



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 18 June 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

I wish to express my gratitude to those who showed me affection, care and friendship, and assured me of their support in prayer, during my stay at Gemelli Hospital. This human and spiritual closeness was of great help and comfort to me. Thank you all! Thank you! Thank you from my heart!

Today, in the Gospel, Jesus calls [the Apostles] by name — he calls them by name — and sends out the twelve Apostles. As he was sending them out, he asks them to proclaim just one thing: “Preach as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’” (*Mt 10:7*). It is the same proclamation with which Jesus began his preaching: the kingdom of God, that is, his lordship of love, has come near; it comes in our midst. And this is not just one piece of news among others, no, but the fundamental reality of life: the closeness of God, the closeness of Jesus.

Indeed, if the God of heaven is close, we are not alone on earth, and even in difficulty, we do not lose faith. Here is the first thing to say to people: God is not far away, but rather he is a Father. God is not distant, he is a Father, he knows you and he loves you; he wants to take you by the hand, even when you travel on steep and rugged paths, even when you fall and struggle to get up again and get back on track. He, the Lord, is there with you. Indeed, often in moments when you are at your weakest, you can feel his presence all the more strongly. He knows the path, he is with you, he is your Father! He is my Father! He is our Father!

Let us linger on this image because proclaiming that God is close is an invitation to think of oneself as a child, who walks hand in hand with his father: everything seems different. The large and mysterious world becomes familiar and secure because the child knows he is protected. He is not afraid, and learns how to open up: he meets other people, finds new friends, joyfully learns things that he did not know, and then returns home and tells everyone what he has seen, while the desire to become a grown-up and do the things he saw his father do, grows within him. This is why Jesus starts out from here. This is why God's closeness is the first proclamation: by staying close to God, we conquer fear, we open ourselves to love, we grow in goodness and we feel the need and the joy to proclaim.

If we want to be good apostles, we have to be like children: sit "on God's lap" and, from there, look at the world with trust and love, in order to bear witness that God is the Father, that he alone transforms our hearts and gives us that joy and that peace that we ourselves cannot attain.

To proclaim that God is near — but how can we do this? In the Gospel, Jesus advises not to say many words, but rather to perform many deeds of love and hope in the name of the Lord. Not saying many words, but performing deeds! "Heal the sick", says the Lord, "raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay" (*Mt 10:8*). Here is the heart of proclamation: freely given witness, service. I will tell you something: I am always puzzled by the "talkers" with their endless talk and no action.

At this point, let us ask a few questions: Do we, who believe in God who is close, confide in him? Do we know how to look forward trustfully, like a child who knows he is held in his father's arms? Do we know how to sit in the Father's lap with prayer, by listening to the Word, partaking of the Sacraments? And finally, close to him, do we know how to instil courage in others, to make ourselves close to those who suffer and are alone, to those who are distant and even those who are hostile to us? This is the substance of faith. This is what counts.

And let us now pray to Mary; may she help us feel we are loved and transmit closeness and trust.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, next Tuesday, 20 June, is World Day of Refugees, organized by the United Nations: with great sorrow and much heartache I think of the victims of the very serious shipwreck that occurred in recent days off the coast of Greece. And it seems that the sea had been calm. I reiterate my prayer for those who have lost their lives, and I implore that everything possible always be done to prevent similar tragedies.

And I pray also for the young students, victims of the brutal attack against a school in the west of

Uganda. This fighting, this war everywhere... let us pray for peace!

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and many other countries, especially the faithful from Florida and from Munich. I greet the “Saint John Paul II” School of Opole, Poland, and the “Saint Philip Neri” School of London.

I also greet the groups from Zogno, Guardiagrele and Poggiomarino, as well as the “Rosario Scardigno” School of Molfetta. And I also greet the Sisters of *Maria Bambina* who are watching the Angelus.

Let us persevere in prayers for the people of tormented Ukraine who are suffering greatly. Let us not forget them!

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