



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

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Appeals of the Holy Father

Greeting to the faithful present in Saint Peter's Basilica

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.30 a.m. in Saint 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 continued his catechesis on the Holy Mass, focusing on the theme "Eucharistic Liturgy: II. Eucharistic prayer".

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!

We will continue the catechesis on the Holy Mass, and with this catechesis we will focus on the *Eucharistic prayer*. After the conclusion of the rite of the presentation of the bread and the wine, there begins the *Eucharistic prayer*, which qualifies the celebration of Mass and constitutes its central moment, ordered to the Holy Communion. It corresponds to what Jesus Himself did, at the table with the Apostles in the Last Supper, when He gave thanks over the bread and then over the chalice of wine (cf. *Mt* 26, 27; *Mk* 14: 23; *Lk* 22: 17-19; *I Cor* 11: 24): His thanksgiving is relived in every Eucharist, associating us with His sacrifice of salvation.

And in this solemn Prayer – the Eucharistic prayer is solemn – the Church expresses what she fulfils when she celebrates the Eucharist, and the reason for which it is celebrated, or rather, communion is made with Christ truly present in the consecrated bread and wine. After inviting the people to raise their hearts to the Lord and give thanks to Him, the priest pronounces the prayer aloud, in the name of all those present, addressing the Father by means of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. “The meaning of the prayer is that the entire congregation of the faithful should join itself with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 78). And to join, it must understand. Therefore, the Church wished to celebrate Mass in the language that the people speak, so that each person can join in this praise and in this great prayer with the priest. In truth, “the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1367).

In the Missal there are various formulas of Eucharistic prayer, all composed of characteristic elements, which I would like to recall now (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 79, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1352-1354). They are all beautiful. First of all there is the *Preface*, which is an *act of thanksgiving* for God’s gifts, especially for sending his Son as Saviour. The Preface ends with the *acclamation* of the “Holy”, normally sung. It is beautiful to sing the “Holy”: “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God”. It is good to sing it. The whole assembly unites its own voice to that of the Angels and the Saints to praise and glorify God.

Then there is the invocation of the Spirit, so that by its power the bread and wine are consecrated. We invoke the Spirit so that He comes, and in the bread and in the wine there is Jesus. The action of the Holy Spirit and the efficacy of Christ’s own words uttered by the priest make truly present, in the form of bread and wine, His Body and His Blood, His sacrifice offered on the cross once and for all. (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1375). Jesus was very clear about this. We have heard how Saint Paul, at the beginning, recounts Jesus’ words: “This is my body, this is my blood”. “This is my blood, this is my body”. It is Jesus Himself Who said this. We must not have strange thoughts: “But, how come something that...”. It is the body of Jesus; it finished there! Faith: faith comes to our aid; with an act of faith we believe that it is the body and blood of Christ. It is “the mystery of faith”, as we say after the consecration. The priest says, “the mystery of faith”, and we respond with an acclamation. Celebrating the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, awaiting His glorious return, the Church offers the Father the sacrifice that reconciles heaven and earth: she the Paschal sacrifice of Christ by offering herself with Him and asking, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, to become in Christ one body and one spirit” (Eucharistic Prayer III, cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 48, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 79f). This is the grace and the fruit of sacramental Communion: we nourish ourselves with the Body of Christ to become, we who eat it, His living Body today in the world.

The mystery of communion is this, the Church unites herself to the offering of Christ and to His intercession, and in this light, “in the catacombs the Church is often represented as a woman in prayer, arms outstretched in the praying position, the Church who prays. It is good to think that the Church prays. There is a passage in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles; when Peter was in prison, the Christian community “joined constantly in prayer”. The Church that prays, the prayerful Church. And when we go to Mass it is to do this: to be the prayerful Church. “Like Christ who stretched out His arms on the cross, through Him, with Him, and in Him, the [Church] offers herself and intercedes for all men” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368).

The Eucharistic prayer asks God to gather together all His sons in the perfection of love, in union with the Pope and the bishop, mentioned by name, a sign that we celebrate in union with the universal Church and with the particular Church. The supplication, like the offertory, is presented to God for all the members of the Church, living and deceased, awaiting the blessed hope of sharing the eternal legacy of heaven, with the Virgin Mary (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1369-1371). No-one and nothing is forgotten in Eucharistic prayer, but everything is redirected to God, as the concluding doxology recalls. No-one is forgotten. And if I have someone,

relatives, friends, who are in need or who have passed from this world to the other, I can name them in this moment, inwardly and in silence, or I can write for the name to be mentioned. “Father, how much do I have to pay for my name to be said there?” “Nothing”. Do you understand this? Nothing! You do not pay for Mass. Mass is Christ’s sacrifice, which is free. Redemption is free. If you want to make an offering, do so, but you do not pay. It is important to understand this.

