



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 22 January 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mt 4:12-23) recounts the beginning of Jesus' preaching in Galilee. He leaves Nazareth, a village in the mountains, and settles in Capernaum, an important centre on the lakeshore, inhabited largely by pagans, a crossroads between the Mediterranean and the Mesopotamian inland. This choice indicates that the beneficiaries of his preaching are not only his compatriots, but those who arrive in the cosmopolitan "Galilee of the Gentiles" (v. 15, cf. Is 9:1): that's what it was called. Seen from the capital Jerusalem, that land is geographically peripheral and religiously impure because it was full of pagans, having mixed with those who did not belong to Israel. Great things were not expected from Galilee for the history of salvation. Instead, right from there — precisely from there — radiated that "light" on which we meditated in recent Sundays: the light of Christ. It radiated right from the periphery.

Jesus' message reiterates that of the Baptist, announcing the "kingdom of heaven" (v. 17). This kingdom does not involve the establishment of a new political power, but the fulfillment of the Covenant between God and his people, which inaugurates a season of peace and justice. To secure this covenant pact with God, each one is called to convert, transforming his or her way of thinking and living. This is important: converting is not only changing the way of life but also the way of thinking. It is a transformation of thought. It is not a matter of changing clothing, but habits! What differentiates Jesus from John the Baptist is the way and manner. Jesus chooses to be an itinerant prophet. He doesn't stay and await people, but goes to encounter them. Jesus is always on the road! His first missionary appearances take place along the lake of Galilee, in contact with the multitude, in particular with the fishermen. There Jesus does not only proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God, but seeks companions to join in his salvific mission. In this very place he

meets two pairs of brothers: Simon and Andrew, James and John. He calls them, saying: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (v. 19). The call reaches them in the middle of their daily activity: the Lord reveals himself to us not in an extraordinary or impressive way, but in the everyday circumstances of our life. There we must discover the Lord; and there he reveals himself, makes his love felt in our heart; and there — with this dialogue with him in the everyday circumstances of life — he changes our heart. The response of the four fishermen is immediate and willing: "Immediately they left their nets and followed him" (v. 20). We know, in fact, that they were disciples of the Baptist and that, thanks to his witness, they had already begun to believe in Jesus as the Messiah (cf. Jn 1:35-42).

We, today's Christians, have the joy of proclaiming and witnessing to our faith because there was that first announcement, because there were those humble and courageous men who responded generously to Jesus' call. On the shores of the lake, in an inconceivable land, the first community of disciples of Christ was born. May the knowledge of these beginnings give rise in us to the desire to bear Jesus' word, love and tenderness in every context, even the most difficult and resistant. To carry the Word to all the peripheries! All the spaces of human living are soil on which to cast the seeds of the Gospel, so they may bear the fruit of salvation.

May the Virgin Mary help us with her maternal intercession to respond joyfully to Jesus' call, and to place ourselves at the service of the Kingdom of God.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, we are in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This year, its theme is an expression taken from Saint Paul, which indicates the path for us to follow. It says:

"Reconciliation — The Love of Christ Compels Us" (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). This Wednesday we will conclude the Week of Prayer with the celebration of Vespers in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls, in which the brothers and sisters of other Christian Churches and Communities present in Rome will participate. I invite you to persevere in prayer, so that Jesus' wish may be fulfilled: "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

In recent days, the earthquake and snows have once again put to the test our brothers and sisters of Central Italy, especially in Abruzzo, the Marches and Lazio. I am close with prayers and affection to the families whose loved ones have been victims. I encourage those who are committed with great generosity in the work of aid and assistance; as well as the local Churches, which are doing all they can to relieve the suffering and difficulty. Many thanks for this closeness, for their work and the concrete help that they bring. Thank you! I invite you to pray together to Our Lady for the victims and also for those who, with great generosity, are committed in the rescue efforts.

[*Hail Mary....*]

In the Far East and in many parts of the world, millions of men and women are preparing to celebrate the Lunar New Year on 28 January. May my cordial greeting reach all their families, with the wish that they may become ever more a school in which to learn to respect others, to communicate and to take care of one another in an unselfish way. May the joy of love multiply within the family and radiate from it throughout society.

I greet all of you, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from different countries. I greet the members of the Union of Catholic Teachers, Principals, Educators and Formators, which has concluded its 25th national conference, and I wish them fruitful educational work, in cooperation with families. Always in cooperation with families!

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