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Angelus: when Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer

The passage of the Gospel of St. Luke in which Jesus teaches the disciples to pray was the theme of the Holy Father's reflection during this morning's Angelus, recited with a large number of faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

St. Luke tells that after Jesus had finished praying alone, the disciples asked him to teach them too how to pray, and his answer was, "When you pray, say Father". "This word is the secret to Jesus' prayer", Francis emphasised. "It is the key that He himself gives us so that we too can enter into this relationship of confidential dialogue with the Father Who accompanied and sustained all his life".

Jesus associates two pleas with the name "Father": "hallowed be your name; your kingdom come". Jesus' prayer, and therefore Christian prayer, is above all about making room for God, allowing Him to manifest His holiness in us and enabling the advance of His kingdom through the possibility of exercising His lordship of love in our lives.

Another three requests complete this prayer that Jesus teaches us, the Lord's Prayer. "They are three requests that express our fundamental needs: bread, forgiveness and help in facing temptation", continued the Pope. "The bread that Jesus has us ask for is that which is necessary, not superfluous. It is the bread of pilgrims, the just, a bread that neither accumulates nor goes to waste, that does not weigh us down on our journey. Forgiveness is first of all that which we receive from God: only an awareness of being sinners forgiven by infinite divine mercy can make us capable of making concrete gestures of fraternal reconciliation. The final request, 'lead us not into temptation', expresses awareness of our condition, always vulnerable to the snares of evil and corruption".

Jesus' teaching on prayer continues with two parables, in which He takes as a model the attitude of a friend toward another friend, and of a father toward his son, to teach us to have complete trust in God, Who is the Father. "He knows better than us our own needs, but He wants us to present them with boldness and insistence, because this is our way of participating in His work of salvation. Prayer is the first and principal 'working tool' in our hands", the Holy Father remarked. "To insist with God is not necessary to convince Him, but rather to strengthen our faith and our patience, or rather, our capacity to fight alongside God for the things that are truly important and necessary. In prayer, we are together: God and me, fighting together for what is important".

"Among these, there is one, the great important thing, which Jesus tells us today in the Gospel, but which we hardly ever consider, and it is the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

"But", Francis continued, "what is the use of the Holy Spirit? To live well, to live with wisdom, with love, doing the will of God".

"How beautiful it would be if during this week, each one of us were to ask the Father, 'Father, give me the Holy Spirit', he concluded. "The Virgin Mary shows us this with her existence, wholly animated by the Spirit of God. May she help us to pray to the Father united with Jesus, so as to live not in a worldly manner, but in accordance with the Gospel, guided by the Holy Spirit".
