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General audience: God's forgiveness gives us the dignity of getting up again

Vatican City, 30 March 2016 – This morning, with a meditation on Psalm 51, the so-called "Miserere", Pope Francis concluded his catechesis of mercy in the Old Testament. This penitential psalm, according to an ancient Jewish tradition, expresses the repentance of the king David after his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband, the Hittite Uriah. The prophet Nathan reveals his guilt and helps him to recognise it.

"And in this David was humble, he was great", said the Pope to the thirty thousands faithful who attended the general audience in St. Peter's Square. "What he had done was not a minor sin, a small falsehood; he had committed adultery and murder". But the king, who trusted in God, humbles himself without fear of confessing his guilt nor of showing his misery, as he is convinced of the Lord's mercy".

The invocation of the Psalm is addressed to God as, "moved by a love as great as that of a father or a mother, He may take pity ... and show his favour with benevolence and understanding. It is a heartfelt appeal to God, Who alone may liberate from sin. ... This prayer shows the true need of man: the only thing that we truly need in our life is to be forgiven, freed from evil and from its consequence of death. Unfortunately, life makes us experience this situation many times; and it is above all at these times that we must trust in mercy. God is greater than our sin. ... God is greater than all the sins we can commit. ... And His love is an ocean in which we can immerse ourselves without fear of drowning; forgiving, for God, means giving us the certainty that He never abandons us. Whatever we may reproach ourselves for, He is still always greater than all".

"In this sense, whoever prays this Psalm seeks forgiveness and confesses his or her own guilt, but recognising it, celebrates the justice and holiness of God, and may still ask for grace and mercy. The Psalmist ... knows that divine mercy is supremely effective ... as it does not conceal sin, but destroys and cancels it out, right from the root. ... Therefore the sinner becomes pure again. ... We sinners, with forgiveness, become new creatures. ... Now a new reality begins for us: a new heart, a new spirit, a new life. We, forgiven sinners, who have received divine grace, are even able to teach others to sin no more".

"But Father, I am weak, and I fall down again", said the Pope. "But if you fall, get up again! When a child falls, what does he do? He raises his hands to his mother or father to help him up. Let us do the same! If you fall into sin through weakness, raise your hand: the Lord will take it and will help you to get up again. This is the dignity of the Lord's forgiveness. The dignity that God's forgiveness gives us is that of getting up again, of always

getting back on our feet, because He has created man and woman so that they might stay on their feet".

"God's forgiveness is what we all need, and it is the greatest sign of His mercy", concluded the Holy Father. "A gift that every forgiven sinner is called upon to share with every brother and sister he or she meets. It is beautiful to be forgiven, but you too, if you wish to be forgiven, forgive in turn. Forgive!"
