
Pope at audience: “Pray, every day, for definitive peace in Ukraine”

“A Christian who is sad is a sad Christian”, Pope Francis said today in unscripted remarks during the weekly general audience in Paul VI Hall. In his continuing catechesis on apostolic zeal, the Pope focused on the figure of Jesus “teacher of proclamation.” He concluded with an appeal to pray, every day, for “definitive peace” in Ukraine and not to forget the horrors of the holocaust.

“One cannot speak of Jesus without joy,

because faith is a wonderful love story to be shared”, Francis said in his opening lines: “Bearing witness to Jesus, doing something for others in His name, to have received ‘between the lines’ of one’s life, so beautiful a gift that no words suffice to express it.” “A sad Christian can talk about beautiful things, but it is all in vain if the news he conveys is not joyful”, Francis pointed out:

“One who proclaims God cannot proselytize,

cannot pressure others, no, but relieve them: not impose burdens, but take them away; bearing peace, not bearing guilt.” “We may have happened to tell someone about a beautiful trip we took”, is the example given: “we would have spoken about the beauty of the places, what we saw and experienced, not about the time to get there and the queues at the airport! So, any announcement worthy of the Redeemer must communicate liberation. Like that of Jesus.”

“Life depends on love,

on the love of the Father, Who cares for us, His beloved children”, the Pope remarked: “Has it occurred to you that the life of each of us – my life, your life, our life – is an act of love? And an invitation to love? This is wonderful! But so many times we forget this, in the face of difficulties, in the face of bad news, even in the face of – and this is bad – worldliness, the worldly way of life.” “What light does Jesus give us? He brings us the light of sonship”, the answer: “He is the beloved Son of the Father, living forever; with Him we too are children of God loved forever, despite our mistakes and faults. So life is no longer a blind advance toward nothingness, it is not a matter of fate or luck, no. It is not something that depends on chance or the stars, no, or even on health or finances.” Jesus says He came “to set at liberty those who are oppressed.” “The oppressed are those in life who feel crushed by something that happens: sickness, labours, burdens on the heart, guilt, mistakes, vices, sins...” Francis explained, adding off text: “We think of the sense of guilt, for example. How many of us have suffered this? What is oppressing us above all is precisely that evil that no medicine or human remedy can heal: sin.” “But the good news is that with Jesus, this ancient evil, sin, which seems invincible, no longer has the last word”, the Pope assured: “I can sin because I am weak, but that is not the last word. The last word is Jesus’ outstretched hand that lifts you up from sin. Whenever you are sick, the Lord always has His hand outstretched. Only He wants us (to) hold on and let Him carry you. The good news is that with Jesus this ancient evil no longer has the last word: the last word is Jesus’ outstretched hand that carries you forward. Jesus heals us from sin, always and gratuitously.” “To accompany someone to an encounter with Jesus is to bring them to the doctor of the heart, Who lifts up life”, Francis noted: “That is to say, ‘Brother, sister, I don’t have answers to so many of your problems, but Jesus knows you, Jesus loves you and can heal and soothe your heart.’ Go and leave them with Jesus.”

“Those who carry burdens need a caress for the past”,

the Pope explained: “So many times we hear: ‘But I would need to heal my past...I need a caress for

that past that weighs so heavily on me...'. He needs forgiveness. And those who believe in Jesus have just that to give to others: the power of forgiveness, which frees the soul from all debt." "God forgets everything. He forgets all our sins. That's why He has no memory, Francis added off text:

"God forgives everything because He forgets our sins:

Only He wants us to draw near to the Lord and He forgives us everything. Jesus is waiting for us to forgive us, to restore us. 'I do the same things always...' And He will always do His same thing! Forgiving you, embracing you. And that's what Jesus gives: to free the soul from all debt. God is the master of surprises. He always surprises us, is always waiting, waits for us." **"The Bible", the Pope recalled, "talks about a year when one was freed from the burden of debt: the Jubilee, the year of grace."** "It was not a scheduled jubilee, like the ones we have now, where everything is planned and you think about how to do it and how not to do it – Francis remarked –. But with Christ the grace that makes life new always arrives and amazes."

"Christ is the Jubilee of every day,

every hour, drawing you near, to caress you, to forgive you", the Pope assured. In the closing remarks, the Pope called upon the faithful not to forget the poor, "God's beloved", the preferential recipients of proclamation: "In order to welcome the Lord, each of us must make him- or herself 'poor within'", Francis said. "You have to overcome any pretense of self-sufficiency in order to understand oneself to be in need of grace, and to always be in need of Him. If someone tells me, 'Father, what is the shortest way to encounter Jesus?' 'Be needy. Be needy for grace, needy for forgiveness, be needy for joy. And he will draw near to you.'"

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