The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 15 October 2023

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno*!

Today's Gospel passage tells us about a king who prepares a wedding banquet for his son (cf. *Mt* 22:1-14). He is a powerful man, but he is above all a generous father, who invites others to share in his joy. In particular, he reveals the goodness of his heart in the fact that he does not compel anyone, but invites everyone, even though this way exposes him to the possibility of rejection. We notice that he prepares a banquet, *freely* offering an opportunity for encounter, an opportunity for a feast. This is what God prepares for us: a banquet, to be in communion with him and among ourselves. And we, all of us, are therefore God's invited guests. But a wedding banquet requires time and commitment on our part: it requires a "yes": to go, to go to the Lord's invitation. He invites, but he leaves us free.

This is the type of relationship that the Father offers us: he calls us to stay with him, leaving us the possibility to accept or not accept [the invitation]. He does not propose to us a relationship of subjection, but rather of fatherhood and sonship, which is necessarily conditioned by our free assent. God is very respectful regarding freedom; *very* respectful. Saint Augustine uses a very beautiful expression in this regard, saying: "He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent" (Sermonclxix, 13). And certainly not because he does not have the capacity to do so — God is omnipotent! — but because, being love, he respects our freedom fully. God proposes: he does not impose. Never.

Let us return, then, to the parable: the king, the text says, “sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they *would not come* ” (v. 3). Here is the drama of the story: the “no” to God. But why do people refuse his invitation? Was it perhaps an unpleasant invitation? No, and yet — the Gospel says — “they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business” (v. 5). They did not care, because they were thinking of their own affairs. And that king, who is a father, God, what does he do? He does not give up; he continues to invite. Indeed, he extends the invitation, until he finds someone who accepts it, among the poor. Among those who know they have little else, many come, until they fill the hall (cf. vv. 8-10).

Brothers and sisters, how many times do we fail to heed God’s invitation, because we are intent on our own affairs! Often, we struggle to have *free* time, but today Jesus invites us to find the time that *frees* : the time to dedicate to God, that lightens and heals our hearts, that increases peace, confidence and joy in us, that saves us from evil, loneliness and loss of meaning. It is worth it, because it is good to be with the Lord, to make room for him. Where? At Mass, in listening to the Word, in prayer and also in charity, because by helping those who are weak or poor, by spending time with those who are lonely, by listening to those who ask for attention, by consoling those who suffer, one is with the Lord, who is present in those in need. However, many think that these things are a “waste of time”, and so they lock themselves away in their private world; and it is sad. And this creates sadness. How many sad hearts there are! For this reason, because they are closed.

Let us ask ourselves, then: how do I respond to God’s invitations? What space do I give him in my days? Does the quality of my life depend on my affairs and my free time, or on love for the Lord and for my brethren, especially those most in need?

May Mary, who with her “yes” made room for God, help us not to be deaf to his invitations.

After praying the Angelus, the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I continue to follow with great sorrow what is happening in Israel and Palestine. I think again of the many [people] … in particular of the children and the elderly. I renew my appeal for the release of the hostages, and I strongly ask that children, the sick, the elderly, women, and all civilians not be made victims of the conflict. May Humanitarian Law be respected, especially in Gaza, where it is urgent and necessary to ensure humanitarian corridors and to come to the aid of the entire population. Brothers and sisters, many have already died. Please, let no more innocent blood be shed, neither in the Holy Land nor in Ukraine, nor in any other place! Enough! Wars are always a defeat, always!

Prayer is the meek and holy force to oppose the diabolical force of hatred, terrorism and war. I invite all believers to join with the Church in the Holy Land and to dedicate next Tuesday, 17

October, to prayer and fasting. And now let us pray to Our Lady. [Hail Mary].

My concern for the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh has not waned. In addition to the humanitarian situation of displaced people — which is serious — I would also like to make a special appeal for the protection of the monasteries and places of worship in the region. I hope that, starting with the Authorities and all the inhabitants, they can be respected and protected as part of the local culture, as expressions of faith and a sign of a fraternity that makes it possible to live together despite differences.

An Apostolic Exhortation on Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, entitled "*C'est la Confiance*", was published today. Indeed, as this great Saint and Doctor of the Church testified, trust in God's merciful love is the way that leads us to the heart of the Lord and his Gospel.

I express my closeness to the Jewish community of Rome, which will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Nazi deportations, tomorrow [16 October].

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and many parts of the world, in particular the Gonfalone Archfraternity of Subiaco and the "Fiat 500" Club of Rome.

I greet the more than 400 young missionaries of New Horizons and other associations and communities, who from yesterday until next Sunday, are participating in "Street Mission" here in Rome, going to places where young people gather, in schools, hospitals, prisons and on the streets to proclaim the joy of the Gospel. They are good! Let us support them with prayer in their commitment to listening to the cry of many young people and many people in need of love.

I am looking at the Ukrainian flags: let us not forget war-torn Ukraine.

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

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