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# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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## **General Audience**

### **Catechesis of the Holy Father**

### **Greetings in various languages**

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.20 a.m. in Saint 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: *A prayer that asks with trust* (Bible reading: *from the Gospel according to Luke, 9.13*).

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 our path of catechesis on the Lord's Prayer, which we began last week. Jesus places on the lips of His disciples a sort but bold prayer, made up of seven questions – a number that in the Bible is not casual, but indicates fullness. I say bold as, if Christ had not suggested it, probably none of us – or rather, none of the most famous theologians – would have dared to pray to God in this manner.

Indeed, Jesus invites His disciples to draw closer to God and to address some requests to Him with confidence: firstly with relation to Him, and then relating to us. There are no preambles in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus does not teach formulas for "ingratiating" oneself with the Lord; rather, He invites us to pray to Him, bringing down the barriers of subjection and fear. He does not say to address God as "Almighty", "Most High", "You, Who are so distant from us, I am a wretch": no, He does not say this, but simply, "Father", with simplicity, as children address their dad. And this word "Father" expresses confidence and filial trust.

The prayer to "Our Father" has its roots in the concrete reality of man. For example, it makes us ask for bread, for daily bread: a simple but essential request, that says that faith is not a decorative question, detached from life, which intervenes only when all other needs have been satisfied. If anything, prayer begins with life itself. Prayer – Jesus teaches us – does not begin in human existence once the stomach is full: rather, it is there wherever there is a man, any man who is hungry, who weeps, who struggles, who suffers and asks himself why. Our first prayer, in a certain sense, was the cry that accompanied our first breath. In that newborn cry the destiny of all our life is announced: our continual hunger, our continual thirst, our search for happiness.

Jesus, in prayer, does not want to extinguish the human, He does not want to anaesthetize him. He does not want us to dampen our demands and requests, learning to bear everything. Instead He wants every suffering, every disquiet, to reach towards heaven and to become dialogue.

To have faith, someone said, is a habit of calling out.

We should all be like Bartimaeus in the Gospel (cf. *Mk* 10: 46-52) – let us recall that passage of the Gospel, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus – that blind man who begged at the gates of Jericho. Around him there were many good people who urged him to be quiet: "But be silent! The Lord is passing. Be silent. Do not disturb. The Master has much to do; do not disturb Him. You are annoying, with your cries. Do not disturb". But he did not heed this advice: with holy insistence, he demanded that his miserable condition finally encounter Jesus. And he shouted even louder! And the polite people: "But no, He is the Master, please! You make a bad impression!" And he shouted because he wanted to see, he wanted to be cured: "Jesus, have mercy on me!" (v. 47). Jesus gives him back his sight, and says to him: "Your faith has healed you" (v. 52), as if to explain that the decisive thing in his healing was that prayer, that *invocation shouted with faith*, stronger than the "common sense" of the many people who wanted to silence him. Prayer not only precedes salvation, but in some way it already contains it, because it frees from desperation those who do not believe in a way out of many unbearable situations.

Certainly, then, believers also feel the need to praise God. The Gospels offer us the jubilant exclamation that breaks out of Jesus' heart, full of grateful wonder at the Father (cf. *Mt* 11: 25-27). The first Christians even felt the need to add a doxology to the text of the Lord's Prayer: "For yours is the power and the glory for ever" (*Didaché*, 8: 2).

But none of us are demanded to embrace the theory that has been advanced in the past, that is, that prayer of demand is a weak form of faith, while the most authentic form would be pure praise, that which God seeks without the weight of any request. No, this is not true. The prayer of demand is authentic, it is spontaneous, it is an act of faith in God Who is the Father, Who is good, Who is almighty. It is an act of faith in me, I who am small, a sinner, in need. And this is why prayer, to ask something, is very noble. God is the Father Who has an immense compassion for us, and wants His children to speak to Him without fear, directly calling Him "Father", or in difficulty saying: "But Lord, what have You done to me?" This is why we can tell Him everything, even the things that in our life remain distorted and incomprehensible. And He has promised us that He would be with us for ever, until the last days we will spend on this earth. Let us pray the Lord's Prayer, starting in this way, simply: "Father", "papa". And He understands us and loves us so much.

## Greetings in various languages

### *French*

I cordially greet Francophone pilgrims, especially the young people of Quimper. As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's coming among us, let us not fear, brothers and sisters, to turn to God with confidence in all the circumstances of our daily life. We are His children; He has promised us to be with us every day, until the end of our life. God bless you.

### **English**

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially those from the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

### **German**

A warm welcome to German-speaking pilgrims. I greet in particular the delegation of Austrian parliamentarians who have come on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Christmas song "*Stille Nacht*". With its profound simplicity, this song makes us grasp the event of the Holy Night. The Saviour Jesus, born in Bethlehem, reveals to us the love of God the Father. Let us entrust all our life to Him. I wish a good advent journey to you all.

### **Spanish**

I cordially greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. The Lord Jesus gives us the grace of total trust in God, a compassionate Father who loves us and always remains at our side. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast we celebrate today, help us to surrender ourselves to the providential love of God and to place all our hope in Him. Thank you.

### **Portuguese**

A warm greeting to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, in particular to the faithful of Braga, Nova Oeiras, São Julião da Barra and to the members of the Symphony Orchestra and Choir of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte: I wish you an Advent time full of light, and ask the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and the Church, to be the star that protects the lives of your families. God bless you.

### **Arabic**

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Egypt, the Holy Land and the Middle East. The Lord's Prayer is not a prayer that we must memorize and recite to God, but rather an example of how we should pray, thank and ask. Saint Paul teaches us: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (*Phil* 4: 6-7). May the Lord bless you and protect you from the evil one!

### **Polish**

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. I entrust to the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, whose memorial we celebrate today, all of you present here, your families and, in particular, those who are awaiting the birth of their children. Saint John Paul II commended to her maternal protection the life and innocence of children, especially those who run the risk of not being born. By her intercession, in this time of Advent, let us implore the gift of children for families without children, respect for the conceived life and the openness of hearts to Gospel values. Praised be Jesus Christ.

### **Italian**

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the pilgrims from the diocese of Sabina-Poggio Mirteto and the parish groups, in particular those of Apice and of Perito.

I greet the “Chaminade” group from Campobasso, accompanied by their archbishop, Msgr. Giancarlo Maria Bregantini, the soldiers of the “Sirio” Second Army Aviation Regiment, from Lamezia Terme; the staff of the Police Headquarters of Isernia; the Saint Peter’s Cricket club; scholastic institutes, in particular that of Altamura, and the group of sick people with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity syndrome.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds.

Today we celebrate the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe. May Our Lady accompany us at Christmas and rekindle in us the desire to welcome with joy the light of her Son Jesus, to make it shine ever more in the night of the world.

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