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## Pope Francis: “we pray for peace, we desire peace”

“Let us pray for peace. We desire peace”: with this exhortation, Pope Francis brought to a close the weekly general audience dedicated to joy, drawing on *Evangelii gaudium*, which marks its tenth anniversary this week. “Let us pray, brothers and sisters, for peace, and especially for the martyred Ukraine, which suffers so much.” The Holy Father also turned his thoughts “to the Holy Land, to Palestine, to Israel. And let us not forget Sudan, which suffers so much. And we should remember that wherever there is war, there is so much war, we should pray for peace. Let there be someone every day who takes the time to pray for peace. We desire peace.”

“Jesus is joy. Either we proclaim Jesus with joy, or we do not proclaim him,

because another way of proclaiming him is not capable of bringing the true reality of Jesus”, the Pope said in the opening lines of his catechesis. “A sad Christian, a dissatisfied, or worse still, resentful or rancorous Christian, is not credible”, Francis said to the faithful: “This person will talk about Jesus but no-one will believe him!” “Once someone said to me, talking about these Christians: **‘But these are po-faced Christians!’**, that is, they express nothing,” the Pope continued in unscripted remarks: “Joy is essential. The Gospel is not an ideology. The Gospel is a proclamation of joy. Ideologies are cold, all of them. The Gospel has the warmth of joy. Ideologies do not know how to smile; the Gospel is a smile, it makes you smile because it touches the soul with the Good News. The birth of Jesus, in history as in life, is the source of joy.”

“An encounter with Jesus always brings you joy, and if this does not happen to you, it is not a true encounter with Jesus”,

Francis said, again departing from the written text. “The first who to need to be evangelized are us: we Christians. And this is very important”, the Pope said: “Immersed in today’s fast-paced and confused environment, we too indeed may find ourselves living our faith with a subtle sense of renunciation, persuaded that the Gospel is no longer heard and no longer worth striving to proclaim. We might even be tempted by the idea of letting ‘others’ go their own way.” “Instead, this is precisely the time to return to the Gospel to discover that Christ “is forever young, he is forever a constant source of newness”, is Francis’ proposal drawing on *Evangelii gaudium*: “Thus, like the two at Emmaus, one returns to daily life with the enthusiasm of one who has found treasure: they were joyful, those two, because they had found Jesus, and he changed their life. And one discovers that humanity abounds with brothers and sisters waiting for a word of hope.” “The Gospel is awaited even today”, the Pope said: “People of today are like people of all times: they need it. Even the civilization of programmed unbelief and institutionalized secularity; indeed, especially the society that leaves the spaces of religious meaning deserted, needs Jesus.” “This is the right moment for the proclamation of Jesus.” The Holy Father thus extended his invitation to everyone: “The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness.” “With Christ joy is constantly born anew: do not forget this. And if anyone does not perceive this joy, they should ask themselves if they have found Jesus. An inner joy. The Gospel takes the path of joy, always, it is the great proclamation.” The Holy Father thus renewed the invitation to “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed encounter with Jesus”: “Each one of you, take a little time and think: ‘Jesus, you are within me. I want to encounter you every day. You are a Person, you are not an idea; you are a travelling companion, you are not a programme. You, Jesus, are the source of joy. You are the beginning of evangelization. You, Jesus, are the source of joy!’

