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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 "*Behold, I am making all things new (Rev. 21: 5)*". The newness of Christian hope".

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 have heard the Word of God in the Book of Revelation, and it tells us this: "Behold, I am making all things new" (21: 5). Christian hope is based on faith in God, Who always creates newness in the life of man, He creates newness in history, and He creates newness in the cosmos. Our God is the God Who creates newness, because He is the God of surprises.

It is not Christian to walk with our gaze turned downwards, as pigs do – they always walk that way – without raising our eyes to the horizon. As if all our path were extinguished there, within a few metres of commencing the journey; as if in our life there were no destination and no point of arrival, and we were condemned to an eternal wandering, without any reason for our many hardships. This is not Christian.

The final pages of the Bible show us the final horizon of the path of the believer: the Jerusalem of Heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem. It is imagined above all as an immense tent, where God will welcome all men to dwell definitively with them (Rev. 21: 3). And this is our hope. And what will God do, when finally we are with Him? He will use infinite tenderness towards us, like a father who welcomes his children who have long struggled and suffered. John, in Revelation, prophesies: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. ... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. ... Behold, I am making all things new". The God of newness!

Try to reflect on this passage from the Sacred Scripture not in an abstract way, but after reading the chronicle of our times, after having seen the news or the front page of the newspapers, where there are many tragedies, where we hear the sad news that we all risk growing accustomed to. And I have greeted many from Barcelona: such sad news from there! I have greeted some from the Congo, and there is such sad news from there too. And so many others. Naming just two countries of those of you who are here... Try to think of the faces of children made afraid by war, the mourning of mothers, the broken dreams of so many young people, of refugees who face terrible journeys, and are very often exploited ... Life unfortunately is also this. Sometimes it may be said it is mostly this.

It may be so. But there is a Father Who weeps with us; there is a Father Who weeps tears of infinite pity for His children. We have a Father Who knows how to weep, Who weeps with us. A Father Who awaits us to console us, because He knows our sufferings and has prepared for us a different future. This is the great vision of Christian hope, which extends to all the days of our existence, and wishes to lift us up.

God did not will our lives by mistake, compelling Himself and us to suffer hard nights of anguish. Instead He created us because He wants us to be happy. He is our Father, and if we, here, experience a life that is not that which He wanted for us, Jesus ensures that God Himself is working His redemption. He works to redeem us.

We believe and we know that death and hatred are not the last words pronounced on the arc of human existence. Being a Christian implies a new perspective: an outlook full of hope. Some believe that life holds all its joy in youth and in the past, and that living is a gradual decline. Others claim that our joys are only sporadic and fleeting, and that there is no meaning in the life of men. Those who, faced with such disasters say, "But life has no meaning. Our path is one of non-meaning". But we Christians do not believe this. We believe, instead, that on the horizon of man there is a sun that always illuminates. We believe that our most beautiful days are yet to come. We are people of the springtime rather than autumn. I would like to ask, now – each one of you answer in his or her heart, in silence, but answer . "Am I a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, of spring or of autumn? Is my soul in spring or in autumn?". Each one of you, answer. We see the shoots of a new world rather than the yellowed leaves on the branch. Let us not cling to nostalgia, regrets and lamentations; we know that God wants us to be the heirs to a promise and tireless cultivators of dreams. Do not forget that question: "Am I a person of spring or of autumn?" Of spring, which awaits the flower, which awaits the fruit, which awaits the sun that is Jesus, or of autumn, which always looks downwards, bitter and, as at times I have said, with a face of bitter lemons.

