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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

Greeting to the sick and to children in the Paul VI Hall

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 his trip to Chile and Peru, which has just come to an end. He then launched an appeal for the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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!

This audience will be held in two connected places: with you, here in the square, and a group of children who are unwell, in the Hall. They will see you, and you will see them: and in this way we are linked up. Let us greet the children who are in the Hall: it was best for them not to be out in the cold, and so they are there.

I returned two days ago from my Apostolic Journey to Chile and Peru. Applause for Chile and for Peru! Two good, good populations ... I thank the Lord as everything went well: I was able to meet the People of God journeying in those lands – and even those who are not journeying, who are at a bit of a standstill ... but they are good people – and to encourage the social development of those countries. I reiterate my gratitude to the civil authorities and to the bishops, who welcomed me with great care and generosity; as well as to all collaborators and volunteers. Think that in each of the two countries there are more than 20 thousand volunteers: 20 thousand and more in Chile, 20 thousand in Peru. Good people: mostly young.

My arrival in Chile was preceded by several protest demonstrations, for various reasons, as you will have read in the newspapers. And this made the motto of my visit even more current and living: “*Mi paz os doy - I give you my peace*”. These are Jesus’s words addressed to the disciples, which we repeat in every Mass: the gift of peace, which only the dead and risen Jesus can give to those who entrust themselves to Him. It is not just some of us who need peace: the world too, today, in this piecemeal third world war ... please, let us pray for peace!

In the meeting with the political and civil *Authorities* of the country, I encouraged the path of Chilean democracy, as a meeting space for solidarity and capable of including diversity; for this purpose I indicated as a method the way of listening: in particular, listening to the poor, the young and the elderly, immigrants, and also listening to the earth.

In the first Eucharist, celebrated *for peace and justice*, the Beatitudes resounded, especially “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt 5: 9). A Beatitude to witness by means of the style of proximity, closeness; sharing and thus strengthening, with the grace of Christ, the fabric of the ecclesial community and of society as a whole.

In this style of proximity, gestures count more than words, and an important gesture I was able to make was visiting the women’s prison in Santiago: the faces of those women, many of them young mothers, with their little ones in their arms, expressed in spite of everything so much hope. I encouraged them to demand, of themselves and of the institutions, a serious journey of preparation for reintegration, as a horizon giving meaning to their daily suffering. We cannot think of a prison, any prison, without this dimension of reintegration, because if there is not this hope of social reintegration, prison is a torture without end. Instead, when you work to reintegrate – even those who are serving life sentences can be reintegrated – though the work of the prison and of society, dialogue opens up. But a prison must always have this dimension of reintegration, always.

With the priests and consecrated persons and with the bishops of Chile, I experienced two very intense meetings, made even more fruitful by the shared suffering of some wounds afflicting the Church in that country. In particular, I confirmed my brothers in rejecting any compromise on the sexual abuse of minors, and at the same time in trusting in God, Who through this harsh trial purifies and renews His ministers.

The other two Masses in Chile were celebrated, one in the south and one in the north. The one in the south, in *Araucanía*, the land where the Mapuche Indians live, transformed into joy the drama and hardships of this people, launching an appeal for a peace that is harmony in diversity, and for the repudiation of all violence. The one in the north, in Iquique, between the ocean and the desert, was a hymn to the meeting between peoples, expressed in a singular way in popular religiosity.

The meetings with *young people* and with the *Catholic University of Chile* responded to the crucial challenge of offering great meaning to the life of the new generations. I left the programmatic words of Saint Albert Hurtado to the young people: “What would Christ do in my place?”. And at the University I proposed a model of integral formation, translating Catholic identity into the capacity to participate in the building of united and plural societies, where conflicts are not hidden but managed in dialogue. There are always conflicts: even at home; always. But bad treatment of conflicts is even worse. Conflicts must not be brushed under the bed: conflicts must

come to light, be faced and resolved with dialogue. Think of the little conflicts you will certainly have at home: they must not be hidden, but faced. Find the moment, and speak: conflict is resolved in this way, with dialogue.

In **Peru** the motto of the Visit was: “*Unidos por la esperanza - United by hope*”. United not in a sterile uniformity, everyone the same, this is not union; but in all the richness of the differences we inherit from history and culture. The meeting with the *peoples of the Peruvian Amazon* was emblematic of this, and also gave rise to the itinerary of the Pan-Amazon Synod convened for October 2019, and it was also witnessed by the moments lived with the people of *Puerto Maldonado* and the children of the “House of the Little Prince”. Together we said “no” to economic colonization and ideological colonization.

Speaking to the political and civil authorities of Peru, I appreciated the environmental, cultural and spiritual heritage of that country, and I focused on the two issues that most seriously threaten it: ecological-social degradation, and corruption. I don't know if you have heard talk here of corruption ... I don't know ... It is not only found in those places: here too, and it is more dangerous than the 'flu! It mixes things up and ruins hearts. Please, no to corruption. And I remarked that no-one is exempt from responsibility in the face of these two scourges, and that the commitment to counter them concerns everyone.

