



# The Holy See

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

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*Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!*

It is not a very nice day but just the same, good morning!

After asking God for our daily bread, the “Lord’s Prayer” enters the sphere of our relationships with others. Jesus teaches us to ask the Father: “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt 6:12). Just as we need bread, we also need forgiveness; this too, this every day.

A Christian who prays asks God first of all that his *debts* be forgiven, that is, his sins, the bad things he does. This is the first truth of every prayer: even if we were perfect people, even if we were pure saints who never deviate from a virtuous life, we continue to be children who owe everything to the Father. What is the most dangerous attitude for every Christian life? It is pride. It is the attitude of those who stand before God thinking that they always have their affairs in order with him: the proud think they have everything in order. Like that Pharisee in the parable who thinks he is praying in the Temple, but in reality, he is commending himself before God: “I thank you, Lord, because I am not like the others”. And the people who feel they are perfect, the people who criticize others, are proud people. None of us is perfect, no one. On the contrary, the tax collector, who was at the back of the Temple, a sinner despised by everyone, stops at the threshold of the Temple and does not feel worthy to enter and entrusts himself to God’s mercy. And Jesus comments: “this man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (Lk 18:14), that is, forgiven, saved. Why? Because he was not proud, because he recognized his limitations and his sins.

There are sins that are seen and sins that are unseen. There are glaring sins that make noise but there are also sins that are devious, that lurk in our heart without us even noticing. The worst of these is pride, which can even infect people who live a profound religious life. There was once a well-known convent of nuns, in the 1600-1700s, at the time of Jansenism. They were utterly perfect, and it was said of them that they were really pure like angels, but also proud like demons.

It is a bad thing. Sin divides fraternity; sin makes us imagine we are better than others; sin makes us think we are comparable to God.

And instead, we are all sinners before God and we have reason to beat our breast — everyone — like the tax collector in the Temple. In his First Letter, Saint John writes: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 Jn 1:8). If you want to deceive yourself, say that you have not sinned: this way, you are deceiving yourself.

We are debtors above all because we have received much in this life: a father and a mother, friendship, the splendours of creation.... Even if we all happen to experience difficult days, we must always remember that life is a grace. It is the miracle that God drew out of nothing.

Secondly, we are debtors because, even if we are able to love, none of us is capable of doing so solely by our own strength. True love is when we can love, but through the grace of God. None of us shines of our own light. There is what the ancient theologians called a *mysterium lunae*, not only in the identity of the Church, but also in the history of each of us. What does this *mysterium lunae* mean? That it is like the moon, which does not have its own light: it reflects the light of the sun. Nor do we have our own light. The light we have is a reflection of God’s grace, of God’s light. If you love, it is because someone other than yourself made you smile when you were a child, teaching you to respond with a smile. If you love it is because someone beside you has awakened you to love, making you understand that the meaning of life lies therein.

Let us try to listen to the story of some person who has made mistakes: a detainee, a convict, a drug addict ... we know many people who make mistakes in life. Notwithstanding the responsibility, which is always personal, you sometimes ask yourself who is to blame for their mistakes; whether it is just their conscience, or the history of hatred and abandonment that some carry within.

And this is the mystery of the moon: first and foremost, we love because we have been loved, we forgive because we have been forgiven. And if someone has not been illuminated by the light of the sun, he becomes icy like the ground in winter.

How can we fail to recognize in the chain of love that precedes us, also the presence of God’s Providential love? None of us loves God as much as he has loved us. It is enough to place oneself before a Crucifix to understand the disproportion: he has loved us and will always love us first.

Let us therefore pray: Lord, not even the most holy in our midst cease to be in your debt. O Father, have mercy on us all!

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***Special Greetings***

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially 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!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. The Lenten journey is drawing to a close. The light and comfort of the Lord's Easter are now near. Filled with joy and hope, let us prepare ourselves to make Christ's sentiments our own, and to live to the full the days of his Passion and glorification.