
Pope at audience: “The evil one is the lord of the penultimate day: never the lord of the last day”

“The evil one is the lord of the penultimate day: never the lord of the last day”, **Pope Francis** said during Wednesday’s general audience at the San Damaso courtyard. The Pope’s catechesis was devoted to the certainty of being heard in prayer, even when it seems that the opposite is happening. “Let us learn this humble patience, to await the Lord’s grace, to await the final day” His Holiness said, with a final invitation: “Very often, the penultimate is very hard, because human sufferings are hard. But the Lord is there. And on the last day, He solves everything.” Francis cited the healing of Jairus’ daughter: “Jesus, before the faith of His poor, of His people, is won over; He feels special tenderness, before that faith. And He listens.” Francis remarked: “The prayer that Jesus addresses to the Father in Gethsemane also seems to go unheard. ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.’ It seems that the Father does not listen to Him. The Son must drink fully from the chalice of the passion. But Holy Saturday is not the final chapter, because on the third day, Sunday, is the Resurrection.” *“There is a radical objection to prayer – the Pope said in the opening lines - which derives from an observation that we all make: we pray, we ask, and yet sometimes our prayers seem to go unheard: what we have asked for - for ourselves or for others - is not fulfilled.”* “If the reason for which we prayed was noble (such as intercession for the health of a sick person, or for the end of a war, for instance), the non-fulfilment seems scandalous”, Francis said. **“For example, for wars”**, the Pope added in unscripted remarks: “We are praying for wars to end, these wars in so many parts of the world. Think of Yemen, think of Syria, countries that have been at war for years, ravaged by wars, and we pray, but they do not come to an end. But how can this be? Some even stop praying because they think their petition is not heard. But if God is Father, why does He not listen to us? He who has assured us that He gives good things to the children who ask Him for them, why does He not respond to our requests? We all have experience of this.”

“Prayer is not a magic wand: it is a dialogue with the Lord”,

said Francis. Indeed, “when we pray we can give in to the risk of not being the ones to serve God, but of expecting Him to serve us. This is, then, a prayer that is always demanding, that wants to direct events according to our own design, that admits no plans other than our own desires.” Jesus’ answer is the **Lord’s Prayer**: “It is a prayer of questions only, as we know, but the first ones we utter are all on God’s side. They ask for the fulfilment not of our plan, but of His will for the world. Better to leave it to Him: ‘Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done.’” *“When we pray, we need to be humble: this is the first attitude for going to pray”*, is the Pope’s recommendation, “so that our words are actually prayers and not just idle talk that God rejects.” *“We can also pray for the wrong reasons”*, Francis noted: *“such as, to defeat the enemy in war, without asking ourselves what God thinks of such a war. It is easy to write ‘God is with us’ on a banner; many are keen to ensure that God is with them, but few bother to check whether they are actually with God.”* **“In prayer, it is God Who must convert us, not we who must convert God”**, the Pope reminded the faithful. “How many times have we asked for a grace, a miracle, let’s say, and nothing has happened. Then, over time, things have worked out but in God’s way, the divine way, not according to what we wanted in that moment.” The accounts of Jesus’ life are full of prayers: at times Jesus’ response is immediate, whereas in some other cases it is delayed, it seems that God does not answer: “On some occasions, therefore, the solution to the problem is not immediate. In our life too, each one of us has this experience.”