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General Audience

Holy Father's greeting to the sick

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 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.

Beforehand, shortly after 9.00, the Pope had greeted sick people and their families in the Paul VI Hall.

In his address in Italian the Pope focused on the theme "Beloved children, the certainty of hope" (cf. *Lk* 15: 20-24a).

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.

Holy Father's greeting to the sick

Good morning to you all!

Please be seated, be seated...

Today we will hold the audience in two different places, but we will be joined by the maxi-screen, and so you will be more comfortable here, because in the square it is very hot! It will be a Turkish bath today...

Thank you very much for coming. And afterwards, listen to what I will say, but with the heart joined to those who are in the square: the Church is like this. A group here, a group there, but all united. And who unites the Church? The Holy Spirit. Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to unite us all here today, in this audience.

Veni, Sancte Spiritus...

Our Father...

Hail Mary...

And now, I give you my blessing.

[*Blessing*]

Thank you, and pray for me! Do not forget! And we will continue to see each other...

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today we will hold this audience in two places, but connected by maxi-screens: people who are sick, who cannot bear the heat, are in the Paul VI Hall, and we are here. But we are still all together and connected by the Holy Spirit, as it is He Who always makes unity. Let us greet those who are in the Hall!

None of us can live without hope. And an ugly slavery we can fall prey to is that of considering that love must be deserved. Perhaps a good part of the anguish of contemporary humanity derives from this: believing that if we are not strong, attractive and beautiful, then no-one will concern themselves with us. Many people today seek visibility simply to fill an inner void: as if we were eternally in need of affirmation. However, imagine a world in which everyone begs to attract the attention of others, while no-one is willing to freely love another person? Imagine a world like that: a world without loving freely! It seems like a human world but in reality it is hell. Many of man's narcissisms are born of feelings of solitude and orphanhood. Behind many apparently inexplicable forms of behaviour there is a hidden question: it is possible that I do not deserve to be called by name, that is, to be loved? Because love always calls us by name...

When it is an adolescent who does not feel loved, then violence can arise. Behind many forms of social hatred and disorderly conduct there is often a heart that has not been acknowledged. Bad children do not exist, and nor do entirely bad teenagers, but unhappy people do exist. And what can make us happy if not the experience of love, given and received? The life of the human being is an exchange of looks – someone who looks at us, raising the first smile from us, and we who freely smile at those who are closed up in their sadness, and in this way we open up a way out. An exchange of glances: looking into the eyes and opening the doors of the heart.

The *first step* that God takes towards us is that of an anticipatory and unconditional love. God loves first. God does not love us because there is some reason in us that inspires love. God loves us because He Himself is love, and love tends by nature to spread, and to give of itself. God does not link even His benevolence to our conversion: if anything, this is a consequence of the love of God. St. Paul says perfectly, "God shows His love for us in that *while we were still sinners*, Christ died for us" (*Rm 5: 8*). *While we were still sinners*. An unconditional love. We were distant, like the prodigal son of the parable: "While he was still a long way off, his

father saw him and felt compassion..." (Lk 15: 20). Out of love for us, God carried out an exodus from Himself, to come and find us in that land where it was absurd for Him to pass through. God loved us even when we were in error".

Who among us loves in this way, if not fathers or mothers? A mother continues to love her son even when this son is in prison. I remember many mothers who stood in line to enter the jail, in my former diocese. And they were not ashamed. The son was in jail, but he was *their* son. And they suffered many humiliations and searches before entering, but: "He is *my* son!". "But your son is a delinquent!" "He is my son". Only this love, of a mother or father, can enable us to understand how God's love is. A mother does not ask for the cancellation of human justice, because every error demands redemption, but a mother never ceases to suffer for her own child. She loves him even when he is a sinner. God does the same thing with us: *we are his beloved children!* But is it possible that God has some children He does not love? No. We are all God's beloved children. There is no malediction on our life, only the benevolent word of God, Who drew our existence out of nothing. The truth of all this is that *relationship of love* that binds the Father with the Son through the Holy Spirit, a relation in which we are received by grace. In Him, in Christ Jesus, we are wanted, loved, desired. There is Someone Who has impressed in us a primordial beauty, that no sin, no mistaken decision can ever completely cancel out. We are always, before the eyes of God, little fountains from which good water is intended to spring. Jesus says so to the Samaritan woman: "The water that I will give [you] will become in [you] a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4: 14).

