguish, by anxiety about the future, by fear of illness and death. This explains why many people, searching for a way out, sometimes take dangerous shortcuts such as, for example, the path of drugs or that of superstition or of disastrous magic rituals. It is good to know our limitations and our weaknesses; we must be aware of them, however, not in order to despair, but to offer them to the Lord. And he helps us on the path of healing; he takes us by the hand, and

never abandons us, never! God is with us and for this reason I “rejoice”; we “rejoice” today: “Rejoice, Jerusalem”, [the antiphon] says, because God is with us. And we have the true and great hope in God the Father rich in mercy, who gave us his Son to save us, and this is our joy. We also have many sorrows, but, when we are true Christians, there is the hope that is a small joy which grows and gives us certainty. We must not become disheartened when we see our limitations, our sins, our weakness: God is near; Jesus is on the Cross to heal us. This is God’s love. To look at the Cross and tell ourselves within: “God loves me”. It is true, there are these limitations, these weaknesses, these sins, but he is greater than the limitations and the weaknesses and the sins. Do not forget this: God is greater than our weaknesses, than our infidelities, than our sins. And let us take the Lord by the hand; let us look to the Crucifix and go forward.

May Mary, Mother of Mercy, place in our hearts the certainty that we are loved by God. May she be close to us in the moments in which we feel alone, when we are tempted to surrender to life’s difficulties. May she convey to us the sentiments of her Son Jesus, so that our Lenten journey may become an experience of forgiveness, of welcome and of charity.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from other countries, in particular the faithful from Agropoli, Padua, Troina, Foggia and Caltanissetta, and the young people of Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Serra di Pepe.

I greet the Brazilian community of Rome, the confirmands of Tivoli with their Bishop, the young people of Avigliano and the youth of Saronno.

I offer a special greeting to the university students who have come from various parts of the world and joined in the first “Vatican Hackathon” promoted by the Dicastery for Communication: dear young people, it is good to place the intelligence, which God gives us, at the service of truth and of the most needy.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.

Arrivederci!