
Pope at audience: “Spend less on Christmas presents and donate the money saved to the Ukrainian people”

"We reiterate our closeness to the martyred people of Ukraine, persevering in prayer for our brothers and sisters who are enduring so much suffering", the Pope said at the end of the Wednesday General Audience today, in his greetings to the Italian-speaking faithful. "I say to you: there is so much suffering in Ukraine, a great amount of suffering!", Francis continued in unscripted remarks: "I wish to draw attention to the upcoming Christmas. It is beautiful to celebrate Christmas, to have festive occasions, but

let us reduce the level of our Christmas spending a little. Let's have a more humble Christmas, and donate what we save to the Ukrainian people, who need it.

"They are suffering so much, they are going hungry, they feel the cold and many are dying because there are not enough doctors and nurses." "Christmas, yes. In peace with the Lord, yes. But with the people of Ukraine in our hearts!", the Pope's appeal: "Let's make this concrete gesture for them." Paul VI Hall was crowded with young National Civil Service volunteers, to whom Francis addressed a special message: "I found three very beautiful things in Italian society, in the Italian Church. , One of these is volunteer work. You have a strong, very powerful volunteerism! Continue pursuing this spirituality of volunteering that brings mutual support and unites us too!" "**Keeping watch to safeguard our heart and to understand what is happening inside it**", the Pope said in the opening lines of his catechesis that focused on "an attitude essential if all the work done to discern for the best and take the good decision is not to be lost, and this would be the attitude of vigilance." "Because in effect there is a risk, and it is that the "spoilsport", that is, the Evil One, can ruin everything, making us go back to the beginning, indeed, in an even worse condition", he warned: "And this happens, so we must be attentive and vigilant. This is why it is indispensable to be vigilant." Therefore, vigilance is an attitude, "which we all need for the discernment process to be successful and stay that way." In fact, as we are taught by Jesus, "the good disciple is vigilant, does not slumber, does not let himself become too self-assured when things go well, but remains alert and ready to do his duty."

"If vigilance is lacking, there is, as we were saying, a very high risk that all will be lost",

Francis pointed out, for "it is a danger not of a psychological order, no, but of a spiritual order, a real snare of the evil spirit. Indeed, he awaits precisely the moment in which we are too sure of ourselves, and this is the danger: 'I am sure of myself, I have won, now I am fine...' – this is the moment he is waiting for, when everything is going well, when things are going 'swimmingly' and we 'have the wind in our sails.'" "We must always safeguard our home, our heart and not be distracted and go away... because the problem is here", the Pope said: "So, the evil spirit can take advantage of this and return to that house." "When we trust too much in ourselves and not in God's grace, then the Evil One finds the door open. So, he organizes the expedition and takes possession of that house", Francis explained: "The last state of that man becomes worse than the first. But doesn't the master notice? No, because these are **polite demons**: they come in without you noticing, they knock on the door, they are polite... and then eventually they take command of your soul."

"Beware of the polite devil, when he pretends to be a great gentleman",

the Pope called on the faithful to "safeguard the house from the deception of polite demons", whence derives "spiritual worldliness." "Temptation comes disguised as an angel", Francis

continued off-text: **“the devil enters with courteous words, and he convinces you, and in the end, it is worse than at the beginning.”** The example chosen by the Pope is the Parable from the Gospel in which the master of the house is unaware of the evil-doers that take possession of his house: “Was he not so good at discerning and banishing them? Did he not receive compliments from his friends and neighbours for that house, so beautiful and elegant, so tidy and clean? Yes, but perhaps precisely because of this he had fallen too much in love with the house, that is, with himself, and had stopped waiting for the Lord, waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom; perhaps for fear of ruining that order he no longer welcomed anyone, he did not invite the poor, the homeless, those who disturbed... One thing is certain: here bad pride is involved, the presumption of being right, of being good, of being in order.” “It seems impossible but it is so”, Francis remarked. He continued off-text: “Many times we are defeated in battles, because of this lack of vigilance. The Lord has given so many graces, many graces, and in the end, we are unable to persevere in this grace and we lose everything, because we lack vigilance. And then we have been deceived by someone who comes along, polite, he goes in and, hello... The devil has these things. Anyone can also verify this by thinking back to their own personal history.” “It is not enough to carry out good discernment and to make a good choice”, the Pope concluded: “we must remain vigilant, safeguard this grace that God has given us, but keep watch. If I were to ask each one of you today, and also myself, “What is happening in your heart?”, perhaps we would not know how to say everything. Keep watch over the heart, because vigilance is a sign of wisdom, it is above all a sign of humility, and humility is the high road of Christian life.”

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