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## Pope Francis: “Let us pray for peace, that Palestine and Israel may be two States”

“Thoughts go out to tormented Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Myanmar, who are at war, and so many other countries”, **Pope Francis** said in unscripted remarks at the end of today's general audience, in his greetings to the Italian-speaking faithful. “War is always a defeat,” he reiterated. “Those who profit the most are the arms manufacturers.” “Please, let us pray for peace; let us pray for tormented Ukraine: it suffers so, so much. Young soldiers go to die... Let us pray. And let us also pray for the Middle East, for Gaza: it suffers so much there, in the war.”

“Let us pray for peace between Palestine and Israel, that they may be two states, free and with good relations.

Let us pray for peace.” **“There is therefore in the heart of every man and woman the capacity to seek the good”**, Francis said in the opening lines of his catechesis, centred on the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. “In recent weeks we have reflected on the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance”, Francis said: “these four virtues belong to a very ancient wisdom that predates even Christianity. Even before Christ, honesty was preached as a civic duty, wisdom as the rule for actions, courage as the fundamental ingredient for a life that tends towards the good, and moderation as the necessary measure not to be overwhelmed by excesses. This patrimony that is so ancient, the patrimony of humanity has not been replaced by Christianity, but focused on, enhanced, purified, and integrated in the faith.” “The Holy Spirit is given so that those who receive it can clearly distinguish good from evil, have the strength to adhere to good by shunning evil, and, in so doing, achieve full self-realization”, the Pope observed: “But in the journey that we are all making towards the fullness of life, which belongs to the destiny of every person, the Christian enjoys special assistance from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus”, through the three theological virtues, “distinctly Christian virtues, received in Baptism and come from the Holy Spirit.” “The Christian is never alone. He does good not because of a titanic effort of personal commitment, but because, as a humble disciple, he walks in the footsteps of Jesus, the Master.” The three theological virtues, Francis remarked, “are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character.” “While the risk of the cardinal virtues is of generating men and women who are heroic in doing good, but all alone, isolated, the great gift of the theological virtues is existence lived in the Holy Spirit”, Francis pointed out with regard to faith, hope and charity, “which are the great antidote to self-sufficiency.” “How often do certain morally irreproachable men and women run the risk of becoming conceited and arrogant in the eyes of those who know them!”, Francis exclaimed: “It is a danger that the Gospel rightly warns us against.” “Pride is a powerful poison: a drop of it is enough to spoil a whole life marked by goodness”, he said: “A person may have performed a mountain of good deeds, may have reaped accolades and praise, but if he has done all this only for himself, to exalt himself, can he still call himself a virtuous person? No!”

“When our ‘I’ is at the centre of everything, everything is ruined!”,

the Pope reminded the faithful: “Good is not only an end, but also a means. Goodness needs a lot of discretion, a lot of kindness. Above all, goodness needs to be stripped of that sometimes too cumbersome presence that is our ego.” “If we perform every action in life only for ourselves, is this motivation really so important?”, the Pope asked: “The poor ‘I’ takes hold of everything and thus pride is born.” “To correct all these situations, which sometimes become painful, the theological virtues are of great help”, Francis said: “They are especially so in times of falling, because even those with good moral intentions sometimes fall. We all fall in life, because we are all sinners. Just as

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even those who practice virtue daily sometimes make mistakes; we all make mistakes in life: intelligence is not always clear, will is not always firm, passions are not always governed, courage does not always overcome fear. But if we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit – the Master of the interior life – He revives the theological virtues in us: then, if we have lost confidence, God reopens us to faith; with the strength of the Spirit, if we have lost confidence, God reopens us to faith; if we are discouraged, God awakens hope in us; and if our heart is hardened, God softens it with His love.”

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