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## Jubilee audience: a conversion that starts with mercy

Vatican City, 18 June 2016 – More than 30,000 people participated in the jubilee audience in St. Peter's Square during which the Holy Father, continuing his catechesis on mercy, focused on the relationship between mercy and conversion.

The Pope explained that when Jesus appeared after his resurrection several times before the disciples, He indicated to them that their preaching in the world should be centred on conversion and the forgiveness of sins, two aspects of God's mercy. "Conversion is present in all the Bible, especially in the preaching of the prophets who constantly invite the people to turn to the Lord, to ask forgiveness and to change their way of life. For the prophets, converting meant changing direction and turning anew to the Lord, based on the certainty that He loves us and that His love is always faithful. ... Returning to the Lord".

Jesus makes repentance the first word of His sermon: "Repent and believe in the Gospel", and by announcing this He presents Himself to the people, asking them to welcome His Word as the final and definitive one the Father addresses to humanity. Compared to the preaching of the prophets, Jesus insists even more on the inner dimension of conversion. In this, indeed, all the person is involved, heart and mind, to become a new creature, "a new person. If you change your heart you are renewed".

However, when Christ calls to conversion, He does not stand in judgement, but instead starts from closeness, from the sharing of the human condition and, therefore, the street, the house, the table", emphasised the Pope. "Mercy towards those who need to change their lives comes from His amiable presence, to involve each person in his history of salvation. Jesus persuaded people with amiability, with love, and with this approach He touched their hearts deeply, they were attracted by God's love and in this way motivated to change their life. For example, the conversions of Matthew and of Zacchaeus took place in this way, as they felt that they were loved by Jesus and, through Him, the Father. True conversion takes place when we welcome the gift of grace, and a clear sign of its authenticity is that we are aware of the needs of our brothers, and we are ready to reach out to them".

"How often we feel the need for a change that involves all of our being!", Francis exclaimed at the end of his catechesis. "How often we say: 'I must change, I can't go on like this ... My life, on this path, will not bear fruit, it will be a useless life and I will not be happy'. How often these thoughts come to us. ... And Jesus by our side,

with His hand outstretched, says to us, 'Come, come to me. I will do the work: I will change your heart, I will change your life, I will make you happy'. ... Jesus is with us and invites us to change our life. It is He, with the Holy Spirit, Who sows in us this restlessness, to change our life and to become a little better. Let us follow the Lord's invitation without resistance, because only if we open ourselves up to His mercy will we encounter the true life and true joy. We must merely throw open the door, and He will do all the rest. He does everything, but we must open the door of our heart so that He can heal us and help us go ahead. I assure you that we will be happier".

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