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## Pope at audience: “May unity prevail over conflicts”

“To work decisively toward promoting conditions necessary for a world without nuclear weapons, contributing to the advancement of peace and multilateral cooperation which humanity greatly needs today”: the closing appeal concluded Pope Francis’ general audience livestreamed from the Library of the Apostolic Palace, devoted to the Week of Prayer for Christian unity celebrated the week of the 18th to the 25th of January. *“To overcome the scandal of division between believers in Jesus”, is the objective of the traditional new year’s event. “the solution to these divisions is not to oppose someone, because discord generates more discord.”* “Unity can be achieved only as a fruit of prayer”, the Pope said, for whom **“Diplomatic efforts and academic dialogue are not enough.** These things are done, but they are not enough. “

**“The world will not believe because we will have convinced it with good arguments, but if we will have borne witness to that love that unites us and draws us near, yes: it will believe”,**

Francis assures: “During this time of serious hardship, this prayer is even more necessary so that unity might prevail over conflicts.”

**“It is urgent that we set aside preferences to promote the common good,”**

said the Holy Father, and to this end, he added, “it is essential that Christians pursue the path toward full visible unity.” “In the last decades, thanks be to God, there have been many steps forward, but we still need to persevere in love and in prayer, without lacking trust or tiring”, taking stock of the ecumenical journey: “It is the path that the Holy Spirit gave rise to in the Church, in Christians and in us, from which there is no turning back. Ever onward!” “We can ask ourselves: ‘Do I pray for unity?’” the Pope said addressing himself to the entire faith community: “It is Jesus’ will but, *if we inspect the intentions for which we pray, we would probably realize that we have prayed little, perhaps never, for Christian unity.* And yet, the world’s faith depends on it; in fact, the Lord asked that we be one ‘so that the world might believe.’”

**“To pray means to fight for unity. Yes, fight, because our enemy, the devil, is the one who divides, as the word itself says.”**

In the final part of the audience, the Pope focused on the figure of the devil, who “always divides because it is convenient for him to divide.” Francis went on in unprepared remarks: “He fosters division everywhere and in any way, while the Holy Spirit always joins in unity.” *“In general, the devil does not tempt us with high theology, but with the weaknesses of our brothers and sisters”*, Francis said: “He is astute: he magnifies others’ mistakes and defects, sows discord, provokes criticism and creates factions.” Instead, God “has another way: He takes us as we are; He takes those of us who are different, He takes sinners, and He always nudges us towards unity.” “We can evaluate ourselves and ask ourselves if, in the places in which we live, we nurture conflict or fight for an increase of unity with the tools that God has given us: prayer and love”, is the proposal of the Pope, who pointed out: *“Gossip is the most handy weapon the devil has to divide the Christian community, to divide families, to divide friends, to always divide.”* Conversely, “the root of communion and love is Christ who makes us overcome our prejudices to see in others a brother or sister to be loved always. Then we will discover that the Christians of other confessions – with their traditions, with their history – are gifts from God, they are gifts present within the territories of our diocesan and parish communities.” “Let us begin to pray for them and, when possible, with them.” The final invitation: “We will thus learn to love and appreciate them. Prayer, the Council reminds us, is the soul of every

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ecumenical movement. May prayer be the starting point to help Jesus make His dream come true: that they all may be one.”

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