
Pope at audience: “Offer Lebanon concrete assistance”

Today the Pope resumed his Wednesday audiences in the Paul VI Hall and was welcomed with a round of applause from the faithful upon his arrival, at the beginning and at the end of his catechesis, rich in impromptu remarks: “With the truth of the Gospel, one cannot negotiate” for faith “is salvation, it is encounter, it is redemption. It cannot be sold off cheaply”, Francis said. At the end of the catechesis, the Holy Father Francis made an appeal to the international community to offer Lebanon “concrete assistance”, not only with words. Starting with the upcoming conference co-chaired by France and the United Nations. **This situation described at the beginning of the Letter to the Galatians “seems paradoxical, because all those involved seem to be animated by good feelings”**: “The Galatians who listen to the new missionaries think that by circumcision they will be even more devoted to the will of God and thus be even more pleasing to Paul. Paul’s enemies seem to be inspired by fidelity to the tradition received from the fathers and believe that genuine faith consists in observing the Law. In the face of this supreme fidelity, they even justify their insinuations and suspicions about Paul, who is considered unorthodox with regard to tradition.” The Pope pointed out that *“the novelty of the Gospel is a radical novelty, not a fleeting novelty: there are no ‘fashionable’ gospels, the Gospel is always new, it is newness”* That’s why “knowing how to discern is important”, as Paul does with the Galatians, towards whom he uses “very harsh terms”: “Twice he uses the expression ‘anathema’, which indicates the need to keep far from the community that which threatens its foundations.” “In this labyrinth of good intentions it is necessary to disentangle oneself”, Francis said: *“Very often we have seen throughout history, and we even see this today, some movements that preach the Gospel in their own way, sometimes with real and genuine charisms; but then they take it too far and reduce all the Gospel to a ‘movement’.” “And this is not Christ’s Gospel: this is the Gospel of the founder and yes, it may help at the beginning, but in the end it does not bear fruit with deep roots. For this reason, Paul’s clear and decisive word was salutary for the Galatians and is salutary for us too. The Gospel is Christ’s gift to us, He Himself revealed it to us. It is what gives us life.”* Paul’s love, interest, profession, is to proclaim: “One can therefore understand the sadness, the disappointment and even the bitter irony of the Apostle towards the Galatians, who in his eyes are taking the wrong path, which will lead to them to a point of no return: they have taken the wrong path.”

In fact, “the Gospel is only one and that is what he proclaimed; there can be no other. It is the only authentic one, because it is that of Jesus Christ.”

“Faced with such a great gift to the Galatians, the Apostle cannot explain why they might think of accepting another ‘gospel’”, the Pope remarked: “Perhaps more sophisticated, more intellectual, I don’t know ... but another ‘gospel’.” “The preaching carried out by the new missionaries - those who bring novelty, who preach - cannot be the Gospel. On the contrary, it is a proclamation that distorts the true Gospel because it prevents them from attaining the freedom acquired by arriving at faith.” In other words, “the Galatians are still ‘beginners’ and their disorientation is understandable. They do not yet know the complexities of the Mosaic Law and their enthusiasm in embracing faith in Christ leads them to listen to these new preachers, deluding themselves that their message is complementary to Paul’s. And it is not. However, the Apostle, cannot risk compromises on such decisive ground.”