Vatican
Vatican News
A group of people in St. Peter's Square holds banner that reads "L'Immacolata Vincera"

A sign in Italian saying "Mary the Immaculate will triumph" is seen as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 8, 2022, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

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 8, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Pope Francis asked Catholics around the world to join him in entrusting to Mary "the universal desire for peace, especially for the martyred Ukraine, which is suffering so much."

Reciting the Angelus prayer at midday Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Francis noted the Angel Gabriel's words to Mary that "nothing will be impossible for God."

"With God's help, peace is possible; disarmament is possible," the pope told people gathered in St. Peter's Square. "But God wants our goodwill. May Our Lady help us to convert to God's plans."

The pope also invited people to join him late in the afternoon at the Spanish Steps in the center of Rome, where he planned to pay homage to Mary at a statue of the Immaculate Conception after visiting the Basilica of St. Mary Major. The COVID-19 pandemic had forced the cancellation of the public ceremony at the Spanish Steps in 2020 and 2021.

In his Angelus talk at noon, Francis said that while Catholics talk a lot about original sin, they often overlook the "original grace" of baptism, when "God came into our lives and we became his beloved children forever."

Advertisement

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, which celebrates Mary having been conceived without original sin, is a good time to remember that "we sinners, too, have received an initial gift that has filled our life, a good greater than anything, an original grace, of which often, however, we are unaware."

The feast day is a time to listen to God who says, "'Son, daughter, I love you and I am with you always, you are important for me, your life is precious,'" the pope said. "When things do not go well and we are discouraged, when we are downcast and risk feeling useless or wrong, let us think about this, about this original grace."

And, he said, it is a perfect day to remember that Mary will be with each person as he or she tries to fight temptation and to live in the fullness of their baptismal "original grace."

"We who struggle to choose what is good, we can entrust ourselves to her," the pope said. "Entrusting ourselves, consecrating ourselves to Mary, we say to her: 'Take me by the hand, lead me: with you I will have more strength in the battle against evil, with you I will rediscover my original beauty.'"