



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.30 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope focused on the theme "Risen Christ our hope" (cf. 1 *Cor.* 15).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recital of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

We meet today in the light of Easter, which we have celebrated and continue to celebrate with the liturgy. Therefore, in our itinerary of catechesis on Christian hope, today I wish to speak about the Risen Christ, our hope, as St. Paul presents Him in the First Letter to the Corinthians (cf. Chapter 15).

The Apostle wants to resolve an issue that in the community of Corinth was definitely the focus of discussions.

The resurrection is the last topic addressed in the letter, but probably, in order of importance, it is the first: indeed, everything rests on this assumption.

Speaking to his fellow Christians, Paul starts from a conclusive fact, that is not the outcome of a wise man's reflection, but a fact, a simple fact that intervened in the life of some people. Christianity is born from here. It is not an ideology, not a philosophical system, but a journey of faith which starts from an event, witnessed by the first disciples of Jesus. Paul summarises it in this way: Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and the third day He rose and He appeared to Peter and to the Twelve (cf. 1 *Cor.* 15:3-5). This is the fact: He died, He was buried, He rose and He appeared. That is, Jesus is living! This is the kernel of the Christian message.

By announcing this event, which is the core of faith, Paul insists above all on the last element of the Paschal mystery, that is the fact that Jesus is risen. If indeed everything came to an end with death, we would have in Him an example of supreme dedication, but this would not be able to generate our faith. He was a hero. No! He died, but He rose again. Because faith is born from the resurrection. To accept that Christ is dead, that He died crucified, is not an act of faith, it is an historical fact. However, believing that He rose is. Our faith is born on Easter morning. Paul lists the people to whom the risen Jesus appeared (cf. v. 5-7). We have here a small summary of all the accounts of Easter and all the people who came into contact with the Risen Christ. First in the list are Cephas, that is Peter, and the group of the Twelve; then there are "Five hundred brothers", many of whom could still give their testimony, and then James is mentioned. The last on the list – as the least worthy of all – Paul himself. He describes himself as "one untimely born".

Paul uses this expression because his personal history is dramatic: he was not an altar boy, he was a persecutor of the Church, proud of his convictions; he felt he was a successful man, with a very clear idea of what life was, with his duties. But, in this perfect picture – everything was perfect in Paul, he knew everything – in this perfect picture of life, one day something entirely unpredictable happened: the encounter with the Risen Christ, on the road to Damascus, where there was not only a man who fell to the ground: there was a person seized by an event that would have overturned the meaning of his life. And the persecutor became an apostle – why? Because I have seen the living Jesus! I have seen the risen Jesus Christ! This is the foundation of Paul's faith, like the faith of the other apostles, like the faith of the Church, like our faith.

How beautiful it is to think that Christianity, basically, is this! It is not so much our search for God – a search that is, in truth, very hesitant – but rather God's search for us. Jesus has taken us, He has seized us, He has won us over and will not to leave us any more. Christianity is grace, it is a surprise, and it therefore presupposes a heart capable of wonder. A closed heart, a rationalistic heart is incapable of wonder, and cannot understand what Christianity is. Because Christianity is grace, and grace can only be perceived, and it is mostly found in the wonder of the encounter.

So, even though we are sinners – we all are – if our good intentions have remained on paper, or if, looking at our lives, we realize that we have accumulated many failures. ... On Easter morning we can do as those people mentioned in the Gospel do: we can go to Christ's tomb, see the great upturned stone and think that God is building for me, for all of us, an unexpected future. To go to our tomb: we all have a little of us inside. To go there, and see how God is capable of rising up from there. Here is happiness, here there is joy, life, where everyone thought there was only sadness, loss and darkness. God raises His most beautiful flowers in the midst of the most arid stones.

Being a Christian does not mean starting out from death, but from God's love for us, that defeated our bitter enemy. God is greater than nothing, and a lighted candle is enough to defeat the darkest of nights. Paul cries, echoing the prophets: "Where, O death, is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (v. 55). In these days of Easter, we carry this cry in our heart. And if they ask us the reason for the smile we give and for our patient sharing, then we can answer that Jesus is still here, and continues to live in our midst, that Jesus is here, in the square, with us: risen and living.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet French-speaking pilgrims, especially young college and high school students, as well as the faithful from the visiting parishes from France and Switzerland. May the Holy Spirit increase our faith in the Risen Lord, so that the love of God may defeat sin and death is us. May our life bear witness with joy to the hope that arises from the open tomb on Easter morning. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from England, Sweden, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Canada and the United States of America. I offer a particular greeting to the newly-ordained deacons from the Pontifical Irish College, together with families and friends. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

German

A warm welcome to German-speaking pilgrims, especially the deans from the archdiocese of München und Freising, accompanied by Cardinal Reinhard Marx and his auxiliary, and the Austrian seminarians with Msgr. Anton Leichtfried. Bear the joy of the Risen Christ in your communities as testimony of life that does not pass away. May the Lord bless your journey.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Spain and Latin America. I invite you to take to all the joy of the resurrection of the Lord. May we be able to communicate with our life that He is here and lives in our midst. Many thanks.

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Egypt and the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, Christ Jesus our hope is risen. I urge you to look constantly to Him, He Who has conquered death and helps us to accept suffering as a valuable opportunity for redemption and salvation. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I greet Polish pilgrims. Brothers and sisters, the apostle Paul exclaims, "Where, O death, is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 *Cor.* 15:55). In these days of Easter, let us carry this cry in our heart. Filled with

hope, let us go to our brothers! With peace and joy, that spring from faith, let us proclaim that Jesus is risen and is still here, that He continues to live in our midst! May His blessing accompany you always!

Italian

I greet Italian-speaking pilgrims. In the climate of Paschal joy I greet you, young priests of the diocese of Mantua, accompanied by Bishop Marco Busca, and you, dear deacons of the Society of Jesus, gathered here with friends and family. I encourage every one of you to live each day the Gospel of charity.

I greet the Sisters of the various institutions participating in the course promoted by USMI; the Logudorese Polyphonic Choir; the Pious Workers of the Immaculate Conception with the *Friends of the Founder Marcucci*; and the faithful of Marigliano, who remember the 80th anniversary of the coronation of the image of Our Lady of Hope. I hope that this meeting will be for all of you an occasion for renewed commitment to Jesus and His teachings.

Finally, I greet the young people, the sick and newlyweds. Dear young people, especially the young people of the *Profession of Faith* of the diocese of Milan and Cremona, live fully the Easter message, everywhere bearing witness to peace, the gift of the Risen Christ. Dear sick people, constantly look to He Who has conquered death and Who helps us to accept suffering as a privileged moment of redemption and salvation. Dear newlyweds, experience your everyday family life aware of the life-giving presence of Jesus in your home.
