



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *ANGELUS* Saint Peter's Square (Library of the Apostolic Palace)

Sunday, 8 March 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

It is a bit strange, this Angelus prayer today, with the Pope “caged in” the library, but I can see you, I am close to you. And I would like to begin also by thanking that group [present in the Square] that is demonstrating and fighting “For the forgotten ones in Idlib”. Thank you! Thank you for what you do. But we are praying the Angelus like this today to comply with the preventative measures, so as to avoid small crowds of people, who might facilitate the transmission of the virus.

The Gospel of this second Sunday of Lent (cf. Mt 17:1-9), presents to us the account of the Transfiguration of Jesus. He takes Peter, James and John with him up a high mountain, symbol of closeness to God, to open them to a fuller understanding of the mystery of his Person, that must suffer, die and then rise again. Indeed, Jesus had begun to speak to them of the suffering, death and Resurrection that awaited him, but they were unable to accept this prospect. Therefore, once they reached the summit of the mountain, Jesus immersed himself in prayer and was transfigured before the three disciples: “his face”, says the Gospel, “shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light” (v. 2).

Through the wondrous event of the Transfiguration, the three disciples are called to recognize in Jesus the Son of God shining with glory. Thus, they advance in their knowledge of their Master, realizing that the human aspect does not express all his reality; in their eyes the otherworldly and divine dimension of Jesus is revealed. And from on High there resounds a voice that says: “This is my beloved Son.... Listen to him” (v. 5). It is the heavenly Father who confirms the “investiture” — let us call it that — that Jesus already received on the day of his Baptism in the Jordan and invites the disciples to listen to him and to follow him.

It must be emphasized that, from among the group of the Twelve, Jesus chose to take James, John and Peter with him up the mountain. He reserved for them the privilege of witnessing the

Transfiguration. But why did he select these three? Because they are the holiest? No. Yet, at the hour of trial, Peter will deny him; and the two brothers James and John will ask for the foremost places in his Kingdom (cf. Mt 20:20-23). However Jesus does not choose according to our criteria, but according to his plan of love. Jesus' love is without measure: it is love, and he chooses with that plan of love. It is a free, unconditional choice, a free initiative, a divine friendship that asks for nothing in return. And just as he called those three disciples, so today too he calls some to be close to him, to be able to bear witness. To be witnesses to Jesus is a gift we have not deserved; we may feel inadequate but we cannot back out with the excuse of our incapacity.

We have not been on Mount Tabor, we have not seen with our own eyes the face of Jesus shining like the sun. However, we too were given the Word of Salvation, faith was given to us, and we have experienced the joy of meeting Jesus in different ways. Jesus also says to us: "Rise, and have no fear" (Mt 17:7). In this world, marked by selfishness and greed, the light of God is obscured by the worries of everyday life. We often say: I do not have time to pray, I am unable to carry out a service in the parish, to respond to the requests of others.... But we must not forget that the Baptism and Confirmation we have received has made us witnesses, not because of our ability, but as a result of the gift of the Spirit.

In the favourable time of Lent, may the Virgin Mary obtain for us that docility to the Spirit which is indispensable for setting out resolutely on the path of conversion.

After the Angelus prayer the Holy Father said:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you recollected in prayer at this moment. I greet in particular those participating in the training course, "Inspiring a new way of communicating"; the faithful from Torrent, in Spain; the group from Corato; the young people from Coverciano and the children receiving their First Communion from Monteodorisio.

I greet the Associations and groups engaged in solidarity with the Syrian people, and especially with the inhabitants of the city of Idlib and of the north-west of Syria — I can see you here — compelled to flee from the recent escalation in the war. Dear brothers and sisters, I express my great apprehension, my sorrow at the inhuman situation of these helpless people, including many children whose lives are at risk. One cannot turn away from this humanitarian crisis, but instead must give it priority over every other interest. Let us pray for these people, these brothers and sisters of ours, who suffer greatly in the north-west of Syria, in the city of Idlib.

I am close to you in prayer to those who are suffering as a result of the current coronavirus epidemic, and to all those who are caring for them. I thought of them very much during the days I

was on retreat. I join with my brother bishops in encouraging the faithful to live this difficult moment with the strength of faith, the certainty of hope and the fervour of charity. May the time of Lent help all of us to give an evangelical meaning also to this moment of trial and suffering.

I wish you a good Sunday. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Now I will look out of the window, so I can see you a little, in real time. Have a good lunch, and *Arrivederci!*