The Christian knows that the Kingdom of God, His dominion of love, is growing like a great wheatfield, even if there is darnel in its midst. There are always problems, there is always gossip, there are always wars, there are diseases ... there are problems, but the wheat grows, and at the end the evil will be eliminated. The future does not belong to us, but we know that Jesus Christ is the greatest grace of life: He is God's embrace that awaits us at the end, but Who already accompanies us and consoles us on our path. He leads us to God's great home with men (cf. Rev. 21: 3), with so many other brothers and sisters, and we will take to God the memory of the days lived down here. And it will be beautiful to discover in that instant that nothing is lost, no smile and no tear. As long as our life may have been, it will seem to us to have been lived in a breath. And that creation did not stop on the seventh day of Genesis, but continued tirelessly, because God is always concerned about us. Up to

the day in which everything will be fulfilled, the morning on which tears will be dried, the very moment in which God will pronounce His last word of blessing: "Behold", says the Lord, "I am making all things new" (v. 5). Yes, our Father is the God of newness and surprises. And that day we will be truly happy, and we will weep. Yes: but we will weep with joy.

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims. On your pilgrimage to Rome, I invite you to renew your union with Christ. He will guide you daily to the happiness of His Kingdom. God bless you !

English

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, India and Vietnam. In a particular way, I extend a warm welcome to pilgrims from the Cardjin Community International on the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, and I encourage them in their generous service to the Gospel. May Jesus Christ confirm all of you in faith and make you witnesses of his love in the world. God bless you!

German

A cordial welcome to all German-speaking pilgrims. In these days we contemplate Mary Queen of Heaven. Christ made His Mother part of His victory over death. Let us entrust to the heavenly Mother so that, as you do, at the end of our earthly path, we can reach the goal of our lives, according to God's plan. May the Lord bless you and your families.

Spanish

I cordially greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular the groups from Spain and Latin America. Through the intercession of Saint Rose of Lima, whose feast we celebrate today, let us ask the Virgin Mary that even in the midst of the difficulties and darkness of life, we keep the light of hope, the certainty that God is our Father and that He never abandon us . May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I greet you, Portuguese-speaking pilgrims present in this audience, and through each one of you, I greet all the families of your countries! I address a particular greeting to the faithful of the parish of Ribeirão and groups of Brazilians. Let yourselves be guided by divine tenderness, so that you may transform the world with your faith. God bless you.

Arabic

I cordially congratulate Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Lebanon, Syria and the Middle East. Christian hope is not based on contempt for earthly life or the childish aspiration of an eternal life, but on the certainty that God has not created us to be prey to sadness, anguish, fragility and death; it is based on the faith that God the Father has created for us to build, with Him and with His strength, our homeland in Heaven, where "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. ... Behold, I am making all things new". May the Lord bless you and protect you always from the evil one.

Polish

I cordially greet the Polish people. In a few days, next Saturday and Sunday, many of you, in person or spiritually, will unite at the so-called “Polish Cana”, your national shrine in Jasna Góra, to celebrate the solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Czestochowa and the third centenary of the coronation of her miraculous effigy. As you present yourselves before the face of your Mother and Queen, listen carefully to her word: whatever Jesus tells you to do, do it (cf. *Jn* 2: 5). May this be for each one of you an indication in the formation of your conscience, in putting your personal and family life in order, in the building of a future of society and the nation. I offer a heartfelt blessing to each one of you and to all Poland.

Italian

I now greet Italian pilgrims. In particular, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Clare, who take part in the General Chapter of their Congregation, and I urge you to bear witness in a concrete way to the Gospel of hope and love. There are many seminarians: those attending the 25th Summer Course, those of the Oratory of Saint Philip Neri and those of Verona: dear young people preparing for the priesthood, train yourself from now on to live the Gospel with an ardent missionary spirit and with a special focus on serving the poor and needy. Also, I greet the members of the “Ali estese” Association of Vittorio Veneto and the other groups present, especially the parishes. I hope that for all of you, your time at the Tombs of the Apostles may be a favourable opportunity for a profitable spiritual renewal.

I cordially greet the young, the sick and newlyweds. Beloved, let us look to Heaven to contemplate the splendour of the Holy Mother of God, whom we remembered last week in her Assumption, and whom yesterday we have invoked as our Queen. Cultivate for her a sincere devotion, so that she may be beside you your daily existence.

Finally, I turn my thoughts and express affectionate closeness to those who are suffering due to the earthquake that hit the island of Ischia on Monday night. Pray for the dead, for the wounded, for their families, and for the people who have lost their homes.
