



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 19 February 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

The words Jesus addresses to us in this Sunday's Gospel are demanding, and seem paradoxical: he invites us to turn the other cheek and to love even our enemies (cf. *Mt* 5:38-48). It is normal for us to love those who love us, and to be friends of those who are friends to us; yet Jesus provokes us by saying: if you act in this way, "what more are you doing than others?" (v. 47). *What more are you doing?* Here is the point to which I would like to draw your attention today, on this what more are you doing that is extraordinary.

Extraordinary is what goes beyond the limits of the usual, what exceeds the habitual practices and normal calculations dictated by prudence. Instead, in general we try to have everything more or less in order and under control, so as to correspond to our expectations, to our measure. Afraid of not being reciprocated or to expose ourselves too much and then being disappointed, we prefer to love only those who love us in order to avoid disappointments, to do good only to those who are good to us, to be generous only to those who can return a favour; and to those who treat us badly, we respond in kind, so that we are even. But the Lord warns us: this is not enough! We would say: this is not [being a] Christian! If we remain in the ordinary, in the balance between giving and receiving, things do not change. If God were to follow this logic, we would have no hope of salvation! But, fortunately for us, God's love is always "extraordinary", it goes beyond the usual criteria by which we humans live out our relationships.

Jesus' words thus challenge us. While we try to remain within the ordinary of utilitarian reasoning, he asks us to open ourselves to the extraordinary, the extraordinary of a freely-given love; while we always try to balance the books, Christ encourages us to live the *imbalance of love*. Jesus is not a good book-keeper, no! He always leads us to the imbalance of love. Let us not be surprised by this. If God had not "unbalanced" himself, we would never have been saved: it is '*the imbalance of the cross*' that saved us! Jesus would have not come to seek us out when we were lost and distant; he would have not loved us to the end, he would have not embraced the cross for us, who did not deserve all this and could not give him anything in return. As the Apostle Paul writes, "One will hardly die for a righteous man — though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (*Rm 5:7-8*). So, God loves us while we are sinners, not because we are good or able to give something back to him. Brothers and sisters, God's love is a love that is always in excess, it always goes beyond calculation, always disproportionate. And today he also asks us to live in this way, because only in this way will we truly bear witness to him.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord invites us to step out of the logic of self-interest and to not measure love on the scales of calculations and convenience. He invites us not to respond to evil with evil, to dare to do good, to risk in giving, even if we receive little or nothing in return. For it is this love that slowly transforms conflicts, shortens distances, overcomes enmities and heals the wounds of hatred. And so, we can ask ourselves, each one of us: do I, in my life, follow the logic of self-interest, or that of gratuitousness, as God does? The extraordinary love of Christ is not easy, but it is possible; it is possible because he himself helps us by giving us his Spirit, his love without measure.

Let us pray to Our Lady, who by answering "yes" to God without calculation, allowed him to make her the masterpiece of his Grace.

After the Angelus, the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus' love asks us to let ourselves be touched by the conditions of those who are in difficulty. I am thinking especially of Syria and Turkey, of the very many victims of the earthquake, but also of the daily tragedies of the dear Ukrainian people and the many peoples who suffer as a result of war or due to poverty, the lack of freedom, or environmental devastation: many peoples... In this regard, I am close to the people of New Zealand, struck in recent days by a devastating cyclone. Brothers and sisters, let us not forget those who suffer, and let us ensure that our charity be attentive, that it be real charity!

I address my greeting to all of you, those from Italy and [those] from other countries. I greet the pilgrims from Oviedo, Spain, and the students of Vila Pouca de Aguiar in Portugal.

I also greet the groups of Catholic Action from Rimini and Saccolongo; the faithful of Lentiai, Turin and Bolzano; candidates for confirmation from Valvasone and Almenno San Salvatore; teenagers and young people from Tricesimo, Leno, Chiuppano and Fino Mornasco; altar servers from Arcene and students of Saint Ambrose School of Milan.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci*.