



The Holy See

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

Wednesday, 13 November 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

This audience is divided into two groups: the sick are in the Paul VI Hall — I was with them. I greeted and blessed them. They are roughly 250 in number. They will be more comfortable there because of the rain — and we are here. But they can see us on the maxi screen. Let us greet both groups with a round of applause.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts that as a tireless evangelizer, after his stay in Athens, Paul continues the Gospel's journey throughout the world. The next leg of his missionary journey is Corinth, the capital city of the Roman province of Achaia, a commercial and cosmopolitan city thanks to its two important ports.

As we read in Chapter 18 of the Acts, Paul is welcomed by a married couple, Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca), who was forced to move from Rome to Corinth after Emperor Claudius had ordered the expulsion of all Jews (cf. Acts 18:2). I would like to pause here. Jewish people have suffered greatly throughout history. They were exiled, persecuted ... And in the last century, we saw very great brutality perpetrated against Jewish people and we were all certain that this had ended. But scattered here and there, today the habit of persecuting Jews is beginning to reappear. Brothers and sisters, this is neither human nor Christian. The Jews are our brothers! And they should not be persecuted. Understood? These spouses show that they have a heart that is filled with faith in God and is generous to others, capable of making room for those who, like them, experience the condition of being a foreigner. Their sensitivity makes them altruistic in order to practice the Christian art of hospitality (cf. Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2) and open the doors of their home to welcome the Apostle Paul. They thus welcome not only the evangelizer, but also the Good News that he brings with him: the Gospel of Christ which is “the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith” (Rom 1:16). And from that moment their home is permeated by the scent of the “living” Word (Heb 4:12) that enlivens hearts.

Aquila and Priscilla also share the same trade as Paul, that is, tent making. Indeed, Paul greatly admired manual labour and considered it to be favourable to bearing Christian witness (1 Cor 4:12) as well as a good way to support oneself without being a burden on others or on the community (cf. 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8).

Aquila and Priscilla's home opens its doors not only to the Apostle but also to the brothers and sisters in Christ. Indeed, Paul can speak of "a community that gathers in their house" (cf. 1 Cor 16:19), which becomes a "house of the Church", a "*domus ecclesiae*", a place in which to listen to the Word of God and celebrate the Eucharist. Even today, in some countries where there is no religious freedom and Christians have no freedom, Christians still meet in a house, a little hidden, to pray and celebrate the Eucharist. Today too there are these homes, these families that become a temple for the Eucharist.

After staying a year and a half in Corinth, Paul leaves that city with Aquila and Priscilla who remain at Ephesus. There too, their house becomes a place of catecheses (cf. Acts 18:26). Eventually the spouses will return to Rome and become the recipients of splendid praise that the Apostle describes in his Letter to the Romans. Listen: "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Jesus Christ, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the Churches of the Gentiles give thanks" (Rom 16:4). How many families risk their lives in times of persecution, in order to keep the persecuted hidden! This is the first example: a family welcomes even in bad times.

Among Paul's many coworkers, Aquila and Priscilla emerge "as models of conjugal life responsibly committed to the service of the entire Christian community" and they remind us that Christianity has come to us, thanks to the faith and the commitment to evangelization of many lay people like them. Indeed, in order "to take root in people's land and develop actively, the commitment of these families" was necessary (*ibid*). Just think that from the very beginning, Christianity was preached by lay people. You lay people are also responsible for your Baptism, to carry the faith forward. It was the commitment of many families, of these spouses, of these Christian communities, of the lay faithful, "in order to offer the 'humus' for the growth of the faith" (*ibid*). This sentence of Benedict XVI is beautiful: *lay people offer the humus for the growth of the faith* (Benedict XVI [General Audience, 7 February 2007](#)).

Let us ask the Father who chose to make the spouses his true living sculptures — (cf. [Amoris Laetitia](#), n. 11) — I think there are newlyweds here: listen to your vocation, you must be the true living sculpture — to spread his Spirit to all the Christian couples so that by the example of Aquila and Priscilla, they may open the doors of their hearts to Christ and to our brothers and sisters, and transform their homes into domestic churches. Fine words: a home is a domestic church in which to experience communion and offer the example of worship of a life lived in faith, hope and charity. We must pray to these two Saints, Aquila and Prisca, so that they may teach our families to be like them: a domestic church where there is humus so that faith may grow.

Special Greetings and Appeal

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!

I offer a special thought to dear Burkina Faso which has been suffering from recurring violence for some time and where a recent attack killed almost 100 people. I entrust to the Lord all the victims, the injured, the numerous displaced and those who suffer from these tragedies. I make an appeal for the protection of the most vulnerable and I encourage civil and religious Authorities and people of good will to multiply their efforts in the spirit of the [Abu Dhabi Document on Human Fraternity](#), in order promote interreligious dialogue and harmony.

Lastly, I greet *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*, in particular the young couples from the Diocese of Fabriano-Matelica. I invite everyone to pray for my upcoming [Apostolic Journey to Thailand and Japan](#), that the Lord may grant those whom I will visit bountiful gifts of grace.