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Pope Francis, sitting in his wheelchair, places a hand on the head and hands of an older white

Pope Francis greets visitors at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican May 24, 2023. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

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Christians should pray on Pentecost that the Holy Spirit would give them the courage and strength to share the Gospel, Pope Francis said.

"No matter how difficult the situation may be -- and indeed, at times it may seem there is no room for the Gospel message -- we must not give up and we must not forsake pursuing what is essential in our Christian life, namely evangelization," the pope said May 24, the Wednesday before Pentecost.

Using the example of St. Andrew Kim Taegon, the 19th-century Korean martyr, Francis continued his weekly general audience talks about the "zeal" to evangelize.

With thousands of visitors and pilgrims -- including bands, flag twirlers and dancers -- gathered in a sunny St. Peter's Square, the pope introduced his talk about St.

Andrew by pointing out how Christianity was introduced to Korea 200 years before St. Andrew by laypeople who had heard the Gospel proclaimed in China and then shared it when they returned home.

"Baptized laypeople were the ones who spread the faith. There were no priests," the pope said. "Would we be able to do something like that?"

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Ordained in 1844, St. Andrew Kim Taegon was the first Korean-born priest and ministered at a time of anti-Christian persecution.

Francis told the story of how when the saint was still a seminarian, he was sent to welcome missionaries who snuck into the country from abroad. After walking far through the snow, "he fell to the ground exhausted, risking unconsciousness and freezing. At that point, he suddenly heard a voice, 'Get up, walk!'"

"This experience of the great Korean witness makes us understand a very important aspect of apostolic zeal: namely, the courage to get back up when one falls," the pope said.

"Each one of us might think, 'But how can I evangelize,'" he said. Following the example of the "greats" of evangelization history, each Christian can find a way to witness to the Gospel -- "talk about Jesus" -- in his or her family, among friends and in one's local community.

"Let us prepare to receive the Holy Spirit this coming Pentecost, asking for that grace, apostolic grace and courage, the grace to evangelize, to always carry forward the message of Jesus."