
Pope at audience: “Please: War never again!”

“And now I ask you to pray for peace in Ukraine, now and throughout this Day. Let us ask the Lord to grant that the country may grow in the spirit of brotherhood, and that all hurts, fears and divisions will be overcome”, the Pope said in the final remarks of Wednesday’s general audience in Paul VI Hall, devoted to the figure of Saint Joseph, “a man who dreams.” Shortly before, the Pope remembered International Holocaust Remembrance Day, to be celebrated on January 27: “It is necessary to remember the extermination of millions of Jews, and people of different nationalities and religious faiths”, Francis’ appeal: “This unspeakable cruelty must never be repeated.” “I appeal to everyone, especially educators and families, to foster in the new generations an awareness of the horror of this black page of history. It must not be forgotten, so that we can build a future where human dignity is no longer trampled underfoot.” “We have spoken about the holocaust – Francis added in unscripted remarks during his appeal for peace in Ukraine - **But consider that more than five million people were annihilated during the time of the last war. They are a suffering people; they have suffered starvation, they have suffered so much cruelty, and they deserve peace.**”

“May the prayers and supplications that today rise up to heaven touch the minds and hearts of world leaders, so that dialogue may prevail and the common good be placed ahead of partisan interests”,

is Francis' wish on the Day of Prayer for Peace in Ukraine, a request he asked of the faithful all over the world after last Sunday's Angelus.

“Please: War never again!”,

the Pope exclaimed: “Let us make our prayer for peace in the words of the Our Father” is the invitation to the faithful: “for it is the prayer of sons and daughters to the one Father, the prayer that makes us brothers and sisters, the prayer of children who plead for reconciliation and concord.” Francis added off-text before the conclusion of Wednesday's audience: *“I will not be able to go among you today to greet you, because I have a problem with my right leg; a ligament in my knee is inflamed”, Francis explained: “It’s a passing thing. They say this only comes to old people, and I don’t know why it has come to me”, the Pope humorously added. “Life often puts us in situations that we do not understand and that seem to have no solution”,* the Pope noted in the catechesis of the Wednesday audience. “Praying in these moments — this means letting the Lord show us the right thing to do”, Francis said, pointing out that “very often it is prayer that gives us the intuition of the way out.” “The Lord never allows a problem to arise without also giving us the help we need to deal with it”, the Pope assured, extending his thoughts to “so many people who are crushed by the weight of life and can no longer hope or pray.” He continued in unscripted remarks, listing various challenges that families are facing today: “Children with many illnesses, children who are sick, even with permanent maladies — how much pain is there!

Parents who see different sexual orientations in their children; how to deal with this and accompany their children and not hide in an attitude of condemnation.

Parents who see their children leaving because of an illness, and also — even sadder, we read about it every day in the newspapers — children who get into mischief and end up in a car accident. Parents who see their children not progressing in school and don't know how... So many parental problems. Let's think about it: how to help them.” “And to these parents I say: don't be scared!”, the Pope remarked: “Yes, there is pain. A lot. But think of the Lord, think about how Joseph solved the

problems and ask Joseph to help you.”

“Never condemn a child!”

the off-text imperative, followed by an account of Bergoglio's time serving as bishop in Buenos Aires: “when I got on the bus and it passed in front of the prison, there was a queue of people who had to go in to visit the prisoners. And there were mothers there. And I was so touched by this mother who, faced with the problem of a son who has made a mistake and is in prison, doesn't leave him alone, puts her face forward and accompanies him. This courage; the courage of a father and mother who always, always accompany their children. Let us ask the Lord to give this courage to all fathers and mothers, as he gave it to Joseph. Joseph prayed, worked, and loved — three beautiful things for parents: to pray, to work, and to love — and because of this he always received what he needed to face life's trials.”

M.Michela Nicolais