

FAITH AND REASON

Pope at Angelus: Christmas 2020 ‘a chance to help others without complaining: Ahead of the Angelus prayer on Sunday, Pope Francis reflects on Mary’s “yes” to God’s invitation and warns against allowing consumerism to distract our hearts from the true spirit of Christmas. Pope Francis led the prayer of the Angelus in St. Peter’s Square on the fourth and final Sunday of Advent. Reflecting on the day’s Gospel of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38), the Pope said the invitation to become the Mother of the Messiah carried with it both pure joy and great trial. According to the Gospel, Mary was betrothed to Joseph, and faced the death penalty if found to be pregnant.

“Certainly, the divine message would have filled Mary’s heart with light and strength,” said the Pope. “Nevertheless, she found herself faced with a crucial decision: to say ‘yes’ to God, risking everything, even her life, or to decline the invitation and to continue her ordinary life.”

Active “yes” to God: Pope Francis noted how Mary offered her assent to God’s invitation with a wholehearted fiat: “Let it be done to me according to your word.” He pointed out that, in the original Greek, the expression attributed to Mary “indicates a strong desire, the firm will that something happen.” Hers was no simple, submissive “yes”, said the Pope. Mary actively bound herself to God. “She is a woman in love prepared to serve her Lord completely and immediately.” Mary, he added, does not hesitate or impose conditions on God.

Without considering the cost: The Pope reflected on how often we procrastinate in life, even in our spiritual life. He said we know it would be good to pray, but that we say we don’t have time. “I know it is important to help someone, but today I can’t. I will do it tomorrow.” Yet, as we cross the threshold into the Christmas Season, Mary invites us to offer our quick and courageous “yes”, no matter the cost.

In spite of difficult conditions: Pope Francis urged Christians to consider in what ways God is inviting us to say “yes”, especially in the difficulties surrounding Christmas in 2020. “Instead of complaining in these difficult times about what the pandemic prevents us from doing, let us do something for someone who has less: not the umpteenth gift for ourselves and our friends, but for a person in need whom no-one thinks of!” The Pope then warned against letting gift-buying consume our heart ahead of the holidays. “Consumerism has stolen Christmas,” he said, pointing out that the Holy Family filled the stable in Bethlehem with poverty and love, not consumerism. Pope Francis concluded by inviting everyone to prepare our hearts for Christmas through prayer, “like Mary’s: free from evil, welcoming, ready to receive God.” ... **By Devin Watkins**

Prayer to Mary, Mother of the Church and Mother of our faith:

Mother, help our faith!

Open our ears to hear God’s word and to recognize his voice and call.

Awaken in us a desire to follow in his footsteps, to go forth from our own land and to receive his promise.

Help us to be touched by his love, that we may touch him in faith.

Help us to entrust ourselves fully to him and to believe in his love, especially at times of trial, beneath the shadow of the cross, when our faith is called to mature. Sow in our faith the joy of the Risen One. Remind us that those who believe are never alone.

Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day, which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!... **Pope Francis**

Is Your Family Holy? “When the Bible says holy it means ‘separate’ or ‘different.’ The word implies being healthy and whole in a world where much is un-healthy and fragmented. The English phrase hale and hearty sums up true holiness. Holiness includes such concepts as humor and laughter, compassion and understanding, and the capacity to forgive and be forgiven, to love and be loved. That’s holiness. Holy families are not free from conflict, nor do they never hurt one another. Holiness in families, rather, comes from learning to forgive and to be reconciled, and learning to face our problems and do something about them. In family life, holy means striving to surrender to God’s light within us when the darkness around us seems overwhelming. It means struggling day after day to bring creative order—if only a bit of it—to the chaos in our lives. When we work at cultivating forgiveness, reconciliation, and community, we embody God’s holy will in the context of family life. A family embodies holiness by striving to be ‘hale and hearty,’ not by trying to be ‘perfect’ according to a set of other worldly standards.” ... **Mitch Finley, Catholic Digest**

Redemption is even Greater than Creation: Both reason and natural justice move me to give up myself wholly to loving the one to whom I owe all that I am and all that I have. But faith shows me that I should love him more than I love myself, as I come to realize that he has given me not only my own life but himself as well. Why shouldn't the creature love his Creator who gave him the power to love? Why shouldn't he love him with all his being since it is by his will alone that he can do anything that is good? It was God's creative grace that out of nothingness raised him to the dignity of humanity. And this fact alone demonstrates our duty to love him, and his justice of the claim to that love.

I owe all that I am to Him who made me. But how can I pay my debt to Him who redeemed, and in such a marvelous way? Creation was not so vast a work as redemption. It is written of the human race and of all things that were made, "He spoke the word and they were created (Ps 148). But to redeem the creation that sprang into being at his word, how much more he spoke, what wonders he worked, what hardship he endured, what humiliation he suffered. In that light "What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me" (Ps 16).

In the first creation God gave me myself. But in his new creation he gave me himself, and by that gift restored to me the self that I had lost. Created first and then restored. I owe him myself twice over in return for myself. But what do I have to offer him for the gift of myself? Even if I could multiply myself a thousand times and then give him all, what would that be in comparison to God?..... **St Bernard of Clairvaux**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	When man is with God in awe and love, then he is praying.
Monday	We make Idols of our concepts, but Wisdom is born of wonder.
Tuesday	Lord, my hands were made for blessing, but not my feet.
Wednesday	Stand in the divine rain, and seeds of wisdom will grow in your soul.
Thursday	Discipline is given to restrain the excesses of freedom.
Friday	We can never attain a maximum love of God with only a minimum knowledge of God.
Saturday	America is wired Catholic, labeled Protestant, and currently functioning as secular.

To attract souls and transform them into Himself through love, Christ has revealed His own infinite love. His own Heart inflamed by love for souls, a love that impelled Him to mount the Cross, to remain with us in the Eucharist and to enter our souls and to leave us in testament His own Mother as our Mother... **Saint Maximilian Kolbe**

The 2 Births of Christ: There are two births of Christ, one unto the world in Bethlehem; the other in the soul, when it is spiritually reborn. Men think of the former much more than the later and celebrate it every year; but the spiritual Bethlehem is equally momentous.... It was the second birth that Saint Paul insisted on when he wrote from prison to his beloved people, the Ephesians, asking that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith and that they be rooted and grounded in love. This is the second Bethlehem, or the personal relationship of the individual heart to the Lord Christ...**Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen**

A Prayer for Grace: Dear Lord, thank you for your light shining on me in the darkness, and for your love drawing me out of loneliness. Help me to share these gifts, with those around me. Even as Mother Teresa did in the "Calcutta's" of my own life, in my own family and in all those you place on my path. Grant me the grace to seek your presence each day in quiet prayer, no matter how hectic life may become, there to experience your renewing love. Empower me to live my own vocation in this world with Mother Teresa's same energy and passion. Thank you for your many gifts, especially for your unimaginable love that fills all my desires.

Prayer in Silence: I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is a friend of silence. We need to listen to God because it is not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters. Prayer feeds the soul and brings you closer to God. It also gives you a clean and pure heart. A clean heart can see God, can speak to God, and can see the love of God in others... **St. Teresa of Calcutta**

In His Will is Our Peace
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