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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 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 continued his catechesis on the Holy Mass, focusing on the Eucharistic Liturgy: III *"Our Father" and the breaking of the Bread*.

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!

Let us continue with the catechesis on the Holy Mass. At the Last Supper, after Jesus took the bread and the cup of wine, and gave thanks to God, we know that He "broke the bread". This action corresponds, in the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Mass, to the *breaking of the Bread*, preceded by the prayer that the Lord has taught us, that is, the "Our Father".

And thus begin the rites of Communion, prolonging the praise and supplication of the Eucharistic Prayer with the communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer. This is not one of the many Christian prayers, but rather it is *the prayer of the children of God*: it is the great prayer that Jesus taught us. Indeed, granted to us on the day of our Baptism, the Lord's Prayer causes to resonate in us those same feelings that were in Christ Jesus. When we pray with the "Our Father", we pray as Jesus prayed. It is the prayer that Jesus recited, and taught to us; when the disciples said to Him, "Master, teacher us to pray as you pray". And Jesus prayed in this way. It is so beautiful to pray like Jesus! Formed in His divine teaching, we dare turn to God calling him "Father", because we are reborn as His children through water and the Holy Spirit (cf. *Eph* 1: 5). No one, in truth, could call him familiarly "Abba" – Father – without having been generated by God, without the inspiration of the Spirit, as Saint Paul teaches (cf. *Rom* 8:15). We must think: no-one can call Him "Father" without the inspiration of the Spirit. How often people say "Our Father" without knowing what they say! Because yes, He is the Father, but do you feel that when He says "Father", He is the Father, your Father, the Father of humanity, the Father of Jesus Christ? Do you have a relationship with this Father? When we pray the "Our Father", we connect with the Father Who loves us, but it is the Spirit Who gives us this connection, this feeling of being children of God.

What better prayer than the one taught by Jesus can prepare us for sacramental communion with Him? In addition to Mass, the Lord's Prayer is recited in the morning and in the evening, in Lauds and Vespers; in this way, the filial attitude towards God and fraternity with our neighbour contribute to giving a Christian form to our days.

In the Lord's Prayer – the "Our Father" - we ask for "daily bread", in which we see a special reference to the Eucharistic Bread, which we need to live as children of God. We also implore forgiveness for our trespasses, and to be worthy to receive forgiveness we commit ourselves to forgiving those who have offended us. And this is not easy. Forgiving people who have offended us is not easy; it is a grace that we must ask for: "Lord, teach us to forgive as You have forgiven me". It is a grace. With our strength we cannot do it: to forgive is a grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, while it opens our hearts to God, the "Our Father" also disposes us to fraternal love. Finally, we ask God again to "deliver us from evil" that separates us from Him and divides us from our brothers. We understand well that these are very suitable requests to prepare us for Holy Communion (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 81).

Indeed, what we ask in the Lord's Prayer is prolonged by the prayer of the priest who, in the name of all, pleads: "Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day". And then he receives a sort of seal in the rite of peace: first of it is invoked that the gift of Christ's peace (cf. *Jn* 14: 27) – so different from the peace of the world – may make the Church grow in unity and peace according to His will; then, with the concrete gesture exchanged among us, we express "ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 82). In the Roman rite the exchange of the sign of peace, placed since ancient times before Communion, is ordered to Eucharistic communion. According to the warning of Saint Paul, it is not possible to communicate in the one Bread that makes us one Body in Christ, without recognizing oneself pacified by fraternal love (cf. *1 Cor* 10: 16-17; 11: 29). The peace of Christ can not take root in a heart incapable of living fraternity and of recomposing it after having wounded it. Peace is given by the Lord: He gives us the grace of forgiving those who have offended us.

The gesture of peace is followed by the breaking of the Bread, which since the apostolic time gave its name to the entire celebration of the Eucharist (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 83; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1329). Performed by Jesus during the Last Supper, breaking the Bread is the revealing gesture that allowed the disciples to recognize him after his resurrection. Let us remember the disciples of Emmaus, who, speaking of the encounter with the Risen One, recount "how they had recognized him in breaking bread" (cf. *Lk* 24: 30-31.35).

The fraction of the Eucharistic Bread is accompanied by the invocation of the "Lamb of God", a figure with whom John the Baptist indicated in Jesus He "Who takes away the sin of the world" (*Jn* 1: 29). The biblical image of the lamb speaks of redemption (cf. *Ex* 12: 1-14; *Is* 53: 7; *1 Pt* 1: 19; *Ap* 7: 14). In the Eucharistic Bread, broken for the life of the world, the prayerful assembly recognizes the true Lamb of God, namely Christ the Redeemer, and begs Him: "Have mercy on us ... give us peace".

“Have mercy on us”, “give us peace” are invocations that, from the recital of the Lord’s Prayer to the breaking of the Bread, help us to dispose our mind to participate in the Eucharistic banquet, a source of communion with God and with brothers.

Let us not forget the great prayer: that which Jesus taught us, and which is the prayer with which He prayed to the Father. And this prayer prepares us for Communion.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to welcome French-speaking pilgrims, especially those from France and Switzerland. I greet young people from French high schools and from the dioceses of Angers and Puy. In this time of preparation for the celebration of Easter, I invite you to strengthen Christ’s peace in your hearts, to live in fraternity and to heal it when it is wounded. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, Norway, Australia, China, Indonesia and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

I greet with affection pilgrims from German-speaking countries, in particular the community of the professional *Friedrich List* College of Hamm. Formed by the grace of the Lord and filled with divine hope, may we be able to reciprocate in our brothers the love that God gives us every day. I wish you a good stay in Rome under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America, in particular the group of the “Global Leaders for the Promotion of Local Governments” Foundation. On our Lenten journey of preparation for the Lord’s Passover, let us ask the Virgin Mary never to cease to look at us with love so that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can make fruitful our intentions of greater dedication and generosity in our Christian life. May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I greet Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the faithful from Lages do Pico and Coimbra. I hope that this encounter will help you to renew in your communities your commitment to being instruments of mercy and peace, as the prayer of the Our Father inspires us. God bless you!

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, in this penitential time, the Lord shows us the path of hope to be followed. Let yourselves be guided by the Holy Spirit, to accomplish a true conversion, to be cleansed of sin and to serve Christ present in our brothers, according to the abilities and the proper roles of each one. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. In the "Our Father", in saying to the Lord: "Give us this day our daily bread", we ask not only for food for the body, but also the gift of the Eucharistic Bread, nourishment of the soul. We know that one who has committed a serious sin should not approach Holy Communion without having first obtained absolution in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Lent is an opportunity to approach the latter, to confess well and to encounter Christ in Holy Communion. The encounter with Him gives meaning to our life. I bless you from my heart.

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to the faithful of the Italian language.

I am pleased to welcome the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; the parish groups, in particular those of Castellaneta, accompanied by the bishop, Msgr. Claudio Maniago, of Bitritto and of Mesagne. I hope that the visit to the Eternal City may be an opportunity to rediscover faith and grow in love.

I greet the schools; the former Salesian students of Livorno and the "Livio Tempesta" Prize Group for the Goodness in the school, in the hope you will be able to grasp the many positive examples and to orient your efforts in formation towards generous service to the common good.

A special thought goes to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Dear friends, Christ has promised to remain with us always, and manifests His presence in many ways. Each one of us has the responsible and courageous task of announcing and witnessing His love that sustains us in every occasion of life. Therefore, never tire of trusting in Christ and of spreading His Gospel everywhere.
