
Pope at audience: “Mary was and is present in these days of the pandemic”

“Mary was and is present in these days of the pandemic, near to the people who, unfortunately, have concluded their earthly journey all alone, without the comfort of or the closeness of their loved ones”, the Pope said in the catechesis of today’s general audience live streamed from the private Library of the Apostolic Palace, devoted to prayer in communion with Mary. *“Mary is always present at the bedside of her children when they depart this world”*, Francis reminded the faithful echoing the Marian prayer par excellence: “If someone is alone and abandoned, she is Mother, she is there, near, as she was next to her Son when everyone else abandoned him.” *“Mary is always there next to us, with her maternal tenderness”*, the Pope repeated: “Prayers said to her are not in vain. The Woman who said “yes”, who promptly welcomed the Angel’s invitation, also responds to our supplications, she hears our voices, even those that remain closed in our hearts that haven’t the strength to be uttered but which God knows better than we ourselves do. She listens as Mother. Just like, and more than, every good mother, Mary defends us from danger, she is concerned about us even when we are concentrated on our own things and lose a sense of the way, and when we put not only our health in danger, but also our salvation. Mary is there, praying for us, praying for those who do not pray. To pray with us. Why? Because she is our Mother.” *Mary “occupies a privileged place in the lives of Christians, and therefore, in their prayer as well, because she is the Mother of Jesus, the first disciple”*, Francis said, clarifying at once any potential misunderstandings:

“Christ is the Mediator, Christ is the bridge that we cross to turn to the Father. He is the only Redeemer: there are no co-redeemers with Christ.

Due to Christ’s one mediation, other references Christians find for their prayer and devotion take on meaning, first among them being the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus.” The Eastern Churches have often depicted **Mary as the Odigitria**, “the one who ‘shows the way’; and the way is her Son, Jesus Christ”, the Pope said mentioning in unwritten remarks “the beautiful, ancient painting of the Odigitria in the Cathedral of Bari. It is simple. The Madonna who shows Jesus, naked. He himself, born of Mary, is the Mediator. And she indicates the Mediator: she is the Odigitria.” “Her presence is everywhere in Christian iconography, sometimes very prominently, but always in relation to her Son and in connection with Him”, Francis pointed out: “Her hands, her eyes, her behaviour are a living ‘catechism’, always indicating the hinge, she always points out the centre: Jesus. Mary is completely directed toward Him, to such an extent that we can say

she is more disciple than Mother.

The directions she gave at the wedding at Cana: ‘He: do whatever he will tell you’. She always refers to Christ. She is the first disciple.” “This is the role Mary fulfilled throughout her entire earthly life and which she forever retains: to be the humble handmaid of the Lord, nothing more”, Francis remarked: “At a certain point in the Gospels she almost seems to disappear; but then she reappears in the more crucial moments, such as at Cana, when her Son, thanks to her caring intervention, performs his first ‘sign’, and then on Golgotha at the foot of the cross.” **Jesus “extended Mary’s maternity to the entire Church** when He entrusted her to his beloved disciple shortly before dying on the cross. From that moment on, we have all been gathered under her mantle, as depicted in certain medieval frescoes or paintings.” “It is true that Christian piety has always given her beautiful titles, as a child gives his or her mamma: how many beautiful things children say about their mamma!”, Francis added in unprepared remarks: “But we need to be careful: *the things the Church, the Saints, say about her, beautiful things, about Mary, subtract nothing from Christ’s sole*

Redemption. He is the only Redeemer. They are expressions of love like a child for his or her mamma – some are exaggerated. But love, as we know, always makes us exaggerate things.” As with the Lord’s Prayer, in the Hail Mary after the praise we add the supplication: “we ask that Mary pray for us sinners, that she might intercede with her tenderness, ‘now and at the hour of our death.’ Now, in the concrete situations of life, and in the final moment, so that she might accompany us – as Mother, as the first disciple – in our passage to eternal life.”

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