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General audience: hope and salvation

This Wednesday's general audience took place in St. Peter's Square, and during his catechesis, continuing to focus on the theme of Christian hope, the Pope reflected on the duality of salvation and hope in the light of St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, in which the apostle recalls that creation is "a wonderful gift that God has placed in our hands, so that we can form a bond with Him and recognise in it the imprint of his plan of love, in whose realisation we are all called to work together".

"However, when the human being allows himself to be led by selfishness, he ends up ruining even the most beautiful things entrusted to him. ... And this has happened to Creation too. Think of water. Water is a beautiful thing, and so important; water gives us life, it helps us in everything, but to exploit minerals water is contaminated, creation is polluted and destroyed. This is a simple example. There are many. With the tragic experience of sin, breaking the communion with God, we violated the original communion with all that surrounds us, and ended up corrupting creation, enslaving it, submitting it to our weakness. And unfortunately the consequence of all this is dramatically before our eyes, every day. When communion with God breaks, man loses his original beauty and ends up disfiguring everything around him; and where everything previously recalled the Father and Creator, and His infinite love, now it bears the sad and desolate sign of human pride and voracity. Human pride, exploiting creation, destroys".

However, the Lord does not leave us by ourselves, and even in this desolate view He offers us a new prospect of liberation, of universal salvation. It is what St. Paul shows joyfully, inviting us to listen to the groans of all creation. "Indeed, if we pay attention, everything around us groans: creation itself groans, we humans groan, and the Spirit groans within us, in our heart. Now, these groans are not a sterile and disconsolate lamentation, but, as the apostle remarks, they are the groans of parturition; they are the groans of one who suffers, but is about to bring to the light, And in our case it is truly thus. We are still struggling with the consequences of our sin, and everything around us still bears the sign of our efforts, of our shortcomings, of our closures. At the same time, though, we are aware of having been saved by the Lord, and already we are given to contemplate and anticipate in ourselves and in what surrounds us the signs of the Resurrection, of Easter, which brings about a new creation".

"This is the content of our hope. The Christian does not live outside the world; he knows how to recognise in his own life and in that which surrounds him the signs of evil, selfishness and sin. He stands by those who suffer,

those who weep, those who are marginalised, those who are desperate. ... But, at the same time, the Christian has learned to read all this with the eyes of Easter, with the eyes of the Risen Christ. And so, he knows that we are living in a time of anticipation, the time of a yearning that goes beyond the present, the time of fulfilment. In hope we know that the Lord wants to heal definitively with His mercy the wounded and humiliated hearts and all that man has disfigured in his impiety, and that in this way He regenerates a new world and a new humanity, finally reconciled in His love”.

“How often we Christians are tempted by disappointment, by pessimism. ... At times we give in to useless lamentation, or remain without words and know not even what to ask, what to hope for. ... Once again, though, the Holy Spirit, breath of our hope, comes to our aid, keeping alive that groan, that expectation in our heart. The Spirit sees for us beyond the negative appearances of the present and already reveals to us the new heavens and new earth that the Lord is preparing for humanity”.
