



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 27 March 2024

[Multimedia]

The following text includes parts that were not read out loud, but should be considered as such.

Cycle of Catechesis. Vices and Virtues. *Patience*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Last Sunday we listened to the account of the Passion of the Lord. Jesus responds to the suffering he endures with a virtue that, although not included among the traditional ones, is so important: the virtue of *patience*. It has to do with the forbearance of what one suffers. It is not a coincidence that *patience* has the same root as *passion*. And it is precisely in the Passion that Christ's patience emerges, as he accepts being arrested, beaten and unjustly condemned, with meekness and mildness. He does not complain before Pilate. He bears being insulted, spat upon and flogged by the soldiers. He carries the weight of the cross. He forgives those who nail him to the wood, and while on the cross, he does not respond to provocation, but rather offers mercy. This is Jesus' patience. All this tells us that Jesus' patience does not consist in a stoic resistance to suffering, but rather, is *the fruit of a greater love*.

In the so-called "Hymn to Charity" (cf. *1 Cor 13:4-7*), the Apostle Paul closely links *love and patience*. Indeed, in describing the first quality of charity, he uses a word that is translated as

“magnanimous” or “patient”. Charity is magnanimous, it is patient. It expresses a surprising concept, which frequently appears in the Bible: faced with our infidelity, God shows himself to be “slow to anger” (cf. *Ex* 34:6; cf. *Nm* 14:18): instead of venting his distaste for man’s evil and sin, he reveals himself to be greater, always ready to start afresh with infinite patience. For Paul, this is the first feature of God’s love, which proposes forgiveness in the face of sin. But not only that: it is the first trait of every great love, which knows how to respond to evil with good, and does not withdraw in anger and despondency, but rather perseveres and tries again. The patience that starts over. Thus love is at the root of patience, as Saint Augustine says: “Each one of the just is in that measure for endurance of any ills more brave, in what measure in him the love of God is mightier” (*De patientia*, XVII).

One might say, then, that there is no better witness to Jesus’ love than encountering a *patient Christian*. But let us also think of the many mothers and fathers, workers, doctors and nurses, the sick, who grace the world with saintly patience, every day, in hiddenness! As the Scripture affirms, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty” (*Pr* 16:32). However, we have to be honest: we often lack patience. In everyday life we are impatient, all of us. We need it as an “essential vitamin” in order to get by, but it is instinctive for us to lose our patience and respond to evil with evil. It is difficult to stay calm, to control our instincts, to refrain from bad responses, to defuse quarrels and conflicts in the family, at work, or in the Christian community. The response is immediate; we are not capable of being patient.

However, let us remember that patience is not only a need, it is a *calling*. If Christ is patient, then Christians are called to be patient. And this demands that we go against the tide with respect to today’s widespread mentality, dominated by rushing and by [wanting] “everything straight away”, in which, rather than waiting for situations to mature, people are put under pressure, in the expectation that they will change immediately. Let us not forget that rushing and impatience are enemies of spiritual life. Why? God is love, and those who love do not tire, they are not irascible; they do not give ultimatums. God is patient, God knows how to wait. Think about the account of the merciful Father, who awaits his son who has left home. He suffers patiently, impatient only to embrace him as soon as he sees him return (cf. *Lk* 15:21). Or think of the parable of the wheat and the weeds, in which the Lord is not in a hurry to uproot evil before its time, so that nothing is lost (cf. *Mt* 13:29-30). Patience lets us save everything.

But brothers and sisters, how can one *grow in patience* ? Since, as Saint Paul teaches us, it is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 5:22), one must ask for it from the Spirit of Christ. He gives us the meek strength of patience — patience is a meek strength — because “Christian virtue is not only a matter of doing good, but of tolerating evil as well” (Augustine, *Sermons*, 46, 13). In these days especially, it will do us good to contemplate the Crucified One, to assimilate his patience. Another good exercise is to take to him the most bothersome people, asking for the grace to put into practice towards them that work of mercy so well known, yet so disregarded: patiently enduring troublesome people. And it is not easy. Let us think about whether we do this: patiently tolerate

troublesome people. It begins by asking to look at them with compassion, with God's gaze, knowing how to distinguish their faces from their faults. We have the habit of cataloguing people according to the mistakes they make. No, this is not good. Let us seek people by their faces, their heart, and not their mistakes.

Lastly, in order to cultivate patience, a virtue which gives breath to life, it is good to *broaden one's outlook*. For example, by not restricting the field of the world to our own troubles, as the *Imitation of Christ* invites us to do: "Well may you remember the very painful woes of others, that you may bear your own little ones the more easily", recalling that "with God nothing that is suffered for His sake, no matter how small, can pass without reward" (III, 19). And again, when we feel we are in the grip of adversity, as Job teaches us, it is good to open ourselves with hope to the newness of God, in the unwavering confidence that he does not disappoint our expectations. Patience, and knowing how to bear troubles.

And here today, at this audience, there are two people, two fathers: one Israeli and the other, Arab. Both of them lost their daughters in the war, and they are friends. They do not look at the wickedness of war, but rather they look at the friendship between two men who care about each other and have experienced the same crucifixion. Let us think of the beautiful witness of these two people who have suffered the war in the Holy Land in the loss of their daughters. Dear brothers, thank you for your witness.

Special Greetings

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors participating in today's Audience, especially the groups from the Philippines, Pakistan, Canada and the United States of America. As we prepare for the Sacred Triduum, I invoke upon all of you the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Brothers and sisters, let us pray for peace. May the Lord grant us peace in tormented Ukraine, which is suffering greatly from the bombings, as well as in Israel and Palestine. May there be peace in the Holy Land. May the Lord grant us all peace, as a gift of his Easter.

I offer my blessing to all of you.

Summary of the Holy Father's words

In our continuing catechesis on the virtues, we now turn to patience, which has its supreme model

in the example of Jesus during his Passion. The patience of Jesus did not consist in a stoic endurance of suffering, but was the fruit of his love. Saint Paul also associates patience with the love of God, who is “slow to anger” and quick to repay evil with good. Indeed, Christian patience and forbearance is the most convincing witness to Christ’s love. This Holy Week, let us ask the grace of the Holy Spirit to imitate Christ in his patience and compassionate love, which forgives all wrongs and shows mercy even to his enemies.