



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope focused on the theme "I am with you always, until the end of the world (cf. Mt. 28.:20): the promise that gives hope".

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recital of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

"I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20). These last words of the Gospel of Matthew recall the prophetic announcement we find at the beginning: "They shall call his name Immanuel, which means, *God with us*" (Mt. 1:23; cf. Is. 7:14). God will be with us, every day, until the end of the world. Jesus will walk with us, every day, until the end of the world. All the Gospel is enclosed between these two citations, words that communicate the mystery of God whose name, whose identity is *being-with*: He is not an isolated God, he is a God *with*, in

particular *with us*, that is, with the human creature. Ours is not an absent God, secluded in far away heaven; He is instead a God Who is passionate about man, so tenderly loving as to be incapable of separating Himself from him. We humans are capable of breaking bonds and bridges; He however is not. While our heart cools, His always remains incandescent. Our God accompanies us always, even if by misfortune we forget about Him. On the boundary that divides incredulity from faith, the discovery of being loved and accompanied by our Father, of never being left alone by Him, is decisive.

Our existence is a pilgrimage, a journey. Even those who are moved by a simply human hope, perceive the seduction of the horizon, that drives them to explore worlds they do not yet know. Our soul is a migrant soul. The Bible is full of stories of pilgrims and travellers. The vocation of Abraham begins with this command: "Go from your country" (Gen. 12:1). And the patriarch leaves that piece of the world that he knew well, and that was one of the cradles of the civilization of his time. Everything conspired against the good sense of making that journey. Yet Abraham departs. We do not become mature men and women if we do not perceive the attraction of the horizon: that limit between the sky and the earth that demands to be reached by a journeying people.

In his journey in the world, man is never alone. In particular, the Christian never feels abandoned, because Jesus assures us that He does not await us only at the end of our long journey, but also accompanies us in all of our days.

How long will God's care for mankind continue? How long will the Lord Jesus, Who walks with us, care for us? The Gospel's answer leaves no room for doubt: until the end of the world! The heavens will pass, the earth will pass, human hopes will be erased, but the Word of God is greater than everything and will not pass away. And He will be the God with us, the God Jesus Who walks with us. There will be no day in our life in which we will cease to be a concern for the heart of God. But one might ask, "What are you saying?" I say this: there will be no day in our life in which we cease to be a concern for the heart of God. He worries about us and walks with us. And why does He do this? Simply because He loves us. Do you understand? He loves us! And God will certainly provide for all our needs; He will not abandon us in the time of trial and darkness. This certainty demands to be entrenched in our minds, so that it is never extinguished. Some call this by the name of "Providence". That is, God's closeness, the love of God, God's journeying with us is also called "God's Providence": He provides for our life.

It is not by chance that among the Christian symbols of hope there is one I particularly like: the anchor. This expresses that our hope is not vague; it is not to be confused with the changing sentiment of those who wish to improve things in a fanciful way, relying only on willpower. Indeed, Christian hope is rooted not in the attraction of the future, but in the *security of what God has promised us and realized in Jesus Christ*. If He has guaranteed to us that He will never abandon us, that the beginning of every vocation is a "Follow me", with which He assures us He will always stay in front of us, then why fear? With this promise, Christians can journey everywhere. Even crossing the wounded parts of the world, where things do not go well, we are among those who continue to hope even there. As the Psalm says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (Psalm 23:4). It is precisely where darkness spreads that a light needs to be kept alive. Let us return to the anchor. Our faith is the anchor in heaven. We have our life anchored in heaven. What must we do? Hold on to the rope: it is always there. And we go ahead because we are sure that our life has as an anchor in heaven, on that shore where we will arrive.

Certainly, if we were to trust only in our strengths, we would be right to feel disappointed and defeated, because the world often shows itself to be refractory to the laws of love. Very often it prefers the laws of selfishness. But if there survives in us the certainty that God does not abandon us, that God loves us and this world tenderly, then immediately the perspective changes. "*Homo viator, spe erectus*", the ancients used to say. Along the way, Jesus' promise that "I am with you" lets us stand up with hope, trusting that the good God is already working to accomplish what feels humanly impossible, because the anchor is on the shore of heaven.

