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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.00 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 cycle of catechesis on "Vices and virtues", focusing on the theme *Patience* (Bible reading: *1 Cor 13:4a-5b, 7*).

After summarizing his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful present.

Before the General Audience in the Paul VI Hall, Pope Francis briefly met with Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, the first Israeli, the second Palestinian, who have both lost their daughters: Smadar, daughter of Rami Elhanan, was a victim of an attack in Jerusalem in 1997; Abir, daughter of Bassam Aramin, was killed in 2007 by a bullet from an Israeli soldier while coming home from school. The story of Rami Elhanan and Bassam Aramin, and their joint commitment to peace in justice through The Parents Circle Association, was recounted in the novel *Apeirogon* by writer Colum McCann, present at Pope Francis' audience with the artists on 23 June, and winner of the Terzani Prize.

The General Audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

[The following text includes parts that were not read out loud, but should be considered as such.]

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today the audience was supposed to take place in the Square, but because of the rain, it has been moved inside here. It is true that you will be rather crowded, but at least we will not get wet. Thank you for your patience.

Last Sunday we listened to the account of the Passion of the Lord. Jesus responds to the sufferings He endures with a virtue that, although it is not considered among the traditional ones, is so important: the virtue of *patience*. Patience, eh! It regards the forbearance of what one suffers: it is not a coincidence that *patience* has the same root as *passion*. And it is precisely in the Passion that Christ's patience emerges, as with meekness and mildness He accepts being arrested, beaten and condemned unjustly; He does not recriminate before Pilate; He bears being insulted, spat upon and flagellated by the soldiers; He carries the weight of the cross; He forgives those who nail Him to the wood; and on the cross, He does not respond to provocations, but rather offers mercy. This is the patience of Jesus. All of this tells us that Jesus' patience does not consist of a stoical resistance to suffering, but is *the fruit of a greater love*.

The Apostle Paul, in the so-called "hymn to charity" (cf. *1 Cor 13:4-7*) closely links *love and patience*. Indeed, in describing the first quality of charity, he uses a word that is translated as "magnanimous" or "patient". Charity is magnanimous, it is patient. It expresses a surprising concept, which frequently appears in the Bible: God, faced with our infidelity, shows Himself to be "slow to anger" (cf. *Ex 34:6*; cf. *Nm 14:18*): instead of unleashing His disgust at man's evil and sin, He reveals Himself to be greater, always ready to start afresh with infinite patience. This, for Paul, is the first feature of God's love, which in the face of sin proposes forgiveness. But not only that: it is the first trait of every great love, which knows how to respond to evil with good, which does not withdraw in anger and discouragement, but perseveres and tries again. The patience that starts over. So, at the root of patience is love, as Saint Augustine says: "Each one of the just is in that measure for endurance of any ills more brave, in what measure in him the love of God is mightier" (*De patientia*, XVII).

One might say, then, that there is no better witness to the love of Jesus than encountering a *patient Christian*. But think of how many mothers and fathers, workers, doctors and nurses, the sick, who every day, in obscurity, grace the world with saintly patience! As the Scripture affirms, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (*Pr 16:32*). However, we must be honest: we often lack patience. In everyday life we are impatient, all of us. We need it as an "essential vitamin" in order to get by, but it comes to us instinctively – it is an instinct to lose our patience – to respond to evil with evil; it is difficult to stay calm, to control our instincts, to refrain from bad responses, to defuse quarrels and conflicts in the family, at work, or in the Christian community. The response comes immediately; we are not capable of remaining patient.

But let us remember that patience is not only a need, it is a *calling*: if Christ is patient, the Christian is called to be patient. And this demands that we go against the tide with respect to today's widespread mentality, dominated by haste and wish for "everything straight away"; in which, instead of waiting for situations to mature, people are pressed, in the expectation that they will change immediately. Let us not forget that haste and impatience are the enemies of spiritual life: why? God is love, and those who love do not tire, they are not irascible; they do not give ultimatums; God is patient, God knows how to wait. Think of the account of the merciful Father, who awaits his son who has left home: he suffers patiently, impatient only to embrace him as soon as he sees him return (cf. *Lk 15:21*); or think of the parable of the wheat and the weeds, with the Lord who is not in a hurry to uproot evil before its time, so that nothing is lost (cf. *Mt 13:29-30*). Patience saves us everything.

But, brothers and sisters, how can one *grow in patience*? Since, as Saint Paul teaches us, it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal 5:22*), one must ask for it from the Spirit of Christ. He gives us the meek strength of patience – patience is a meek strength – because "Christian virtue is not only a matter of doing good, but of tolerating evil as well" (Augustine, *Sermons*, 46,13). In these days especially, it will be good for us to contemplate the Crucified One to assimilate His patience. Another good exercise is to take to Him the most bothersome people, asking for the grace to put into practice towards them that work of mercy so well known, yet so disregarded: patiently enduring troublesome people. And it is not easy. Let us think – I repeat – if we were to do this: to patiently tolerate troublesome people. It starts by asking to look at them with compassion, with God's gaze, knowing how to distinguish their faces from their faults. We have the habit of cataloguing people according to the mistakes they make. No, this is not good. Let us seek people by their faces, their heart, and by for their mistakes.

Finally, to cultivate patience, a virtue which gives breath to life, it is good to *broaden one's outlook*. For example, by not restricting the field of the world to our own troubles, as the *Imitation of Christ* invites us to do. And it says: "Well may you remember the very painful woes of others, that you may bear your own little ones the more easily", recalling that "for with God nothing that is suffered for His sake, no matter how small, can pass without reward" (III, 19). And again, when we feel we are in the grip of adversity, as Job teaches us, it is good to open ourselves with hope to the newness of God, in the unwavering confidence that He does not let our expectations be disappointed. Patience, and knowing how to bear troubles.

And here today, in this audience, there are two people, two fathers. They are the first: an Israeli and an Arab. Both of them have lost their daughters in this war, and they are both friends; they do not look at the wickedness of the war, but they look at the friendship of two men who care about each other and have experienced the same crucifixion. Let us think of the beautiful witness of these two people who have suffered the war in the Holy Land in the loss of their daughters. Dear brothers, thank you for your witness.

Greeting in English

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors participating in today's Audience, especially the groups from the Philippines, Pakistan, Canada and the United States of America. As we prepare for the Sacred Triduum, I invoke upon all of you the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!
