

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. 200429a

Wednesday 29.04.2020

General Audience

This morning's general audience took place at 9.30 in the Library of the Vatican Apostolic Palace.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Beatitudes, focusing on the eighth and final one: "Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (*Mt* 5: 10).

After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful.

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!

With today's audience, we conclude the catechesis on the Gospel Beatitudes. As we have heard, the last one proclaims that eschatological joy for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

This beatitude proclaims the same happiness as the first: the kingdom of Heaven is given to the persecuted in the same way as to the poor in spirit. We thus understand that we have arrived at the end of a single route which has unfolded through the preceding statements.

The poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, those who thirst for holiness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart and those who are peacemakers might experience persecution for Christ's sake. But in the end, this persecution is a cause of joy of great recompense in heaven. The path of the Beatitudes is one of a Paschal journey that leads from a life according to the world to one that is of God; from an existence guided by

the flesh, that is, by selfishness, to one guided by the Spirit.

The world, with its idols, its compromises, and its priorities cannot approve this type of existence. The “structures of sin” [1], often produced by a human mentality, foreign as they are to the Spirit of truth that the world cannot receive (see *Jn* 14:17), cannot but reject poverty, or meekness or purity, and thus declare that life according to the Gospel is mistaken and a problem, something to be marginalised. The world thinks thus: “These people are idealists or fanatics...”. This is what they think.

If the world lives on the basis of money, whoever demonstrates that life can be fulfilled through giving and renouncing becomes a nuisance to this system of greed. This word “nuisance” is the key, because Christian witness alone, which does so much good for many people because they follow it, is a nuisance to those who have a worldly mentality. They experience it as a reproach. When sanctity and a life lived as children of God come to the fore, in that beauty which is uncomfortable because it begs that a position be taken: either one allows oneself to be open to the question and to the good or one rejects the light and hardens one’s heart, even to the point of opposition and hounding (see *Wis* 2:14-15). It is curious, it calls our attention to see how, in the persecution of martyrs, hostility grows to the point of hounding. It is enough to see the persecutions of the last century, of the European dictatorships: how one arrives at this hounding of Christians, against Christian witness and against the heroism of Christians.

But this shows that the drama of persecution is also the place of liberation from subjection to the world’s success, vainglory and compromises. What do those who are rejected by the world for Christ’s sake rejoice in? They rejoice that they have found something worth more than the whole world. In fact “what advantage is there that a person should gain the whole world and lose his or her own life?” (*Mk* 8,36). What advantage is there?

It is painful to remember that, at this moment, there are many Christians who suffer persecution in various parts of the world. We must hope and pray that their tribulation will end as soon as possible. There are many of them: the martyrs of today are more numerous than the martyrs of the first centuries. We express our closeness to these brothers and sisters: we are one body, and these Christians are the bleeding members of the body of Christ, which is the Church.

But we must also be careful not to read this beatitude in a victimising or self-pitying key. In fact, contempt is not always synonymous with persecution: just shortly after Jesus says that Christians are the “salt of the earth”, He warns against the danger of “losing its flavour”, otherwise salt “is good for nothing else but to be thrown away and trampled by people” (*Mt* 5:13). Therefore, there is also a contempt which is our fault when we lose the flavour of Christ and His Gospel.

We must be faithful to the humble path of the Beatitudes, because it leads to being of Christ and not of the world. It is worth remembering Saint Paul’s journey: when he thought he was a righteous person he was actually a persecutor, but when he discovered that he was a persecutor, he became a man of love, who happily faced the suffering of the persecution he suffered (cf *Col* 1.24).

Exclusion and persecution, if God grants us that grace, make us resemble Christ Crucified and, associating us with His passion, are the manifestation of new life. This life is the same as Christ’s, who for us and for our salvation was “despised and rejected by men” (cf. *Is* 53: 3; *Acts* 8: 30-35). Welcoming His Spirit can lead us to have so much love in our hearts to offer to the world an uncompromising life in the face of its deceptions and accepting its rejection. Compromises with the world are the danger: the Christian is always tempted to make compromises with the world, with the spirit of the world. This - refusing compromises and taking the path of Jesus Christ - is the life of the Kingdom of heaven, the greatest joy, true joy. And then, in persecutions, there is always the presence of Jesus who accompanies us, the presence of Jesus who consoles us, and the strength of the Holy Spirit who helps us to go ahead. Let us not be discouraged when a life consistent with the Gospel attracts the persecution of the people: there is the Spirit who sustains us on this road.

[1] *Address to participants in the workshop "New forms of Solidarity: Towards fraternal inclusion, integration and innovation"*, 5 February 2020: "The idolatry of money, greed, corruption, are all 'structures of sin', as defined by John Paul II, produced by the 'globalisation of indifference'".

Greeting in English

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. 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!

Greeting in Italian

I greet the Italian-speaking faithful. Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Catherine of Siena, patroness of Italy. This great figure of a woman drew from communion with Jesus the courage of action and that inexhaustible hope which sustained her in the most difficult hours, even when all seemed lost, and enabled her to influence others, even at the highest civil and ecclesiastical levels, with the strength of her faith. May her example help everyone to know how to unite, with Christian consistency, an intense love of the Church with an effective concern for the civil community, especially in this time of trial.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. I exhort them all to be witnesses of the Risen Christ who shows the disciples the glorious wounds of His Passion. With all my heart I bless you.
