

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 170524c

Wednesday 24.05.2017

General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. in St. 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 focused on the theme "Emmaus, the journey of hope" (cf. Lk. 24:28-32).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

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

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today I would like to focus on the experience of the two disciples of Emmaus, to which the Gospel of Luke refers (cf. 24: 13-35). Let us imagine the scene: two men walk along, disappointed, sad, convinced that they have left behind them the bitterness of an affair that has gone badly. Before that Passover they were full of enthusiasm: convinced that those days would have been decisive for their expectations and for the hope of all the people. Jesus, to Whom they had entrusted their life, seemed finally to have arrived at the decisive battle: now He would have demonstrated His power, after a long period of preparation and concealment. This was what they

expected. And it was not thus.

The two pilgrims cultivated a solely human hope, that was now shattered. That cross hoisted on Calvary was the most eloquent sign of a defeat that they had not foreseen. If that Jesus really did follow God's heart, they had to conclude that God was helpless, defenceless in the hands of the violent, and incapable of resisting evil.

So, that Sunday morning, these two flee from Jerusalem. The events of the passion and the death of Jesus are still before their eyes; and in their mind the painful rush of those events, during the forced rest of the Sabbath. That feast of the Passover, which should have sounded the hymn of liberation, was instead transformed into the most painful day of their lives. They leave Jerusalem to go elsewhere, in a quiet village. They all have the appearance of people intent on removing a memory that burns. So, they are on the road, and they walk, sorrowful. This scene – the road – had already been important in the Gospel accounts; now it will become even more so, in the moment in which one begins to tell the story of the Church.

Jesus' encounter with these two disciples seems to be entirely fortuitous: it resembles one of those many encounters that happen in life. The two disciples walk deep in thought, and a stranger appears beside them. It is Jesus, but their eyes are unable to recognize Him. And then Jesus begins his "therapy of hope". What happens on that road is a therapy of hope. Who gives it? Jesus.

First of all, He asks and listens: our God is not intrusive. Even though He already knows the reason for the disappointment of these two, He leaves them the time to gauge in depth the bitterness that they have experienced. There emerges a confession that is recurrent in human existence: "*We hoped, but ... we hoped, but ...*" (v. 21). How much sorrow, how many defeats, how many failures there are in the life of every person! In the end we are all a bit like those two disciples. How often in life have we hoped, how often have we felt as though we were one step from happiness, only to find ourselves on the ground, disappointed. But Jesus walks with all those distrustful people who proceed with their heads bowed. And walking with them, in a discreet way, He manages to restore hope.

Jesus speaks to them first through the *Scriptures*. He who holds in his hand the book of God will not chance upon stories of easy heroism or thunderous campaigns of conquest. True hope never comes at an easy price: it always passes through defeat. The hope of those who do not suffer, is perhaps not even hope. God does not like to be loved as one would love a leader who drags his people to victory, annihilating his adversaries in blood. Our God is a dim light that burns on a cold and windy day, and although His presence in this world may seem fragile, He has chosen the place that we all disdain.

Then Jesus repeats for the two disciples the *cardinal gesture of each Eucharist*: He takes the bread, He blesses it, and He gives it. In this series of gestures, is there not perhaps all the story of Jesus? And is there not, in every Eucharist, also the sign of what the Church should be? Jesus takes us, He blesses us, He "breaks" our life – because there is no love without sacrifice – and He offers it to others, He offers it to everyone.

It is a swift encounter, that of Jesus with the two disciples of Emmaus. But in it there is all the destiny of the Church. It tells us that the Christian community is not closed up in a fortified citadel, but walks in its most vital space, namely the road. And there it encounters people, with their hopes and disappointments, at times heavy. The Church listens to all our stories, as they emerge from the casket of our personal conscience; to then offer the Word of life, the witness of love, love that is faithful unto the end. And then people's hearts once more burn with hope.

We have all, in our life, had difficult and dark moments; moments in which we journeyed sadly, deep in thought, without prospects, with only a wall in front of us. And Jesus is always next to us to give us hope, to warm our heart and say, "Go ahead, I am with you. Go ahead". The secret of the road to Emmaus is all here: even contrary to appearances, we continue to be loved, and God will never cease to love us. God will always walk with us, always, even in the most painful moments, even in the ugliest moments, even in the moments of defeat: the Lord is there. And this is our hope. Let us go ahead with this hope! Because He is next to us and walks with us, always!

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to welcome French-speaking pilgrims, particularly the Catholic group from the Paris Palace of Justice and the community of the Arch of Ambleteuse, as well as all the faithful from Belgium, France and Mauritius. On the eve of the Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension, be assured that even through seeming contradictions, we are always loved by God and that His love for us will never cease. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Hong Kong, India, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Guam, Zimbabwe, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. Today I wish to greet especially pilgrims from Hong Kong as they celebrate Our Lady of Sheshan. May the Lord bless you all!

German

A cordial welcome to all German-speaking pilgrims! In particular I greet the faithful and the musical band of *Zams*. In the month of May I entrust all of you to Our Lady, as well as our desires and concerns. God bless you and your families.

Spanish

I cordially greet the Spanish-speaking pilgrims, in particular the groups from Spain and Latin America. May the risen Jesus grant us to discover Him present and alive in His Church where, coming out to meet us and walking beside each one, He leads us with His infallible love and His life-giving presence on the path of hope. God bless you.

Portuguese

I greet Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, invoking on all the consolations and lights of the Spirit of God so that, defeating pessimism and the disappointments of life, they may cross, along with their loved ones, the threshold of hope that we have in the risen Christ. I count on your prayers. Thank you!

Arabic

I cordially greet Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Syria, the Holy Land and the Middle East. Many people nowadays live the experience of the two disciples of Emmaus, with their hearts broken by war and disappointments: they experience the need to find Jesus and to be found by Him. In reality, only the Risen Christ can reignite in them and in deluded humanity the flame of hope that never disappoints. The Lord bless you all and protect you from the evil one.

Polish

I cordially greet the Polish people attending this audience. Every person, in difficult times in life, feels lost and does not know what to do. We need someone's support, help and advice – especially in the spiritual field. The memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of Christians, whom we remember today, makes us aware of the greatness of the gift of protection of the Mother of the Son of God for each one of us. I entrust our lives to her. In

doubt, we often invoke her protection. May Mary Help of Christians, intercede for us. Praised be Jesus Christ.

Ukrainian

I greet the Ukrainian pilgrims who have participated in the international military pilgrimage to Lourdes, and continue to invoke from the Lord peace for the dear Ukrainian land.

Italian

I address a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims. I greet the faithful from the areas affected by earthquakes in the Valnerina; those from Massa di Somma, on the occasion of the anniversary of the foundation of the Santa Maria Assunta parish and mayors from the Pinerolo area. I greet the parish groups and associations, especially those of opera singers. On the eve of the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, may this visit to the eternal city reawaken faith and inspire new commitment to charity and solidarity.

I address a special greeting to the young, the sick and newlyweds. Today we celebrate the memory of Mary Help of Christians. Dear young people, learn to love in the way of the Mother of Jesus; dear people who are sick, in suffering ask for the heavenly intercession of the Holy Virgin with the prayer of the Rosary, and you, dear newlyweds, like Our Lady, always know how to listen to God's will for your family.
