

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. 170628b

Wednesday 28.06.2017

General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 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 "Hope, the strength of martyrs" (cf. *Mt* 10: 16-17.21-22).

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!

Today we reflect on *Christian hope as the strength of martyrs*. When, in the Gospel, Jesus sends His disciples on their mission, He does not delude them with mirages of easy success; on the contrary, He warns them clearly that announcing the Kingdom of God will always face opposition. And He even uses an extreme expression: "You will be hated by all for my name's sake" (*Mt* 10: 22). Christians love, but they are not always loved. From the very beginning Jesus places this reality before us: to a greater or lesser degree, the confession of faith takes place in a hostile environment.

Christians are therefore “counter-current”. It is normal: since the world is marked by sin, which manifests itself in various forms of selfishness and injustice, he who follows Christ walks against the current. Not out of a polemic spirit, but out of faithfulness to the logic of the Kingdom of God, which is a *logic of hope*, and translates into a style of life based on Jesus’ indications.

And the first indication is *poverty*. When Jesus sends His disciples on the mission, it seems as though He takes greater care to “denude” them than to “dress” them! Indeed, a Christian who is not humble and poor, detached from the wealth of power and above all detached from the self, does not resemble Jesus. The Christian walks his path in this world with the essentials for the journey, but with the heart full of love. The true defeat for him or for her is to give in to the temptation of revenge and violence, responding to evil with evil. Jesus tells us: “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves” (*Mt 10: 16*). So, without teeth, without claws, without weapons. The Christian must instead be prudent, at times shrewd: these are virtues accepted by the evangelical logic. But violence, never. To defeat evil, one cannot share the methods of evil.

The only force for the Christian is the Gospel. In times of difficulty, one must believe that Jesus stands before us, and that He never ceases to accompany His disciples. Persecution is not a contradiction of the Gospel, but forms part of it: if they persecuted our Master, how can we hope to be spared this struggle? However, in the midst of the whirlwind, the Christian must not lose hope, thinking he has been abandoned. Jesus reassures His own by saying, “Even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (*Mt 10: 30*). As if to say that none of the man’s sufferings, even the most minute and hidden, are invisible to the eyes of God. God sees, and surely protects; and will give His redemption. There is indeed in our midst Someone who is stronger than evil, stronger than mafias, than obscure networks of those who profit from the skins of the desperate, those who crush others with arrogance ... Someone who has always listened to the voice of the blood of Abel shouting from the earth.

Christians must therefore always place themselves on the “other side” of the world, the one chosen by God; not persecutors, but persecuted; not arrogant, but meek; not peddlers of smoke, but submissive to the truth; not imposters, but honest people.

This faithfulness to the style of Jesus – which is a style of hope – unto death, was given a beautiful name by the first Christians: “*martyrdom*”, which means “*witness*”. There were many other possibilities offered by the dictionary: it could have been called heroism, or abnegation, or self-sacrifice. And instead the Christians of the earliest times gave it a name with the perfume of discipleship. Martyrs do not live for themselves, not do they combat to affirm their own ideas, and they accept the duty to die only through faithfulness to the Gospel. Martyrdom is not even the supreme ideal of Christian life, because above it there is charity, understood as love of God and of one’s neighbour. The Apostle Paul says so clearly in his hymn to charity: “If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing” (*1 Cor 13: 3*). Christians are repelled by the idea that suicide bombers can be called “martyrs”: there is nothing in their aim that can be considered close to the attitude of children of God.

At times, reading the stories of the many martyrs of yesterday and of today – who are more numerous than those of the earliest times – we are astonished by the fortitude with which they faced the test. This fortitude is a sign of the *great hope* that inspired them: the certain hope that nothing and no-one could separate them from the love of God given to us in Jesus Christ (cf *Rm 8: 38-39*).

May God always give us the strength to be His witnesses. May He let us live Christian hope especially in the hidden martyrdom of carrying out our everyday duties well and with love.

Thank you.

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims, in particular the *La Rosablanche* fanfare and the faithful from Switzerland and France. I invite you to read the lives of martyrs, yesterday and today, to find out with what strength they have faced the trials. On their example, we put all our hope in Jesus that gives us strength, self-sacrifice and self-sacrifice, to do good and to do our duty every day of our lives. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Wales, Sweden, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States of America. I especially greet the participants in the Conference for the promotion of the new Programme of Priestly Formation, with the assurance of my prayers for their important ministry. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

I warmly welcome German-speaking pilgrims, especially young people from Oldenburger Münsterland. Dear friends, martyrs have given everything to the Lord. Let us pray that God also gives us the strength to be His witnesses, especially in the "hidden martyrdom of everyday life", doing our deeds and duties well and with love. May the Lord make us strong in hope.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular the groups from Spain and Latin America. Tomorrow we will celebrate the solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul who gave their lives for the sake of Christ. Let us pray to God that by their intercession He grant us the gift of the strength to follow Him and to be His witnesses living Christian hope, above all in that continuous and hidden martyrdom of carrying out our daily obligations well and with love. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

Dear pilgrims from Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries, I greet you all, acknowledging the affection and the prayers with which every day you support my ministry as Peter's Successor. To our Mother, the Virgin Mary, I entrust your lives and your families, asking for them the grace to grow in intimacy with His divine Son, source of true life.

Arabic

I address a warm greeting to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, martyrs are those men and women faithful to the meek strength of love, to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who in everyday life seek to help their brothers and sisters and to love God without reserve; they teach us that, with the strength of love, with meekness, one can fight against arrogance, violence and war, and with patience achieve peace. The Lord bless you!

Polish

I welcome Polish pilgrims, in particular the guests of the metropolitan archbishops who will receive the pallium tomorrow. Dear brothers and sisters, tomorrow the liturgy will remind us of the martyrdom of the two pillars of the Church, Saints Peter and Paul. Looking to the example of their boundless devotion to Christ and to the Gospel, let us ask God to give to us too the strength to be His faithful witnesses. May He help us live Christian hope, especially in the hidden martyrdom of performing our everyday duties well and with love. God bless you!

Italian

I address a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the Handmaids of the Visitation “Oasi Tabor” and the Daughters of Divine Providence on the occasion of their respective General Chapters, and I encourage them to promote their charism with a spirit of service and faithfulness to the Church.

I offer a special greeting to the participants in the Convention of the National Association of Families of the Clergy, and exhort its members to cultivate friendship with priests, particularly those who are alone, supporting their vocation and accompanying their ministry. I greet the Basilian monks of St. Josaphat, who remember the fourth centenary of their foundation; the pilgrims of the Via Francigena; the soldiers of the 17th Regiment “Acqui” of Capua, and the faithful of Altamura and the flag-bearers of Grumo Appula.

Finally I greet the young, the sick, and newly-weds. Tomorrow we celebrate the solemnity of the Saints Peter and Paul, patrons of Rome. Dear young people, from the courage of the martyrs, upon whose blood the Church is founded, learn to bear witness to the Gospel and to the values in which you believe; dear people who are sick, may the love of the Apostles for the Lord be your hope in the trials of suffering; dear newly-weds, teach your children the passion for virtue and boundless devotion to God and our brothers.
