Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis waves as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 26. (CNS/EPA/Claudio Peri)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — December 27, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

While "it may seem strange" to celebrate the feast of the first Christian martyr on the day after Christmas, Pope Francis said it serves as a reminder that Jesus came to offer his life for the salvation of all.

Gathered around the Christmas tree and Nativity scene, some 25,000 people came to St. Peter's Square Dec. 26, the feast of St. Stephen, to recite the Angelus at midday with Pope Francis.

"The joy of Christmas still fills our hearts," the pope said. "The marvelous news that Christ was born for us and brings the world peace continues to resonate."

The feast of St. Stephen is not meant to put a halt to the joy, he said, but to remind Christians that the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes was born to be wrapped in a burial cloth and to rise again.

Like Jesus, St. Stephen entrusted his life to God and died forgiving his persecutors, the pope said.

"The attitude of Stephen, who faithfully imitates the gesture of Jesus, is a call to each one of us to accept from the hands of God, with faith, that which life has in store for us, both the positive and negative," he said.

Every life has difficult moments, the pope said, but faith in God helps people live through them as "an occasion to grow in faith and to build new relationships with our brothers and sisters. It's about abandoning ourselves into the hands of the Lord, who we know is a father rich in goodness toward his children."

The other attitude of St. Stephen's that Christians are called to imitate is forgiveness, Francis said. Forgiving another "is not easy to do, as we all know," but "forgiveness expands the heart, generates sharing and gives serenity and peace."

All Christians, he said, should pray for the Holy Spirit's gift of strength, which "heals our fears, our weaknesses, our pettiness and enlarges our hearts to forgive."

Advertisement