



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 10 December 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

On this second Sunday of Advent, the Gospel speaks to us about John the Baptist, Jesus' precursor (cf. *Mk* 1:1-8), and it describes him to us as "the voice of one crying in the desert" (cf. v. 3). The desert, an empty place where one does not communicate, and the voice, a means for speaking, seem like two contradictory images. But they are joined in the Baptist.

The *desert*. John preaches there, near the Jordan River, near the place where his people had entered the promised land many centuries earlier (cf. *Joshua* 3:1-17). In so doing, it is as if he were saying: to listen to God, we must return to the place where, for 40 years, he accompanied, protected and educated his people, in the desert. That is the place of silence and essentials, where one cannot afford to dwell on useless things, but needs to concentrate on what is indispensable in order to live.

And this is an ever relevant reminder: to proceed on the journey of life, we need to be stripped of the "extra", because living well does not mean filling oneself with useless things, but being freed from the superfluous, to dig deeply within ourselves so as to hold on to what is truly important before God. Only if, through silence and prayer, we make space for Jesus, who is the Word of the Father, will we know how to free ourselves from the pollution of vain words and gossip. Silence

and sobriety — in words, in the use of things, in the media and social media — these are not just *fioretti* [translator's note: a common practice in Italian devotional life in which someone offers a small sacrifice, a resolution, or the proposal to do a good deed to Our Lord or Our Lady] or virtues; they are essential elements of the Christian life.

And we come to the second image, the *voice*. This is the means by which we manifest what we think and what we bear in our hearts. We understand, therefore, that it is quite connected with silence, because it expresses what matures inside, from listening to what the Spirit suggests. Brothers and sisters, if one does not know how to be quiet, it is unlikely that one will have something good to say; while, the more attentive the silence, the stronger the word. In John the Baptist that voice is linked to the genuineness of his experience and the purity of his heart.

We can ask ourselves: What place does silence have in my days? Is it an empty, perhaps oppressive, silence? Or is it a space for listening, for prayer, for guarding my heart? Is my life sober or filled with superfluous things? Even if it means going against the tide, let us value silence, sobriety and listening. May Mary, Virgin of silence, help us to love the desert, to become credible voices who proclaim her Son who is coming.

After praying the Angelus the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, 75 years ago, on 10 December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed. It is like a master plan, from which many steps have been taken, but many still need to be made, and unfortunately, at times, steps backward have been taken. The commitment to human rights is never finished! In this regard, I am near to all those who, without fanfare, in concrete daily life, fight and personally pay the price for defending the rights of those who do not count.

I welcome [the news of] the release of a significant number of Armenian and Azerbaijani prisoners. I look with great hope on this positive sign between Armenia and Azerbaijan, for peace in the Southern Caucasus, and I encourage the parties and their leaders to conclude the peace treaty as soon as possible.

In a few days, the work of COP28 on the climate, underway in Dubai, will conclude. I ask all of you to pray for a good outcome for the care of our common home and the protection of people.

And we continue to pray for the populations who are suffering because of war. We are heading toward Christmas: Will we be able, with God's help, to take concrete steps of peace? It is not easy; we know that. Certain conflicts have historically deep roots. But we also have the witness of men and women who have worked wisely and patiently for peaceful coexistence. Let their

example be followed! Let every effort be put toward addressing and removing the causes of conflict, while at the same time — speaking of human rights — protecting civilians, hospitals, places of worship, freeing hostages and guaranteeing human rights. Let us not forget battered Ukraine, Palestine, Israel.

I assure my prayers to the victims of the fire that took place two days ago in the hospital in Tivoli.

I affectionately greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and other parts of the world, particularly the faithful from San Nicola Manfredi, the adult scouts from Scafati and the groups of young people from Novoli, Gerenzano and Rovigo.

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

Arrivederci!