
Pope at audience: "Changes in the Church without prayer are not changes made by the Church"

"Changes in the Church without prayer are not changes made by the Church", Francis said in the catechesis of today's general audience, live streamed from the private Library of the Apostolic Palace. "The Son of Man, when he comes, will he find faith on earth?", Francis asked quoting the Gospel of Luke: "Or will he find only organisations, like groups of entrepreneurs of the faith, everything organised well, who do charitable works, many things...?"

"Everything in the Church originates in prayer and everything grows thanks to prayer",

the Pope explained: "When the Enemy, the Evil One, wants to combat the Church, he does so first by trying to drain her fonts, hindering them from praying. For example, we see this in **certain groups who agree about moving ecclesial reform forward, changes in the life of the Church and all the organizations, it is the media that informs everyone... But prayer is not evident, there is no prayer.** 'We need to change this; we need to make this decision that is a bit tough...' But the proposal is interesting. It is interesting! Only with discussion, only through the media. But where is prayer? And prayer is what opens the door to the Holy Spirit, who inspires progress." *"The question that we should ourselves is: 'How do I pray? Like parrots or do I pray with my heart? Do I pray, certain that I am in the Church and that I pray with the Church? Or do I pray a bit according to my ideas and then make my ideas become prayer? This is a pagan prayer, not Christian.'" "The Church is a great school of prayer"*, Francis said in the opening lines. "Many of us learned how to whisper our first prayers on our parents' or grandparents' laps." The life of a parish and every Christian community is marked by liturgical moments and moments of community prayer", the Pope remarked: "And this is the Church's essential task: to pray and to teach how to pray. To transmit the lamp of faith and the oil of prayer from generation to generation. The lamp of faith that illuminates, fixes things as they truly are, but it can only go forward with the oil of faith. Otherwise, it is extinguished. *Without the light of this lamp, we would not be able to see the path of evangelisation, or rather, we would not be able to see the path in order to believe well; we would not be able to see the faces of our brothers and sisters to draw near and serve; we would not be able to illuminate the room where we meet in community... Without faith everything collapses; and without prayer faith is extinguished. Faith and prayer together. There is no other alternative.*" "The garment of faith is not starched, but develops with us, even through moments of crisis and resurrection", Francis said. "Actually, **there is no growth without moments of crisis** because crises make you grow. And the breath of faith is prayer: we grow in faith inasmuch as we learn to pray." "After certain passages in life, we become aware that without faith we could not have made it and that our strength was prayer." Francis' analysis: "not only personal prayer, but also that of our brothers and sisters, and of the community that accompanied and supported us, of the people who know us, of the people we ask to pray for us." "For this reason too," the Pope observed, "communities and groups dedicated to prayer flourish in the Church. Some Christians even feel the call to make prayer the primary action of their day." "Moreover, in the Church, "there are monasteries, convents, hermitages where persons consecrated to God live. They often become centres of spiritual light that radiate spirituality. They are small oases in which intense prayer is shared and fraternal communion is constructed day by day. They are cells that are vital not only for the ecclesial fabric, but that of society itself. Let us think, for example, of the role that monasticism played in the birth and growth of European civilisation, and other cultures as well."

Praying and working in community keeps the world going. It is a motor!"

Francis said: "If prayer ceases, for a little while it seems that everything can go ahead like always – by inertia – but after a short time, the Church becomes aware that it has become like an empty shell, that it has lost its bearings, that it no longer possesses its source of warmth and love." Francis thus referred to the exemplary model of the saints "who often count for little in the eyes of the world" but "are in reality the ones who sustain it, not with the weapons of money and power, of the communications media – and so forth – but with the weapon of prayer."

M.Michela Nicolais