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General Audience

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

In his address in Italian the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the theme, "Healing the world", focusing on "Solidarity and the virtue of faith".

After summarising his catechesis in various languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the faithful. He then launched an appeal for prayer for Lebanon, inviting all to participate in a Day of prayer and fasting for the country next Friday, 4 September.

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!

After many months we meet each other again our face to face, rather than screen to screen. Face to face. This is good! The current pandemic has highlighted our interdependence: we are all linked to each other, for better or for worse. Therefore, to come out of this crisis better than before, we have to do so together; together, not alone. Together. Alone no, because it cannot be done. Either it is done together, or it is not done. We must do it together, all of us, in *solidarity*. I would like to underline this word today: *solidarity*.

As a human family we have our common origin in God; we dwell in a common home, the garden-planet, the earth where God placed us; and we have a common destination in Christ. But when we forget all this, our *interdependence* becomes *dependence* of some on others, we lose this harmony of interdependence and solidarity and we become dependent - the dependence of some on a few, on others - increasing inequality and

marginalisation; it weakens the social fabric and the environment deteriorates. It is always the same. The same way of acting.

Therefore, the principle of solidarity is now more necessary than ever, as Saint John Paul II taught (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 38-40). In an interconnected world, we experience what it means to live in the same "global village"; this expression is beautiful, isn't it? The big wide world is none other than a global village, because everything is interconnected, but we do not always transform this *interdependence* into *solidarity*. There is a long journey between interdependence and solidarity. Selfishness - individual, national and power-groups - and ideological rigidities instead sustain "structures of sin" (*ibid.*, 36).

"The word 'solidarity' is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts - the odd sporadic act - of generosity". Much more! "It presumes the creation of a new mindset; a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 188). This is what "solidarity" means. It is not merely a question of helping others - it is good to do so, but it is more than that - it is a matter of justice (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1938-1949). Interdependence, in order to be in solidarity and to bear fruit, needs strong roots in the humanity and nature created by God; it needs respect for faces and for the land.

The Bible, from the very beginning, warns us of this. Think of the account of the Tower of Babel (see *Gen 11: 1-9*), which describes what happens when we try to reach heaven - that is, our destination - ignoring our bond with humanity, creation and the Creator. It is a figure of speech. This happens every time that someone wants to climb up and up, without taking others into consideration. Just myself, no? Think about the tower. We build towers and skyscrapers, but we destroy community. We unify buildings and languages, but we mortify cultural wealth. We want to be masters of the Earth, but we ruin biodiversity and ecological balance. In another audience I spoke about those fishermen from San Benedetto del Tronto, who came this year, and they told me that this year: "We have taken 24 tonnes of waste out of the sea, half of which was plastic". Just think! These people have the task of catching fish - yes - but also refuse, and of taking it out of the water to clean up the sea. But this is ruining the earth - not having solidarity with the earth, which is a gift - and the ecological balance.

I remember a medieval account of this "Babel syndrome", which occurs when there is no solidarity. This medieval account says that, during the building of the tower, when a man fell - they were slaves, weren't they? - and died, no-one said anything, or at best, "Poor thing, he made a mistake and he fell". Instead, if a brick fell, everyone complained. And if someone was to blame, he was punished. Why? Because a brick was costly to make, to prepare, to fire... All of this. It took time to produce a brick, and work. A brick was worth more than a human life. Every one of us, think about what happens today. Unfortunately, something of the type can happen nowadays too. When shares fall in the financial markets, all the agencies report the news - we have seen it in the newspapers in these days. Thousands of people fall due to hunger and poverty, and no-one talks about it.

Pentecost is diametrically opposed to Babel (see *Acts 2: 1-3*), we heard at the beginning of the audience. The Holy Spirit, descending from above like wind and fire, sweeps over the community closed up in the Cenacle, infuses it with the power of God, and inspires it to go out and announce the Lord Jesus to everyone. The Spirit creates unity in diversity; He creates harmony. In the account of the Tower of Babel, there is no harmony; only pressing forward in order to earn. There, others are simply instruments, mere "manpower", but here, in Pentecost, each one of us is an instrument, but a community instrument that participates fully in building up the community. Saint Francis of Assisi knew this well, and inspired by the Spirit, he gave all people, indeed creatures, the name of brother or sister (see *LS 11*; see Saint Bonaventure, *Legenda maior*, VIII, 6: *FF 1145*). Even brother wolf, remember.

