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General Audience

This Wednesday's general audience took place at 9.10 in Saint Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

The Holy Father spoke about his apostolic trip to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius, which came to an end yesterday afternoon. The Bible reading was a passage from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew (13: 31-33).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

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!

Last night I returned from my apostolic trip to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius. I thank God Who allowed me to make this journey as a *pilgrim of peace and hope*, and I again express my gratitude to the respective authorities of these states, as well as to the Episcopates, who invited me and welcomed me with so much affection and care, and to the apostolic nuncios, who worked so hard for this journey.

The hope of the world is Christ, and His Gospel is the most powerful leaven of brotherhood, freedom, justice and peace for all peoples. With my visit, in the footsteps of holy evangelizers, I tried to bring this leaven, the leaven of Jesus, to the people of Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius.

In Mozambique I went to sow seeds of hope, peace and reconciliation in a land that has suffered so much in the

recent past as a result of a long armed conflict, and that was struck last spring by two cyclones causing very serious damage. The Church continues to accompany the peace process, which took a further step forward on 1 August last with a new agreement between the parties. And here I would like to pause to thank the Sant'Egidio Community, which has worked so much, so much in this peace process.

I encouraged the *authorities* of the country in this regard, urging them to work together for the common good. And I encouraged the *young people*, who gathered together from different religious backgrounds, to build up the country, overcoming resignation and anxiety, spreading social friendship and building on the traditions of the elderly. To the *bishops, priests and consecrated persons* whom I met in the Cathedral of Maputo, dedicated to the Immaculate Virgin, I proposed the way of Nazareth, the way of the generous "yes" to God, in the grateful memory of His call and of His own origins. A strong sign of this evangelical presence is the Zimpeto Hospital, on the outskirts of the capital, built with the efforts of the Sant'Egidio Community. In this hospital I saw that the most important thing is the sick, and everyone works for the sick. Moreover, not everyone has the same religious affiliation. The director of the hospital is a woman, a researcher, a good woman, an AIDS researcher. She is Muslim, but she is the director and this hospital is a hospital built by the Sant'Egidio Community. But all of them, all together for the people, united, as brothers. My visit to Mozambique culminated in the Mass, celebrated in the stadium in the rain, but we were all happy. The songs, the religious dances...so much happiness. The rain didn't matter. And there, the call of the Lord Jesus resounded: "Love your enemies" (*Lk 6: 27*), the seed of the true revolution, that of love, which extinguishes violence and generates brotherhood.

From Maputo I moved on to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. A country rich in beauty and natural resources, but marked by so much poverty. I expressed my hope that, inspired by their traditional spirit of solidarity, the Malagasy people would be able overcome adversity and build a future of development by combining respect for the environment and social justice. As a prophetic sign in this direction, I visited the "*City of Friendship*" - *Akamasoa*, founded by a Lazzarist missionary, Father Pedro Opeka: there, they try to combine work, dignity, care for the poorest, and education for children. All inspired by the Gospel. In Akamasoa, at the granite quarry, I raised to God the *Prayer for workers*.

Then I had a meeting with the contemplative nuns of different congregations, in the Carmelite monastery: in fact, without faith and prayer one cannot build a city worthy of man. With the Bishops of the country we have renewed our commitment to be "sowers of peace and hope", taking care of God's people, especially the poor, and of our priests. Together we venerated the Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo, the first Malagasy woman to be elevated to the altars. With the young people, who were very numerous – many young people on that vigil, but many, many – I experienced a vigil rich in testimonies, songs and dances.

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In Antananarivo we celebrated the Sunday Eucharist in the great "diocesan field": as in the streets of Galilee, great crowds gathered around the Lord Jesus. And finally, in the Saint-Michel Institute, I met the priests, consecrated women and men and the seminarians of Madagascar. An encounter characterized by praise for God.

Last Monday was dedicated to the visit to the Republic of Mauritius, a well-known tourist destination, but which I chose as a place of integration between different ethnic groups and cultures. In fact, over the last two centuries, different populations have arrived in the archipelago, especially from India; and after independence it experienced strong economic and social development. There is strong inter-religious dialogue, and also friendship between the leaders of the various religious denominations. It is something that would seem strange to us, but they live friendship in this way, which is natural. When I entered the Episcopal residence, I found a beautiful bouquet, a beautiful one: it had been sent by the Grand Imam as a sign of brotherhood.

The Holy Mass in Mauritius was celebrated at the Monument of Mary Queen of Peace, in memory of Blessed Jacques-Désiré Laval, known as the “Apostle of Mauritian Unity”. The Gospel of the Beatitudes, the “identity card” of Christ’s disciples, in that context is an antidote to the temptation to selfish and discriminatory well-being. The Gospel and the Beatitudes are the antidote to this selfish and discriminatory well-being, and it is also the leaven of true happiness, imbued with mercy, justice and peace. I was struck by the work that the bishops do for the evangelization of the poor. Later, in my meeting with the *authorities* in Mauritius, I expressed my appreciation for the commitment to harmonizing differences in a common project, and I encouraged them to carry forth their capacity to welcome people today, as well as their efforts to maintain and develop democratic life.

So, I arrived yesterday in the Vatican. Before beginning a journey, and upon my return, I always go to Our Lady, the *Salus Populi Romani*, so that she might accompany me on the journey as a Mother, to tell me what I must do, to safeguard my words, my gestures. With Our Lady, I am safe.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to God and ask Him that the seeds sown in this apostolic journey bear abundant fruit for the peoples of Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius. Thank you!

Greetings in various languages

In his greetings in various languages, the Pope addressed, among others, the Polish pilgrims, recalling that next Saturday is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. “In your country”, he said, “it will also be the day of the evangelization initiative entitled ‘Poland under the Cross’. Participating in the many celebrations and prayer meetings, persevere together with Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, under her Son’s Cross. Pray to obtain the necessary graces for yourselves, your families and your country. Implore the grace of conversion and repentance for many, and in particular the gift of the victory of good over evil, which easily penetrates the human heart”.

He also cordially greeted Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, especially the priests of the Pontifical Brazilian College of Rome, and Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially the “Brotherhood of Marian Youth” on the 25th anniversary of its foundation, accompanied by Bishop Michel Aoun of Jbeil.

The Pope spoke with affection to the Slovak faithful, “in particular the participants in the fourteenth pilgrimage of the Military Ordinariate of the Slovak Republic, led by Bishop František Rábek”.

The Holy Father also welcomed the capitulars of the Sisters of Saint Catherine, the participants in the General Assembly of the “Movement for a Better World”, and those participating in the International Meeting of the Pallottine Spiritual Formators.

Finally, he spoke to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds, recalling that tomorrow the memorial of the Most Holy Name of Mary will be celebrated, and he invited all those present to “look at the Virgin and allow yourselves to be inspired by her with Christian sentiments, so that you may increasingly live and imitate her Son Jesus more and more.

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Zimbabwe, India, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Canada and the United States of America. Upon you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord. May God bless you!
