



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 12 April

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
good morning!*

On Sunday we recalled Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, amid the festive acclamation of the disciples and the large crowd. Those people placed many hopes in Jesus: many expected him to work miracles and great signs, manifest power and even bring freedom from the occupying forces. Who among them could have imagined that within a short time, Jesus would have instead been humiliated, condemned and put to death on the Cross? Those people lost all earthly hope before the Cross. But we believe that precisely in the Crucifix our hope is reborn. Earthly hopes collapse before the Cross, but new hopes are born, those which last forever. The hope born of the Cross is different. It is a different hope from those that collapse, from those of the world. But which hope is it? Which hope is born of the Cross?

It may help us to understand what Jesus said right after he entered Jerusalem: *"unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit"* (Jn 12:24). Let us try to think of a grain or a small seed, that falls upon the soil. If it remains closed within itself, nothing happens; but if instead it splits open, it germinates and then gives life to an ear of wheat; it sprouts, then becomes a plant, and the plant will bear fruit.

Jesus brought new hope into the world and he did so in the manner of the seed: he became very small, like a grain of wheat; he left his heavenly glory in order to come among us: he "fell into the earth". But this still was not enough. In order to bear fruit, Jesus experienced love to the fullest, allowing himself to be split open by death as a seed lets itself split open under the ground. Precisely there, at the lowest point of his abasement — which is also the loftiest point of love — *hope burgeoned*. Should one of you ask: "How is hope born?" — "From the Cross. Look to the Cross; look to Christ Crucified and from there you will receive the hope that never disappears, which lasts to eternal life". Indeed, this hope sprouted from the very force of love: because the love that "hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor 13:7), the love that is the life of God, has renewed everything that it touched. Thus, at Easter, Jesus transformed our sin into forgiveness, by taking it upon himself. But feel how truly the Paschal Mystery transforms: Jesus has transformed our sin into forgiveness; our death into resurrection, our fear into trust. This is why there, on the Cross, our hope is always born and born anew. This is why with Jesus, all our darkness can be

transformed into light, every defeat into victory, every disappointment into hope. Every one: yes, every one. Hope overcomes all, because it is born of the love of Jesus who made himself as a grain of wheat that fell to the soil and died to give life, and hope comes from that life full of love.

When we choose the hope of Jesus, we gradually discover that the successful way of life is that of the seed, that of humble love. There is no other way to conquer evil and give hope to the world. But you might tell me: “No, it is a losing rationale!”. It might seem so, seem that it is a losing rationale, because those who love, lose power. Have you considered this? Those who love, lose power; those who give, impart something, and loving is a gift. In reality, the rationale of the seed that dies, of humble love, is God’s way, and only this bears fruit. We see it also in ourselves; possessing always spurs desire for something else: I have obtained something for myself and immediately I want another larger one, and so on, and I am never satisfied. That is a pernicious thirst! The more you have, the more you want. Those who are insatiable are never sated. Jesus says this in a clear way: “He who loves his life loses it” (Jn 12:25). You are insatiable, you seek to have many things but ... you will lose everything, even your life; that is: those who love *their own* and live for their own self-interest only swell with pride and lose. However those who accept, who are ready to serve, live in God’s way: thus they are winners, they save themselves and others; they become *seeds of hope* for the world. But it is lovely to help others, to serve others.... Perhaps we will get tired! But that is the way life is, and the heart is filled with joy and hope. This is love and hope together: to serve and to give.

Of course, this true love passes through the Cross, sacrifice, as for Jesus. The Cross is the obligatory passage, but it is not the goal; it is a passage: the goal is glory, as Easter shows us. And here another lovely image comes to our aid: that Jesus gave his disciples during the Last Supper. He says: “When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world (Jn 16:21). Thus: to give life, not to keep it. This is what mothers do: they give another life; they suffer, but then they rejoice, they are happy because they have given birth to another life. It gives joy; love gives birth to life and even gives meaning to pain. Love is the engine that empowers our hope. Let me repeat: love is the engine that empowers our hope. Let each one ask: “Do I love? Have I learned how to love? Do I learn each day to love more?”, given that love is the engine that empowers our hope.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, in these days, days of love, let us allow ourselves to be enveloped by the mystery of Jesus who, as a kernel of wheat, gives us life by dying. He is the seed of our hope. Let us contemplate the Crucifix: source of hope. We will slowly understand that to hope with Jesus, is to learn to see, as of now, the plant in the seed, Easter in the Cross, life in death. Now, I would like to give you a task to do at home. It will be good for all of us to pause before the Crucifix — you all have one at home — to look at it and say to it: “With You, nothing is lost. With You, I can always hope. You are my hope”. Let us now imagine the Crucifix and let us all together say three times to the [image] of Jesus Crucified: “You are my hope”. Everyone: “You are my hope”. Louder! “You are my hope”. Thank you.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Nigeria, Australia, Canada and the United States of America. I offer a particular greeting to the many student groups present. May this Lenten journey bring all of us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. God bless you!

A special greeting goes to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Yesterday we recalled Saint Gemma Galgani, apostle of the Passion of Jesus. Dear *young people*, at school you experience the Easter Triduum by reflecting on the love of Jesus who sacrificed himself on the Cross; dear *sick people*, may Good Friday teach you patience even in discomfort; and you *newlyweds*. May you experience hope even in the difficult moments of your new family.