

An employee holds the hand of a person at an elderly residence in Brussels April 14, 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. During his April 15 morning Mass at the Vatican, Pope Francis prayed for the elderly who are fearful of dying alone during the pandemic. (CNS/ Reuters/Yves Herman)

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Pope Francis offered prayers for elderly people living alone or in retirement homes who are living in fear of contracting the coronavirus and dying alone.

"They are our roots, our history. They have given us the faith, traditions, the sense of belonging to a homeland. Let us pray for them so that the Lord may be close to them in this moment," the pope said April 15 at the beginning of the live broadcast of his morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

The pope reflected on the day's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, in which Peter and John heal a beggar crippled from birth.

"I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk," Peter told the man before he was healed.

In healing the crippled man, the pope said, God shows that he is faithful to his promise of closeness to his people.

"God, who is capable of remaking things, of re-creating, as he did with this man crippled from birth" whom he healed, he said. "This is his faithfulness to us; it is a 're-creation' that is more wonderful than creation."

Like the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep and the father of the prodigal son, the pope continued, "our God is a God who works overtime out of love, out of fidelity."

"God's faithfulness is feast; it is joy; it is such a joy that it makes us do as this crippled man did: he entered the temple walking, jumping, praising God. God's faithfulness is feast, it is a free feast; a feast for all of us."

Francis said that patience is also a hallmark of God's faithfulness as proven by Christ's appearance to Peter after the resurrection even though Peter had denied him.

"We know that it was God's fidelity that sought Peter," the pope said. "God's faithfulness always precedes us and our faithfulness is always the answer to that faithfulness that precedes us."

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