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## Pope at audience: “Monks and nuns are the true reserve of the Church”

“Monks and nuns are the beating heart of Church proclamation. Their prayer is oxygen for all the members of the Body of Christ, the invisible force that sustains the mission”: in his catechesis for today's General Audience in St Peter's Square, **Pope Francis** praised the witness of the nuns and monks, “sisters and brothers who renounce themselves and the world to imitate Jesus on the path of poverty, chastity, obedience, and to intercede on behalf of all.” “Their lives speak for themselves, but we might ask: how can people living in monasteries help the proclamation of the Gospel?”, the Pope said in the opening remarks of his catechesis: “Wouldn't they do better to put their energies into the mission, leaving the monastery and preaching outside the monastery?” “It's not a coincidence that the patron saint of missions is a nun, **Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus**”, Francis noted. The Pope went on to quote the words of the saint when she discovered her vocation: “I understood that the Church has a heart, a heart burned by love. I understood that only love impels the members of the Church to action and that, when this love was extinguished, the apostles would no longer proclaim the Gospel, the martyrs would no longer shed their blood. I understood and I knew that love embraces all vocations in itself. Then with supreme joy and with extasy of soul I cried out: O Jesus, my love, I have found my vocation. My vocation is love. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love.” “This love for all animates the life of monks and results in their intercessory prayer”, the Pope remarked.

“Monks and nuns share universal solidarity: they pray for everything that happens in the world”,

The Pope explained in his catechesis, with a special emphasis on the figure of **Saint Gregory of Narek**, a tenth century Armenian monk and Doctor of the Church, “who left us a prayer book in which the faith of the Armenian people, the first to embrace Christianity, was poured out. A people who, clasped to the cross of Christ, have suffered so much throughout history”, Francis pointed out. “The heart of the monks and nuns is like an antenna: they see what happens in the world and they intercede in prayer for it”, the Pope noted in the second part of his catechesis, almost entirely delivered in unscripted remarks: “This love for all animates the life of the monks and finds expression in their prayer of intercession.” Francis reminded the faithful: “Saint Gregory spent most of his life in a monastery of Narek. There he learned to peer into the depths of the human soul, and fusing poetry and prayer together, he marked the pinnacle of both Armenian literature and spirituality. The most striking aspect in him is precisely his universal solidarity of which he is an interpreter. He shares the faith of all and devotes his life to interceding for them. He lives in communion with all and for all he implores mercy, starting with human misery, which he does not see in others, but first and foremost in himself. He writes: ‘I have voluntarily taken upon myself all faults, from those of the first father down to the last of his descendants, and I have held myself responsible for them’. As Jesus did.” “The monks and nuns take upon themselves the problems of the world, the hardships, diseases, and pray for them. They are the true evangelisers” Francis said expressing words of praise: the monks and nuns “evangelise because with their words and examples, with prayer and their daily commitment, they are like a bridge of intercession for all.”

“The monks and nuns pray also with tears.

And they weep for the sins of the world. They pray and intercede with the hands lifted on high”, is the image chosen by Francis. “**Let us think about the reserve that we have in the Church**: monks and nuns are the true force that moves the people of God forward, whence comes the habit people have,

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the people of God, when they meet a consecrated man or woman, they say: 'pray for me' for they know that prayer is intercession." "It will do you good to visit some monastery, for those are places where they pray and work", is the Pope's advice to the faithful. "Each have their rules, but the monks and nuns are always busy: they work and they pray." "May the Lord send us monks and nuns who bring the Church forward through their intercession", the concluding wish. "Let us not forget to pray for the martyred Ukraine", the final appeal.

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