



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 170913a

Wednesday 13.09.2017

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 his recent apostolic trip to Colombia.

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!

As you know, in recent days I made an apostolic trip to Colombia. I thank the Lord with all my heart for this great gift; and I wish to reiterate my expression of gratitude to the President of the Republic, who received me with great courtesy, the Colombian bishops, who worked hard to prepare this visit, as well as the other authorities of the country, and all those who collaborated in realising this trip. And special thanks go to the Colombian people who welcomed me with such affection and so much joy! A joyful people, with many sufferings, but joyful; a people with joy. One of the things that struck me most in all the cities, among the crowds, were the fathers and

mothers with children, who lifted up their children for the Pope to bless them, but also with pride, showing their children as if to say, "This is our pride! This is our hope". I thought: a people capable of having children and of showing them off with pride, as their hope; this population has a future. And I liked this a lot.

In a particular way in this trip I was aware of the continuity with the two Popes who visited Colombia before me: Blessed Paul VI in 1968, and Saint John Paul II, in 1986. A continuity strongly inspired by the Spirit, Who guides the steps of the people of God on the paths of history.

The motto of the trip was "*Demos el primer paso*", that is, "Let's take the first step", referring to the process of reconciliation that Colombia is going through as it emerges from half a century of domestic conflict, which has disseminated suffering and animosity, causing many wounds that are difficult to heal. But with God's help the journey has now begun. With my visit I wanted to bless the effort of the people, to confirm them in faith and in hope, and to receive their witness, which is a wealth for my ministry and for all the Church. The witness of this people is a wealth for all the Church.

Colombia, like the majority of Latin American countries, is a country where the Christian roots are very strong. And while this fact makes even sharper the pain that the tragedy of war has caused, at the same time it constitutes a guarantee of peace, the firm foundation for its reconstruction, the sap for its invincible hope. It is evident that the evil one has sought to divide the population to destroy the work of God, but it is equally evident that Christ's love, His infinite mercy, is stronger than sin and death.

This trip has meant bringing Christ's blessing, the blessing of the Church for the desire for life and peace that overflows from the heart of the nation; I was able to see it in the eyes of the thousands and thousands of children, teenagers and young people who filled the square in Bogotá and whom I met everywhere; that force of life that nature itself proclaims with its exuberance and its biodiversity. Colombia is the second country in the world in terms of biodiversity. In Bogotá I was able to meet all the bishops of the country, and also the Executive Committee of the Latin American Episcopal Conference. I thank God for having been able to embrace them and give them my pastoral encouragement, for their mission in the service of the Church, sacrament of Christ our peace and our hope.

The day dedicated in a special way to the theme of *reconciliation*, the climax of all the trip, took place at Villavicencio. In the morning there was the great Eucharistic celebration, with the beatification of the martyrs Jesús Emilio Jaramilla Monsalve, bishop and Pedro María Ramírez Ramos, priest; in the afternoon, the special Liturgy of Reconciliation, symbolically facing the Christ of Bocayá, without arms or legs, mutilated like His people.

The beatification of the two martyrs reminded us in a real sense that peace is based also, and perhaps above all, on the blood of many witnesses of love, truth and justice, and also of genuine martyrs, killed for their faith, like the two I have just mentioned. Listening to their biographies moved me to tears; tears of pain and joy together. Before their relics and their faces, the holy faithful people of God strongly felt its own identity, with pain, thinking of the many, too many victims, and with joy, the mercy of God which is extended to those who fear Him (cf. *Lk* 1: 50).

"Steadfast love and faithfulness meet / righteousness and peace kiss each other" (*Psalms* 85: 11), we heard at the beginning. This verse of the Psalm contains the prophecy of what happened last Friday in Colombia; the prophecy and the grace of God for that wounded population, so that it may rise again and journey towards a new life. We have seen these prophetic words full of grace, incarnate in the stories of the witnesses, who spoke on behalf of many who, starting from their wounds, with Christ's grace came out of themselves and opened up to encounter, forgiveness, reconciliation.

