
Pope at audience: “Those who pray never turn their backs on the world”

“Those who pray never turn their backs on the world,” the Pope said in today’s general audience livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace. “If prayer does not embrace the joys and sorrows, the hopes and anxieties of humanity, it becomes a decorative activity, a superficial, staged attitude”, Francis said. “We all need an inner life: to withdraw into a space and time devoted to our relationship with God. But this does not mean escaping from reality”, Francis remarked. At the end of the audience, the Pope made reference to the “restrictions and discomforts” linked to the health emergency: *“May the present difficulties somehow help us to purify our way of experiencing Christmas, departing from consumerism,” said the Holy Father, “that it may be more religious, more authentic, more true.”* **“In prayer, God takes us, blesses us, breaks us, and gives us, to satisfy everyone’s hunger”** Francis said, calling upon the faithful to engage in

“concrete prayer, which is not daydreaming.”

When we pray we “keep the door of our heart wide open, for those who pray unaware that they are praying, for those who do not pray but harbour within them a suppressed cry, a concealed invocation; for those who have erred and lost their way”, said the Holy Father. “Anyone can knock on the doors of a praying person and discover a compassionate heart that prays without leaving no one behind”, Francis said, adding that in prayer each one of us “is the heart and voice of all those who do not know how to pray, who do not pray, who do not want to pray. Jesus is our intercessor, and to pray is to do as Jesus did, to intercede in Jesus to the Father, for others. *In harmony with God's heart, with God's mercy: this is prayer.*” “When we pray in silence and solitude we detach ourselves from everything and everyone in order to rediscover everything and everyone in God”, the Pope continued: “Thus the prayerful person is praying for the whole world, bearing the weight of his own sorrows and sins. Those who pray are praying for each and every person: as though they were God's antenna in this world. Those who pray see the face of Christ in every poor person knocking at their door, in every person who has lost the meaning of things.” *“The human heart tends toward prayer. Prayer is simply human”: for this very reason “it involves love for our brothers and sisters.” “In the Church, those who understand another person's sadness or joy go deeper than those who explore chief world systems,” the Pope assured: “Human experience is present in every prayer, because no matter what errors people may have committed, they should never be rejected or discarded.”* “when the faithful, guided by the Holy Ghost, offer prayers for sinners, there should be no judgment or condemnation: those who pray, pray for all, and first of all for themselves.” In fact

“we are not superior to anyone,

we are all brothers in our shared fragilities, sufferings and sins.”

“To pray with tenderness for others”

like the Good Shepherd, and as the Church is called to do. The Pope said in conclusion with regard to the prayer of intercession: **“We are all leaves on the same tree.** Each one that falls reminds us of the great piety that must be nourished in prayer for one another. We pray for one another: it will do good unto us and unto all.”