



Pope Francis greets visitors gathered in St. Peter's Square to pray the Angelus at the Vatican June 23, 2024. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Pope Francis called on world leaders to avoid any actions or words that could fuel current conflicts and instead to push for negotiations and peace.

"May the Holy Spirit enlighten the minds of those who govern, inspire wisdom and a sense of responsibility in them, to avoid any action or word that may fuel confrontation, and instead strive resolutely for a peaceful resolution of conflicts. It takes negotiation," he said after praying the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter's Square June 23.

The pope asked that people "continue to pray for peace, especially in Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel," remarking he could see someone in the crowd holding a flag from Israel. He prayed for peace in Gaza, the northern part of Congo and "in tormented Ukraine, which suffers greatly; let there be peace!"

In his main address before the Angelus prayer, the pope said Jesus strengthens the faith of his disciples and makes them more courageous with his presence.

When his disciples become aware of his power and presence, the "stronger and readier" they are to face "obstacles, difficulties, including the fear of venturing out to proclaim the Gospel," the pope said.

"Having overcome this trial with him, they will know how to face many others, even to the cross and martyrdom, to bring the Gospel to all peoples," the pope said.

"And Jesus does likewise with us too, in particular in the Eucharist: He gathers us around him, he gives us his Word, he nourishes with his body and his blood, and then he invites us to set sail, to transmit everything we have heard and to share what we have received with everyone, in everyday life, even when it is difficult," he said.

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Before the noonday prayer, Francis went to pray before the remains of his deceased confessor, Franciscan Father Manuel Blanco Rodríguez.

The pope went early morning June 23 to the priest's church in Rome's Trastevere neighborhood, the Church of the Santi Quaranta Martiri e San Pasquale Baylon, to pay his last respects.

The Spanish priest, who died June 20, was 85 and had lived in Rome for the past 44 years.

After the Angelus, Francis told visitors that the priest had been "a superior, a confessor, a man of counsel."

"Remembering him, I'd like to recall so many Franciscan brothers, confessors and preachers, who have honored and continue to honor the church of Rome. Thank you to all of them!" he said.