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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.00 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 continued his cycle of catechesis on *The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer*, focusing on the theme "Witnesses: Saint Andrew Kim Tae-gon" (Bible reading: *Mt* 10: 24-25,27).

After summarizing his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful present. He then made an appeal on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Catholic Church in China, which coincides with the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of Christians, venerated and invoked in the Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan, in Shanghai.

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 this series of catecheses that we are undertaking, we place ourselves in the school of some of the saints who, as exemplary witnesses, teach us apostolic zeal. Let's recall that we are talking about apostolic zeal, which is what we must have in order to proclaim the Gospel.

Today we are going to find a great example of a saint of the passion for evangelization in a land far away, namely the Korean Church. Let us look at the Korean martyr and first priest Saint Andrew Kim Tae-gon.

But, the first Korean priest: you know something? The evangelization of Korea was done by the laity! It was the

baptized laity who transmitted the faith, there were no priests, because they had none. Then, later... but the first evangelization was done by the laity. Would we be capable of something like that? Let's think about it: it's interesting. And this is one of the first priests, Saint Andrew. His life was and remains an eloquent testimony of the proclamation of the Gospel, the zeal for this.

About 200 years ago, the Korean land was the scene of a very severe persecution: Christians were persecuted and annihilated. At that time, believing in Jesus Christ in Korea meant being ready to bear witness even unto death. Specifically, from the example of Saint Andrew Kim, we can draw out two concrete aspects of his life.

The first is the way he used to meet with the faithful. Given the highly intimidating context, the saint was forced to approach Christians in a discreet manner, and always in the presence of other people, as if they had been talking to each other for a while. Then, to confirm the Christian identity of his interlocutor, Saint Andrew would implement these devices: first, there was a previously agreed upon sign of recognition: "You will meet with this Christian and he will have this sign on his outfit or in his hand." "And after that, he would surreptitiously ask the question—but all this under his breath, eh?"—"Are you a disciple of Jesus?" Since other people were watching the conversation, the saint had to speak in a low voice, saying only a few words, the most essential ones. So, for Andrew Kim, the expression that summed up the whole identity of the Christian was "disciple of Christ." "Are you a disciple of Christ?"—but in a soft voice because it was dangerous. It was forbidden to be a Christian there.

Indeed, being a disciple of the Lord means following Him, following His path. And the Christian is by nature one who preaches and bears witness to Jesus. Every Christian community receives this identity from the Holy Spirit, and so does the whole Church, since the day of Pentecost (cf. Vatican Council II, Decree *Ad gentes*, 2). It is from this Spirit that we receive the passion, the passion for evangelization, this great apostolic zeal; it is a gift of the Spirit Who gives. And even if the surrounding context is not favorable—like the Korean context of Andrew Kim—it does not change; on the contrary, it becomes even more valuable. Saint Andrew Kim and other Korean believers have demonstrated that witnessing to the Gospel in times of persecution can bear much fruit for the faith.

Now let us look at a second concrete example. When he was still a seminarian, Saint Andrew had to find a way to secretly welcome missionary priests from abroad. This was not an easy task, as the regime of the time strictly forbade all foreigners from entering the territory. That's why it had been, before this, so difficult to find a priest that could come to do missionary work: the laity undertook the mission.

One time—think about what Saint Andrew did—one time, he was walking in the snow, without eating, for so long that he fell to the ground exhausted, risking unconsciousness and freezing. At that point, he suddenly heard a voice, "Get up, walk!" Hearing that voice, Andrew came to his senses, catching a glimpse of something like a shadow of someone guiding him.

This experience of the great Korean witness makes us understand a very important aspect of apostolic zeal; namely, the courage to get back up when one falls.

But do saints fall? Yes! Indeed, from the earliest times. Think of Saint Peter: he committed a great sin, eh? But he found strength in God's mercy and got up again. And in Saint Andrew we see this strength: he had fallen physically but he had the strength to go, go, go to carry the message forward.

No matter how difficult the situation may be—and indeed, at times it may seem to leave no room for the Gospel message—we must not give up and we must not forsake pursuing what is essential in our Christian life: namely, evangelization.

This is the path. And each of us can think to themselves: "But what about me, how can I evangelize?" But you look at these great ones and you consider your smallness, we consider our littleness: evangelizing the family, evangelizing friends, talking about Jesus—but talking about Jesus and evangelizing with a heart full of joy, full of strength. And this is given by the Holy Spirit. Let us prepare to receive the Holy Spirit this coming Pentecost, and ask Him for that grace, the grace of apostolic courage, the grace to evangelize, to always carry the message of

Jesus forward. Thank you.

Greeting in English

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from England, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Canada and the United States of America. As we prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, I invoke upon you and your families a rich outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless you all!

Appeals

Today is the World Day of Prayer for the Catholic Church in China. It coincides with the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, venerated and invoked at the Shrine of Our Lady of Sheshan in Shanghai. On this occasion, I wish to offer an assurance of my remembrance and express my closeness to our brothers and sisters in China, sharing in their joys and hopes. I turn my thoughts especially to all those who suffer, pastors and faithful, that in the communion and solidarity of the universal Church they may experience consolation and encouragement. And I invite everyone to raise their prayers to God that the Good News of Christ crucified and risen may be proclaimed in its fullness, beauty, and freedom, bearing fruit for the good of the Catholic Church and all of Chinese society.

And again, sadness comes to us all for tormented Ukraine: there is so much suffering there. Let us not forget them. Let us pray today to Mary Help of Christians that she may be close to the Ukrainian people.
