
Pope at audience: “violence and hatred seek to compromise fraternal cooperation between religions”

Concluding today's audience, held in the private library of the Apostolic Palace “to defend ourselves against contagion by Covid”, Pope Francis called on the faithful to pray for “the helpless victims of terrorism, which is escalating in its cruelty throughout Europe.” He added in unwritten remarks: “This also teaches us that we must be very attentive to the prescriptions of the authorities, both the political authorities and the health authorities, to defend ourselves against this pandemic.” In his appeal prior to the special greetings to the Italian-speaking faithful, the Pope referred to the attacks in Nice and Vienna as “deplorable events, which seek to compromise fraternal cooperation between religions through violence and hatred.” Jesus' prayer is at the heart of the catechesis, which was not dictated by success or consensus. In fact, the path Jesus charted “was the least comfortable one”, that is, to be “immersed in the needs of the people” by delivering oneself into the hands of the Father.

“Prayer was the rudder that guides Jesus' course”,

Francis said: “Even at times of greater dedication to the poor and the sick, Jesus never neglected His intimate dialogue with the Father. The more He was immersed in the needs of the people, the more He felt the need to repose in the Trinitarian Communion, to return to the Father and the Spirit.” Prayer, the Pope assures, “*has the power to transform into good what in life could otherwise be condemnation*; prayer has the power to open the mind and broaden the heart to a great horizon.” It is “the first desire of the day” something that “restores a soul to that which otherwise would be without breath”: **“A day lived without prayer risks being transformed into a bothersome or tedious experience: all that happens to us could turn into a badly endured and blind fate.”** Jesus instead “teaches an obedience to reality and, therefore, to listening”, since “prayer is primarily listening and encountering God.” The problems of everyday life, including the trials of life, then, do not become obstacles, “but appeals from God Himself to listen to and encounter those who are in front of us.” **“Every person needs a space for him- or herself**, to be able to cultivate the inner life, where actions find meaning”, Francis said, with an exhortation:

“Without the inner life we become superficial, agitated, and anxious - how anxiety harms us!”,

Francis exclaimed. “This is why we must go to pray; without an inner life we flee from reality, and we also flee from ourselves, we are men and women always on the run.” Prayer “is an art to be practised insistently”: “We are all capable of sporadic prayers, which arise from a momentary emotion; but Jesus educates us in another type of prayer: the one that knows a discipline, an exercise, assumed within a rule of life. Consistent prayer produces progressive transformation, makes us strong in times of tribulation, gives us the grace to be supported by Him who loves us and always protects us.” And that’s the reason why “*those who pray do not escape from the world, but prefer deserted places.*” In silence God speaks, in silence emerge “the most repressed desires, the truths that we insist on suffocating.” Jesus' prayer “is the place where we perceive that everything comes from God and returns to Him.” “*Sometimes we human beings believe that we are the masters of everything, or on the contrary, we lose all self-esteem, we go from one side to another*”, the Pope remarked. Prayer, instead, “means delivering oneself into the hands of the Father, like Jesus in the olive grove, in that anguish: ‘Father, if it is possible... let your will be done.’” “It is good, when we are agitated, a bit worried”, the Pope concluded in unprepared remarks: “the Holy Spirit transforms us from within and leads us to this surrendering of oneself into the hands of the Father: ‘Father, let your will be done.’”

M.Michela Nicolais