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General Audience

This morning's general audience took place at 9.25 in the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

In his address in Italian, the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Beatitudes, focusing on the fourth: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill" (*Mt 5: 6*). After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful.

The general audience concluded with the apostolic blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In today's audience we will continue to reflect on the luminous path of joy that the Lord gave us in the Beatitudes, and we arrive at the fourth: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill" (*Mt 5:6*).

We have already encountered poverty in spirit, and mourning; now we face another type of weakness, that connected to hunger and thirst. Hunger and thirst are primary needs, which relate to survival. This must be highlighted: here we do not talk about a generic desire, but rather a vital daily need, such as nourishment.

But what does it mean to hunger and thirst for uprightness, for justice? We are certainly not talking about those who want revenge; on the contrary, in the previous beatitude we spoke about meekness. Certainly injustice wounds humanity; human society has an urgent need for equality, truth and social justice; let us remember that the evils suffered by the women and men of the world reach the heart of God the Father. Which father would not suffer for the pain of his children?

The Scriptures speak about the suffering of the poor and the oppressed, which God knows and shares. After listening to the cry of oppression raised by the sons of Israel - as recounted in the Book of Exodus (cf. 3: 7-10) - God descended to free His people. But the hunger and thirst for justice that the Lord speaks of is even more profound than the legitimate need for human justice that every man bears in his heart.

In the same "Sermon on the Mount", a little later, Jesus speaks about a justice greater than human rights or personal perfection, saying: "For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven" (*Mt* 5: 20). This is the justice that comes from God (cf. *1 Cor* 1: 30).

In the Scriptures we find the expression of a thirst more profound than the physical one, which is a desire found at the root of our being. A Psalm says: "God, you are my God, I pine for you; my heart thirsts for you, my body longs for you, as a land parched, dreary and waterless" (Psalm 63: 2). The Fathers of the Church speak about this restlessness which inhabits the heart of man. Saint Augustine says: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee" [1]. There is an inner thirst, an inner hunger, a restlessness...

In every heart, even in the person who is most corrupt and farthest from goodness, there is a hidden yearning for the light, even if it is found under the rubble of deceit and errors, but there is always the thirst for truth and goodness, which is thirst for God. It is the Holy Spirit that inspires this thirst: He is the living water that has moulded our dust, His is the creative breath that gave it life.

This is why the Church is sent to proclaim to all the Word of God, imbued with the Holy Spirit. For the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest justice that can be offered to the heart of humanity, which has a vital need of it, even if it is unaware of this [2].

For example, when a man and a woman marry they have the intention of doing something great and beautiful, and if they keep this thirst alive they will always find the way forward, in the midst of problems, with the help of Grace. Even young people have this hunger, and they must not lose it! It is necessary to protect and nurture in the hearts of children that desire for love, for tenderness, for acceptance which they express in their sincere and luminous impulses.

Every person is called to rediscover what really matters, what they really need, what makes them live well and, at the same time, what is secondary, and what they can do without.

Jesus proclaims in this beatitude - hunger and thirst for uprightness - that there is a thirst that will not be disappointed; a thirst that, if satisfied, will be sated and will always end well, because it corresponds to the very heart of God, to His Holy Spirit Who is love, and also to the seed that the Holy Spirit has sown in our hearts. May the Lord give us this grace: to have this thirst for justice which is precisely the desire to find it, to see God and to do good to others.

[1] *Confessions*, 1, 1.5.

[2] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2017: "The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in His life."

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Greeting in Italian

At this moment, I would like to address all those who have the virus and who suffer from the disease, and the many who suffer uncertainty about their own illnesses. My heartfelt thanks go to the hospital staff, the doctors and nurses, the volunteers who are by the side of the people who are suffering at this very difficult time. I thank all Christians, all men and women of good will who pray for this moment, all united, whatever the religious tradition to which they belong. Thank you very much for this effort. But I would not want this pain, this major epidemic, to make us forget the poor Syrians, who are suffering on the Greek-Turkish border: a people who have been suffering for years. They are forced to flee from war, hunger, and disease. Let us not forget those brothers and sisters, and the many children, who are suffering there.

I greet you with affection, dear Italian-speaking brothers and sisters. I encourage you to face every situation, even the most difficult, with fortitude, responsibility and hope.

I would also like to thank the parish of the "Due Palazzi" prison in Padua: thank you very much. Yesterday I received the draft of the Stations of the Cross, which you have drawn up for the coming Good Friday. Thank you for working together, the whole prison community. Thank you for the profoundness of your meditations.

I now address a special greeting to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. May you live this Lenten time with your gaze fixed on Jesus Who suffered and rose again, receiving consolation and meekness from His Spirit.