I celebrated the first Mass in Peru by the ocean, in the city of *Trujillo*, where last year the storm known as the “*Niño costiero*” struck the population hard. Therefore, I encouraged the people to react to this, but also to other storms such as criminality, and the lack of education, work and safe housing. In Trujillo I also met with the *priests and consecrated persons* of northern Peru, sharing with them the joy of the calling and the mission, and the responsibility of communion in the Church. I urged them to be rich in memory and faithful to their roots. And among these roots there is the popular devotion to the Virgin Mary. Again in Trujillo a *Marian celebration* was held in which I crowned the Virgin of the Gate, proclaiming her “Mother of Mercy and Hope”.

The final day of the trip, last Sunday, took place in Lima, with a strong spiritual and ecclesial accent. In the most famous Shrine of Peru, where the painting of the Crucifixion entitled “*Señor de los Milagros*” is venerated, I met about 500 *cloistered women religious, of the contemplative life*: a true “lung” of faith and prayer for the Church and for society as a whole. In the Cathedral I performed a special *act of prayer* through the intercession of the Peruvian Saints, which was followed by the meeting with the bishops of the country, to whom I proposed the exemplary figure of Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo. I also pointed out to the young Peruvians the saints as men and women who did not waste time “retouching” their own image, but instead followed Christ, Who looked on them with hope. As always, the word of Jesus gives full meaning to everything, and so too the Gospel of the last Eucharistic celebration summarized God's message to His people in Chile and in Peru: “Repent and believe the Good News” (Mk 1:15). Thus – the Lord seemed to say – you will receive *the peace that I give you* and you will be *united in my hope*. This is, more or less, my summary of this trip. Let us pray for these two sister Nations, Chile and Peru, that the Lord bless them.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am glad to welcome pilgrims from France and other francophone countries. As we end the Prayer Week for Christian Unity, I invite you to be, in the places where you live, pioneers of peace and unity. God bless you!

English

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from England, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Korea and the United States of America. In the context of this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I offer a special greeting to the group from the Bossey Ecumenical Institute. I also greet the priests of the Institute for Continuing Theological Education of the Pontifical North American College.

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

German

I greet with affection the pilgrims from German-speaking countries. Formed by the grace of the Lord and filled with divine hope, we can reciprocate in our brothers the love that God gives us every day. Have a good stay in Rome, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from Spain and Latin America. May the power of fidelity and the merciful love of the Father, offered to us in Jesus, impel us to believe in the Gospel and to initiate a path of conversion, that will open us to *welcoming the peace He gives us* and to be men and women *united in His hope*. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I greet the dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the groups of faithful from Brangança Paulista and Maringá, hoping that you will be strong in your faith in Jesus Christ Who invites us to open our hearts to brothers and sisters in need. In this way we become true workers of peace. God bless you. Thank you for your prayers!

Arabic

I address a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from Syria and Lebanon. Peace is the supreme gift that Christ left us before ascending to heaven. To live in this peace, that only He can give, makes us see in every man a brother, transforms differences into wealth and makes us able to put them together to build a world in which each person can find his or her place, sharing with others His gifts and enjoying all his or her rights. May the Lord bless you all and give you His peace!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for accompanying me with your prayers during my trip to Chile and Peru. It was a time of grace that enabled us to experience unity and to appreciate and promote the spiritual values rooted in the Gospel and in the traditions of the people and populations of those regions. I share with you my joy and I ask you to continue to pray for me. God bless you!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful. I am pleased to welcome the new Ministers Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor, participants in the conference of the Marian League of Priests, and the parish groups and the *Virtus Nova* Oratory of Pontecagnano Fiano. I encourage you all to be faithful to Christ so that, following the example of Mary Most Holy, the joy of the Gospel will shine forth.

I offer a special greeting and a word of encouragement to the members of the Association of Hospital Volunteers, urging them to continue their charitable work for the sick who are most in need. I greet the school institutes, in particular that of Ginosa; the 235th "Piceno" Volunteer Training Regiment of Rome; the Lions Clubs of Campania, Basilicata and Calabria; the Marevivo Campania Group and that of volunteers from Livorno, wishing everyone a joyful and generous service for the common good.

I address a special thought to the young, the sick and the newlyweds. Today is the memorial of Saint Francis de Sales, bishop and Doctor of the Church. May this saint be for you, young people, a model of gentleness; for you, people who are sick, an encouragement to offer your sufferings for the cause of the unity of the Church of Christ;

and for you, newlyweds, an example in recognizing in your family life the primacy of God and His love.

Appeal of the Holy Father

Unfortunately, worrying news continues to arrive from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Therefore, I renew my appeal that all may be committed to avoiding every form of violence. For her part, the Church wishes only to contribute to peace and the common good of society.

Greeting to the sick and to children in the Paul VI Hall

Good morning, I greet you all, and I thank you for coming.

It is better for you to be here, because of the cold. You can see the audience on the screen, and they can see you from the square. You are calmer here, without the cold, sitting down ... Also, the smallest children can play, and so everything will go well.

Now I would like to give you my blessing. Let us pray to Our Lady. Seated, all seated ...

[Hail Mary and blessing]

Have a good day, and pray for me. Goodbye! So, what do children say? "Bye bye!"
