
Pope at general audience: “even in the hardest and most sorrowful experiences Jesus prays with us and for us”

“Jesus’ first public act is participation in a choral prayer of the people, a prayer of the people who went to be baptised, a penitential prayer, in which everyone recognises him- or herself as a sinner”, the Pope said in the catechesis of today’s general audience devoted to Jesus’ prayer and to His baptism in the Jordan river, thereby “beginning His public ministry”. Francis pointed out that “His is an act of obedience to the will of the Father, an act of solidarity with our human condition.” “He prays with the sinners of the people of God”, the Pope said: “He does not stay on the opposite side of the river - “I am righteous, you are sinners” - to mark His difference and distance from the disobedient people, but rather He immerses His feet in the same purifying waters.” “Jesus is not a distant God, and He cannot be”, he affirmed: “inaugurating His mission, Jesus places Himself at the forefront of a people of penitents, as if He were responsible for opening a breach through which all of us, after Him, must have the courage to pass.” As in recent audiences, in his opening remarks the Holy Father apologized to the faithful: “please excuse me if I do not come down to greet you”, because of “Madame Covid”, that is “harmful to us.” The Pope concluded with an appeal that “weapons remain silent” in Cameroon, where “a cruel and senseless act” , barbarically killed young students in Kumba, in the Country’s English-speaking Southwest Region. *“On that day, on the bank of the river Jordan, there is therefore all of humanity, with its unexpressed yearning for prayer”*, the Pope remarked: “There is, above all, the population of sinners: those who thought they were not beloved by God, those who did not dare cross the threshold of the temple, those who did not pray because they did not consider themselves worthy.” In fact, Jesus came for everyone, even for them, and He begins precisely by joining them.” *“In the whirlwind of life and the world that will come to condemn him, even in the hardest and most sorrowful experiences He will have to endure, even when He experiences that he has no place to lay His head, even when hatred and persecution are unleashed around Him, Jesus is never without the refuge of a dwelling place”* Francis said: “He dwells eternally in the Father. This is the unique greatness of Jesus’ prayer: the Holy Spirit takes possession of His person and the voice of the Father attests that He is the beloved, the Son in whom He fully reflects Himself.” *“If during an evening of prayer we feel sluggish and empty, if it seems to us that life has been completely useless, we must at that moment beg that Jesus’ prayer also become our own”*, the Pope’s counsel: “He in this moment is before the Father, praying for us, He shows the wounds to the Father, for us.” Francis assured: “Let us trust in this.” “if we are trustful – he pointed out - we will then hear a voice from heaven, louder than the voice rising from the depths of ourselves, and we will hear this voice whispering words of tenderness: “You are God’s beloved, you are a son, you are the joy of the Father in heaven.”” “Just for us, for each one of us, echoes the word of the Father: even if we were rejected by all, sinners of the worst kind.” The Pope said: “Jesus did not descend into the waters of the Jordan for Himself, but for all of us.” “It was the entire people of God who went to the Jordan to pray, to ask for forgiveness, to receive that baptism of penance. And as that theologian said, they approached the Jordan with a ‘bare soul and bare feet’. This is humility.

It takes humility to pray.”

Thus Jesus, “opened the heavens, as Moses opened the waters of the Red Sea, so that we could all pass behind Him. Jesus gave us His own prayer, which is His loving dialogue with the Father. He gave it to us like a seed of the Trinity, which He wants to take root in our hearts.” “Let us welcome him!”, the final exhortation: “Let us welcome this gift, the gift of prayer. Always with Him. And we will not err.”

