



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 14 February 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Good morning, even if the day is a little unpleasant. But if the soul is joyful it is always a good day. So, good day! Today the Audience is taking place in two places: a small group of sick people is in the Hall, due to the weather, and we are here. But we see them and they see us on the jumbo screen. Let us greet them with a round of applause.

We are continuing with the catechesis on the Mass. To what does listening to the Bible readings, which are elaborated upon in the homily, respond? It responds to a right: the spiritual right of the People of God to receive abundantly from the treasury of the Word of God (cf. *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, 45). When we go to Mass, each of us has the right to receive in abundance the Word of God read well, said well and then, explained well in the homily. It is a right! And when the Word of God is not read well, not preached with fervour by the deacon, by the priest or by the bishop, then the faithful are deprived of a right. We have the right to hear the Word of God. The Lord speaks for everyone, Pastors and the faithful. He knocks at the heart of those who participate in the Mass, each one in his or her condition of life, age, situation. The Lord comforts, calls, brings forth sprouts of a new and reconciled life. And this is through his Word. His Word knocks at the heart and changes hearts!

Therefore, after the homily, a moment of silence allows the seed received to settle in the soul, so that intentions to heed what the Spirit has suggested to each person may sprout. Silence after the homily. A good moment of silence must be observed there, and each one should ponder what he or she has heard.

After this silence, how does the Mass continue? The personal response of faith is integrated in the

Church's *Profession of Faith*, expressed in the *Creed*. We all recite the *Creed* in the Mass. Recited by the entire assembly, the *Symbolum* manifests the common response to what is heard together from the Word of God (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 185-197). There is an essential nexus between listening and faith. They are linked. Indeed, this — faith — does not arise from human imagination, but, as Saint Paul recalls, “comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Thus, faith is nourished by what is heard and leads to the Sacrament. In this way, reciting the *Creed* enables the liturgical assembly to “call to mind and confess the great mysteries of the faith ... before these mysteries are celebrated in the Eucharist” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 67).

The *Symbolum of Faith* joins the Eucharist to Baptism, received “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, and recalls that the Sacraments are understood in the light of the faith of the Church.

The response to the Word of God heard with faith is then expressed in the common petition, called the *Universal Prayer*, because it embraces the needs of the Church and of the world (cf. *girm*, 69-71; *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, 30-31).

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wished to restore this prayer after the Gospel and homily, especially on Sundays and feast days, so that, with the participation of the people, “intercession will be made for holy Church, for the civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the entire world (Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 53; cf. 1 Tim 2:1-2). Therefore, under the guidance of the priest who introduces and concludes, the people, “exercising the office of their baptismal priesthood, offer prayers to God for the salvation of all” (*girm*, 69). And after the individual intentions, proposals by the deacon or a reader, the congregation joins its voice, invoking: “Hear us, Lord”.

Indeed, let us remember what the Lord Jesus told us: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (Jn 15:7). “But we do not believe this, because we have little faith”. But if we had faith — Jesus says — like the mustard seed, we would have received all. “Ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you”. And in this moment of universal prayer after the *Creed*, it is the time to ask the Lord for the most important things in the Mass, the things we need, what we want. “It shall be done for you”; in one way or another, but “it shall be done for you”. “All things are possible to him who believes”, the Lord said. What did that man respond, to whom the Lord had addressed these words — “all things are possible to him who believes”? The man said: “I believe, Lord. Help my little faith”. We too can say: “Lord, I believe. But help my lack of faith”. And we must pray with this spirit of faith: “I believe, Lord; help my lack of faith”. Worldly demands, however, do not ascend toward heaven, just as self-referential requests remain unheard (cf. Jas 4:2-3). The intentions for which the faithful people are invited to pray must give voice to the concrete needs of the ecclesial community and of the world, avoiding recourse to conventional and short-sighted formulas. The “universal” prayer, which concludes the Liturgy of

the Word, exhorts us to turn our gaze to God, who takes care of all his children.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Ash Wednesday Audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, China and the United States of America. I wish you and your families a holy and fruitful Season of Lent, and I invoke upon you the grace and peace of Christ our Lord. May God bless you all!

I address a special thought to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today, Ash Wednesday, our Lenten journey begins. Dear *young people*, I hope you may live this time of grace as a return to the love of the Father who awaits everyone with open arms. Dear *sick people*, I encourage you to offer your suffering for the conversion of those who live far from the faith; and I invite you, dear *newlyweds*, to build your new family on the rock of God's love.