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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.15 in the Paul VI Hall, 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 continued the new cycle of catechesis on the Beatitudes, focusing this week on the third Beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (*Mt* 5: 5). Bible reading: from Psalm 37, 3.8-11).

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!

In today's catechesis we will consider the third of the eight Beatitudes of the Gospel of Matthew: "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*" (*Mt* 5: 5).

The term "meek" used here means literally sweet, mild, gentle, without violence. Mildness manifests itself in moments of conflict, as can be seen from how one reacts to a hostile situation. Anyone may seem meek when things are quiet, but how does one react "under pressure", when attacked, offended, assaulted?

In one passage, Saint Paul recalls "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (*2 Col* 10: 1). And in turn, Saint Peter recalls Jesus' attitude in the Passion: He did neither respond nor threatened, but "continued entrusting Himself to Him Who judges justly" (*1 Pt* 2: 23). And Jesus' meekness is seen strongly in His Passion.

In the Scripture the word “meek” also indicates those who have no earthly property; and therefore it is striking that the third Beatitude says indeed that the meek “shall inherit the earth”.

In reality, this Beatitude cites Psalm 37, which we heard at the beginning of this catechesis. There too meekness and earthly possession are placed in relationship with one another. These two things, if we think about them carefully, seem incompatible. Indeed, possession of land is the typical context for conflict: one often fights over a territory, to protect one’s hegemony over a certain zone. In wars the strongest prevails and conquers other lands.

But let us look closely at the verb used to indicate the possession of the meek: they will not conquer the earth, it does not say “Blessed are the meek for they shall conquer the earth”. They will “inherit” it. Blessed are the meek for “they shall inherit” the earth. In the Scriptures the verb “inherit” has an even broader meaning. The People of God specifically describe as “inheritance” the land of Israel, which is the Promised Land.

That land is a promise and a gift for the people of God, and becomes as sign of something much larger than a simple territory. There is a “land” – permit me the play on words – which is Heaven, that is the land towards which we walk: the new heavens and the new land towards which we go (cf. *Is* 65: 17; 66: 2; *2 Pt* 3: 13; *Rev* 21: 1).

So, the meek is he who “inherits” the most sublime of territories. He is not a coward, a “sluggard” who finds a fall-back morality to stay out of trouble. Not at all! He is a person who has received an inheritance and does not want to waste it. The meek is not an accommodating person, but he is the disciple of Christ who has learned to defend a quite different land. He defends his peace, he defends his relationship with God, he defends his gifts, God’s gifts, guarding mercy, fraternity, trust, hope. Because the meek are merciful, fraternal, trusting and hopeful people.

Here we must mention the sin of anger, a violent reaction whose impulse we all know. Who has not been angry sometimes? We all have. We must overturn the Beatitude and ask ourselves one question: how many things have we destroyed with rage? How many things have we lost? A moment of anger can destroy many things; one loses control and does not evaluate what is really important, and one can ruin the relationship with a brother, sometimes without remedy. As a result of anger, many brothers no longer speak to each other, they distance themselves from each other. It is the opposite of meekness. Meekness brings together, anger separates.

Meekness is the conquest of many things. Meekness is capable of winning the heart, saving friendships and much more, because people anger but then they calm down, think about it and go back over their footsteps, and so you can rebuild with meekness.

The “land” to be conquered with meekness is the salvation of that brother of whom the Gospel of Matthew himself speaks: “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (*Mt* 18: 15). There is no land more beautiful than the heart of others, there is no land more beautiful to gain than the peace found with a brother. And that is the land to inherit with meekness!

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially the groups from England, Norway, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam and the United States of America. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!