We may feel a little distant from this codified formula of prayer – it is true, it is an ancient formula – but if we understand its meaning well, then certainly we participate better. Indeed, it expresses all that we fulfil in the Eucharistic celebration, and in addition it teaches us to cultivate three attitudes that must never be lacking in Jesus’ disciples. The three attitudes: first, learning to “*give thanks, always and everywhere*”, and not only in certain occasions, when everything is going well; secondly, *making our life a gift of love*, freely given; and third, *building real communion*, in the Church and with all. So, this central prayer in the Mass educates us, gradually, to make all our life a “Eucharist”, that is, an act of thanksgiving.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet the pilgrims from France, Belgium and the various Francophone countries, especially the young people of the Stanislas Catholic College in Paris. May the Lord help you to understand the meaning of the Eucharistic Prayer, to understand, little by little, how to make our whole life a “Eucharist”. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, particularly those from England, Lithuania, Vietnam and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

I greet German-speaking pilgrims with affection, in particular the delegation of judges and senior prosecutors from Germany. The Eucharistic celebration unites us in the sacrifice of Christ and in communion with Him and among ourselves. Participation in Mass helps us to make a “Eucharist” of our whole life. May the Lord bless you and keep you always.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly those from Spain and Latin America. May the Lord grant us to make our life a “Eucharist”, that is, an act of thanksgiving, a gift of love and communion. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially young people from Castro Marim, welcome! I warmly greet all of you and entrust your life and that of your family to God, invoking for you all the consolations and the light of the Holy Spirit so that, overcoming the pessimism and disappointments of life, you can cross the threshold of hope we have in the risen Christ. I count on your prayers. Thank you!

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to cultivate the attitudes of the disciples of Christ in your daily life, making your life a gift of love, free and gratuitous, and building real communion in the Church and with everyone. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I warmly welcome Polish pilgrims, especially young volunteers from “Caritas Poland” with their peers from Syria. Dear brothers and sisters, the Lenten time brings us closer to the mystery of the Christ’s salvific sacrifice which, once completed in history, becomes present in every Eucharist we celebrate. We thank the Lord for the gift of His love and we try to share it, making of our life a free and gratuitous gift to God and to our brothers and sisters. I bless you from my heart!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking faithful.

I am pleased to welcome the teaching priests of “Theology of the Mission”; the Little Sisters of Divine Providence; the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Hearts and the Focolare Movement group.

I greet the parish groups; the delegation of the *Fiaccola Benedettina*, the “Benedictine Torch”, accompanied by the archbishop, Msgr. Renato Boccardo; the young guests in the reception centre of L’Aquila; the Gariwo Group *La Foresta dei Giusti* (“The Forest of the Righteous”) in Milan; the Sixth *Opera San Fedele* Association of Milan; the *Regina Pacis* Centre from Quarto; the Group *Accanto a chi è nel Bisogno* (“Beside those in need”) from San Giorgio nel Sannio and the schools, in particular “Campolieti” of Termoli and “Mary Help of Christians” of Canove di Roana.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Dear brothers, in this penitential time, the Lord shows you the path of hope to follow. May the Holy Spirit guide you to make a true conversion, to rediscover the gift of the Word of God, to be cleansed of sin and to serve Christ present in your brothers, according to the abilities and the roles proper to each one of you.

Appeals of the Holy Father

Appeal for the “24 Hours for the Lord”

Next Friday, in Saint Peter’s Basilica, I will celebrate the penitential liturgy for the traditional *24 Hours for the Lord*.

I hope that our churches can stay open to welcome those who wish to prepare themselves for Holy Easter, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and experiencing God’s mercy in this way.

Appeal for the Winter Paralympics in PyeongChang

In two days’ time the Winter Paralympics will open in the city of PyeongChang, in South Korea, which has recently hosted the Olympics. These have shown how sport can build bridges between countries in conflict and make a valid contribution to the prospects of peace between peoples. The Paralympic Games demonstrate even more how through sport one’s own disabilities may be overcome. The Paralympic athletes are for all of us examples of courage, constancy, tenacity and of not allowing oneself to be defeated by limitations. Sport in this way appears as a great school of inclusion, and also of inspiration for one’s own life and commitment in

transforming society.

I address my greeting to the International Paralympic Council, to the athletes, to the Authorities and to the Korean people. I assure them of my prayer that this event may promote days of peace and joy for all.

Greeting to the faithful present in Saint Peter's Basilica

Good morning to you all! Today we thought there would be rain, but who can understand Rome? Roman weather is like that, and so we have done this here and not in the square. Thank you for your patience and your prayers. Because I know that you pray for me! It is true, isn't it? No? Isn't it true? It is true! Continue to pray for me.

Now, before greeting you, I will give you my blessing, for you, for your families, for all the things that you have in your heart. But first, let us pray to Our Lady together.

"Hail Mary" and blessing

And pray for me, don't forget!
