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Pope Francis smiles and waves from his apartment window with his other hand on the clear le

Pope Francis greets to an estimated 20,000 visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican to pray the Angelus Nov. 1, 2023, the feast of All Saints. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

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Holiness is a gift everyone receives with baptism, and it is a journey to be made together with the help of the saints in heaven, Pope Francis said on the feast of All Saints.

The saints "are our elder brothers and sisters, on whom we can always count," he said before reciting the Angelus with people gathered in St. Peter's Square Nov. 1.

"They support us and, when we take a wrong turn along the way, with their silent presence they never fail to correct us; they are sincere friends, whom we can trust, because they desire our wellbeing," he said.

"Holiness is a gift from God which we have received with baptism," Francis said. "If we let it grow, it can completely change our life."

"Therefore, saints are not unreachable or distant heroes, but people like us," he said, "whose starting point is the same gift we have received -- baptism."

In fact, he said, people today have certainly met what he likes to call the "saints next door," that is, people "who genuinely and with simplicity live a Christian life" as part of their "normal" everyday lives.

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"Every gift, however, must be accepted," he said. It comes with "the responsibility of a response" and "the invitation to commit oneself so that it is not squandered."

Holiness, therefore, is also a journey "to be made together, helping each other, united with those excellent companions who are the saints," he said.

Francis invited Catholics to get to know the lives of the saints, "to be moved by their examples" and "to turn to them in prayer."

"In their lives we find an example, in their prayers we receive help and friendship, and with them we are bound in a bond of brotherly love," he said.

After praying the Angelus, the pope asked for continued prayers "for the people who are suffering because of today's wars."

"Let us not forget tormented Ukraine, let us not forget Palestine, let us not forget Israel and let us not forget so many other regions" where fierce wars are raging, he said.