



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 14 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Let us continue with the Catecheses on the Holy Mass. At the Last Supper, after Jesus took the bread and the cup of wine, and gave thanks to God, we know that “he broke the bread”. In the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Mass, this action corresponds to the *Fraction of Bread*, preceded by the prayer that the Lord taught us, that is, by the “Our Father”.

Thus begins the Communion Rite, continuing the praise and petition of the Eucharistic Prayer with the community’s recitation of the “*Our Father*”. This is not one of many Christian prayers, but *the prayer of the children of God*: it is the great prayer that Jesus taught us. Indeed, consigned to us on the day of our Baptism, the “Our Father” makes resonate within us those same sentiments that Christ Jesus bore within. When we pray the “Our Father”, we pray as Jesus prayed. It is the prayer that Jesus prayed, and he taught it to us; when the disciples said to him: “Master, teach us to pray as you pray”. And this is how Jesus prayed. It is so beautiful to pray like Jesus! Formed by his divine teaching, we dare to turn to God calling him “Father”, because we are reborn as his children through water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:5). No one, truly, could call him “*Abbà*” — “Father” — in a familiar way without having been created by God, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul teaches (cf. Rom 8:15). We must consider: no one can call him “Father” without the inspiration of the Spirit. How often there are people who say “Our Father” but do not know what they are saying. Because yes, he is the Father, but when you say “Father”, do you feel that he is Father, your Father, the Father of mankind, the Father of Jesus Christ? Do you have a relationship with this Father? When we pray the “Our Father”, we connect with the Father who loves us, but it

is the Spirit who gives us this connection, this feeling of being God's children.

What better prayer than the one taught by Jesus could prepare us for sacramental Communion with him? Apart from in the Mass, the "Our Father" is prayed in the morning and at night, in the Praises and in Vespers; in this way, the filial attitude toward God and that of fraternity with our neighbour help give Christian form to our days.

In the Lord's Prayer — in the "Our Father" — we ask for our "daily bread", in which we see a particular reference to the Eucharistic Bread, which we need in order to live as children of God. We also implore "forgiveness of our trespasses". And in order to be worthy to receive God's forgiveness we commit to forgiving those who have offended us. And this is not easy. Forgiving the people who have offended us is not easy; it is a grace that we must ask for: "Lord, teach me to forgive as you have forgiven me". It is a grace. Through our own efforts we are unable: to forgive is a grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as we open our heart to God, the "Our Father" also prepares us for fraternal love. Lastly, we again ask God to "deliver us from evil" which separates us from him and divides us from our brothers and sisters. Let us clearly understand that these requests are quite appropriate to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 81).

Indeed, what we ask in the "Our Father" is extended by the prayer of the priest who, in the name of all, implores: "Deliver us Lord from every evil, and grant us peace in our day". He then receives a sort of seal in the Rite of Peace: what he first asks of Christ is that the gift of His peace (cf. Jn 14:27) — thus different from worldly peace — may help the Church to grow in unity and in peace, according to His will; then, with the concrete gesture exchanged among us, we express "ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament" (cf. *girm*, 82). In the Roman Rite the exchange of the sign of peace, placed from antiquity before Communion, is ordered to Eucharistic Communion. According to Saint Paul's admonition, it is impossible to communicate with the one Bread that renders us one Body in Christ, without recognizing that we are reconciled by fraternal love (cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:29). Christ's peace cannot take root in a heart incapable of experiencing fraternity and of restoring it after it has been wounded. Peace is granted by the Lord: he grants us the grace to forgive those who have offended us.

The gesture of peace is followed by the *Fraction of Bread* (cf. *girm*, 83; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1329). Performed by Jesus during the Last Supper, the breaking of the Bread is the revelatory gesture that allowed the disciples to recognize him after his Resurrection. We remember the disciples of Emmaus who, in speaking of their encounter with the Risen One, recount "how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread" (cf. Lk 24:30-31, 35).

The breaking of the Eucharistic Bread is accompanied by the invocation of the "Lamb of God", the figure which John the Baptist indicated in Jesus "who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The biblical image of the lamb speaks of redemption (cf. Ex 12:1-14; Is 53:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev

7:14). In the Eucharistic Bread, broken for the life of the world, the prayerful assembly recognizes the true Lamb of God, namely, Christ the Redeemer, and implores him: “Have mercy on us ... grant us peace”.

“Have mercy on us”, “grant us peace” are invocations that, from the “Our Father” prayer to the Fraction of Bread, help us to prepare our soul to participate in the Eucharistic banquet, the source of communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.

Let us not forget the great prayer: the one that Jesus taught us, and which is the prayer with which he prayed to the Father. This prayer prepares us for Communion.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, Norway, Australia, China, Indonesia and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. Dear friends, Christ promised to always be with us and he manifests his presence in many ways. Each person has the responsible and courageous task of proclaiming and witnessing to His love which sustains us in every occasion of life. Therefore, never tire of entrusting yourselves to Christ and to spread his Gospel everywhere.