



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 11 February 2024

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today's Gospel presents us with the healing of a leper (cf. *Mk* 1:40-45). To the sick man who implores him, Jesus answers: "I will; be clean!" (v. 41). He utters a very simple phrase, which he immediately puts into practice. Indeed, "immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean" (v. 42). This is Jesus' style with those who suffer: few words, and concrete deeds.

Many times in the Gospel, we see him behave in this way towards those who suffer: deaf people (cf. *Mk* 7:31-37), paralyzed people (cf. *Mk* 2:1-12), and many others in need (cf. *Mk* 5). He always does this. He speaks little and he promptly follows up his words with actions. He bends down, takes by the hand, heals. He does not waste time with discourses or interrogations, much less with pietism or sentimentalism. Rather, he shows the delicate discretion of one who listens attentively and acts with solicitude, preferably without being conspicuous.

It is a wonderful way to love, and how much good it does us to imagine it and assimilate it! Let us also think of when we come across people who act like this: sober in words, but generous in action; reluctant to show off but ready to make themselves useful; effective in helping because they are willing to listen. Friends to whom one can say: "Do you want to listen to me? Do you want to help me?", with the confidence of hearing them answer, almost with Jesus' words: "Yes, *I will*, I am here for you, to help you!". This concreteness is so much more important in a world such as our own, in which an evanescent virtuality of relationships seems to be gaining ever more ground.

Let us listen instead to how the Word of God prompts us: “If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?” (*James 2:15-16*). The Apostle James says this. Love needs tangibility, love needs presence, encounter, it needs to be given time and space: it cannot be reduced to beautiful words, images on a screen, to selfies of a moment, or hasty messages. They are useful tools that can help, but they are not enough for love; they cannot substitute real presence.

Let us ask ourselves today: do I know how to listen to people, am I ready to meet their good requests? Or do I make excuses, procrastinate, hide behind abstract or useless words? In real terms, when was the last time I went to visit someone who was alone or sick — everyone can answer in their heart — or when was the last time I changed my plans to meet the needs of someone who asked me for help?

May Mary, solicitous in caring, help us to be ready and tangible in love.

After praying the Angelus the Holy Father continued:

Today, María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa was canonized: an Argentine saint. A round of applause for the new saint!

Today, on the memorial of the Blessed Virgin of Lourdes, we celebrate World Day of the Sick, which this year draws attention to the importance of *relationships* in sickness. The first thing we need when we are ill is the closeness of loved ones, of healthcare professionals and, in our heart, God’s closeness. We are all called to be a neighbour to those who suffer, to visit the sick as Jesus teaches us in the Gospel. Therefore, today I wish to express my closeness, and that of the entire Church, to all people who are sick or more fragile. Let us not forget God’s style: closeness, compassion and tenderness.

But on this Day, brothers and sisters, we cannot remain silent about the fact that there are many people today who are denied the right to [health] care, and thus the right to life! I am thinking of those who live in extreme poverty; but I am also thinking of war zones: fundamental human rights are violated there every day! It is intolerable. Let us pray for martyred Ukraine, for Palestine and Israel, let us pray for Myanmar and for all peoples who are tormented by war.

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from various countries. In particular, I greet the faithful of Moral de Calatrava and Burgos, Spain, those from Brasilia and from Portugal; the Youth Choir and Orchestra of Mostar; the School of Vila Pouca de Aguiar, Portugal.

I greet the faithful from Enego and Rogno, volunteers from the Shrine of Sant'Anna of Vinadio, the Choir of Eraclèa and the Santa Paola Frassinetti Association of San Calogero. I greet the young people from Lodi, Petosino and Torri di Quartesòlo; the confirmation candidates from Malta, Lallio and Almenno San Salvatore; the students of the "Sant'Ambrogio" Salesian Institute of Milan, and the Children's Choir of Piovène Rocchette; as well as the "Radio Mater" group, on the occasion of their 30th anniversary.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch, and *arrivederci!*