



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 28 August 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

The ecclesial community described in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is full of so much richness made available by the Lord — the Lord is generous! It experiences a growth in numbers and great success, despite external attacks. In order to show us this vitality, Luke, in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, also mentions significant places, such as Solomon's Portico (cf. Acts 5:12), a meeting place for believers. The portico (*stoà*) is an open gallery that serves as a shelter, and as a place of encounter and witness. In fact, Luke makes a point of [narrating] the signs and wonders that accompany the Apostles' words and the special care of the sick to whom they devote themselves.

In Chapter 5 of the Acts, the nascent Church shows that it is like a "field hospital" that welcomes the weakest, that is, the sick. Their suffering attracts the Apostles, who possess "no silver and gold" (Acts 3:6) — so says Peter to the cripple — but are strong in the name of Jesus. In their eyes, as in the eyes of Christians of all times, the sick are privileged recipients of the Good News of the Kingdom; they are brothers and sisters in whom Christ is present in a special way, so that they may be sought and found by all of us (cf. Mt 25:36, 40). The sick are privileged for the Church, for the priestly heart, for all the faithful. They are not to be discarded. On the contrary, they are to be healed, to be cared for. They are the object of Christian concern.

Among the Apostles, stands out Peter, who has pre-eminence in the apostolic group because of the primacy (cf. Mt 16:18) and mission received from the Risen One (cf. Jn 21:15-17). It is he who began preaching the *kerygma* on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14-41) and who plays a leading role at the Council of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15 and Gal 2:1-10).

Peter approaches the stretchers and walks among the sick, as Jesus had done, taking their infirmities and diseases upon himself (cf. Mt 8:17; Is 53:4). And Peter, the fisherman from Galilee, passes through, but he lets Another manifest himself: that is the Christ alive and working! Indeed, the witness is whoever manifests Christ, both in words and with physical presence, who allows

him to engage and to be an extension of the Verb made flesh in history.

Peter is the one who carries out the works of the Teacher (cf. Jn 14:12): looking to him with faith, one sees Christ himself. Filled with the Spirit of his Lord, Peter passes through and, without doing anything, his shadow becomes a healing “caress”, a communication of health, an effusion of the tenderness of the Risen One who bends over the sick and restores life, salvation and dignity. In this way, God manifests his proximity and makes his children’s wounds “the theological place of God’s tenderness” (Morning meditation, *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, 14 December 2017). In the wounds of the sick, in the illnesses that are a hindrance to going forward in life, there is always the presence of Jesus, the wound of Jesus. There is Jesus who calls each of us to care for them, support them and heal them.

The healing action of Peter stirs the hatred and envy of the Sadducees, who imprison the Apostles and, upset by their mysterious deliverance, forbid them to teach. These people saw the miracles the Apostles performed, not through magic, but in the name of Jesus, but they did not want to accept this and so they imprisoned and beat them. They were then miraculously freed, but the heart of the Sadducees was so hard that they did not want to believe what they saw. Peter then responds by offering a key [aspect] of Christian life: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Because they — the Sadducees — say: “You should not continue doing these things, you should not heal” — “I obey God before men”: it is the great Christian reply. This means listening to God without reserve, delay, calculation; adhering to Him in order to be able to have a Covenant with him and with those we meet on our journey.

Let us, too, ask the Holy Spirit for the strength to be unafraid when faced with those who order us to be quiet, who slander us and even make attempts against our lives. Let us ask him to strengthen us interiorly, to be certain of the loving and comforting presence of the Lord at our side.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially those from England and the United States of America. Upon you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. Today we are celebrating the memory of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. I invite you all to allow yourselves to be inspired by his holiness and his doctrine. Together with him, rediscover the way to the inner life that leads to God and to our neediest neighbour.

I offer a cordial greeting to the Polish pilgrims. Dear brothers and sisters, 1 September marks the

80th anniversary of the start of the Second World War which began with the Nazi Germany invasion of Poland. Commemorative events will take place in Warsaw, Wielun and other cities, which will be attended by several heads of state from around the world. We will all pray for peace; that there be no reoccurrence of the tragic events caused by hatred that only brought destruction, suffering and death. Let us pray to God so that peace may reign in the hearts of mankind, in families, in society and among peoples! I entrust you all to the maternal protection of Mary Queen of Peace and I offer you my heartfelt Blessing.