In Medellín, the prospect was that of the *Christian life as discipleship*: vocation and mission. When Christians fully commit themselves to following Jesus Christ, they truly become salt, light and leaven for the world, and we see abundant fruits. One of these fruits is the *Hogares*, namely the houses where children and young people whose lives have been damaged can find a new family where they are loved, welcomed, protected and

accompanied. And other fruits, abundant like grapes, are the *vocations* to priestly and consecrated life, which I was able to bless and encourage with joy in an unforgettable meeting with consecrated people and their families.

And finally, in Cartagena, the city of Saint Peter Claver, apostle of the slaves, the focus was the *promotion of the human person and fundamental rights*. Saint Peter Claver, like the more recent Saint Maria Bernarda Bütler, gave their lives for the poorest and marginalised, and in this way they showed the way of true revolution, the evangelical rather than ideological one, which truly frees people and societies from the slavery of yesteryear and that which unfortunately still exists today. In this sense, “taking the first step” – the motto of the trip – means drawing closer, bending down, touching the flesh of our wounded and abandoned brother. And doing so with Christ, the Lord Who became a slave for us. Thanks to Him there is hope, because He is mercy and peace.

I again commend Colombia and her beloved people to the Mother, Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, whom I was able to venerate in the Cathedral of Bogotá. With Mary’s help, may every Colombian be able to *take every day the first step* towards their brother and sister, and in this way build together, day by day, peace in love, in justice and in truth.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am glad to greet pilgrims from France, the Congo, and in particular the members of the Interdiocesan Committee of Senegal with Msgr. Mamba, bishop of Ziguinchor. May the Virgin Mary help us take the first step every day towards building peace in love, in justice and in truth. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

I am pleased to welcome pilgrims from German-speaking countries. Christ is our peace and reconciliation. As His disciples, we must always be ready to take the first step in bringing His love. In this way we can truly be salt, light and leaven in the world. May the Holy Spirit help us with His grace.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular the groups from Spain and Latin America. I entrust all of you to the Virgin of Chiquinquirá, that she may help us take the first step towards a more just and peaceful world. God bless you.

Portuguese

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, in particular the many groups of faithful from Brazil and Portugal: I hope that this pilgrimage may strengthen in you your faith in Jesus Christ Who calls us to take the first step towards our brothers and sisters who are in need. Return home certain that when we are generous, God’s blessings will

never be lacking. Thank you for your prayers!

Arabic

I address a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, tomorrow we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Remember always that through Christ's Cross the evil one was vanquished and death overcome; life was given to us and hope restored. Be able always to discover and welcome this message of love and salvation of the Cross of Jesus. May the Lord bless you.

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims and thank you for the support given to me in prayer during my apostolic trip to Colombia. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, which we will celebrate tomorrow, reminds us that the way to holiness passes through the Cross. From We must see all suffering from this perspective: illness, injustice, poverty and failures. May the Cross be for us a source of purification, life and strength in the spirit. Bearing with Christ our daily crosses and difficulties, let us learn from Him the capacity to understand and accept God's will. I bless you heartily.

Italian

A warm welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims!

I am happy to welcome the Society of Saint Teresa of Jesus and the Sisters Servants of the Poor, and urge them to continue in their founding charism. I greet the participants in the Congress of the Salesian Institutes of Salesian Sisters of the Sacred Hearts and participants in the World Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine.

I greet parish groups, especially the faithful of Marta and Acquaviva delle Fonti, as well as the diocesan aid association of Florence. May the visit to the Tombs of the Apostles be an opportunity to grown in God's love, so that your communities may be a place for experiencing mercy towards one's neighbour.

I address a special greeting to the young, the sick and newlyweds. Tomorrow we celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Dear young people, strengthen your dialogue with God, spreading His light and His peace; dear people who are sick, find comfort in the cross of the Lord Jesus, Who continues His work of redemption in the life of every man; and you, dear newlyweds, try hard to keep a constant relationship with the Crucified Christ, so that your love may be ever truer, more fruitful and lasting.

Finally, I turn my thoughts and my spiritual closeness to who suffer as a result of the flood that has afflicted the territory of Leghorn. Let us pray for the dead, the injured, the respective families and those who are in difficulty.
