
Pope at audience: "Wars destroy everything, dialogue does not water down"

"Dialogue is the oxygen of peace", the Pope emphasized in today's general audience, ideally retracing the stages of his journey to Bahrain, under the banner of three words: "Dialogue, encounter and journey." "Choose the path of encounter and reject confrontation", is one of the appeals launched on his 39th apostolic journey: "How much we need this! There is such a need to encounter each other!" Francis exclaimed:

"I have in mind the insanity of war of which battered Ukraine is a victim, and of many other conflicts, that will never be resolved through the infantile logic of artillery, but only with the gentle power of dialogue."

"But in addition to Ukraine, which is being tormented, let's think of the wars that last for years", the Pope continued in unscripted remarks: "Let's think of Syria - more than ten years!- let's think of the children in Yemen, let's think of Myanmar. Right now, Ukraine is closer. And what does war do? It destroys, it destroys humanity, destroys everything." Francis referred to "the battered Ukraine" also at the end of the audience, in his greetings to the Italian-speaking faithful, and shortly before in his greeting to the Polish pilgrims:

"Let us ask the Lord for peace for these people, so sorely afflicted and suffering such cruelty on the part of war-mongering mercenaries."

"Bahrain, an archipelago formed by many islands, helps us understand that it is not necessary to live by isolating ourselves, but by coming closer. The cause of peace necessitates this, and dialogue is "the oxygen of peace", the Pope said. "Don't forget this. Dialogue is the oxygen of peace. Even for peace in our homes", The Pope added off-text: "If there is war there between husband and wife, with dialogue they can move ahead in peace. In the family, dialogue, for peace is preserved through dialogue." "In Bahrain – Francis recalled - I hoped that religious and civil leaders throughout the world might be able to look beyond their own borders, their own communities, to care for the whole. This is the only way to confront certain universal issues, for example, that God is being forgotten, the tragedy of hunger, the care of creation, peace." "There can be no dialogue without encounter", the Pope said: "We met each other in Bahrain. Several times, I heard the desire emerge that encounters between Christians and Muslims increase, that they form stronger relationships, that this be taken more to heart. As is customary in the Orient, in Bahrain people place their hand on their heart when they greet someone. I did this too, to make room inside me for the person I was meeting. For without this welcome, dialogue remains empty, seeming, it remains on the level of an idea rather than reality." "So, the first visit of a Pope in Bahrain represents a new step on the journey between Christian and Muslim believers – not to confuse things or water down the faith, no", the Pope remarked: "Dialogue does not water down, but creates fraternal alliances in the name of our Father Abraham, who was a pilgrim on earth under the merciful gaze of the one God of Heaven, the God of peace."

"Dialogue does not water down -

Francis continued off text - because in order to dialogue you need to have your own identity. If you do not have your own identity, you cannot dialogue because you do not even understand who you are. For a dialogue to be good, it always has to be rooted in one's own identity, to be aware of your own identity, and from there dialogue can take place." Francis thus referred to the first ecumenical prayer

for peace “with the dear Patriarch and Brother Bartholomew, and with brothers and sisters of various confessions and rites.” “The brothers and sisters in the faith, whom I met in Bahrain, truly live on a journey”, the Pope’s homage: “For the most part, they are immigrant laborers who, far from home, discover their roots in the People of God and their family within the larger family of the Church.” “It’s wonderful to see these migrants, these Christians who gather and support each other in the faith” added the Pope. “And they move ahead joyfully, in the certainty that the hope of God does not disappoint.” “Meeting each other and praying together, we felt we were of one heart and one soul”, Francis told the faithful: “Thinking about their journey, their daily experience of dialogue, let us all feel called to expand our horizons – Open hearts, please! Not closed, hard hearts. Open your hearts so that this human fraternity might move ahead”, the Pope said in his final appeal, along with an invitation to “be open, expand your interests and let’s dedicate ourselves to knowing about others.” **“If you dedicate yourself to knowing about others, you will never be threatened”**, the Pope assured: “But if you are afraid of others, you will be threatened. I can give my hand, but if there is no hand from the other side, it doesn’t do anything. Each and every person is needed in order for the journey of fraternity and peace to progress.”

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