



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *Library of the Apostolic Palace*

Wednesday, 11 March 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

At today's audience, we shall continue to meditate on the luminous path of happiness that the Lord consigned to us in the Beatitudes. We have come to the fourth one: "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied*" (Mt 5:6).

We have already encountered poverty in spirit and weeping. Now we face another type of weakness, one that is linked to hunger and thirst. *Hunger and thirst* are primary needs. They have to do with survival. This should be underscored: this does not concern a general desire, but rather a vital, daily need such as nourishment.

But what does hunger and thirst for righteousness' sake mean? We are certainly not talking about those who want vengeance. Indeed in the preceding Beatitude, we spoke about meekness. Admittedly, injustice wounds humanity. Human society urgently needs fairness, truth and social justice. Let us remember that the evil suffered by women and men throughout the world reaches the heart of God the Father. What Father would not suffer over the suffering of his children?

The Scriptures speak of the suffering of the poor and oppressed which God knows and shares. For having listened to the cry of oppression raised by children of Israel — as the Book of Exodus narrates (cf. Ex 3:7-10) — God descended to free his people. But the hunger and thirst for righteousness' sake that the Lord refers to is even more profound than the legitimate need for human justice that each man and woman carries in his/her heart.

In the "Sermon on the Mount" which takes place a little later, Jesus speaks of righteousness that is greater than human rights or personal perfection, saying, "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:20). This is the righteousness that comes from God (cf. 1 Cor 1:30).

In the Scriptures, a thirst is expressed that is more profound than a physical one, a desire at the root of our being. One psalm says: “O God, thou art my God, I seek thee; my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee, as in a dry and weary land where no water is (Ps 63[62]:1). The Fathers of the Church speak about this anxiety that lives in the heart of mankind. Saint Augustine says: “Thou madest us for Thyself, Lord, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee”.^[1] There is an interior thirst, an inner hunger, an anxiety....

In each heart, even in that of the most corrupt and distant people, there is a hidden yearning for the light, even if it is buried under the rubble of deceit and mistakes, but there is always the thirst for truth and good which is the thirst for God. The Holy Spirit arouses this thirst. He is the living water that has shaped our dust; he is the creative breath that gave it life.

This is why the Church is sent forth to proclaim to all the Word of God, imbued with the Holy Spirit. Because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest righteousness that can be offered to the heart of humanity which has a vital need for it, even though it does not realize this. ^[2]

For example, when a man and woman marry, they have the intention of doing something great and beautiful, and if they keep this thirst alive, they will always find the way to move forward in the midst of difficulties with the help of Grace. Young people too have this hunger and they must not lose it! We have to protect and nourish in children’s hearts, the desire for love, tenderness and welcoming that they express in their sincere and luminous outbursts.

Each person is called to rediscover what truly matters, what they truly need, what makes life good, and at the same time, what is secondary and what one can easily do without.

In this Beatitude, Jesus announces — hunger and thirst for righteousness — which is a thirst that will not be disappointed; a thirst that, if supported, will be satisfied and always have a positive outcome because it corresponds with God’s own heart, with his Holy Spirit that is love, and also with the seed that the Holy Spirit sowed within our hearts. May the Lord grant us this grace: to have this thirst for righteousness which is the very desire to find him, to see God and to do good unto others.

At this time, I would like to address all the sick who have contracted the virus and the many who suffer from the uncertainty of their respective illnesses. I offer a heartfelt thanks to the hospital staff, the physicians, male and female nurses and volunteers who are close to the people who are suffering at this very difficult time. I thank all Christians, all the men and women of good will who pray at this moment, in unison, whichever religious tradition they belong to. I warmly thank you for this effort. However, I would not want this suffering, this epidemic that is so strong, to cause us to forget the poor Syrians who are suffering on the border between Greece and Turkey: a people who have been suffering for years. They have to flee war, hunger and illness. Let us not forget our brothers and sisters and the many children who are suffering there.

I also warmly thank the “Due Palazzi” Parish for the text of the *Via Crucis* for Good Friday, which I received yesterday. Thank you all for your deep meditation.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to *young people*, the *elderly*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. May you experience in this Lenten period, with your gaze fixed on Jesus who suffered and was Raised, the comfort and meekness of his Spirit.

[1] *Confessions*, n. 1,1.5.

[2] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2017: “The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in his life”.