



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 10 November 2021

[Multimedia]

Catechesis on the Letter to the Galatians: 15. *Let us not grow weary*

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

We have reached the end of the catecheses on the *Letter to the Galatians*. We could have reflected on so much other content found in this writing of Saint Paul! The Word of God is an inexhaustible font. And in this Letter, the Apostle spoke to us as an evangeliser, as a theologian and as a pastor.

The holy Bishop Ignatius of Antioch used a beautiful expression when he wrote: “There is then one Teacher, who spoke and it was done; while even those things which He did in silence are worthy of the Father. He who possesses the word of Jesus, is truly able to hear even His very silence” (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 15, 1-2). We can say that the Apostle Paul was capable of giving voice to this silence of God. His most original intuitions help us discover the astounding newness contained in the revelation of Jesus Christ. He was a true theologian who contemplated the mystery of Christ and transmitted it with his creative intelligence. And he was also capable of exercising his pastoral mission towards a lost and confused community. He did this with different methods: from time to time he used irony, firmness, gentleness... He revealed his own authority as an apostle, but at the same time he did not hide the weaknesses of his character. The strength of the Spirit had truly entered his heart: his meeting with the Risen Christ conquered and transformed his whole life, and he spent it entirely at the service of the Gospel.

Paul never thought of Christianity in irenic terms, lacking edge and energy — on the contrary. He defended the freedom Christ brought with such passion that it still moves us today, especially if we think of the suffering and loneliness he must have endured. He was convinced that he had received a call to which he alone could respond; and he wanted to explain to the Galatians that they too were called to that freedom which liberated them from every form of slavery because it made them heirs of the ancient promise and, in Christ, children of God. And aware of the risks that this concept of freedom brought, he never minimised the consequences. He was aware of the risks that Christian freedom brought. But he did not minimise the consequences. With *parrhesia*, that is, courageously, he repeated to the believers that freedom is in no way equal to libertinism, nor does it lead to forms of presumptuous self-sufficiency. Rather, Paul placed freedom in love's shadow and based its consistent exercise on the service of charity. This entire vision was set within the horizon of a life according to the Holy Spirit that brings to fulfilment the Law given by God to Israel and prevents from falling back into the slavery of sin. The temptation is always to go backward. One definition of Christians found in the Scripture says that *we Christians are not the type of people who go backward*, who turn back. This is a beautiful definition. And the temptation is to turn back to be more secure; to turn back to the Law, disregarding the new life of the Spirit. This is what Paul teaches us: the fulfilment of the true Law is found in this life of the Spirit that Jesus gave us. And this life of the Spirit can only be lived in freedom; Christian freedom. And this is one of the most beautiful things.

At the end of this catechetical journey, it seems to me that a twofold attitude could arise within us. On the one hand, the Apostle's teaching generates *enthusiasm* in us; we feel drawn to follow immediately the way of freedom, to "walk by the Spirit", to always walk by the Spirit: it makes us free. On the other hand, we are aware of our limitations because we experience first-hand every day how difficult it is to be docile to the Spirit, to facilitate his beneficial action. Then the *tiredness that dampens enthusiasm*, can set in. We feel discouraged, weak, sometimes marginalised with respect to a worldly life-style. Saint Augustine, referring to the Gospel episode of the storm on the lake, suggests how to react in this situation. This is what he says: "The faith of Christ in your heart is like Christ in the boat. You hear insults, you wear yourself out, you are upset, and Christ sleeps. Wake Christ up, rouse your faith! Even in tribulation you can do something. Rouse your faith. Christ awakes and speaks to you... Therefore, wake Christ up... Believe what has been said to you, and there will be tremendous calm in your heart" (cf. Sermon 63). In difficult moments, as Saint Augustine says here, we are like in the boat at the moment of the storm. And what did the apostles do? They woke Christ up who was sleeping during the storm; but he was present. The only thing we can do in terrible moments is to wake up Christ who is within us, but "sleeps" like [he did] in the boat. It is exactly like this. We must wake up Christ in our hearts and only then will we be able to contemplate things with his eyes for he sees beyond the storm. Through that serene gaze, we can see a panorama that we cannot even glimpse on our own.

In this challenging but captivating journey, the Apostle reminds us that we cannot allow ourselves any tiredness when it comes to doing good. Do not grow tired of doing good. We have to trust that

the Spirit always comes to assist us in our weakness and grants us the support we need. Let us, therefore, learn to invoke the Holy Spirit more often! Some might say: “how is the Holy Spirit invoked? I know how to pray to the Father with the Our Father; I know how to pray to Our Lady with the Hail Mary, I know how to pray to Jesus with the Prayer to His Holy Wounds. But to the Spirit? What is the prayer to the Holy Spirit”? The prayer to the Holy Spirit is spontaneous: it has to come from your heart. In moments of difficulty, you have to say: “Come, Holy Spirit”. This is the key word: “*Come*”. But you have to say it yourself in your own style, in your own words. Come, because I find myself in difficulty. Come, because I am in obscurity, in the dark. Come, because I do not know what to do. Come, because I am about to fall. Come. Come. This is the Holy Spirit’s word to call upon the Spirit. Let us learn to invoke the Holy Spirit often. We can do this with simple words at various moments during the day. And we can carry with us, perhaps inside the Gospel in our pocket, the beautiful prayer the Church recites on Pentecost: “Come, come Holy Spirit, / And from your celestial home / Shed a ray of light divine! / Come, come, Father of the poor! / Come, Source of all our store! / Come, within our bosoms shine! / You, of comforters the best; / You the soul’s most welcome Guest; / Sweet refreshment... ”. Come. And so it continues, it is a very beautiful prayer. The core of the prayer is “come”, as Our Lady and the Apostles prayed after Jesus had ascended into Heaven. They were alone in the Upper Room and invoked the Spirit. It will be good for us to often pray: *Come, Holy Spirit*. And with the presence of the Spirit, we will protect our freedom. We will be free, free Christians, not attached to the past in the bad sense of the word, not chained to practices, but free with the Christian freedom, the kind that makes us grow. This prayer will help us walk in the Spirit, in freedom and in joy because when the Holy Spirit comes, joy, true joy comes. May the Lord bless you. Thank you.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially the groups from England and the United States of America. In this month of November, let us pray for our deceased loved ones, and for all who have died, that the Lord in his mercy will welcome them into the Kingdom of heaven. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of Christ. May God bless you!

Lastly, as usual, my thoughts turn to *the elderly*, to *the sick*, to *young people* and to *newlyweds*. Today’s liturgy recalls Saint Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church, who consecrated his life to defending and spreading the evangelical truth. Through his intercession, may you live your faith with joy and be serene witnesses of the Lord’s love.

Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear Brothers and Sisters: Today we conclude our series of catecheses on Saint Paul's Letter to the Galatians. We have seen Paul speak in a variety of ways as apostle, theologian and pastor, opening up the inexhaustible riches of Jesus Christ. Paul's personal encounter with the risen Lord led him to proclaim boldly the freedom from sin and death won by Christ's victory on the Cross, and the new life bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit at our baptism. Paul's insistence that charity is the fulfilment of the law should lead us enthusiastically to pursue the way of Christian love and to cultivate the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Nor should we ever grow weary or discouraged by our failures or apparent lack of progress. Saint Augustine evokes the image of Christ asleep in the boat amid the storm to remind us that whenever we feel weary and the tempests of life threaten to overwhelm us, we need but awaken Christ in our hearts, trusting in his faithful presence and the life-giving power of his Spirit. With Saint Paul, may we constantly rejoice in the newness, joy and freedom of the new life proclaimed by the Gospel.