



Pope Francis invited Christians to live the Advent season preparing for Christmas by asking for the grace of keeping the faith.

Pope Francis on Monday shone the spotlight on the second week of Advent urging believers to ask for the grace to prepare themselves with faith to celebrate Christmas.

Speaking during the homily at Mass at the Casa Santa Marta, the Pope said “it’s not easy to keep the faith, to defend the faith”.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading of the day that tells the story of a paralysed man healed by Jesus, the Pope said faith gives us courage and shows us the way to touch the heart of the Lord.

He noted how, in the parable, the Lord “saw the faith” of those who brought the man and set him in His presence. “It took courage,” he said, to go up on the roof and lower him on the stretcher through the tiles.... “Those people had faith: “They knew that if the sick man was put in front of Jesus, he would be healed”.

Celebrate Christmas with faith

The Pope also recalled other episodes in which Jesus expressed admiration for people’s faith. Like in the case of the centurion who asked for the healing of his servant, of the Syrophenician woman who interceded for her daughter who was possessed by the devil, and of the woman afflicted with hemorrhages who was healed after having touched the hem of Jesus’ cloak. “Jesus, the Pope said, reproaches people of little faith”, like Peter who doubts, but he said; “with faith everything is possible”.

In this second week of Advent, Pope Francis continued, “we ask for the grace to prepare ourselves with faith to celebrate Christmas”.

He noted that Christmas is often marked in a worldly or pagan fashion, but reiterating the Lord's request that we do so with faith, the Pope said “it's not easy to keep the faith, it's not easy to defend the faith... it's not easy!”

Act of faith

Pope Francis wrapped up his reflection commenting on the episode narrated in the Gospel of John in which a boy who was blind is healed: “It will do us good today, and also tomorrow, during the week, to take chapter 9 of the Gospel of John and read this beautiful story of the boy who was blind from birth”.

“From the bottom of our hearts” he concluded “utter an act of faith and say: I believe Lord. Help me in my faith. Defend my faith from worldliness, from superstitions, from all that is not faith. Keep it from being reduced to theory, be it theological or moral... Faith in You, Lord”.