



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *ANGELUS* Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 4 February 2018 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

This Sunday's Gospel reading continues the narrative of Jesus' day in Capernaum, on a Saturday, the Jewish weekly holy day (cf. Mk 1:21-39). This time the Evangelist Mark highlights the relationship between Jesus' *thaumaturgical work* and the *awakening of faith* in the people he meets. Indeed, with the healing signs that he performs on all types of sick people, the Lord wants to arouse faith as a response.

Jesus' day in Capernaum begins with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and ends with the scene of a crowd of townspeople who gathered outside the house where he was staying, to bring all the sick people to him. Marked by physical suffering and by spiritual wretchedness, the crowd comprises, so to speak, "the living environment" in which Jesus' mission, made up of healing and comforting words and actions, takes place. Jesus did not come to bring salvation in a laboratory; he does not preach from a laboratory, detached from people. He is in the midst of the crowd! In the midst of the people! Just think that most of Jesus' public ministry took place on the streets, among the people; to preach the Gospel, to heal physical and spiritual wounds. This *crowd* of which the Gospel often speaks is a humanity marked by suffering. It is a humanity marked by suffering, toil and problems. It is to this poor humanity that Jesus' powerful, liberating and renewing action is directed. That Saturday ends in this way, in the midst of the crowd until late in the evening. And what does Jesus do after that?

Before dawn the next day, he goes out of the town's gates unseen and withdraws to a secluded place to pray. Jesus prays. In this way, he removes even himself and his mission from a "triumphalist" view which misunderstands the meaning of miracles and of his charismatic power. Miracles, in fact, are "signs" which encourage faith as a response; signs which are always accompanied by words that enlighten; and, taken together, the signs and words arouse faith and conversion through the divine power of Christ's grace.

The conclusion of today's passage (vv. 35-39) indicates that Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom of God finds its most rightful place on the streets. To the disciples who look for him in order to bring him back to the town — the disciples went to find him where he was praying and they wanted to bring him back to the town — what does Jesus answer? "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also" (v. 38). This was the journey of the Son of God and this will be the journey of his disciples. And it must be the journey of each Christian. The street, as the place for the Good News of the Gospel, places the mission of the Church under the sign of "going forth", of journeying, under the sign of "movement", and never of idleness.

May the Virgin Mary help us to be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit which propels the Church to increasingly "pitch her tent" among the people, in order to bring to everyone the healing word of Jesus, the physician of souls and bodies.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Vigevano, the young Teresio Olivelli was beatified. Killed because of his Christian faith in 1945 in the Hersbruck concentration camp, he bore witness to Christ in his love for the weaker ones and he joins the array of martyrs of the last century. May his heroic sacrifice be a seed of hope and brotherhood especially for young people.

Today in Italy, we celebrate Pro-Life Day which has as its theme, "the Gospel of life, joy for the world". I echo the message of the Bishops and express my appreciation and encouragement to the different ecclesiastical groups which promote and support life in many ways, in particular the pro-life movement; I greet its representatives present here — not very many. And this worries me. There are not many who fight for life; in a world where more and more weapons are built each day, where laws contrary to life are made daily; where a throwaway culture continues every day; the discarding of what is not useful, what is bothersome. Please let us pray that our people may be more conscious of the defence of life in this moment of destruction and rejection of humanity.

I wish to express my closeness to the people of Madagascar, recently struck by a violent cyclone which claimed many victims, displaced people and caused extensive damage. May the Lord comfort them and support them.

And now an announcement. Faced with the tragic prolonging of conflicts in various parts of the world, I invite all the faithful to join me in a Special Day of Prayer and Fasting for Peace on 23 February, the Friday of the First week of Lent. We will offer it in particular for the populations of the Democratic Republic of Congo and of South Sudan. As on other similar occasions, I also invite our non-Catholic and non-Christian brothers and sisters to join in this initiative in the ways they believe best, but all together.

Our heavenly Father always listens to his children who cry out to him in pain and anguish; “he heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds” (Ps 147[146]:3). I launch a heartfelt appeal that we too may listen to this cry and each, according to his or her own conscience before God, can ask: “What can I do for peace?”. We can certainly pray, but not only: each one can concretely say “no” to violence on his or her own behalf. Because the victories obtained through violence are false victories, whereas working for peace is good for everyone.

I greet all of you faithful of Rome and pilgrims who have come here from Italy and other countries. I greet the group from the Dioceses of Cádiz and Ceuta, Spain, the students from Collège Charles Péguy in Paris, the faithful from Sestri Levante, Empoli, Milan and Palermo, and the representatives from the City of Agrigento, to whom I express my appreciation for their commitment to welcoming and integrating migrants. Thank you! Thank you for what you do. I cordially greet the volunteers and associates of the Fraternal Domus association which for the last 50 years has been working in the fields of reception and solidarity in Rome.

I wish you all a Happy Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci!*