



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 12 February 2020 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning,

We have started the journey of the Beatitudes and today, we will pause on the second one:
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

In the Greek in which the Gospel was written, this beatitude is expressed with a verb that is not in the passive form — in fact the Blessed do not endure this mourning — but in the active form: “*they afflict themselves*”: they cry but from within. It has to do with a teaching that has become central to Christian spirituality and which the Desert Fathers, namely the first monks in history, referred to as “*penthos*”, that is, an inner suffering that opens out to a relationship with the Lord and our neighbour; to a renewed relationship with the Lord and neighbour.

In the Scriptures, this weeping, can have two aspects: the first is for the death or suffering of someone. The other aspect is the tears for the sin — for one’s own sin —, when the heart bleeds for the suffering of having offended God and neighbour.

It is therefore a case of loving the other in such a way as to be bonded to him/her to the point of sharing their suffering. There are many people who remain distant, one step behind. It is important instead that others enter our heart.

I have often spoken about the gift of tears and of how precious this is. Can one love in a cold way? Can one love as a function, out of duty? Certainly not. There are some afflicted people who need comforting but sometimes there are also some comforted ones who need to be afflicted, reawakened, who have a heart of stone and have forgotten how to cry. There is also the need to reawaken those who do not know how to be moved by the suffering of others.

Grief, for example, is a bitter path but it can serve to open our eyes to life and the sacred and irreplaceable value of each person, and at that moment, one realizes how short time is.

There is a second meaning to this paradoxical Beatitude: crying *for the sin*.

Here we have to distinguish: there are those who become angry because they made a mistake. But this is pride. Instead, there are those who cry for the wrong done, for the good omitted, for the betrayal of the relationship with God. This is crying for not having loved, that springs from caring about the life of others. Here one cries because one does not match the Lord who loves us so much, and the thought of the good not done makes one sad. This is the sense of the sin. These people say: "*I have hurt the one I love*" and this causes them to suffer to the point of tears. May God be blessed if these tears arrive!

This is the issue of one's errors that need to be faced, difficult but vital. Let us think about the weeping of Saint Peter which takes him to a new and much truer love. It is weeping that purifies, renews. Peter looked at Jesus and cried: his heart had been renewed. Unlike Judas who would not accept that he had made a mistake and, poor wretch, killed himself. To understand sin is a gift from God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot understand sin on our own. It is a grace that we have to ask. Lord may I understand the evil I have committed or might commit. This is a great gift and after understanding this, comes the weeping of repentance.

One of the first monks, Ephrem the Syrian said that a face streaming with tears is indescribably beautiful (cf. *Sermo Asceticus*). The beauty of repentance, the beauty of weeping, the beauty of contrition! As always Christian life has its best expression in mercy. Wise and blessed are those who welcome the suffering that is bound to love because they will receive the comfort of the Holy Spirit which is the tenderness of God who forgives and corrects. God always forgives. Let us not forget this. God always forgives, even the worst of sins, always. The problem is within us who grow tired of asking for forgiveness. We withdraw into ourselves and we do not ask for forgiveness. This is the problem. But he is there to forgive us.

If we always remember that God "does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities" (Ps 103[102]:10), we will live in mercy and compassion, and love will appear within us. May the Lord grant us to love abundantly, to love with a smile, with closeness, with service and also with tears.

Special Greetings

At this time, I would like us all to pray for beloved and martyred Syria. Many families, many elderly and many children have to flee from war. Syria has been bleeding for years. Also [let us offer] a prayer for our Chinese brothers and sisters who are suffering from this terrible illness. May they find their way to health as soon as possible.

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

groups from England, Ireland, Japan 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!

Lastly, I greet young people, the *elderly*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. May the Lord always sustain you with his grace so that you may be constant in hope, entrusting yourselves every day to the Providence of God.