To change the heart of an unhappy person, what is the medicine? What is the medicine to change the heart of a person who is not happy? [Those present reply: love]. Louder! [Love!] Good! Good, all of you! And how do you make someone feel that they are loved? First of all, we must embrace them. Make them feel that they are wanted, they are important, and they will stop being sad. *Love calls to love*, more strongly than hatred calls to death. Jesus did not die and rise again for Himself, but for us, so that our sins can be forgiven. It is therefore the time of resurrection for all: a time to lift up the poor from their discouragement, especially those who lie in the tomb for much longer than three days. Here there blows on our faces a breeze of freedom. Here there germinates the gift of hope. And hope is that of God the Father, Who loves us as we are: He loves all of us, always. Thank you.

Greetings in various languages

French

I welcome French speaking pilgrims, in particular students of the *Olivaïnt* conference from Paris, as well as groups from France, Belgium, and the island of Mauritius. Let us remember that we are all God's beloved children, and that we are all precious in His eyes! It is the wellspring of our faith! God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from England, Sweden, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

A cordial welcome to all German-speaking pilgrims, in particular from the community of the College of the Piarists from Illertissen. In the month of June we venerate in a special way the Most Sacred Heart of Christ, source of inexhaustible love for us. Let us try to be joyful witnesses of that love, giving it to those we meet. God bless you and your families.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially groups from Spain and Latin America. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to let us be guided always by the love of her Son. May we be able to transmit to others this love of God, so that it kindles new hope in all of us. May the Lord bless you. Many thanks.

Portuguese

I address a cordial greeting to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Brazil, invited all to remain faithful to the love of God that we find in Christ Jesus. He challenges us to come out of our small and limited world towards the Kingdom of God and true freedom. May the Holy Spirit enlighten you so that you are able to take God's blessing to all men. May the Virgin Mary watch over your path and protect you.

Arabic

I address a cordial greeting to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, in his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes: you received a spirit of adoption, through which we cry, "Abbà, Father!". Let us show the joy of being children of God, and let us behave as true children, letting Christ transform us and make us like Him. May the Lord bless you.

Polish

I cordially greet Polish people. St. John Paul II, in the Encyclical *Redemptor hominis*, stated that man "remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless ... if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it" (No. 10). Recalling that *love begets love*, more strongly than hatred begets death, let us not be afraid of love and its demands. Let us make it great, beautiful, responsible in our life, so that for others it may be a ray of hope. Jesus Christ be praised.

Italian

I welcome Italian-speaking pilgrims! I welcome the new priests from the diocese of Brescia and encourage them to be pastors following God's heart, as well as the "Charity without boundaries" Association of the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its activity.

I greet the Italian union of the blind of Rossano Calabro; the Silvia Angelucci Foundation from various Italian regions and the *Reatium* Cultural Association, which commemorates the figure of Pope St. Zosimo. I greet the faithful of Corridonia, Altamura and Potenza. A special thought goes to relatives of soldiers who have given their lives in peace missions: I am close to them with affection, comfort and encouragement.

Finally I greet the young, the sick and newlyweds. Yesterday was the liturgical memorial of St. Anthony of Padua, "distinguished preacher and patron of the poor and the suffering". Dear young people, imitate the linearity of his Christian life; dear people who are sick, never tire of asking God the Father with his intercession for what you need; and you, dear newlyweds, compete in his school in knowledge of the word of God.
