

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 191016b

Wednesday 16.10.2019

General Audience

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

The Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Acts of the Apostles, this time focusing on the passage "God shows no partiality" (*Acts* 10: 34). Peter and the pouring of the Spirit on the gentiles (*Acts of the Apostles* 10: 34-36).

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 recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

The journey of the Gospel in the world, which Saint Luke recounts in the Acts of the Apostles, is accompanied by the supreme creativity of God Who manifests Himself in a surprising way. He wants His children to overcome all particularism in order to be open to the universality of salvation. This is the aim: to overcome particularism and open oneself to the universality of salvation, because God wants to save everyone. Those who are reborn by water and the Spirit - the baptized - are called to come out of themselves and open themselves up to others, to live close together, in the style of living together, which transforms every interpersonal relationship into an experience of fraternity (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 87).

The witness of this process of "fraternization" that the Spirit wants to trigger in history is Peter, protagonist in the Acts of the Apostles together with Paul. Peter lives an event that marks a decisive turning point for his existence. While he is praying, he receives a vision that acts as a divine "provocation", to provoke a change of mentality in him. He sees a large cloth descending from above, holding various animals: quadrupeds, reptiles and birds, and

he hears a voice inviting him to eat their flesh. As a good Jew, he reacted by saying that he had never eaten anything impure, as required by the Law of the Lord (cf. *Lv* 11). Then the voice forcefully repeats: “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean” (*Acts* 10: 15).

With this fact, the Lord wants Peter no longer to evaluate events and people according to the categories of the pure and the impure, but to learn to go beyond, to look at the person and the intentions of his heart. What makes man impure, in fact, does not come from outside but only from within, from the heart (cf. *Mk* 7: 21). Jesus said this clearly.

After that vision, God sends Peter to the home of an uncircumcised stranger, Cornelius, “a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God” (cf. *Acts* 10: 1-2), but was not Jewish.

In that pagan household, Peter preaches the crucified and risen Christ and the forgiveness of sins to whoever believes in Him. And while Peter speaks, the Holy Spirit is poured over Cornelius and his family. And Peter baptizes him in the name of Jesus Christ (cf. *Acts* 10: 48).

This extraordinary fact – it is the first time that something of this type has happened – becomes known in Jerusalem, where the brothers, scandalized by Peter’s behaviour, harshly reproach him (cf. *Acts* 11: 1-3). Peter did something that went beyond what was usual, beyond the law, and for this reason they rebuke him. But after the encounter with Cornelius, Peter is more free from himself and more in communion with God and with others, because he has seen God’s will in action in the Holy Spirit. He can therefore understand that the election of Israel is not the reward for merits, but the sign of the gratuitous call to mediate the divine blessing among pagan peoples.

Dear brothers, from the Prince of the Apostles we learn that an evangelizer cannot be an impediment to the creative work of God, who “wants all men to be saved” (1 *Tim* 2: 4), but one that fosters the encounter of hearts with the Lord. And how do we behave with our brothers and sisters, especially with those who are not Christians? Are we impediments to the encounter with God? Do we hinder or facilitate their encounter with the Father?

Today we ask for the grace to allow ourselves to be astonished by God’s surprises, not to hinder His creativity, but to recognize and encourage the ever new ways in which the Risen One pours out His Spirit into the world and attracts hearts, making Himself known as the “Lord of all”. (*Acts* 10: 36). Thank you.

Greeting in English

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Finland, Norway, Nigeria, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Korea, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. I greet in particular the delegation from the NATO Defense College, with good wishes for their efforts in the cause of peace. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Greetings in other languages

In his greetings to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, he urged them to gather together with their families to pray the rosary every day so that “the oil of faith and joy that flows from the life of its members in communion with God may never run out”.

He also reminded Polish faithful that the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla to the See of Peter is commemorated today. "Let us give thanks to the Lord for all the good that has been done in the Church, in the world and in human hearts through the words of John Paul II, his works and his holiness. Let us remember that his call to open hearts to Christ is always timely".

Finally, he dedicated a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. "The day after tomorrow", he observed, "we will celebrate the feast of Saint Luke, the evangelist who best reveals the heart of Jesus and His mercy. May this date help us all to rediscover the joy of being Christians, witnesses to the Lord's goodness!"
