Francis, the comic strip

Pope Francis greets people as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking

Pope Francis greets people as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 31, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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Pope Francis called on world leaders to aid the people of Haiti as the country continues to descend into chaos due to widespread violence, economic instability and natural disasters.

During his Sunday Angelus address Oct. 31, the pope told pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square he was thinking of the Haitian people, "who are living in extreme conditions."

"I ask the leaders of nations to help this country, not to leave it on its own. And all of you, when you return home, look for news about Haiti and pray, pray a lot," he said. "Let's not abandon them."

The Oct. 16 kidnapping of 17 Christian missionaries was the latest sign of the deteriorating circumstances in the country following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise in July and a magnitude 7.2 earthquake in August.

Furthermore, armed gangs have blocked major ports in the island nation, causing severe fuel shortages and forcing several hospitals, which depend on diesel to run their generators, to suspend services, the New York Times reported Oct. 27.

The pope also said he was praying for Vietnam, which was recently hit with widespread flooding, causing thousands to evacuate their homes.

"My prayer and my thoughts go to the many families who are suffering, along with my encouragement to all those leaders of the country and the local church who are working to respond to the emergency," he said.

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He also remembered the people of Sicily, who have been devastated by flash flooding triggered by a powerful storm system, killing two people.

Before praying the Angelus prayer, Pope Francis reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. Mark in which Jesus insists the "first of all the commandments" are to love God and neighbor.

The pope said the scribe's repetition of Jesus' words was a reminder for Christians that "the word of the Lord must be repeated, made one's own, safeguarded."

Jesus, he added, "is not so much looking for skilled Scripture commentators, as he is looking for docile hearts which, welcoming his word, allow themselves to be changed inside."

The pope said it was not enough to read and understand the commandments to love God and neighbor. Instead, it must be "assimilated" and become "the voice of our conscience.

Christians, he added, must examine their own consciences so that Christ's words do "not remain a dead letter in the drawer of the heart."

"Let us repeat Jesus' words, making them resound in us," Pope Francis said. "And let us ask ourselves: Does this commandment truly orient my life? Does this

commandment resonate in my daily life?"