



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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## General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.15 a.m. in Saint Peter's Square. In his address in Italian the Pope resumed his cycle of catechesis on the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the theme "Forgive us our trespasses" (Bible passage: from the *First Letter of Saint John the Apostle*, 1: 8-9).

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 recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

## Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

After asking God for our daily bread, the Lord's Prayer enters into the field of our relations with others. Jesus teaches us to ask the Father, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (*Mt* 6: 12). Just as we need bread, we need forgiveness. Every day.

The Christian who prays asks first and foremost that God forgive our trespasses. This is the first truth of every prayer: even if we were perfect people, even if we were also crystalline saints who never deflect from a life of good, we always remain children who owe everything to the Father. The most dangerous attitude of every Christian life is pride. It is the attitude of those who place themselves before God, thinking that they always have their accounts in order with Him. Like that Pharisee in the parable, who thinks he prays in the temple but in reality praises himself before God. On the contrary the publican, a sinner despised by all, stops at the threshold of the temple, as he does not feel he is worthy of entering, and entrusts himself to God's mercy. And Jesus comments, "This man, rather than the other, went home justified before God" (*Lk* 18: 14), and is therefore forgiven, saved.

There are sins that are seen and sins that are not seen. There are egregious sins that make a noise, but there

are also sly sins that lurk in the heart without us even realizing. The worst of these is pride, which can even affect people who live an intense religious life. It is the sin that divides fraternity, that makes us presume we are better than others, that makes us believe we are similar to God.

And instead before God we are all sinners, and have a reason to beat our breast, like the publican at the temple. Saint John, in his first Letter, writes: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1: 8).

We are trespassers, debtors, first and foremost because in this life we have received so much: our existence, a father and a mother, friendship, the wonders of creation. Even if all of us have difficult days, we must always remember that life is a grace, it is the miracle that God extracted from nothing.

Secondly, we are debtors because, even if we succeed in loving, none of us is able to do so with his own strength. None of us shines with his own light. There is a "*mysterium lunae*", not only in the identity of the Church, but also in the history of each one of us. If you love, it is because someone, external to you, smiled at you when you were a child, teaching you to respond with a smile. If you love it is because someone next to you reawakened you to love, making you understand that in it there resides the meaning of existence.

Let us try to listen to the story of someone who has made a mistake: a prison inmate, a convict, a drug addict. Without prejudice to responsibility, which is always personal, you ask yourself sometimes who should be blamed for his mistakes, if only his conscience, or the history of hatred and abandonment that some carry with them.

It is the *mysterium lunae*: we love first and foremost because we have been loved; we forgive because we have been forgiven. And if someone has not been illuminated by the sunlight, he becomes frozen like the ground in winter.

How can we not recognize, in the chain of love that precedes us, also the provident presence of God's love? None of us loves God as much as He has loved us. It is enough to stand before a crucifix to grasp the disproportion. He has loved us and always loves us first.

So, let us pray. Lord, even the most holy among us never ceases to be in debt to You. O Father, have pity on us all!

Following the catechesis, the Pope greeted, among others, English-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from England, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Australia, Sri Lanka and the United States of America. "May the Lenten journey bring us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you and your families I invoke joy and peace in Christ our Redeemer!"

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