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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

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 his recent Apostolic Visit to Morocco (Bible passage: *from the Gospel according to Matthew, 13: 33*).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. He then made an appeal on for the Sixth United Nations International Day of Sport for Development and Peace.

The General Audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Last Saturday and Sunday, I made an Apostolic Visit to Morocco, invited by His Majesty King Mohammed VI. I renew my gratitude to him and to the Moroccan authorities for their warm welcome and for all their collaboration,

especially the King: he was very fraternal, very friendly, very close.

Above all I thank the Lord, Who has enabled me to take another step along the road of dialogue and encounter with our Muslim brothers and sisters, to be – as stated by the motto of the trip – a “servant of hope” in today’s world. My pilgrimage followed in the footsteps of two Saints: Francis of Assisi and John Paul II. Eight hundred years ago Francis took the message of peace and fraternity to the Sultan al-Malik al Kamil; in 1985 Pope Wojtyła made his memorable visit to Morocco, after receiving in the Vatican - the first Muslim Head of State - King Hassan II. But one might ask: but why does the Pope go to Muslims and not only to Catholics? Why are there so many religions, how come there are so many religions? With Muslims, we are descendants of the same Father, Abraham: why does God permit there to be so many religions? God wanted to permit this: the theologians of the Scholastica made reference to the *volutas permissiva* of God. He wanted to allow this situation: there are many religions; some are born of culture, but they always look to heaven, they look to God. But what God wants is fraternity between us and in a special way – here is the reason for this trip – with our brothers, sons of Abraham like us, the Muslims. We must not be afraid of difference: God allowed this. We must be afraid if we do not work in fraternity, to walk together in life.

Serving hope, in a time such as ours, means first of all building bridges between civilizations. And for me, it is a joy and an honour to be able to do so with the noble Kingdom of Morocco, encountering her people and her governors. Recalling some important international summits that in recent years have been held in the country, with King Mohammed VI we have reaffirmed the essential role of religions in defending human dignity and in promoting peace, justice and care for creation, that is, our common home. From this perspective we have also signed together with the King an Appeal for Jerusalem, so that the holy city may be preserved as a patrimony of humanity and a place of peaceful encounter, especially for the faithful of the three monotheistic religions.

I also visited the Mausoleum of Mohammed V, paying homage to the memory of him and of Hassan II, as well as the Institute for the Training of Imams, Mordichines and Mordichates. This Institute promotes an Islam that is respectful towards other religions and which rejects violence and fundamentalism, that is, which underlines that we are all brothers and must work for fraternity.

I dedicated particular attention to the issue of migration, both when speaking to the Authorities and, above all, in the encounter specifically dedicated to migrants. Some of them testified that the life of a person who emigrates changes, and becomes human again when he or she finds a community that welcomes them as a person. This is fundamental. Indeed in Marrakech, in Morocco, last December the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” was ratified. An important step towards the assumption of responsibility by the international community. As the Holy See, we have offered our contribution that may be summarized in four verbs: to welcome migrants, to protect migrants, to promote migrants and to integrate migrants. It is not a question of sending down welfare programmes from above, but rather of undertaking a journey together through these four actions, to build cities and countries that, while conserving their respective cultural and religious identities, are open to differences and know how to value them in the spirit of human brotherhood. The Church in Morocco is very committed to closeness to migrants. I do not like to say migrants; I prefer to say migrant persons. Do you know why? Because “migrant” is an adjective, whereas “person” is a noun. We have fallen to the culture of the adjective: we use so many adjectives and very often forget the nouns, that is, the substance. The adjective must be linked to a noun, to a person, hence a *migrant person*. In this way there is respect and one does not fall prey to this culture of the adjective, which is too liquid, too gaseous. The Church in Morocco, I was saying, is very committed in closeness to *migrant persons*, and therefore I wished to thank and encourage those who generously carry out their service, realizing Christ’s word: “I was a stranger and you invited me in” (*Mt 25: 35*).

The day of Sunday was dedicated to the Christian community. First of all, I visited the Centre Rural des Services Sociaux, managed by the Daughters of Charity, the same who run the dispensary and clinic for children here at Santa Marta, and these sisters work with the collaboration of many volunteers [and] offer various services to the population.