With Pentecost, God makes Himself present and inspires the *faith* of the community *united in diversity and in solidarity*. Diversity and solidarity united in harmony, this is the way. A diversity in solidarity possesses "antibodies" that ensure that the singularity of each person - which is a gift, unique and unrepeatable - not sicken with individualism, with selfishness. Diversity in solidarity also possesses antibodies that heal social structures and processes that have degenerated into systems of injustice, systems of oppression (see *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, 192). Therefore, solidarity today is the road to take towards a post-pandemic

world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social sicknesses. There is no other way. Either we go ahead along the road of solidarity, or things will worsen. I want to repeat this: one does not come out of a crisis the same as before. The pandemic is a crisis. We emerge from a crisis either better or worse than before. It is up to us to choose. And solidarity is, indeed, a way of coming out of the crisis better, not with superficial changes, with a fresh coat of paint so everything looks fine. No. Better!

In the midst of crises, a *solidarity* guided by *faith* enables us to translate the love of God in our globalised culture, not by building towers or walls - and how many walls are being built today! - that divide, but then collapse, but by interweaving communities and sustaining processes of growth that are truly human and solid. And to do this, solidarity helps. I would like to ask a question: do I think of the needs of others? Everyone, answer in your heart.

In the midst of crises and tempests, the Lord calls to us and invites us to reawaken and activate this solidarity capable of giving solidity, support and meaning to these hours in which everything seems to be wrecked. May the creativity of the Holy Spirit encourage us to generate new forms of familiar hospitality, fruitful fraternity and universal solidarity. Thank you.

Greeting in English

I cordially greet the English-speaking faithful. My thoughts turn especially to young people returning to school in the coming weeks. Upon all of you and your families I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Appeal of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

One month after the tragedy that struck the city of Beirut, my thoughts turn once again to Lebanon and its people, so sorely tried. The priest beside me has brought the Lebanese flag to this Audience.

Today, I would repeat the words spoken by Saint John Paul II thirty years ago, at a crucial moment in Lebanon's history: "Faced with repeated tragedies which each of the land's inhabitants knows, we are aware of the extreme danger that threatens the very existence of the country: Lebanon cannot be abandoned in its solitude" (Apostolic Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the situation in Lebanon, 7 September 1989).

For over a hundred years, Lebanon has been a country of hope. Even in the darkest periods of its history, the Lebanese people maintained their faith in God and proved capable of making their land a place of tolerance, respect and coexistence unique in that region. How true it is that Lebanon is more than a State: it is "a message of freedom and an example of pluralism, both for the East and for the West" (*ibid.*). For the good of the country and the world, we cannot let this legacy be lost.

I encourage all Lebanese to persevere in hope and to summon the strength and energy needed to start anew. I ask political and religious leaders to commit themselves with sincerity and openness to the work of rebuilding, setting aside all partisan interests and looking to the common good and the future of the nation. Once again, I ask the international community to support Lebanon and to help it emerge from this grave crisis, without becoming caught up in regional tensions.

In a special way, my thoughts turn to the people of Beirut, who have suffered so greatly from the explosion. Brothers and sisters, take courage once more! Let faith and prayer be your strength. Do not abandon your

homes and your heritage. Do not abandon the dreams of those who believed in the dawn of a beautiful and prosperous country.

Dear bishops, priests, consecrated and lay persons, continue to accompany the faithful. Of you, bishops and priests, I ask apostolic zeal, poverty and austerity. Be poor together with your poor and suffering people. Be the first to give an example of poverty and humility. Help the faithful and your people to rise again and contribute actively to a new rebirth. May all alike foster concord and renewal in the name of the common good and a genuine culture of encounter, peaceful coexistence and fraternity. Fraternity: a word so dear to Saint Francis. May this concord be a source of renewal in the common interest. This will prove a sure basis for the continuity of the Christian presence and your own inestimable contribution to the country, the Arab world and the whole region, in a spirit of fraternity among all the religious traditions present in Lebanon.

For this reason, I would ask everyone to join in a universal day of prayer and fasting for Lebanon on Friday next, 4 September. I intend to send my own representative to Lebanon that day to be present with its people: The Secretary of State will go in my name to express my spiritual closeness and solidarity. Let us pray for Lebanon as a whole and for Beirut. And let us demonstrate our closeness by concrete works of charity, as on other similar occasions. I also invite our brothers and sisters of other religious confessions to join in this initiative in whatever way they deem best, but together as one.

And now I ask you to entrust to Mary, Our Lady of Harissa, our hopes and our fears. May she sustain all who grieve for their loved ones and instill courage in those who have lost their homes and, with them, a part of their lives! May she intercede with the Lord Jesus so that the Land of Cedars may flourish once again and spread the fragrance of fraternal coexistence throughout the entire Middle East.

And now I ask everyone, to the extent it is possible, to stand and pray in silence for Lebanon.
