
Pope at audience: “Closeness to the victims of abuse”

“I renew my closeness to the victims of sexual abuse and the Church's commitment to eradicate this evil”, said Pope Francis at the end of today’s audience livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace, referring to the Report on the “sad case” of former Cardinal McCarrick, published yesterday by the Secretary of State. Jesus’ “persevering prayer” was at the heart of the catechesis: “Constant dialogue with His Father, in silence and in recollection, was the fulcrum of His entire mission. The Gospels also report His exhortations to the disciples, so that they might pray insistently, without getting tired.” “First of all, prayer must be tenacious”, Francis explained: “like the person in the parable who, having to welcome a guest who arrived unexpectedly in the middle of the night, goes to knock on the door of a friend and asks him for some bread. The friend responds, “No!”, because he is already in bed – but he insists and insists until he constrains his friend to get up and give him some bread. A tenacious request.” *“Someone said to me: “You talk too much about prayer. It is not necessary”. Yes, it is necessary. Because if we do not pray, we will not have the strength to go forward in life.”* The Pope opened today’s catechesis with these words, delivered unscripted. “Prayer is like the oxygen of life”, the Holy Father went on extempore: “Prayer draws down on us the Holy Spirit’s presence who always leads us forward. For this reason, I speak a lot about prayer.” **“God is more patient with us** - Francis said - and the person who knocks with faith and perseverance on the door of His heart will not be disappointed.” “God always responds. Always”, Francis assured: “Our Father knows well what we need; insistence is necessary not to inform Him or to convince Him, but is necessary to nurture the desire and expectation in us.” “Faith is not a momentary choice, but a courageous disposition to call on God, even to ‘argue’ with Him, without resigning oneself to evil and injustice”, is the comment on the parable of the widow who goes to the judge for his help in obtaining justice, narrated in the Gospel of Luke. *“We need to pray always, even when everything seems in vain, when God appears to be deaf and mute and it seems we are wasting time”, the Holy Father remarked: “Even if heaven is overshadowed, the Christian does not stop praying.”* **“There are moments of darkness in our life**, and in those moments, faith may seem to be an illusion”, the Pope said: “But the practice of prayer means accepting even this exertion. Many saints experienced the night of faith and God’s silence, and these saints were persevering. During those nights of faith, the one who prays is never alone. Jesus, in fact, is not only a witness and teacher of prayer; He is more. He welcomes us in His prayer so that we might pray in Him and through Him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. Without Jesus, our prayer risks being reduced to human effort, destined most of the time to failure. But He has taken on Himself every cry, every groan, every jubilation, every supplication...every human prayer.”

“Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit”,

the Pope’s unscripted invitation: “the Holy Spirit prays in us; it is He who leads us to pray, who leads us to Jesus. He is the gift that the Father and the Son gave us to foster an encounter with God.” “When we pray, it is the Holy Spirit who prays in our hearts”, Francis remarked impromptu: “This is why the Christian who prays fears nothing, he or she trusts in the Holy Spirit who was given to us as a gift and who prays in us, eliciting prayer.” The concluding entreaty: “May the Holy Spirit, Teacher of prayer, teach us the path of prayer.”

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