



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

Wednesday, 22 November 2023

[Multimedia]

Catechesis. The passion for evangelization: the apostolic zeal of the believer. 27. *Proclamation is for everyone*

Dear brothers and sisters,

After having seen, last time, that the Christian proclamation is joy, today let us focus on a second aspect: it is *for everyone* ; Christian proclamation is a joy for everyone. When we truly meet the Lord Jesus, the wonder of this encounter pervades our life and demands to be taken beyond us. He desires this, that his Gospel be for everyone. Indeed, there is a “humanizing power” in it, a fulfilment of life that is destined for every man and woman, because Christ was born, died, and rose again for everyone. For everyone: no-one excluded.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* we read that everyone has “a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction’” (no. 14). Brothers, sisters, let us feel that we are at the service of the *universal destination of the Gospel* ; it is for everyone. And let us distinguish ourselves for our capacity to come out of ourselves — a proclamation, in order to be true, must leave behind one’s own selfishness — and let us also have the capacity to overcome all boundaries. Christians meet on the parvis more than in the sacristy, and go “to the streets and lanes of the city” (*Lk 14:21*).

They must be open and expansive. Christians must be “extroverts”, and this character of theirs comes from Jesus, who made his presence in the world a continuous journey, aimed at reaching everyone, even learning from some of his encounters.

In this sense, the Gospel reports Jesus’ surprising encounter with a foreign woman, a Canaanite who begs him to cure her sick daughter (cf. *Mt* 15:21-28). Jesus refuses, saying that he was sent only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” and that “it is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (vv. 24, 26). But the woman, with the insistence typical of the simple, replies that “even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table” (v. 27). Jesus is struck by this and says, “Woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire” (v. 28). The encounter with this woman has something unique about it. Not only does someone make Jesus change his mind, and a woman, a foreigner and a pagan, but the Lord himself finds confirmation that his preaching should not be limited to the people to whom he belongs, but open to all.

The Bible shows us that when God calls a person and makes a pact with some of them, this is always the criterion: *elect someone to reach others*. This is the criterion of God, of God’s calling. All the Lord’s friends have experienced the beauty, but also the responsibility and the burden, of being “chosen” by him. And everyone has felt discouragement in the face of their own weaknesses or the loss of their certainties. But perhaps the greatest temptation is that of considering the calling received as a privilege: please, no. The calling is not a privilege, ever. We cannot say that we are privileged compared to others — no. The calling is for a service. And God chooses one in order to love everyone, to reach everyone.

It is also to prevent the temptation of identifying Christianity with a culture, with an ethnicity, with a system. In this way, it [would] lose its truly *Catholic* nature, that is, for everyone, universal: it is not a small group of first-class, chosen people. Let us not forget: God chooses someone in order to love *all*. This horizon of universality. The Gospel is not only for me; it is for everyone. Let us not forget this. Thank you.

Special Greetings

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially the groups from England, Finland, the Netherlands, Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea and the United States of America. Upon all of you I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Lastly, I greet *the elderly, the sick, newlyweds and young people*, among them many school groups. Next Sunday, the last in Ordinary Time, we will celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. I encourage you to place Jesus at the centre of your life, and you will receive light and courage from him in every daily decision.

And let us not forget to persevere in prayer for all those who suffer because of the wars in so many parts of the world, especially for the dear people of Ukraine, martyred Ukraine, and of Israel and of Palestine. This morning I received two delegations, one of Israelis who have relatives being held hostage in Gaza, and another of Palestinians who have relatives suffering in Gaza. They suffer a lot and I heard how both suffer: this is what wars do, but in this case, we have surpassed wars. This is not waging war; this is terrorism. Please, let us press on for peace, pray for peace, pray a lot for peace. May the Lord intervene there, may the Lord help us solve problems and not move forward with passions that end up killing everyone. Let us pray for the Palestinian people, let us pray for the Israeli people, so that peace may come.

I give my blessing to all!

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters!

In our continuing catechesis on apostolic zeal, we are reflecting on the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and its summons to proclaim “the joy of the Gospel”. That joy is meant for everyone, since the risen Lord wishes to call all men and women to share in the fullness of life. In fidelity to the mission we received in baptism, we have a duty to share the Gospel with all whom we meet, not excluding anyone, because Christ was born, died, and rose again for all. The Scriptures reveal that when God calls individuals to discipleship, he also sends them forth as witnesses of his redeeming love. The Church herself is “catholic”, universal, for she has been entrusted with the mission of making disciples of all nations, while also fostering unity that respects and reconciles the rich variety of histories and cultures. May we who have experienced the beauty and joy of the Gospel become ever more conscious that its message is good news for all, and strive to show the face of a Church that is welcoming and embraces all.