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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.20 a.m. in Saint Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued the cycle of catechesis on the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the theme "Your will be done" (Bible passage: from the First Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to Timothy, 2: 1-4).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. He then launched an appeal for the populations of the various regions of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, afflicted by floods in recent days.

The General Audience concluded with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Continuing our catechesis on the "Lord's Prayer", today we focus on the third invocation: "Your will be done". This must be read as united with the first two – "Hallowed be your name" and "Your Kingdom come" – so that

together they form a triptych: "Hallowed be your name", "Your Kingdom come", "Your will be done".

Before the care of the world by man, there is the tireless care God uses in relation to man and the world. All the Gospel reflects this inversion of prospective. The sinner Zacchaeus climbs a tree because he wants to see Jesus, but he does not know that, much earlier, God had looked for him. Jesus, when He arrives, tells him: "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today". And in the end He declares "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (*Lk 19: 5-10*). Here is the will of God, the one we pray to be done. What is the will of God incarnated in Jesus? Search and save what is lost. And we, in prayer, ask that the search for God be successful, that his universal plan of salvation be fulfilled, first, in each of us and then in the whole world. Have you thought about what it means that God is looking for me? Each one of us can say: "But, God is looking for me?" – "Yes! He is looking for you! He is looking for me": He looks for each one, personally. But God is great! How much love there is behind all this.

God is not ambiguous, He does not hide behind enigmas, he has not planned the future of the world in an indecipherable way. No, He is clear. If we do not understand this, we risk not understanding the meaning of the third expression of the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, the Bible is full of expressions that describe God's positive will in relation to the world. And in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we find a collection of citations that bear witness to this faithful and patient divine will (cf. 2821-2827). And Saint Paul, in the First Letter to Timothy, writes that He "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (*1 Tim 2: 4*). This, without a shadow of a doubt, is the will of God: the salvation of man, of man, of every one of us. God, with His love, knocks on the door of our heart. Why? To attract us; to attract us to Him and to lead us ahead on the path of salvation. God is close to every one of us with His love, to lead us by the hand to salvation. How much love there is behind this!

Therefore, praying "Your will be done", we are not invited to bow our heads in a servile way, as though we were slaves. No! God wants us free; it is His love that frees us. The Lord's Prayer, indeed, is the prayer of sons, not of slaves; but of sons who know their father's heart and are of his plan of love. Woe to us if, pronouncing these words, we were to shrug our shoulders as a sign of surrender in the face of a destiny that repels us yet we are unable to change. On the contrary, it is a prayer full of ardent trust in God Who wants goodness, life and salvation for us. A courageous, even combative prayer, because in the world there are many, too many situations that do not follow God's plan. We all know them. To paraphrase the prophet Isaiah, we could say: "Here, Father, there is war, prevarication, exploitation; but we know that You want what is good for us, so we beg of you: let Your will be done! Lord, subvert the plans of the world, transform swords in ploughshares and spears into pruninghooks; may no-one ever more practise the art of war!" (cf. *Is 2: 4*). God wants peace.

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer that ignites in us the same love of Jesus for the will of the Father, a flame that drives us to transform the world with love. The Christian does not believe in an ineluctable "fate". There is nothing haphazard in the faith of Christians: there is instead a salvation that awaits manifestation in the life of every man and woman and fulfilment in eternity. If we pray it is because we believe that God can and wants to transform reality by overcoming evil with good. To this God it makes sense to obey and abandon oneself even in the hour of greatest difficulty.

This was the case for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He experienced anguish and prayed: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (*Lk 22: 42*). Jesus is crushed by the evil of the world, but trustfully abandons Himself to the ocean of the love of the will of the Father. Even the martyrs, in their trial, did not seek death; they sought what came after death, resurrection. God, out of love, can lead us to walk on difficult paths, to experience painful wounds and thorns, but He will never abandon us. He will always be with us, next to us, within us. For a believer this is not a hope but a certainty. God is with me. We find the same in that parable of the Gospel of Luke dedicated to the need to pray always. Jesus says: "Will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly" (*Lk 18: 7.8*). This is how the Lord loves us, in this way He cares for us. But, I want to invite you all together now to pray the Lord's Prayer. And those of you who do not know Italian, pray in your own language. Let us pray together.

Recitation of the Lord's Prayer

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims, in particular the Saint Jean Marie Vianney Society Seminar, the youth and all the people of France, Monaco, Switzerland and Belgium. In this time of Lent, we contemplate Jesus in Gethsemane, crushed by evil, but trustingly abandoned to the will of the Father. God can guide us on difficult and painful paths, but – it is sure – He will never abandon us. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially those from England, Belgium, Croatia, Norway, Nigeria, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

German

I cordially greet the German-speaking pilgrims. From Vienna came the interreligious movement "Earth Caravan", on a pilgrimage for justice and peace. Let us commit ourselves to discover ever more deeply the will of God, for us and for our lives, for our communities and for the whole world. Let us be ardent collaborators of His saving will. A Good Lent to you all!

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America, particularly the Manos Unidas de España Foundation, which, from the Christian commitment in its campaign against hunger, seeks to fulfil God's will so that no-one may lack their daily bread or necessary means in their lives. Let us ask the Lord that our testimony and our prayer be a wake-up call so that all men may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. God bless you all. Thank you.

Portuguese

I address a cordial greeting to Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, in particular to the Brazilian faithful of Ribeirão Preto. Dear friends, in the time of Lent, the Church recommends that we increase the time we dedicate to prayer. May such moments of filial dialogue with God help us increasingly to rediscover His infinite love for each of us and thus become instruments of mercy and peace. God bless you.

Arabic

I warmly welcome Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, Saint Paul teaches us that in our prayer we must open ourselves to the presence of the Holy Spirit, Who prays in us with inexpressible cries, to lead us to follow God with all our heart and with our whole being. Thus the Spirit of Christ becomes the strength of our weak prayer, the fire of our dry prayer, giving us true inner freedom, teaching us to live and face the trials of existence, in the certainty of not being alone. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I cordially greet the Polish pilgrims. Yesterday we celebrated the solemnity of Saint Joseph. The protection he offered to the Holy Family is a significant example for us. As Saint Joseph did, we keep Jesus in us, when today we receive Him in the Eucharist and in listening to His word. With the same love, let us turn to Mary asking for support and good advice in daily life. From Saint Joseph we learn trust in God, humility, courage and obedience. Praised be Jesus Christ.

Italian

I cordially welcome the Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the Capitulars of the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; the participants in the meeting promoted by the Focolare Movement and the Deacons of the Diocese of Milan.

I greet the parish groups, in particular that of Gesualdo; the pastoral units of San Martino in Campo; the *Campus Bio-Medico* University of Rome; and the following associations: AIDO of Alessandria; "White Roses on the asphalt" of Senigallia; Active Citizenship of Bronte; the White Hands Choir Melissano, and the educational Institutes: there are many of them!

I address a special thought to young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds.

The journey of Lent, which we are following, is an opportunity for authentic conversion for each one of us, so that we can reach the full maturity of faith in Christ, eager to spread His Gospel in every environment of life in which we find ourselves.

Appeal of the Holy Father

In these days, major floods have sown grief and devastation in many regions of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi. To these dear populations I express my sorrow and my closeness. I entrust the many victims and their families to God's mercy, and implore comfort and support for those afflicted by this disaster.
