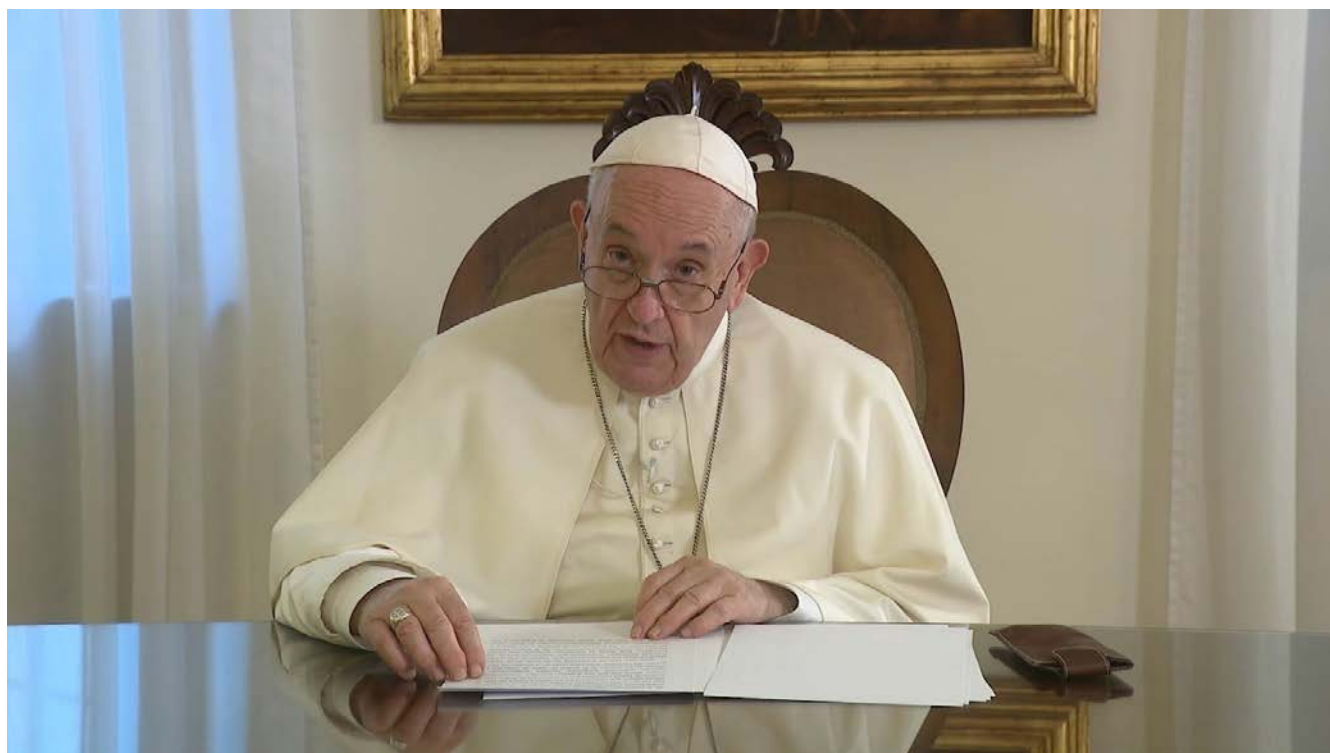


Message from Pope Francis for the inauguration of the tower of the Virgin Mary



“Dear brothers and sisters, pilgrims of the Archdiocese of Barcelona: peace and all good.

And with this Franciscan greeting, I join all of you from Rome for the lighting of the star on the tower of the Virgin Mary at the Basilica of the Sagrada Família. I would also like to send a very special greeting to the poorest members of that great city, to those who are ill or affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, to the elderly, to the young who for one reason or another see their future in danger, to those who are going through trying times.

Dear friends, the star of the tower of Mary shines for all of you today. With my brothers Archbishop Cardinal Joan Josep Omella i Omella and his three auxiliary bishops, you walk together, synodally. Both lay people, children, teens, young people and adults; and the members of the vowed life: seminarians, deacons and priests.



Starting today, this synodal path is illuminated for you by this star that the great architect Antoni Gaudí dreamed would crown the tower of the Virgin Mary. Because Mary is the star of the new evangelism. So, lifting our eyes up to the star that crowns the tower, I invite you to contemplate our Mother. Because each time we look to Mary, we once again believe in the revolutionary power of kindness and love. Today we celebrate the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. She is a true masterpiece. In perfect harmony with God's design for her, the Virgin Mary became the highest, most humble, docile and transparent before God. Gaudí wanted this mystery to crown the portal of Faith, the first built, so that, as the prayer to the Holy Trinity unfolds repeatedly throughout the Basilica, we would learn to be like Mary, the temple of that mystery, and to worship God in spirit and in truth.

The Gospel of Luke refers to her as "full of grace". We also address her this way every time we say the Hail Mary, always feeling her endearing maternal presence. She is full of the presence of God made flesh in her bosom. This is why Gaudí also put her in the centre of the portal of Charity, offering us the Baby Jesus under the careful gaze of Saint Joseph, so we would enter the church aflame with love for God and man.

I encourage you to also follow the example of the Virgin Mary with daily gestures of love and service. The immaculate beauty of our Mother cannot be imitated and, at the same time, attracts us. May this star that will shine from today illuminate you all so that, in praying the rosary, you say "yes" once and for all to the Lord's grace and a firm "no" to sin.

By praying with Mary, we meditate on the mysteries of Jesus' life, but also discern the path he indicates for us and draw strength to resist the temptations of violence or immediate gain. I also join you in your prayers that, like countless roses, are represented at Mary's feet on this beautiful Basilica.

I pray that each of you make Barcelona a more welcoming, liveable place for everyone. I particularly ask the Virgin Mary to give those with more responsibility wisdom, promptness of service and open minds. May Saint Mary watch over the families with her luminous star.

She, as part of the Holy Family of Nazareth with the Baby Jesus and Saint Joseph, experienced situations similar to what so many families experience today. Gaudí represented this on the portal of Hope, expressing in the faces of the workers the suffering and difficulties that put them in communion with the suffering of the Holy Family. The exile into Egypt of so many poor people seeking a better future or escaping evil, the death of so many innocents who join the two from Bethlehem.

May the Virgin Mary safeguard your homes, schools, universities, offices, businesses, hospitals, prisons. When praying the Virgin's crown of sorrows, don't forget to pray for the poor, the excluded. Because they are in God's heart and so many times we are responsible for their poverty, their exclusion. Let's take this opportunity to look at ourselves. What is our responsibility in this?



May this illuminated star on the tower of the Virgin Mary also illuminate us to keep living according to the Diocese Pastoral Plan and radiating the joy of the Gospel everywhere. May we, through knowing Christ, grow in fraternity, in sharing the good word of the Gospel with young people, in embracing the poor and marginalised. And, with the judgement of one with a very good ear, know how to listen to the Spirit and have a heart fully willing to do what he asks.

Don't forget the tree; don't forget our elders. A tree without roots cannot grow, cannot flower. We cannot turn our backs on the elderly. They aren't disposable; they're living memory. From them comes the sap that makes everything grow. Let's encourage dialogue between the young and the old so this wisdom may be passed down to make them grow and flower.

May God bless you and may the Holy Virgin, our Immaculate Mother, watch over you.

Please don't forget to pray for me.

Thank you.”

Pope Francis, December 2021

