



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *St Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 27 March 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today we move on to analyze the second part of the “Lord’s Prayer”, in which we present our needs to God. This second part begins with a word with the scent of daily life: *bread*.

Jesus’ prayer begins with a compelling request, which quite resembles a beggar’s plea: “Give us our daily bread!”. This prayer comes from an evident [fact] that we often forget, which is to say that we are not self-sufficient beings, and that we need to nourish ourselves every day.

Scripture shows us that for many people the encounter with Jesus is realized by beginning with a request. Jesus does not ask for refined invocations, but rather, the whole of human existence, with its most concrete and mundane problems, can become prayer. In the Gospels we find a multitude of mendicants who plead for liberation and salvation. Those who ask for bread, those for healing; some for purification, others sight; or that a dear one may live again.... Jesus never moves indifferently past these requests and this suffering.

Thus, Jesus teaches us to ask the Father for our daily bread. And he teaches us to do so united with many men and women for whom this prayer is a plea — often stifled within — which accompanies the anxiety of each day. How many mothers and how many fathers, even today, go to sleep with the torment of not having enough bread for their own children tomorrow! Let us imagine this prayer recited not in the security of a comfortable apartment, but in the precariousness of a room in which one adapts, where life’s necessities are lacking. Jesus’ words take on new meaning. Christian prayer begins at this level. It is not an exercise for ascetics; it begins from reality, from the heart and from the flesh of people who live in need, or who share the condition of those who do not have life’s necessities. Not even the most exalted Christian mystics can overlook the simplicity of this request. “Father let there be the necessary bread for us and for all”. And “bread” also means water, medicine, home, work.... Asking for life’s necessities.

The bread a Christian requests in prayer is not “mine”, but “ours”. This is what Jesus wants. He teaches us to request it not only for ourselves but for the world’s entire fraternity. If one does not pray in this way, the “Our Father” ceases to be a Christian prayer. If God is our Father, how can we present ourselves to him without taking each other by the hand? All of us. And if we steal from one another the bread that he gives us, how can we call ourselves his children? This prayer contains an attitude of empathy, an attitude of solidarity. In my hunger I feel the hunger of the multitudes, and thus I will pray to God until their request is answered. This is how Jesus teaches his community, his Church, to bring to God the needs of all: “We are all your children, O Father, have mercy on us!”. And now it will do us good to pause a bit and think about the starving children. Let us think about the children who are in warring countries: the starving children of Yemen, the starving children in Syria, the starving children in so many countries where there is no bread, in South Sudan. Let us think about these children and, thinking of them, let us recite the prayer together aloud: “Father, give us this day our daily bread”. Everyone together.

The bread we request from the Lord in prayer is the very same that one day will fault us. It will reproach us for the paltry habit of breaking it with those who are close to us, the paltry habit of sharing it. It was bread given for mankind, and instead it was eaten by just one: love cannot bear this. Our love cannot bear it; nor can God’s love bear this selfishness of not sharing our bread.

Once there was a great crowd before Jesus: they were people who were hungry. Jesus asked whether someone had something, and they found only one lad willing to share his provisions: five loaves and two fish. Jesus multiplied that generous act (cf. Jn 6:9). That lad had understood the lesson of the “Our Father”: that food is not private property — let us keep this in mind: food is not private property — but Providence to be shared, with the grace of God.

The true miracle performed by Jesus that day is not so much the multiplication — which is true — but the sharing: give what you have and I will perform a miracle. He himself, in multiplying that given bread, revealed the offering of Himself in the Eucharistic Bread. Indeed, the Eucharist alone is capable of satisfying the infinite hunger and the desire for God which animates each person, even in the search for daily bread.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Japan and the United States of America. May the Lenten journey bring us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in Christ our Redeemer! I address a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*.

May the visit to the Tombs of the Apostles be for all of you an occasion to grow in God’s love and

to allow yourselves to be transformed by divine grace, which is stronger than all sin.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we have the joy to have with us a person I would like to introduce to you. She is Sr Maria Concetta Esu, of the Congregation of the Daughters of San Giuseppe di Genoni. And why am I doing this?

Sr Maria Concetta is 85 years old, and for almost 60 years has been a missionary in Africa, where she serves as an obstetrician. Let's have a round of applause. I met her in Bangui, when I went to open the Jubilee of Mercy. There, she told me that in her lifetime she has helped to deliver thousands of babies. How wonderful! That day too, she had come by canoe from Congo — at 85 years of age — to do her shopping in Bangui.

These days she has come to Rome for a meeting with her Sisters, and today she has come to the Audience with her Superior. So I thought I would take advantage of this occasion to offer her a sign of appreciation and to express great gratitude to her for her witness!

Dear Sister, on behalf of the Church, I confer on you a commendation. It is a sign of our “thanks” for all the work you have done among our African sisters and brothers, at the service of life, of children, of mothers and families.

With this gesture dedicated to you, I also wish to express my appreciation to all the missionary men and women, priests, religious and lay people who are sowing the seed of the Kingdom of God in every part of the world. Your work, dear men and women missionaries, is great. You “consume” your lives by sowing the Word of God with your testimony.... And in this world you do not make the news. You are not headlines in the newspapers. Cardinal Hummes, who is in charge of the Brazilian Episcopate, of all of Amazonia, often goes to visit the cities and villages of Amazonia. And each time he arrives there, — he told me so himself — he goes to the cemetery and visits the tombs of missionaries; many died young from diseases for which they had no antibodies. And he told me: “All of them deserve to be canonized”, because they “consumed” their lives in service.

Dear brothers and sisters, after this appointment, in the coming days Sister Maria Concetta will return to Africa. Let us accompany her with prayer. And may her example help all of us to live the Gospel where we are.

Thank you, Sister! May the Lord bless you and may Our Lady protect you.

After the General Audience the Holy Father said:

As every year, on Friday and Saturday, we will meet for the traditional initiative: '24 Hours for the Lord'. On Friday, 29 March, at 5:00 pm, in Saint Peter's Basilica, I will preside at a Penitential Liturgy. How significant it would be if our Churches too, on this particular occasion, were opened for a long time, to ask for God's mercy and welcome it in the Sacrament of Forgiveness.