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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.20 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 "God's paternity, wellspring of our hope" (cf. *Lk* 11: 1-4).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. He then launched an appeal in favour of the "One minute for peace" initiative.

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!

There was something fascinating in Jesus' prayer, so fascinating that one day His disciples asked to be introduced to it. The episode takes place in the Gospel of Luke, who among the Evangelists was the one who most documented the mystery of the "prayerful" Christ. The Lord prayed. Jesus' disciples are struck by the fact that He, especially in the morning and in the evening, retires in solitude and "immerses" Himself in prayer. And

for this reason, one day, they ask Him to teach them too how to pray (cf. *Lk* 11:1).

It is at this point that Jesus transmits what has become the quintessential Christian prayer: the *Pater Noster*. In truth, Luke, compared to Matthew, gives us Jesus' prayer in a slightly abbreviated form, beginning with a simple invocation: "*Father*" (v.2).

All the mystery of Christian prayer is summarized here, in this word: having the courage to call God with the name of Father. It is also affirmed in the liturgy when, inviting us to recite together Jesus' prayer, he uses the expression "let us dare to say".

Indeed, calling God with the name of "Father" is not to be taken for granted by any means. We are led to use more elevated titles, that seem to us more respectful of His transcendence. Instead, invoking Him as "Father" places us in a relation of confidence with Him, like a child who addresses his father, knowing that he is loved and cared for by him. This is the great revolution that Christianity impresses in the religious psychology of man. The mystery of God, which always fascinates us and makes us feel small, no longer makes us afraid, nor does it crush us or cause us anguish. This is a difficult revolution to accept in our human heart: so much so that it is true that even in the accounts of the Resurrection, it is said that the women, after having seen the empty tomb and the angel, "fled ... for trembling and astonishment had seized them" (*Mk* 16:8). But Jesus reveals to us that God is a good Father, and says to us, "Do not fear!"

Let us think of the parable of the merciful father (cf. *Lk* 15: 11-32). Jesus tells the story of a father who knows only love for his sons. A father who does not punish his son for his arrogance, and who is capable even of entrusting to him his part of his inheritance, and letting him leave home. God is the Father, says Jesus, but not in a human way, because there is no father in the world who would act like the protagonist of this parable. God is Father in His way: good, helpless in the face of the free will of man, capable only of conjugating the verb "to love". When the rebellious son, after having squandered everything, finally returns to the home of his birth, that father does not apply criteria of human justice, but feels first and foremost the need to forgive, and with his embrace he makes his son understand that during all that long period of his absence he was missed, he was painfully missed by his loving father.

What an unfathomable mystery is a God Who reserves this type of love for His children! Perhaps it is for this reason that, evoking the centre of the Christian mystery, the apostle Paul does not wish to translate into Greek a work that Jesus pronounces in Aramaic: "*abbā*". St. Paul touches on this theme twice in his epistles (cf. *Rm* 8: 15; *Gal* 4: 6), and twice he does not translate the word, leaving it in the same form in which it passed Jesus' lips, "*abbā*", an even more intimate term than "Father", and which some translate as "papa", or "daddy".

Dear brothers and sisters, we are never alone. We may be distant, hostile, we may even profess ourselves to be "without God". But the Gospel of Jesus Christ shows us that God cannot stay without us: He will never be a God "without man"; it is He Who cannot stay without us, and this is a great mystery! God cannot be God without man: the great mystery is this! And this certainty is *the wellspring of our hope*", which we find conserved in all the invocations of *Our Father*. When we are in need of help, Jesus does not tell us to resign ourselves and close ourselves up, but instead to turn to the Father and to ask Him trustfully. All our needs, from the most evident and everyday, such as food, health and work, up to those such as being forgiven and kept from temptation, are not the reflection of our solitude: there is instead a Father who always looks upon us with love, and Who certainly does not abandon us.

I will now make you a proposal: each one of us has many problems and many needs. Let us think a little, in silence, of these problems and these needs. Let us think also of the Father, of our Father, Who cannot stay without us, and Who in this moment is looking at us. And all together, with trust and hope, let us pray: "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Thank you!

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims, in particular the faithful from France, Cote d'Ivoire and Benin. The Holy Spirit is introduced to us in Jesus' prayer. Let us dare to enter into a true filial relationship of love and faith with God our Father, a relationship that excludes any fear and any anguish: we will no longer feel alone and our life will be transformed. God bless you.

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Germany, the Netherlands, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

I address a warm greeting to pilgrims and visitors from German-speaking countries. Jesus gave us the great gift of being able to call God "Father". He is a Father who always looks upon us with love and takes care of us. We wish to live this certainty every day and take this hope to our brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit make us true sons and daughters of God.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially the groups from Spain and Latin America. I invite you to turn to God, our Father, at every time and in every circumstance. Let us not be wrapped up in ourselves, but instead turn trustfully to Him, Who as a good Father looks upon us with love and never abandons us.

Portuguese

Dear pilgrims from Brazil and all Portuguese speakers present, welcome! Christ's Resurrection has opened to us the path beyond death; and so the way to heaven is cleared. Nothing can prevent us from living and growing in friendship with the heavenly Father, and of witnessing all His infinite goodness and mercy. May His abundant blessings descend upon you, and all your families.

Arabic

I address a cordial greeting to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, whatever our situation in life, we must never forget that we will never cease to be children of God, children of a Father Who loves us and awaits our return. Even in the worst situation in life, God awaits us and

wishes to embrace us. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I warmly greet Polish pilgrims. In a special way, I greet the Community Queen of Peace Association of Radom, which, inspired by the *Twelve Stars in the crown of Mary, Queen of Peace*, is creating twelve centres for Eucharistic adoration and perpetual prayer for peace in the world's most troubled places. Upon their request, today I have blessed the altar *Adoratio Domini in unitate et pace*, destined for the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Namyang, South Korea. In this month of June, dedicated to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, let there be no lack of prayer for peace. Jesus Christ be praised.

Italian

I address a warm welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims. I greet the Sisters of Charity of the Saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, who participate in the General Chapter, and the young athletes of the Macerata-Loreto pilgrimage with the "torch of peace", accompanied by their bishop, Msgr. Nazzareno Marconi.

I greet the Friars Minor Conventual, parish groups, in particular the faithful of San Cipriano Picentino and those of Airola, who commemorate the centenary of the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, as well as the participants in the international Gynaecology Convention.

I greet with joy the children from the Paediatric Oncology ward of the San Matteo Hospital, Pavia; the flag-bearers of Mappano di Caselle, and students, especially those from the Cangemi Institute in Boscoreale. I encourage you all to live intensely the encounter with Peter's Successor to grow in faith in God, merciful Father.

Finally, I address a thought to the young, the sick and newlyweds. The month of June, which has just begun, is dedicated to devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: dear young people, grow in dedication to your neighbour in the school of that divine Heart; dear people who are sick, in suffering, join your heart to that of the Son of God; and you, dear newlyweds, look to the Heart of Jesus to learn unconditional love.

Appeal

Tomorrow, at 13.00, in various countries we revisit the "One minute for peace" initiative, that is, a brief moment of prayer to commemorate the meeting in the Vatican between myself, the late Israeli president Peres, and the Palestinian president Abbas. In our time there is a great need to pray – Christians, Jews and Muslims – for peace.
