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General Audience

This morning's general audience took place at 9.15 in the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

During his address in Italian, the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on prayer, focusing on the theme "Praying in daily life" (Bible reading: *Col 3: 16-17*).

After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful. He then launched an appeal to the victims of the natural disaster that occurred in North India and addressed good wishes to the populations of the Far East and in other parts of the world who celebrate the lunar New Year this coming Friday.

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!

In the preceding catechesis we saw how Christian prayer is "anchored" in the Liturgy. Today, we will shed light on how the Liturgy always enters daily life: on the streets, in offices, on public transportation... And there it continues the dialogue with God: the person who prays is like someone in love who always bears the beloved in his or her heart wherever they go.

Essentially, everything becomes a part of this dialogue with God: every joy becomes a reason for praise, every trial is an opportunity to ask for help. Prayer is always alive in our lives, like embers, even when the mouth does not speak, but the heart speaks. Every thought, even the apparently "profane" ones, can be permeated by prayer. There is even a prayerful aspect in the human intelligence; it is, in fact, a window peering into the mystery: it illuminates the few steps in front of us and then opens up to the entire reality, this reality that

precedes it and surpasses it. This mystery does not have a disquieting or anxious face. No, knowledge of Christ makes us confident that whatever our eyes and the eyes of our minds cannot see, rather than nothing being there, there is someone who is waiting for us, there is infinite grace. And thus, Christian prayer instills an invincible hope in the human heart: whatever experience we touch on our journey, God's love can turn it into good.

Regarding this, the *Catechism* reads: "We learn to pray at certain moments by hearing the Word of the Lord and sharing in his Paschal Mystery, but his Spirit is offered us at all times, in the events of each day, to make prayer spring up from us. [...] Time is in the Father's hands; it is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday or tomorrow, but today" (n. 2659). Today I meet God, today is always the day of the encounter.

There exists no other wonderful day than the day we are living. Those who live always thinking about the future, in the future: "But it will be better...", but do not take each day as it comes: these are people who live in their fantasy, they do not know how to deal with concrete reality. And today is real, today is concrete. And prayer is to be done today. Jesus comes to meet us today, the day we are living. And it is prayer that transforms this day into grace, or better, it transforms us: it appeases anger, sustains love, multiplies joy, instills the strength to forgive. Sometimes it will seem that it is no longer we who are living, but that grace lives and works in us through prayer. It is grace that awaits, but always this, don't forget: take today as it comes. And let's think about when an angry thought comes to you, of unhappiness, that moves you toward bitterness, stop yourself. And let's say to the Lord: "Where are you? And where am I going?" And the Lord is there, the Lord will give you the right word, the advice to go ahead without that bitter, negative taste. For prayer is always, using a profane word, is positive. Always. It will carry you ahead. Each day that begins is accompanied by courage if it is welcomed in prayer. Thus, the problems we face no longer seem to be obstacles to our happiness, but appeals from God, opportunities to meet Him. And when a person is accompanied by the Lord, he or she feels more courageous, freer, and even happier.

Let us pray always, then, for everyone, even for our enemies. Jesus counseled us to do this: "Pray for your enemies". Let us pray for our dear ones, even those we do not know. Let us pray even for our enemies, as I said, as the Scriptures often invite us to do. Prayer inclines us toward a superabundant love. Let us pray above all for people who are sad, for those who weep in solitude and despair that there still might be someone who loves them. Prayer works miracles; and the poor then understand, by God's grace that, even in their precarious situation, the prayer of a Christian makes Christ's compassion present. He, in fact, looked with great tenderness on the weary and lost crowd who were like sheep without a shepherd (cf *Mk* 6:34). The Lord is – let's not forget – the Lord of compassion, of nearness, of tenderness: three words never to be forgotten regarding the Lord. Because this is the Lord's style: compassion, nearness, tenderness.

Prayer helps us love others, despite their mistakes and sins. The person is always more important than their actions, and Jesus did not judge the world, but He saved it. What a horrible life is that of the person who always judges others, who is always condemning, judging... This is a horrible, unhappy life, when Jesus came to save us. Open your heart, pardon, give others the benefit of the doubt, understand, be close to others, be compassionate, be tender, like Jesus. We need to love each and every person, remembering in prayer that we are all sinners and at the same time loved individually by God. Loving the world in this way, loving it with tenderness, we will discover that each day and everything bears within it a fragment of God's mystery.

Again, the *Catechism* reads: "Prayer in the events of each day and each moment is one of the secrets of the Kingdom revealed to 'little children,' to the servants of Christ, to the poor of the beatitudes. It is right and good to pray so that the coming of the kingdom of justice and peace may influence the march of history, but it is just as important to bring the help of prayer into humble, everyday situations; all forms of prayer can be the leaven to which the Lord compares the kingdom" (n. 2660).

The human person – men and women, all of us, – the human person is like a breath, like a blade of grass (cf *Pss* 144:4; 103:15). The philosopher Pascal once wrote: "There is no need for the whole universe to take up arms to crush him: a vapour, a drop of water is enough to kill him." [1] We are fragile beings, but we know how to pray: this is our greatest dignity and it is also our strength. Have courage. Pray in every moment, in every situation so

the Lord might be near to us. And when a prayer is said according to the heart of Jesus, it obtains miracles.

Greeting in English

I cordially greet the English-speaking faithful. I invite everyone, especially in this time of pandemic, to draw nearer to the Lord in prayer each day, bringing to him our own needs and the needs of the world around us. Upon you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Appeal of the Holy Father

I express my closeness to the victims of the calamity that happened three days ago in the North of India where part of a glacier detached itself provoking violent flooding that devastated the construction sites of two power plants. I pray for the workers who died and for their families and for all those who were harmed and wounded.

In the Far East and in various other parts of the world millions of men and women will celebrate the Lunar New Year this coming Friday, 12 February. To all of them and to their families, I wish to express my heartfelt greetings, together with the wish that the new year might bear the fruit of fraternity and solidarity. At this particular time, in which we are very concerned about facing the challenges of the pandemic that touches people physically and spiritually, but also influences social relationships, I express the hope that everyone might enjoy complete health and serenity of life.

Lastly, while I invite that we pray for the gift of peace and every other good, I would like to remind everyone that these are obtained through goodness, respect, far-sightedness and courage. Never forget to give preference to caring for the poorest and the weakest.

[1] *Thoughts*, 186.
