



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 17 December 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Gospel speaks to us about John the Baptist's mission (cf. *Jn* 1:6-8, 19-28), indicating that he is the prophet sent by God to "bear witness to the light" (v. 8). Let us reflect on this: *to bear witness to the light*.

Testimony. The Baptist is certainly an extraordinary man. People flock to listen to him, attracted by his consistent and sincere way of being (cf. vv. 6-7). His witness comes through his frank language, his honest behaviour, his austerity of life. All this makes him different from other famous and powerful people of the time, who, instead, invested a lot in appearances. People like him — honest, free and courageous — are luminous, fascinating figures: they motivate us to rise above mediocrity and be in turn models of good living for others. In every age, the Lord sends men and women like this. Do we know how to recognize them? Do we try to learn from their witness, allowing ourselves to be challenged? Or do we allow ourselves to be bedazzled by fashionable people and get caught in artificial behaviour?

Instead John is luminous because he bears witness to *the light*. But what is his light? He himself gives us the answer when he clearly tells the crowds who had flocked to hear him that he is not the light, that he is not the Messiah (cf. vv. 19-20). The light is Jesus, the Lamb of God, "God who saves". Only he redeems, frees, heals and enlightens. This is why John is a "voice" who accompanies his brothers and sisters to the Word. He serves without seeking honours or the

spotlight. He is a lamp, while the light is the living Christ (cf. vv. 26-27; *Jn* 5:35).

Brothers and sisters, the example of John the Baptist teaches us at least two things. First, that we cannot save ourselves alone: only in God do we find the *light* of life. And second, that each of us, through service, consistency, humility, witness of life — and always by God's grace — can be a lamp that shines and helps others find the way on which to meet Jesus.

Let us thus ask ourselves: How can I *bear witness to the light*, bear witness to Christ, in the places where I live, now, this very Christmas, not in a distant future?

May Mary, mirror of holiness, help us be men and women who reflect Jesus, the light who comes into the world.

After the Angelus the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in the Shrine of Our Lady of Luján in Argentina, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, a humble and zealous pastor, a witness of hope and defender of the poor, was beatified. He collaborated with Saint John Paul II in the promotion of lay people and in World Youth Days. May his example help us to be an outward bound Church, that accompanies everyone on their way, especially the weakest. A round of applause for the new Blessed!

Today I would like to recall the thousands of migrants who try to cross through the Darién jungle between Colombia and Panama. It is often families with children who venture along the dangerous paths, deceived by those who falsely promise them short and safe passage, mistreated and robbed. Many of them lose their lives in the jungle. Combined efforts are needed from the countries more directly affected and from the international community to prevent this tragic situation from passing unnoticed, and to provide a joint humanitarian response.

And let us not forget our brothers and sisters who are suffering because of war, in Ukraine, in Palestine and Israel, and in other conflict zones. As Christmas approaches, may the dedication to open paths of peace be strengthened.

I continue to receive very serious and sad news about Gaza. Unarmed civilians are targets for bombs and shootings. And this happened even within the parish complex of the Holy Family, where there are no terrorists, but families, children, people who are sick and have disabilities, sisters. A mother and her daughter, Mrs. Nahida Khalil Anton and her daughter Samar Kamal Anton, were killed, and other people wounded by snipers as they were going to the bathroom. The house of the Sisters of Mother Teresa was damaged and their generator was hit. Some say: "this is terrorism and war". Yes, it is war, it is terrorism. This is why Scripture says that "God makes

wars cease... he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear” (cf. *Ps* 46:9). Let us pray to the Lord for peace.

I greet all of you, families, parish groups and associations, who have come to Rome from Italy and many parts of the world. In particular, I greet the pilgrims from the United States of America and Poland and the faithful from Mormanno, Acilia and Viterbo.

And now I greet you, dear children from the oratories and schools in Rome who have brought your Baby Jesus figurines to be blessed. I bless them. In blessing your *Bambinelli*, I ask that you pray before the Nativity scene for children who will experience a difficult Christmas in places where there is war, in refugee camps, in situations of profound misery. Thank you for doing this, and Merry Christmas to all of you and your families. A round of applause for the children!

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