In the Cathedral of Rabat I met the priests, consecrated persons and Ecumenical Council of Churches. It is a small flock, in Morocco, and for this reason I remembered the Gospel images of the salt, the light and the leaven

(cf. *Mt* 5: 13-16; 13: 33), which we read at the beginning of this audience. What counts is not the quantity, but that the salt has flavour, that the light shines, and that the leaven has the strength to ferment all the mass. And this comes not from us, but from God, from the Holy Spirit Who makes us witnesses of Christ wherever we are, in a style of dialogue and friendship, to be lived first and foremost amongst us Christians, because – Jesus says – “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (*Jn* 13: 35).

And the joy of the ecclesial community found its foundation and its full expression in the Sunday Eucharist, celebrated in a sports complex in the capital. Thousands of people of around sixty different nationalities! A unique epiphany of the People of God in the heart of an Islamic country. The parable of the merciful Father made shine in our midst the beauty of the plan of God, who wants all His children to take part in His joy, in the feast of forgiveness and reconciliation. In this feast, there may enter all those who are able to acknowledge they are in need of the Father’s mercy, and who are able to rejoice with Him when a brother or a sister returns home. It is not by chance that, where the Muslims invoke every day the Compassionate and Merciful, the great parable of the Father’s mercy resonated. It is thus: only those who are reborn and live in the embrace of this Father, only those who feel they are brothers, can be servants of hope in the world.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France and other French-speaking countries, in particular from the Faculty of Canon Law in Leuven. I also greet the many young people present. May the Lord help us to be servants of hope, where we live, becoming builders of bridges between men. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, China, the Philippines and the United States of America. May the Lenten journey bring us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you and your families I invoke joy and peace in Christ our Redeemer!

German

A cordial welcome to pilgrims from German-speaking countries. Let us allow ourselves to be transformed by the mercy of the Father, receiving this Lent His forgiveness in the Sacrament of Confession. Thus we become servants of the hope that is Jesus Christ, Who died and rose again for mankind. May the Holy Spirit fill you with His strength and His joy.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. Let us ask that God, the Compassionate and Merciful - as invoked by our Muslim brothers and sisters -, foster interreligious dialogue and foster the bonds of fraternity that unite us as children of the same God.

May the Lord bless you.

Portuguese

I extend a cordial greeting to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, in particular the Portuguese schools and the groups from Brazil, in the hope that this pilgrimage will be an opportunity for you to contemplate the beauty of faith and

union with Christ, to live fully your Christian vocation as witnesses of hope in the world. God bless you. Thank you!

Arabic

I warmly welcome Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from Morocco and the Middle East. As children of God we are called to live human brotherhood with everyone and to see in every brother, especially the needy and the marginalized, the face of Christ the Saviour. May the Lord bless you and always protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I greet Polish pilgrims. I sincerely thank you for the prayers on my trip to Morocco. As I met Christians and Muslims together, I especially encouraged brotherhood among them, so that it may spread everywhere, since its source is God Himself. In the days of Lent, during your spiritual exercises, the prayers of the Cross and other Lenten functions, invoke this gift of God for them and for the Church as a whole. Be servants of hope, which the world needs. I bless you from my heart.

Italian

I cordially welcome the Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the Course for rectors and vice rectors of major seminaries in mission territories; as well as those at the international study seminar "The Family as a Place of Growth".

I welcome the faithful, together with the administrators, associations and school groups participating in the peace project: "*Amico ulivo Albero della Amicizia*" ("*Friend of the olive, tree of friendship*").

I greet the parish groups, in particular those from Grosseto, accompanied by their bishop, Msgr. Rodolfo Cetoloni; those from Fondi; Filetto; and Gagnano; the Italian Centre for Salesian Women's Vocational Training; the *Agesci* Scout Group, from Villanova di Castenaso; and educational institutions.

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

The Lent we are experiencing encourages a rapprochement with God. It is a valuable time to rediscover the importance of faith in daily life, which, lived through the exercise of works of mercy, revives in us the love for the Father and makes us more aware of the needs of the disadvantaged.

Appeal of the Holy Father

Recalling the Sixth International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, instituted by the United Nations, the Holy Father said: "Sport is a universal language, that embraces all peoples and contributes to overcoming conflicts and uniting people. Sport is also a source of joy and great emotions, and it is a school where the virtues of human and social growth of people and communities are forged. I hope that you may all 'get into the game' in life as in sport".