The Holy faithful people of God are people who stand – "*homo viator*" and walk, but upright, "*erectus*", and they walk in hope. And wherever they go, they know that God's love precedes them: there is no part of the world that is excluded from the victory of the Risen Christ. And what is the victory of the Risen Christ? The victory of love.

Thank you.

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially congratulate French-speaking pilgrims, especially the group of Pontifical Mission Societies, with Cardinal Filippo Barbarin, archbishop of Lyon, as well as the *de la Arche* Communities of the Cognac, and all the faithful from France and Belgium.

We are the people of God on a pilgrimage following the Risen Christ, and we know that His love precedes us, even in the most difficult situations. I invite you to bring this light around you. God bless you.

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from England, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Nigeria, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

German

I am happy to welcome German-speaking brothers and sisters as well as the faithful of the Netherlands. In particular, I greet the pilgrims of Gais in South Tyrol, accompanied by Bishop Ivo Muser, and the pupils of the *Liebfrauenschule Dießen*. Dear friends, we take to all the message of Easter hope that there is no part in the world that escapes the victory of the Risen Christ. May God always accompany you with His grace.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, especially the groups from Spain and Latin America. In this Easter time, may the contemplation of the Risen Christ, who defeated death and lives for ever, help us to feel we are accompanied by His love and by his life-giving presence, even in the most difficult moments of our life. God bless you.

Portuguese

I cordially greet the students and teachers of Carcavelos and Porto Alegre and the faithful of the parish of Queluz and of the Obra de Maria community; I would also like to welcome the Mayors and Coordinators of the Bairrada Winery, military and civilian cyclists, and other Portuguese-speaking pilgrims: thank you for your presence and above all for your prayers! I entrust to the Virgin Mary your steps in the service of the growth of our brothers and sisters. May the Lord's blessing be upon you and your families.

Arabic

I address a warm greeting to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East. Dear brothers and sisters, always remember that our existence is a pilgrimage, and that the promise of Christ and the love of God that precedes us, support us on our journey. May the Lord bless you.

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Last Sunday, the feast of Divine Mercy, we also commemorated St. Adalbert, patron of Poland. It was also an opportunity to celebrate the sixth centenary of the institution of the first see in Gniezno. To the protection of this great bishop and martyr, who brought the Gospel message and the testimony of Christian life to your lands, I entrust all the pastors and faithful of the Church of Poland. Keep alive for your future generations your spiritual and cultural tradition that has grown from its blood. God bless you!

Croatian

I greet the Croatian pilgrims, especially the Officers and Students of the nineteenth generation of the Military Academy of Croatia, as well as the officers of the Military Ordinance accompanied by their bishop, Msgr. Jure Bogdan. Dear friends, may God's blessing always be upon you and your mission, so that you can engage daily in society as true peacemakers. Praise be to Jesus and Mary

Italian

I cordially welcome Italian-speaking pilgrims. I am glad to welcome the boys of profession of faith of Treviso and couples from the archdiocese of Ancona-Osimo who celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary: I hope that this pilgrimage inspires in each one the rediscovery of the sacraments received, effective signs of God's grace in our life. And to you, commemorating fifty years of marriage, tell young people that is beautiful: the life of Christian marriage is beautiful!

I greet the participants at the conference on anti-seismic construction in Latin America at the Latin American Institute promoted by the European University; the Verbite Fathers; the *Telefono Azzurro* Association; choir of Clusone; the faithful of Cardito, Belvedere and Pellezzano, "Sacerdoti Calcio" sports societies and those of Andria and Oriolo. May the visit to the Tombs of the Apostles promote in all of you a sense of belonging to the ecclesial family.

I address a special greeting to young people, the sick and the newlyweds. Yesterday we celebrated the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist. May his discipleship following St. Paul be an example to you, dear young people, to follow the Saviour; may His intercession support you, dear sick people, in the difficulty and trials of illness; and may his brief and incisive Gospel remind you, dear newlyweds, of the importance of prayer in the matrimonial journey you have undertaken.
