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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. 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 focused on the theme "Christian hope: *enemies in hope*" and then addressed an appeal to the representatives of *Caritas Internationalis* on the occasion of the opening of the Campaign "Sharing the Journey", officially launched during the General Audience.

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!

In this time we are talking about hope; but today I would like to reflect with you on the *enemies of hope*. Because hope has its enemies: like any good in this world, it has its enemies.

And the ancient myth of Pandora's box comes to mind: the opening of the box unleashes so many misfortunes for the history of the world. Few, however, remember the final part of the story, which opens up a glimmer of light: after all the evils have left the vessel, a tiny gift seems to prevail over all the spreading evil. Pandora, the woman who conserved the vessel, perceives it last of all: the Greeks call it *elpis*, which means *hope*.

This myth tells us why hope is so important for humanity. It is not true that "where there is life, there is hope", as the saying goes. If anything, it is the opposite: it is hope that supports life, that protects and guards it, and allows it to grow. If men had not cultivated hope, if they had not been held up by that virtue, they would never have left their caves, and they would not have left any trace on the history of the world. It is that which is most divine that can exist in the heart of a man.

A French poet – Charles Péguy – left us some wonderful pages on hope (cf. *The Portico of the Mystery of the Second Virtue*). He says poetically that God does not wonder so much at the faith of human beings, nor their charity; but what truly fills Him with wonder and emotion is the hope of the people. "That those poor sons", he writes – see how things are and that they believe they will be better tomorrow". The poet's image recalls the faces of many people who pass through this world – peasants, poor workers, migrants in search of a better future – who have fought tenaciously despite the bitterness of a difficult present, full of many trials, inspired however by the confidence that their children would have a more just and serene life. They battled for their children, they fought in hope.

Hope is the impulse in the heart of those who depart, leaving their home, their land, at times family and relatives – I think of migrants – in search of a better and more worthy life for them and for their loved ones. And it is also the impulse in the heart of those who welcome them: the desire to meet them, to get to know them, to engage in dialogue... Hope is the impetus to "share the journey", because journeys are made by two: those who come to our land, and us, we who go towards their heart, to understand them, to understand their culture, their language. It is a journey undertaken by two, but without hope that journey cannot be made. Hope is the impulse to share the journey of life, as we are reminded by the Caritas Campaign we are inaugurating today. Brothers, do not be afraid of sharing the journey! Let us not be afraid! Let us not be afraid of sharing hope!

Hope is not a virtue for people whose stomachs are full. This is why *the poor are the first bearers of hope*. And in this sense we can say that the poor, even those who beg, are the protagonists of history. To enter the world, God needed them: Joseph and Mary, the shepherds of Bethlehem. On the night of the first Christmas there was a world that slept, settled in certain acquired securities. But the humble prepared in concealment the revolution of goodness. They were poor in everything; some floated just above the survival threshold, but they were rich in the most precious good that existed in the world, that is, the desire for change.

At times, having had everything in life is a misfortune. Think of a young person who has not been taught the virtue of waiting and patience, who has never had to sweat for anything, who has already done everything by the age of twenty and "already knows how the world is"; he is destined for the worst sentence, that of no longer desiring anything. It is this, the worst sentence. Closing the door to desires, to dreams. He seems young, but instead autumn has already descended on his heart. They are the young people of autumn.

Having an empty soul is the worst obstacle to hope. It is a risk from which no-one can be considered exempt; because being tempted away from hope can happen even when following the path of Christian life. The monks of antiquity had denounced one of the worst enemies of fervour. They used to say this: that "midday demon" that wipes out a life of commitment, just as the sun is high in the sky. This temptation surprises us when we least expect it; the days become monotonous and boring, and no value seems worth the effort any more. This attitude is called *sloth*, which erodes life from within, leaving it like an empty shell.

When this happens, the Christian knows that the condition must be combated, and never accepted passively. God created us for joy and for happiness, not to wallow in melancholy thoughts. This is why it is important to protect one's own heart, opposing oneself to temptations of infidelity, that certainly do not come from God. And where our forces seem weak and the battle against anguish particularly hard, we can always seek refuge in the name of Jesus. We can repeat that simple prayer, traces of which we find in the Gospels, and which as become

the cornerstone of so many Christian spiritual traditions: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. A beautiful prayer. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner”. This is a prayer of hope, because I address it to Him, He Who can throw open the doors and solve the problem, and let me look to the horizon, the horizon of hope.

