

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 190522b

Wednesday 22.05.2019

General Audience

This morning's General Audience took place in Saint Peter's Square. The Holy Father concluded his cycle of catechesis dedicated to the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the theme, "Wherever you are, invoke the Father" (Bible passage: from the Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Romans 8: 15).

Among those present was the Congolese gynaecologist Denis Mukwege, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in the surgical treatment of women raped and mutilated in war.

After the catechesis and the summary of his address in various languages, the Holy Father invited those present to pray for the faithful of China on the feast of Our Lady Help of Christians, venerated in the Shrine of "Our Lady of Sheshan" in Shanghai, to be celebrated on 24 May.

He went on to greet the groups of faithful present from all over the world. The general audience ended with the recitation of the *Pater Noster* and the apostolic blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today we conclude the cycle of catechesis on the Lord's Prayer. We can say that the Christian prayer is born of the boldness of calling God with the name of "Father". It is not so much a formula as a filial intimacy in which we are introduced by grace: Jesus is the revealer of the Father and gives us familiarity with Him. "But Jesus does not give us a formula to repeat mechanically. As in every vocal prayer, it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God to pray to their Father (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2766). Jesus Himself used different expressions to pray to the Father. If we read the Gospels carefully, we discover that these expressions of prayer that emerge on the lips of Jesus recall the text of the Lord's Prayer.

In the night of Gethsemane Jesus prays in this way: “‘Abba, Father’ He said, ‘everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will’” (*Mk 14: 36*). We have already recalled this text of the Gospel of Mark. How can we fail to recognize in this prayer, brief though it may be, a trace of the Lord’s Prayer? In the midst of darkness, Jesus invokes God with the name of “Abba”, with filial trust and, while feeling fear and anguish, asks that His will be fulfilled.

In other passages of the Gospel Jesus insists with His disciples that they cultivate a spirit of prayer. Prayer must be insistent, and above all it must bring the memory of our brothers, especially when we live difficult relationships with them. Jesus says: “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (*Mk 11: 25*). How can we fail to recognize the similarity with the Lord’s Prayer in these expressions? And the examples could be numerous.

In the writings of Saint Paul we do not find the text of the Lord’s Prayer, but its presence emerges in that stupendous synthesis where the invocation of the Christian is condensed in a single word: “Abba!” (*Rm 8: 15, Gal 4: 6*).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus fully satisfies the disciples’ request that, seeing Him frequently retire and immerge Himself in prayer, one day they decide to ask Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples” (11. 1). And so the Teacher taught them the prayer to the Father.

Considering the New Testament as a whole, it is clear that the main protagonist of every Christian prayer is the Holy Spirit, Who blows in the heart of the disciple. The Spirit makes us capable of praying as children of God, which we truly are through Baptism. The Spirit makes us pray in the furrow that Jesus has prepared for us. This is the mystery of Christian prayer. by grace we are attracted to that dialogue of love of the Most Holy Trinity.

Jesus prayed in this way. Sometimes He used expressions that are certainly very distant from the text of the Lord’s Prayer. Think of the initial words of Psalm 22, which Jesus pronounces on the cross: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (*Mt 27: 46*). Can the Heavenly Father abandon His Son? No, certainly not. And yet love for us, sinners, led Jesus to this point: to experiencing God’s abandonment, His distance. But even the anguished cry is still “My God, My God”. In that “my” there is the nucleus of the relationship with the Father, there is the nucleus of faith and prayer.

This is why, starting from this nucleus, a Christian can pray in every situation. He can take on all the prayers of the Bible, of the Psalms in particular; but he can also pray with many expressions that in millennia of history have sprung from the heart of man. And let us never cease to tell the Father of our brothers and sisters in humanity, so that no-one of them, the poor especially, may remain without consolation and portion of love.

At the end of this catechesis, let us repeat that prayer of Jesus: “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children” (*Lk 10: 21*).

Appeal of the Holy Father

Next Friday, 24 May, we will celebrate the Feast of the Virgin Mary, “Help of Christians”, particularly venerated in China in the Shrine to “Our Lady of Sheshan”, near Shanghai.

This happy occasion enables me to express special closeness and affection to all Catholics in China who, amid daily hardships and difficulties, continue to believe, to hope and to love.

Dear faithful in China, may our Mother in Heaven help you to be witnesses to charity and fraternity, staying always joined in communion with the universal Church. I pray for you and I bless you.

Let us pray together to Our Lady. Hail Mary...

Greetings in different languages

The Pope greeted the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in the audience, “especially those from England, Belgium, Tanzania, New Zealand, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!”.

Addressing French pilgrims, the Holy Father recalled Sister Ines Nieves Sancho, the Spanish nun of the Daughters of Jesus of Massac, brutally murdered in the Central African Republic, precisely in the place where for decades she taught sewing to poor girls. “Another woman who gave her life for Jesus in the service of the poor. Let us pray together”, he said.

He also greeted the Ukrainian pilgrims, in Rome for the annual military pilgrimage to Lourdes: “I pray continuously to the risen Lord to fill the hearts of the Ukrainians with love and serenity and give their peace to the whole country”.

Finally, he remembered Santa Rita of Cascia, whose memory we celebrate today and who was a “woman, wife, mother, widow and nun of her time. May the women of today, following her example, express their enthusiasm for life and, at the same time, be capable of the same love that she unconditionally gave to all!” exclaimed the Holy Father.
