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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. 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 his cycle of catechesis on the Holy Mass, focusing on the theme *The Hymn of the "Gloria" and the prayer of the Collect*.

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!

During our catechesis on the Eucharistic celebration, we have seen that the Penitential Act helps us to divest ourselves of our presumptions and to present ourselves to God as we really are, conscious of being sinners, in the hope of being forgiven.

It is precisely from the encounter between human misery and divine mercy that there comes the gratitude

expressed in “Gloria”, “a very ancient and venerable hymn in which the Church, gathered together in the Holy Spirit, glorifies and entreats God the Father and the Lamb” (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 53).

The beginning of this hymn resumes the song of the Angels at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, a joyous announcement of the embrace between heaven and earth. This song also engages us, gathered in prayer: “Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace to men of good will”.

After the “Gloria”, or, when it is not included, immediately after the Penitential Act, prayer takes a particular form in the oration called the “Collect”, by means of which the proper character of the celebration is expressed, variable according to the days and times of the year (see *ibid.*, 54). With the invitation to “pray”, the priest exhorts the people to gather with him in a moment of silence, in order to become aware of being in the presence of God and to bring out, each in his own heart, the personal intentions with which he participates in Mass (cf. *ibid.*, 54). The priest says, “Let us pray”, and each person thinks of what they need, what they wish to ask for, in the prayer.

Silence is not reduced to the absence of words, but rather it is the willingness to listen to other voices: that of our heart and, above all, the voice of the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, the nature of the sacred silence depends on the moment in which it takes place: “Within the Act of Penitence and again after the invitation to pray, all recollect themselves; but at the conclusion of a reading or the homily, all meditate briefly on what they have heard; then after Communion, they praise and pray to God in their hearts” (*ibid.*, 45). So, before the initial prayer, silence helps us to gather ourselves and to think of why we are here. Here, then, there is the importance of listening to our heart to then open it to the Lord. Perhaps we come from days of weariness, of joy, of pain, and we want to say so to the Lord, to invoke His help, to ask Him to be close to us; we have relatives or friends who are ill or who are going through difficult times; we wish to entrust to God the fate of the Church and the world. And this is why we need this brief silence before the priest, *gathering the intentions of each person*, expresses in a loud voice to God, on behalf of all, the common prayer that concludes the rites of introduction, making the “collection” of individual intentions. I strongly recommend that priests observe this moment of silence and not to be hasty: “Let us pray”, and then silence. I recommend this to priests. Without this silence, we risk neglecting the recollection of the soul.

The priest recites this entreaty, this prayer of the Collect, with his arms outstretched, in the attitude of the person praying, adopted by Christians since the early centuries – as the frescoes of the Roman catacombs testify – to imitate Christ with open arms on the wood of the cross. And there, Christ is the Orante and it is prayer together! In the Crucifix we recognize the priest who offers to God the worship he pleases, that is filial obedience.

In the Roman Rite the prayers are concise but full of meaning: many beautiful meditations can be made on these prayers. So beautiful! Going back to meditating on the texts, even outside of Mass, can help us learn how to turn to God, what to ask, what words to use. May the liturgy become for all of us a true school of prayer.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France and various francophone countries, in particular students from middle and high schools in Paris, as well as members of the Franco-Peruvian Association. May the liturgy be for us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, a true school of prayer. God bless you!

English

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, particularly those from Norway, New Zealand and the United States of America. In a special way, I greet the numerous seminarians

and university students present. Upon you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

German

I greet with affection the German-speaking pilgrims present at this audience. The Holy Mass offers us prayers and texts rich in meaning that may inspire personal prayer, helping us to learn how to approach God. Let us ensure that the liturgy of the Church become for us a true school of prayer. God bless you and your loved ones.

Spanish

I warmly greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially groups from Spain and Latin America. Let us entreat the Virgin Mary to intercede for us so that the Holy Mass be a true school of prayer, in which we learn how to address God in any moment of our life. May the Lord bless you. Many thanks.

Portuguese

I greet Portuguese-speaking pilgrims with great affection, in particular the faithful from *Luziânia* and *Arcozelo*, in the hope that you all find in the liturgy a true school of prayer. May the Virgin Mary watch over your path and help you to be a sign of trust and hope in the midst of your brothers. May God's blessing descend upon you and your families.

Arabic

I address a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, returning to meditate upon the texts of prayers, also outside of Mass, can help us to learn how to address God, what to ask, and which words to use. May the liturgy become for all of us a true school of prayer. May the Lord bless you.

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Dear brothers and sisters, as we again find ourselves at the beginning of the year, let us entrust it to the Lord and ask that it be a time of grace, of peace and of hope for us, for our families and for the entire world. I heartily bless you and your loved ones.

Italian

I am pleased to welcome the permanent Deacons of the diocese of Biella, and the Ursuline Sisters of the Sacred Heart. I hope that for every one of you that this meeting will revive your communion with the universal ministry of the Successor of Peter.

I greet the parish groups, in particular those of Gesualdo and of Canosa di Puglia; the private Infant Schools of Basilicata and the Scholastic Institutes: *Caetani* of Cisterna di Latina and *Zona Leda* of Aprilia. I greet the directors and students of the School of Inspectors and Superintendents of the Financial Police of L'Aquila-Coppito; the Association of Social and Health Volunteers of Bronte (CT) and the National Cancer Institute Foundation of Milan.

I address a special thought to the young, the sick and newlyweds. Dear young people, be bearers of the love of Christ among your peers; dear people who are sick, find support in your pain in God's tenderness; and you, dear newlyweds, be witnesses of the beauty of the Sacrament of Marriage through your faithful love.

