



# The Holy See

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LEO XIV

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Audience Hall*

*Wednesday, 20 August 2025*

**[Multimedia]**

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**Cycle of Catechesis – Jubilee 2025. Jesus Christ our Hope. III. The Passover of Jesus. 3. *Forgiveness. «He loved them to the end» (Jn 13:2)***

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will look at one of the most striking and luminous gestures in the Gospel: the moment when Jesus, during the last supper, offers a morsel to the one who is about to betray him. It is not only a gesture of sharing: it is much more; it is love's last attempt not to give up.

Saint John, with his profound spiritual sensibility, tells us about this moment as follows: [During supper, when] "the devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over... Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass ... he loved them to the end" (*Jn 13:1-2*). To love until the end: here is the key to understanding Christ's heart. A love that does not cease in the face of rejection, disappointment, even ingratitude.

Jesus knows the time, but he does not submit to it: he chooses it. It is he who recognizes the moment in which his love must pass through the most painful wound, that of betrayal. And instead of withdrawing, accusing, defending himself... he continues to love: he washes the feet, dips the bread and offers it.

*“It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it” (Jn 13:26).* With this simple and humble gesture, Jesus carries his love forward and to its depths, not because he is ignoring what is happening, but precisely because he sees it clearly. He has understood that the freedom of the other, even when it is lost in evil, can still be reached by the light of a meek gesture, because he knows that true forgiveness does not await repentance, but offers itself first, as a free gift, even before it is accepted.

Judas, unfortunately, does not understand. After the morsel – says the Gospel – “Satan entered him” (v. 27). This passage strikes us: as if evil, hidden until then, manifested itself after love showed its most defenceless face. And precisely for this reason, brothers and sisters, that morsel is our salvation: because it tells us that God does everything – absolutely everything – to reach us, even in the hour when we reject him.

It is here that forgiveness reveals all its power and manifests the true face of hope. It is not forgetfulness; it is not weakness. It is the ability to set the other free, while loving him to the end. Jesus’ love does not deny the truth of pain, but it does not allow evil to have the last word. This is the mystery Jesus accomplishes for us, in which we too, at times, are called to participate.

How many relationships are broken, how many stories become complicated, how many unspoken words remain suspended. And yet the Gospel shows us that there is always a way to continue to love, even when everything seems irredeemably compromised. To forgive does not mean to deny evil, but to prevent it from generating further evil. It is not to say that nothing has happened, but to do everything possible to ensure that resentment does not determine the future.

When Judas leaves the room, “it was night” (v. 30). But immediately afterwards, Jesus says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified” (v. 31). The night is still there, but a light has already begun to shine. And it shines because Christ remains faithful to the end, and so his love is stronger than hatred.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too experience painful and difficult nights. Nights of the soul, nights of disappointment, nights in which someone has hurt or betrayed us. In those moments, the temptation is to close ourselves up, to protect ourselves, to return the blow. But the Lord shows us the hope that that another way exists, always exists. He teaches us that one can offer a morsel even to someone who turns their back on us. That one can respond with the silence of trust. And that we can move forward with dignity, without renouncing love.

Let us ask today for the grace to be able to forgive, even when we do not feel understood, even when we feel abandoned. Because it is precisely in those hours that love can reach its pinnacle. As Jesus teaches us, to love means to leave the other free — even to betray — without ever ceasing to believe that even that freedom, wounded and lost, can be snatched from the deception of darkness and returned to the light of goodness.

When the light of forgiveness succeeds in filtering through the deepest crevices of the heart, we understand that it is never futile. Even if the other does not accept it, even if it seems to be in vain, forgiveness frees those who give it: it dispels resentment, it restores peace, it returns us to ourselves.

Jesus, with the simple gesture of offering bread, shows that every betrayal can become an opportunity for salvation, if it is chosen as a space for a greater love. It does not give in to evil, but conquers it with good, preventing it from extinguishing what is truest in us: the capacity to love.

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## APPEAL

Next Friday, 22 August, we will celebrate the memorial of Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary is the Mother of believers here on earth, and is also invoked as Queen of Peace, while our earth continues to be wounded by wars in the Holy Land, in Ukraine, and in many other regions of the world.

I invite all the faithful to devote the day of 22 August to fasting and prayer, imploring the Lord to grant us peace and justice, and to dry the tears of those who suffer as a result of the ongoing armed conflicts. Mary, Queen of Peace, intercede so that peoples may find the path to peace.

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### Special greetings

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Finland, Malta, Senegal, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam and the United States of America. I pray that this Jubilee of Hope will be a time of healing and spiritual renewal for all men and women everywhere. Upon you and your families, I invoke God's strength, love and peace. God bless you.

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### Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters, in our catechesis on the Jubilee theme of "Christ our Hope," we continue to reflect on Jesus' passion, death and resurrection by considering his forgiving love. Despite his betrayal, Jesus loves his disciples until the end: he washes their feet, and even offers a morsel of bread to his betrayer in one last attempt to demonstrate that love. This morsel, in fact, signifies that God does everything possible to reach us in order to offer his love and forgiveness.

While never denying that evil exists or acting as if bad things do not happen in this world, the example of Jesus shows us that true forgiveness does not wait for contrition but is offered first as a gift. When we experience wounds and betrayal, let us ask for the grace to offer true forgiveness, even when we feel misunderstood and abandoned, or even when it seems to be in vain. In this way, may we know the freedom and peace that comes from a loving and forgiving heart.