



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 28 January 2024

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today's Gospel shows us Jesus freeing a person possessed by an "evil spirit" (cf. *Mk* 1:21-28), that tormented and made him scream (cf. vv. 23, 26). This is how the devil behaves: he wants to take possession of us in order to "enchain our souls". To enchain our souls: this is what the devil wants. We must be wary of the "chains" that stifle our freedom, because the devil always takes away our freedom. Let us try to name some of these chains that can shackle our hearts.

I am thinking of addictions, which enslave us, making us feel constantly dissatisfied, devouring our energies, goods, and relationships. I am thinking of the leading trends which encourage unrealistic perfectionism, consumerism and hedonism, that commodify people and ruin relationships. And other chains: there are temptations and conditionings that undermine self-esteem, serenity and the ability to choose and love life. Another chain is fear, which makes us look to the future with pessimism; and intolerance, which always puts the blame on others. Then there is a very ugly chain: the idolatry of power, which generates conflicts and resorts to weapons that kill, or uses economic injustice and thought manipulation. There are many chains in our life.

And Jesus came to free us from all these chains. Today, facing the devil who challenges him by shouting, "What have you to do with us? [...] Have you come to destroy us?" (v. 24), Jesus answers, "Be silent, and come out of him!" (v. 25). Jesus has the power to drive out the devil. Jesus frees us from the power of evil and — let us be attentive — he drives out the devil, but he

does not negotiate with him! Jesus never negotiated with the devil, and when he was tempted in the desert, his responses were words from the Bible, never a dialogue. Brothers and sisters, there should be no dialogue with the devil! Be careful: there should be no dialogue with the devil, because if you start speaking to him, he will always win. Be careful.

So, what should we do when we feel tempted and oppressed? Negotiate with the devil? No: there must be no negotiating with him. We must invoke Jesus, invoke him there where we most strongly feel the tightening of the chains of evil and fear. By the power of his Spirit, the Lord wants to say to the evil one again today: “Be gone, leave that heart in peace, do not divide the world, families and communities; let them live serenely so that the fruits of my Spirit, not yours, may blossom there” — this is what Jesus says — “so that love, joy and meekness may reign among them and so that there may be freedom and peace, instead of violence and cries of hatred”.

Let us ask ourselves: Do I really want to be freed from those chains that shackle my heart? And also, am I capable of saying “no” to the temptations of evil before they plant themselves in my soul? Finally, do I invoke Jesus, allowing him to act in me, to heal me within?

May the Holy Virgin guard us from evil.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, for three years now, cries of suffering and the sound of weapons have replaced the smiles that characterize the people of Myanmar. Therefore, I join the call made by some Burmese bishops, to transform weapons of destruction into instruments for the growth of humanity and justice. Peace is a journey, and I invite all parties involved to take steps in dialogue and to practice understanding so that the land of Myanmar may reach the goal of fraternal reconciliation. May the transit of humanitarian aid be permitted, in order to guarantee access to basic necessities to everyone.

And may the same happen in the Middle East, in Palestine and Israel, and wherever there is conflict. May the peoples be respected! I always think intensely of all the victims, especially the civilian ones, caused by the war in Ukraine. Please, may their cry for peace be heard: it is the cry of the people, who are tired of violence and want the war to stop. It is a disaster for the people and a defeat for humanity!

I was relieved to learn about last week’s release of the nuns and the other people who were kidnapped with them [last month] in Haiti. I ask that those who are still being held captive be set free, and that all forms of violence may cease. May everyone make their own contribution to the peaceful development of the country, which needs renewed support from the international

community.

I express my closeness to the community of the Santa Maria [Catholic] Church in Istanbul, which suffered an armed attack during Mass, resulting in one death and several injuries.

Today is World Leprosy Day. I encourage those who are engaged in assisting people who suffer from this disease, helping them become socially integrated. Despite its decline, it is still one of the most feared diseases, affecting the poorest and most marginalized.

I greet you all, people from Rome, from Italy, and from many parts of the world. In particular, the students of the “Puente Ajuda” Institute in Olivenza, Spain, and those of the “Sir Michelangelo Refalo” Institute in Gozo.

Now I address you, boys and girls of Catholic Action, of the parishes and Catholic schools in Rome. You have come to the end of the “Caravan of Peace”, during which you reflected on the call to be guardians of Creation, a gift from God. Thank you for your presence! And thank you for your commitment to building a better society. Now let us listen to the message that your friends, who are here by my side, will read.

Wearing green sweatshirts with the words “acr Style”, two children acting as “spokespersons” for Catholic Action — accompanied by the ecclesiastical assistant of Rome, Fr Alfredo Tedesco, by Ms Marilena Pintagro, and by Mr Antonio Culla — read the traditional message of peace, this year centred on the environment. “We are here”, they said, “to shout to the whole city and the entire world our longing for peace! These days it is difficult to think of peace, many wars are being fought even close to us: it seems that no one cares about making peace. We, instead, want to be on the side of peace, attempting to put out, in our small way, the fire of hatred and violence”. The children told the Pope that they had “drawn” peace “as a beautiful and blooming plant”, and war “as a dry and bare plant”. This, they explained, “reminds us that the world is a gift from God: we must not destroy it with hatred but make Jesus’ message of love flourish, and love cannot exist without peace!”. Recalling, then, the *acr*’s slogan for this year — “This is your house!” — they stressed that “our house is our planet” and that “we must all take care of it as if in a nature reserve”. Then the Pope continued:

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. You see that young people, the children of Catholic Action, are good! Take courage! Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*