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## Pope at audience: “Prayer opens the door to hope”

The human person “is almost nothing: a being that is born, a being that dies, a very fragile creature. Yet, in the whole universe, the human person is the only creature aware of such a profusion of beauty”, the Pope said referring to the words of the Psalms in the Wednesday General Audience – livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace - continuing his cycle of catechesis on prayer. “Prayer opens the door to hope”, Francis said: “it illuminates your soul, it illuminates your heart, and it illuminates your face. Even in the darkest times, even in the times of greatest pain.” **The human person, Francis said, is “a small being** that is born, dies, is here today but not tomorrow, is the only one aware of this beauty. We are aware of this beauty.” “Life, the simple fact that we exist, opens the heart of the human person to prayer,” continued Francis, for whom “The first page of the Bible resembles a great hymn of thanks” generated by wonder before the beauty of creation. “The greatness of man and woman is infinitesimal in relation to the dimensions of the universe”, he said. “Our greatest achievements seem to be very little.” *But we “are nothing”, and “nothing exists by chance: the secret of the universe resides in a benevolent glance that catches our eyes. The relationship with God is the greatness of each human person.”* **“By nature we are almost nothing, small, but by vocation, by calling, we are children of the great King!”**, Francis exclaimed: “It is an experience that many of us have had. If the events of our life, with all its bitterness, at times risks suffocating the gift of prayer within us, it is enough to contemplate a starry sky, a sunset, a flower, to reignite the spark of thanksgiving.” When the great biblical account of Creation was written, the people of Israel “were not going through happy days.” “An enemy power had occupied the land; many had been deported, and now they found themselves enslaved in Mesopotamia. There was no homeland, no temple, no social and religious life, nothing. And yet, just starting from the great story of Creation, someone began to find reasons to give thanks, to praise God for their existence.”

**“Prayer is the first force of hope.”**

Francis repeated: **“Prayer is the first force of hope.”** “Men and women of prayer safeguard the basic truths”, Francis explained: “they are those who repeat, first of all to themselves and then to all others, that this life, despite all its fatigue and trials, despite its difficult days, is filled with a grace at which we marvel. And as such

**it must always be defended and protected.**

Men and women who pray know that hope is stronger than discouragement. They believe that love is more powerful than death, and that it will surely triumph one day, be it in times and ways we do not know.” “Men and women of prayer bear the reflection of light on their faces: because even on the darkest days the sun does not cease to illuminate them. Prayer illuminates your soul, it illuminates your heart, and it illuminates your face. Even in the darkest times, even in the times of greatest pain.” “We are all bearers of joy”, the Pope reminded the faithful: *“We are all capable of bearing joy”, and we need to choose between being bearers of joy or bearers of bad news, things that bring sadness.*” “This life is the gift that God has given us: and **it is too short to be consumed in sadness, in bitterness.** Let us praise God, content simply to exist. Let us look at the universe, let us look at the beauty and let us also look at our crosses and say: ‘you exist, you have made us this way, for you.’ And feel that restlessness in the heart that leads us to thank and to praise God. We are the children of the great King, of the Creator, capable of reading His signature in all creation; that creation that today we do not protect, but in that creation there is the signature of God who made it out of love. May the Lord make us understand this ever more deeply, and lead us to say “thank you.”

