The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 19 December 2021

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

The Gospel of the Liturgy of today, fourth Sunday of Advent, tells of Mary's visit to Elizabeth (cf. *Lk* 1:39-45). After receiving the annunciation of the angel, the Virgin does not stay at home, thinking over what has happened and considering the problems and pitfalls, which were certainly not lacking: because, poor girl, she did not know what to do with this news, with the culture of that age… She did not understand…. On the contrary, she first thinks of someone in need; instead of being absorbed in her own problems, she thinks about someone in need, she thinks about Elizabeth, her relative, who was advanced in years and with child, something strange and miraculous. Mary sets out with generosity, without letting herself be daunted by the discomforts of the journey, responding to an inner impulse that called her to be close and to help. A long road, kilometre after kilometre, and no bus went there: she had to go on foot. She went out to help, sharing her joy. Mary gives Elizabeth the joy of Jesus, the joy she carried in her heart and in her womb. She goes to her and proclaims her feelings, and this proclamation of feelings then became a prayer, the *Magnificat*, which we all know. And the text says that Our Lady "arose and went with haste" (v. 39).

She *arose and went*. In the last stretch of the Advent journey, let us be guided by these two verbs. To *arise* and to *go in haste* : these are the two movements that Mary made and that she also invites us to make as Christmas approaches. First of all, *arise*. After the angel's annunciation, a difficult period loomed ahead for the Virgin: her unexpected pregnancy exposed her to

misunderstandings and even severe punishment, including stoning, in the culture of that time. Let us imagine how many concerns and worries she had! Nevertheless, she did not become discouraged, she was not disheartened: but she arose. She did not look down at her problems, but up to God. And she did not think about who to ask for help, but to whom to bring help. She always thought about others: that is Mary, always thinking of the needs of others. She would do the same later, at the wedding in Cana, when she realizes that there is no more wine. It is a problem for other people, but she thinks about this and tries to find a solution. Mary always thinks about others. She also thinks of us.

Let us learn this way of reacting from Our Lady: to arise, especially when difficulties threaten to crush us. To arise, so as not to get bogged down in problems, sinking into self-pity or falling into a sadness that paralyses us. But why get up? Because God is great and is ready to lift us up again if we reach out to him. So let us cast to him the negative thoughts, the fears that block every impulse and that prevent us from moving forward. And then let us do as Mary did: let us look around and look for someone to whom we can be of help! Is there an elderly person I know to whom I can give a little help, company? Everyone, think about it. Or offering a service to someone, a kindness, a phone call? But who can I help? I get up and I help. By helping others, we help ourselves rise up again from difficulties.

The second movement is to *go in haste*. This does not mean to proceed with agitation, in a hurried manner, no, it does not mean this. Instead, it means conducting our days with a joyful step, looking ahead with confidence, without dragging our feet, as slaves to complaints — these complaints ruin so many lives, because one starts complaining and complaining, and life drains away. Complaining leads you always to look for someone to blame. On her way to Elizabeth's house, Mary proceeds with the quick step of one whose heart and life are full of God, full of his joy. So, let us ask ourselves, for our benefit: how is my "step"? Am I proactive or do I linger in melancholy, in sadness? Do I move forward with hope or do I stop and feel sorry for myself? If we proceed with the tired step of grumbling and small talk, we will not bring God to anyone, we will only bring bitterness and dark things. Instead, it is very good for us to cultivate a healthy sense of humour, as for example, Saint Thomas More or Saint Philip Neri did. We can also ask for this grace, the grace of a healthy sense of humour: it does so much good. Let us not forget that the first act of charity we can do for our neighbours is to offer them a serene and smiling face. It is bringing the joy of Jesus to them, as Mary did with Elizabeth.

May the Mother of God take us by the hand, and help us to *arise* and to *go in haste* towards Christmas!

After the Angelus, the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I express my closeness to the people of the Philippines affected by a strong typhoon, that destroyed many homes. May the Santo Niño bring comfort and hope to the families experiencing the greatest difficulties; and may he inspire practical help in all of us! The first genuine help is prayer and the other aid.

I greet all of you, pilgrims from Italy and from different countries. In particular, I greet Rome's Peruvian community and its folkloric group gathered here for the celebration in honour of the "*Niño Jesús Andino* " of Choqcca, the place of origin of the Nativity display set up in this Square. Thank you! I greet the Musical Band of Soriano al Cimino. I would like to listen to them later... [the band intones "Happy Birthday"] They play well, these ones! I greet the faithful of Terni, the scouts of Marigliano and the young people of Cingoli, Macerata.

And I wish you all a happy Sunday and a good journey in this last stretch of Advent that prepares us for the birth of Jesus. May it be for all of us a time of expectation and collaboration: hope, hoping and praying, in the company of the Virgin Mary, woman of expectation. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci*. And now the band, may it play something beautiful!

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