



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place 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 cycle of catechesis on the Acts of the Apostles, this time focusing on the passage: "*Priscilla and Aquila took him aside*" (Acts of the Apostles 18: 26). *A couple in the service of the Gospel.*

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present and made an appeal for the situation in Burkino Faso, expressing his closeness to the victims of the recent attack.

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!

This audience will be held in two groups: the sick will be in the Paul VI Hall – I was with them, I greeted and blessed them, there are around 250 of them. There they will be more comfortable due to the rain – and we are here. But they will watch us on the maxi-screen. Let us greet both groups with applause.

The Acts of the Apostles narrate that Paul, indefatigable evangelizer as he is, after his stay in Athens, continues the journey of the Gospel in the world. A new stop on his missionary journey is Corinth, capital of the Roman province of Achaia, a commercial and cosmopolitan city, thanks to the presence of two important ports.

As we read in chapter 18 of the Acts, Paul found hospitality with a married couple, Aquila and Priscilla (or

Prisca), who were forced to move from Rome to Corinth after the emperor Claudius had ordered the expulsion of the Jews (cf. *Acts* 18: 2). I would like to add a parenthesis. The Jewish people have suffered so much throughout history. They have been banished, persecuted... And, in the last century, we saw so many, so many brutalities inflicted on the Jewish people, and we were all convinced that this was over. But today, the habit of persecuting Jews is beginning to resurface here and there. Brothers and sisters, this is neither human nor Christian. The Jews are our brothers! And they should not be persecuted. Do you understand? These spouses show that they have a heart full of faith in God and generous towards others, capable of making room for those who, like them, experience the condition of being a stranger. This sensitivity leads them to decentralize themselves in order to practice the Christian art of hospitality (cf. *Rom* 12: 13; *Heb* 13: 2) and to open the doors of their home to welcome the Apostle Paul. In this way they welcome not only the evangelizer, but also the proclamation which he carries with him: the Gospel of Christ which is “the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (*Rom* 1: 16). And from that moment on their house is imbued with the perfume of the “living” Word (*Heb* 4: 12) which enlivens hearts.

Aquila and Priscilla also share with Paul the professional activity of building tents. Indeed, Paul held manual work in high esteem and considered it a privileged space for Christian witness (cf. *1 Cor* 4: 12), as well as a righteous way of maintaining oneself without being a burden on others (cf. *1 Thess* 2: 9; *2 Thess* 3: 8) or on the community.

The house of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth opens its doors not only to the Apostle but also to brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul can in fact speak of the “church in their house” (*1 Cor* 16: 19), which becomes a “house of the Church”, a “*domus ecclesiae*”, a place of listening to the Word of God and of celebrating the Eucharist. Even today in some countries where there is no religious freedom and no freedom for Christians, Christians gather in a house, hidden away a little, to pray and celebrate the Eucharist. Even today there are these houses, these families that become a temple for the Eucharist.

After a year and a half in Corinth, Paul left the city along with Aquila and Priscilla, who stopped at Ephesus. There too their house became a place of catechesis (cf. *Acts* 18:26). Finally, the couple returned to Rome and received a splendid eulogy which the Apostle included in his letter to the Romans. He had a grateful heart, and so Paul wrote about these two spouses in his letter to the Romans. Listen: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the Churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well” (16: 4). How many families in times of persecution risk their heads to keep the persecuted hidden! This is the first example: the family welcome, even in bad times.

Among Paul’s many collaborators, Aquila and Priscilla emerge as “models of conjugal life responsibly committed to the service of the entire Christian community”, and remind us that, thanks to the faith and commitment to the evangelization of so many lay people like them, Christianity has reached us. In fact, “in order to take root in people’s land and develop actively, the commitment of these families ... was necessary”. But think that Christianity from the beginning was preached by the laity. You too, the laity, are responsible by your Baptism to carry forward the faith. “The commitment of these families, these spouses, these Christian communities, of the lay faithful was necessary in order to offer the ‘humus’ for the growth of the faith” (Benedict XVI, *Catechesis*, 7 February 2007). This phrase of Pope Benedict XVI is beautiful: *the laity provide the humus for the growth of the faith*.

Let us ask the Father, Who chose to make the spouses His “true, living icon” (Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, 11) – I think that there are newlyweds here: listen to your vocation, you must be the true living icon – to pour out His Spirit upon all Christian couples so that, following the example of Aquila and Priscilla, they will know how to open the doors of their hearts to Christ and to their brothers, and to transform their homes into domestic churches. A beautiful word: a home is a domestic church, where one lives communion and offers the worship of life lived with faith, hope and charity. We must pray to these two saints, Aquila and Prisca, to teach our families to be like them: a domestic church where there is humus, so that the faith may grow.

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from England, Denmark, Australia, Malaysia, and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Greetings in other languages

The Pope greeted pilgrims from the Czech Republic, in Rome with the archbishop of Prague, Cardinal Dominik Duka, and the archbishop of Olomouc, Jan Graubner, and all the bishops of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, as well as the representatives of public life, for the canonisation of Saint Agnes of Bohemia, celebrated thirty years ago in Saint Peter's Basilica by Saint John Paul II. "May Saint Agnes, represented by the statue that depicts her, brought here by you all, continue to intercede for you, so that you may live the Gospel with renewed enthusiasm, making an effort for the common good, in the midst of many fellow citizens who still do not know the Lord Jesus", he said. "You have already given good witness of this, bringing with you, in the name of Saint Agnes, a collection of money for the poor. Charity covers all sins. And I greet these singers who sing so well. I thank you from the heart. May the Lord bless you".

Finally, he invited all those present to pray for his upcoming trip to Thailand and Japan, "so that the Lord may grant copious gifts of grace to the peoples visited".

Appeal of the Holy Father

I address a special thought to dear Burkina Faso, for some time afflicted by recurrent violence, and where recently an attack cost the lives of almost a hundred people. I entrust to the Lord all the victims, the wounded, the many displaced people and those who suffer as a result of these dramas. I make an appeal that there may be no lack of protection to the most vulnerable, and I encourage the civil and religious authorities and those who are inspired by good will to multiply their efforts, in the spirit of the Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity, to promote interreligious dialogue and harmony.

Greeting to the sick in the Paul VI Hall

Good morning to you all!

Outside it is raining. Here you will be comfortable, you can follow the audience on the maxi-screen, calmly, in peace, without getting wet. This is good. I thank you for this visit. For me it is a joy when I see that you come like this, with great difficulty, but out of love for the Church, to say that you love the Church. This is good for all those who see you; it is good for me. Thank you.

And now I will go to the other group who are in the square; they will be a bit wet, but you will stay here. We will be linked by the maxi-screen. Now I would like to give you my blessing. Everyone, let us pray to Our Lady first.
[Recitation of the *Hail Mary*, and *Blessing*]

Pray for me, and thank you for coming!

