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General Audience

This Wednesday's general audience took place 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 catechesis on the Beatitudes, today speaking about the second: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*" (Mt 5: 4). Bible reading from the *Book of Zechariah*, 12: 10).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present, and invited them to pray for the dramatic situation in Syria and for the Chinese population affected by the epidemic.

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!

We have undertaken a journey in the Beatitudes, and today we will look at the second: *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*.

In the Greek language in which the Gospel is written, this Beatitude is expressed with a verb that is not passive – indeed the blessed do not submit to this mourning – but in the active form, "*They mourn*", "*They grieve*"; they weep, but inwardly. It is an attitude that became central to Christian spirituality and which the desert fathers, the first monks in history, called "*penthos*", that is, an inner pain that opens up to a relationship with the Lord and with one's neighbour; a renewed relationship with the Lord and with one's neighbour.

This mourning, in the Scriptures, can have two aspects: the first is for death or for the suffering of someone. The other aspect is tears shed over sin – for our own sin, when the heart bleeds for the pain of having offended God and one's neighbour.

It is therefore a question of loving the other in such a way that we are bound to him or her until we share his or her pain. There are people who remain distant, one step behind; instead, it is important that others make a breach in our hearts.

I have often spoken about the gift of tears, and how precious it is.[1] Can one love in a cold way? Can one love by function, by duty? Certainly not. There are the afflicted to console, but sometimes there are also the consoled to afflict, to awaken, who have a heart of stone and have forgotten how to weep. It is also necessary to reawaken people who do not know how to be moved by the pain of others.

Mourning, for example, is a bitter road, but it can be useful to open one's eyes to life and to the sacred and irreplaceable value of each person, and at that moment one realizes how short time is.

There is a second meaning of this paradoxical Beatitude: weeping over *sin*.

Here one must distinguish: there are those who are angry because they made a mistake. But this is pride. Instead there are those who mourn the evil done, the good omitted, the betrayal of the relationship with God. This is mourning for not having loved, which springs from having the life of others at heart. Here one weeps because one does not correspond to the Lord Who loves us so much, and we are saddened by the thought of the good not done; this is the meaning of sin. They say, "I have wounded the one I love", and it pains them to tears. God be blessed if these tears come!

This is the theme of one's own errors to face, difficult but vital. Let us think of the weeping of Saint Peter, which leads him to a new and far truer love: they are tears which purify, which renew. Peter looked to Jesus and wept: his heart was renewed. Unlike Judas, who did not accept that he had made a mistake and, poor man, took his own life. Understanding sin is a gift from God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. We, by ourselves, are unable to understand sin. It is a grace we must ask for. Lord, may I understand the evil I have done or that I can do. This is a very great gift and after we have understood this, there comes the grief of repentance.

One of the first monks, Ephrem the Syrian, says that a face washed with tears is unspeakably beautiful (see, *Ascetic Discourses*). The beauty of penitence, the beauty of tears, the beauty of contrition! As always, Christian life finds its best expression in mercy. Wise and blessed is he who welcomes the pain linked to love, because he will receive the consolation of the Holy Spirit which God always forgives, even the worst sins, always is the tenderness of God Who forgives and corrects. God always forgives: let us never forget this.. The problem is in us, that we tire of asking for forgiveness, we become wrapped up in ourselves and we do not ask for forgiveness. This is the problem; but He is there to forgive.

If we always keep in mind that God "does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities" (*Psalms* 103: 10), we live in mercy and in compassion, and love appears in us. May the Lord grant us to love in abundance, to love with a smile, with closeness, with service and also with grief.

[1] Cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 76, Address to young people at *Santo Tomás University*, Manila, 18 January 2015; Homily of Ash Wednesday, 18 February 2015.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially the groups from England, Ireland, Japan and the United States of America. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Greetings in various languages

The Pope, addressing Polish pilgrims, recalled that yesterday we celebrated the World Day of the Sick. "Due to illness, there are many in our society, in the world and in our families who suffer. May the Lord give them strength, patience and the grace of healing. And let us always remember them and accompany them with prayer, with closeness and with real gestures of compassionate and tender love. May the Lord bless you! Praise be to Jesus Christ!

Appeals by the Holy Father

I would like us all to pray for beloved and tormented Syria at this moment. So many families, so many old people, children, are compelled to flee from war. Syria has been bleeding for years. Let us pray for Syria.

Also a prayer for our Chinese brothers who are suffering from this cruel disease. May they find their way to recovery as soon as possible.
