



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *St Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 3 April 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Catechisis on the [Apostolic visit to Morocco](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Last Saturday and Sunday I made an [Apostolic Journey to Morocco](#), at the invitation of His Majesty King Mohammed VI. I renew my gratitude to him and to the Moroccan authorities for their warm welcome and for all their cooperation, especially the King: he was most fraternal, very friendly, very close.

I especially thank the Lord who allowed me to take another step on the path of dialogue and encounter with our Muslim brothers and sisters, to be, as the Motto of the Journey said, a “Servant of Hope” in today’s world. My pilgrimage followed in the footsteps of two saints: Francis of Assisi and [John Paul II](#). Eight hundred years ago, Francis brought a message of peace and fraternity to Sultan al-Malik al Kamil. [In 1985, Pope Wojtyla made his memorable visit to Morocco](#), after having received King Hassan II, the first Muslim Head of State, at the Vatican. But some might ask themselves: but why is the Pope going to the Muslims and not just to Catholics? Because there are many religions, and why are there many religions? Along with the Muslims, we are the descendants of the same Father, Abraham: why does God allow many religions? God wanted to allow this: Scolastica theologians used to refer to God’s *voluntas permissiva*. He wanted to allow this reality: there are many religions. Some are born from culture, but they always look to heaven; they look to God. But what God wants is fraternity among us and in a special way, this was the reason for the trip, with our brothers, Abraham’s children like us, the Muslims. We must not fear differences. God allowed this. We should be afraid were we to fail to work fraternally to walk together in life.

To serve hope in a time like ours means above all to build bridges between civilizations. And it was a joy and an honour for me to be able to do so with the noble Kingdom of Morocco, [meeting its people and its leaders](#). Remembering some important international summits which were held in

that country in recent years, with King Mohammed VI, we reaffirmed the essential role of religions in safeguarding human dignity and promoting peace, justice and care for creation, that is, our common home. In this perspective together with the King, we also signed an [Appeal for Jerusalem](#) so that the Holy City may be preserved as a human heritage site and as a place for peaceful encounter, especially for the faithful of the three monotheistic religions.

I visited the Mausoleum of Mohammed V where I paid homage to his memory and to that of Hassan II. I then visited the [Institute for the formation of Imams and of men and women preachers](#). This Institute promotes an Islam which respects other religions and rejects violence and fundamentalism; that is, it emphasizes that we are all brothers and sisters, and that we must work for fraternity.

I dedicated particular attention to the migration issue, by [speaking to the authorities](#) and above all, by participating in an [encounter specifically reserved to migrants](#). Some of them bore witness that the lives of those who migrate change and they feel human again only when they find a community that welcomes each one as a person. This is fundamental. It was precisely in Marrakech, Morocco last December, that the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” was ratified. It was an important step towards the shouldering of responsibility by the international community. [As the Holy See, we offered our contribution which can be summed up in four verbs: to welcome migrants, to protect migrants, to promote migrants and to integrate migrants](#). It is not a case of implementing welfare programs from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together, through these four actions, in order to build cities and countries that, while preserving their respective cultural and religious identity, are open to differences and know how to promote them in the spirit of human fraternity. The Church in Morocco is very committed to being close to migrants. I do not like to say *migrant*. I prefer to say *migrating persons*. Do you know why? Because *migrant* is an adjective while the term *person* is a noun. We have slipped into the culture of the adjective: we use many adjectives and we often forget the nouns, that is, the substance. Adjectives are always linked to a noun, to a person. Therefore, a *migrant person*. In this way, there is respect and one does not slip into this culture of the adjective which is too “liquid”, too “gaseous”. The Church in Morocco, I was saying, is very committed to being close to *migrant people*, and this is why I wanted to thank and encourage those who generously expend themselves at their service, fulfilling the word of Christ: “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35).

Sunday was dedicated to the Christian community. First of all I visited the Rural Centre for Social Services managed by the sisters of the Daughters of Charity, the same ones who run the outpatients dispensary and the childrens’ department, here at Santa Marta, and these sisters work in cooperation with many volunteers, offering various services to the people.

[In Rabat’s Cathedral I met the priests, consecrated people and the Ecumenical Council of Churches](#). The flock in Morocco is small and this is why I recalled the Gospel images of salt, light

and leaven (cf. Mt 5:13-16; 13:33) which we read at the beginning of this Audience. What matters is not the quantity but that the salt have flavour, that the light shine and that the leaven have the strength to ferment the whole mass of dough. And this does not come from us but from God, from the Holy Spirit who makes us witnesses to Christ there where we are, in a style of dialogue and friendship, to be lived, above all, by Christians, because Jesus says, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

And the joy of ecclesial communion found its foundation and its full expression in the Sunday Eucharist celebrated in a sports complex in the capital. Thousands of people from about 60 different nationalities! It was a unique epiphany of the People of God in the heart of a Muslim country. The parable of the Merciful Father caused to shine in our midst the beauty of the design of God who wants all his children to participate in his joy, in the feast of forgiveness and reconciliation. This feast is entered by those who know how to recognize themselves as in need of the Father’s mercy and who know how to rejoice with him when a brother or a sister returns home. It is not by chance that the great parable of the Merciful Father resonated in the place where Muslims invoke the Clement and the Merciful One, every day. Thus, it is: only those who are reborn and live in the embrace of this Father, only those who feel they are brothers and sisters can be servants of hope in the world.

After his catechesis, the Holy Father continued with the following Appeal:

Today is the the Sixth International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, established by the United Nations. Sports is a universal language which embraces all peoples and contributes to overcoming conflicts and to uniting people. Sports is also a source of joy and great emotion and it is a school where the virtues for human and social growth of people and communities are forged. I wish that you all may “accept the challenge” in life as in sport.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, China, the Philippines 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!

I offer a special greeting to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. May the Lenten period we are experiencing bring us closer to God. It is a precious time to rediscover the importance of faith in daily life, which when lived through performing works of mercy, revitalizes in us, love for the Father and makes us more aware of the plight of those in need.

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