Brothers and sisters, we are not alone in battling against desperation. If Jesus conquered the world, He is capable of defeating in us all that is opposed to good. If God is with us, no-one can rob us of that virtue which we need absolutely in order to live. No-one will rob us of hope. Let us go ahead!

Greetings in various languages

French

I am glad to greet pilgrims from France and Switzerland, especially the young people of Lucerne. May the Lord, through the intercession of Saint Vincent de Paul, help you face with courage the disappointments of life and sow hope around you. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. Today marks the start of the worldwide Caritas campaign “Share the Journey”, to assist families forced to migrate. I encourage you to support this praiseworthy initiative as an expression of our solidarity with our many brothers and sisters in need. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

I greet German-speaking pilgrims with affection, and give a special welcome to the many young people, in particular students from the Coelestin-Maier Realschule of Vilshofen, the Paulus-Schule of Oldenburg and the Domschule of Osnabrück. God is always near, even in the difficulties and trials of everyday life. With Him we conquer all desperation. If God is with us, no-one will rob us of hope. May the Holy Spirit fill you with His joy.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially the groups from Spain and Latin America.

I wish to ask today that we remember in prayer the victims and those who have been affected by the damage left in the wake of the hurricane that has hit the Caribbean, and especially Puerto Rico, in these days. God bless you.

Portuguese

I extend my greeting to all Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, particularly to the faithful of Arruda dos Vinhos and Sobral and to the various groups from Brazil. Dear friends, Christian hope urges us to look to the future as men and women who do not tire of dreaming of a better world. May Mary, the cause of our hope, guide you on this path.

Arabic

I cordially welcome Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, God has created us for joy and happiness, and not for wallowing in melancholy thoughts. And when our forces appear to be weak, and the battle against anguish particularly tough, we can always resort to the name of Jesus, inviting him: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!” May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I address a cordial greeting to Polish pilgrims. Dear brothers and sisters, Christian hope is based on trust in God's omnipotence and goodness. When we are aware of difficulties and sufferings that threaten our hope, let us not hesitate to ask the Lord to open our eyes to goodness, to inspire in us a new desire for happiness and to reawaken the desire for effort in favour of a better world, for us and for others. God bless you!

Italian

A cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims!

I am glad to welcome the faithful from various parishes, priests who celebrate their 25th anniversary of their ordination, participants in the General Chapter of the Missionaries of the Faith, the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth who today commemorate their foundation 175 years ago, the priests of the Pontifical “Saint Paul the Apostle” International Missionary College of Rome and the members of the Institute of Lay Missionaries of Mary Mother of the Redeemer. I urge you all to be faithful to the charism received, bearing witness in the places of the apostolate to the merciful love of the Father. I greet the *Opera Nazionale per il Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, the Financiers of the Regional Command of Abruzzo, the National Association of Carabinieri of Tagliacozzo and the Filipino community of Venice. Finally, I greet the young, the sick and newlyweds. May the example of charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, whom we remember today as the patron of charitable associations, lead you, dear young people, to implement the plans of your future with joyful and altruistic service to those most in need. May it help you, dear people who are sick, to face suffering with selfless faith. And may it encourage you, dear newlyweds, to build a family always open to the duties of hospitality and the giving of life.

Appeal of the Holy Father

I am pleased to welcome the representatives of Caritas, gathered here to begin officially the campaign “Share the Journey” – a beautiful name for your campaign, share the journey – which I wished to coincide with this audience. I welcome migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who, along with workers of Caritas Italiana and other Catholic organisations, are a sign of a Church who seeks to be open, inclusive and welcoming. Thank you to you all for your tireless service. You have already applauded, but they all truly deserve great applause, from everyone!

With your daily effort, you remind us that Christ Himself asks us to welcome our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters with open arms, with wide open arms. Welcoming just like that, with wide open arms. When the arms are open, they are ready for a sincere embrace, an affectionate embrace, a warm embrace, a bit like this colonnade in Saint Peter's Square, that represents the Mother Church who embraces all in the sharing of the common journey.

I also welcome the representatives of many organisations of civil society engaged in assistance to migrants and refugees, which alongside Caritas, have given their support to the collection of signatures for a petition for a new law on migration, more suited to the current context. You are all welcome.
