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Audience with the “Our Lady of Tears” pastoral Community from Treviglio, Bergamo

Today the Holy Father Francis received in audience the “Our Lady of Tears” Pastoral Community from Treviglio, Bergamo.

The following is the Pope’s address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank the parish priest for his words, and I warmly return your archbishop’s greeting. Thank you for coming in such great numbers! So many! Who stayed at home? Our Lady, perhaps!

Our Lady of Tears. It is not the only Shrine with this title. The one in Syracuse immediately comes to mind; but yours is much older, it’s five hundred years old. Then the tears of the Virgin Mary in the apparition at La Salette are famous.

Mary’s tears are a reflection of Jesus’ tears. Jesus wept, the Gospel tells us of two episodes: at the tomb of his friend Lazarus (cf. *Jn* 11:35) and in front of Jerusalem (cf. *Lk* 19:41). In both cases they were tears of sorrow. But we can imagine that Jesus also wept with joy, for example when he saw the little ones, the humble people enthusiastically accepting the Gospel.

Mary, the Mother, is the first disciple. She is more of a disciple than a Mother. She followed her Son in everything, even in the holiness of her sentiments, her emotions, even in laughter and in tears. Surely tears of joy fell from her eyes when she gave birth to Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem, and when she saw the shepherds and the Magi prostrate themselves before him. And she wept bitter tears, in the end, when she followed him along the sorrowful way, and as she stood beneath the cross. Our Lady weeping.

Mary's tears were transformed by Christ's grace, just as her whole life, her whole being, everything in Mary is transfigured in perfect union with her Son, with his mystery of salvation. Therefore, when Mary weeps, her tears are a sign of God's compassion. God has compassion for us, always; and God wants to forgive us. And I remind you of one thing: God always forgives! Always! It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness. And that is why Our Lady's tears are a sign of the compassion of God, who always forgives us with this compassion; they are a sign of Christ's sorrow for our sins, for the evil that afflicts humanity, especially the little ones and the innocent, who are the ones who suffer.

As you, Don Norberto, rightly said, Mary's tears are also a sign of God's weeping for the victims of the war that is destroying not only Ukraine- let us be courageous and tell the truth – it is destroying all the peoples involved in the war. All of them. Because war does not only destroy the defeated people, no, it also destroys the victor; it destroys even those who look on with superficial news to see who is winning and who is losing. War destroys everyone. Beware of this. To her immaculate Heart we have entrusted our plea, and we are sure that the Mother has received it and intercedes for peace, because she is the Queen of Peace. She is the Mother of Peace. And tomorrow will be Mercy Sunday. She is the Mother of Mercy. She knows what *mercy* means, because she "took" it from God.

For five centuries your land has been irrigated with the tears of Mary; from generation to generation your people have been accompanied by her maternal tenderness. She, the Mother, teaches you not to be ashamed of tears. No, we must not be ashamed to weep; on the contrary, the saints teach us that our tears are a gift, at times a grace, a penitence, a liberation of the heart. Weeping means opening up, breaking the shell we close ourselves up in, and being open to the Love that embraces us, that always awaits us to forgive us. Thus is God's heart. God waits. What does he await? Forgiveness, he waits to forgive us. He is restless, incorrigible: he wants to forgive, to forgive... He asks only that we ask him for forgiveness. Opening up to the good Father is also opening up to our brothers. Letting ourselves be tender, letting ourselves be moved by the wounds of those we encounter along the way; knowing how to share, how to welcome, how to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep.

I believe that we, in our time – I speak in general – have lost the habit of weeping "well". Perhaps we cry when something happens that touches us, or when we chop an onion. But weeping that comes from the heart, the true weeping like that of Peter when he repents, like that of Our Lady... Our civilization, our times, have lost the sense of weeping. And we must ask for the grace to weep before the things that we see, before the use that is made of humanity, not only wars – I have spoken about them – but also rejection, the elderly who are rejected, children who are rejected before they have even been born... So many tragedies of rejection: that poor person who has nothing to live on is rejected; the squares, the streets are full of homeless people... The miseries of our time should make us cry, and we need to cry. There is a Mass in the Catholic liturgy to ask for the gift of tears. But you, who have Our Lady "to hand", ask for this gift. And the prayer of that Mass says: "O Lord, Thou who hast brought forth water from the rock, let tears flow from the rock of my heart". The heart of stone that has forgotten how to cry. Please, let us ask for the grace to weep. All of us.

And for this reason, Mary's tears help us. It is important that our ego not be closed up, that it be open to others, especially to the Father, who forgives, and to our brothers. We must let ourselves be tender, be moved by the wounds of those we encounter along the way, know how to share, know how to welcome, how know to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Your Community bears precisely this name: "Our Lady of Tears". This is beautiful! In this title there is a whole pastoral approach: the pastoral care of tenderness, of compassion, of closeness. Tenderness, compassion and closeness. This is God's style. It is a pastoral style that relates to everyone: priests, deacons, lay faithful, consecrated persons... All close, compassionate and tender. And at all ages, in all seasons of life. We must all learn from Mary and follow Jesus, letting the Spirit form our sentiments, our desires, our plans and our actions in accordance with God's heart. Because, as it is said in a beautiful liturgical prayer, "may the action of his Holy Spirit, not our sentiment, prevail in us".

Dear friends, thank you for this visit! Thank you for having brought us to meditate upon the tears of our Mother.

We are in great need of this! We have a great need to weep. I bless all of you, your families and your community from my heart. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!
