



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

Wednesday, 27 November 2013

Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning, and compliments on your courage in coming out to the Square in this cold. Many compliments.

I wish to complete the catechesis on the *Creed* delivered during the Year of Faith, which concluded last Sunday. In this catechesis and in the next, I would like to consider the subject of the resurrection of the body, by seeking to grasp a deeper understanding of two of its aspects as they are presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; i.e. our dying and our rising in Jesus Christ. Today I shall consider the first aspect, “dying in Christ”.

1. Among us there is commonly *a mistaken way of looking at death*. Death affects us all, and it questions us in a profound way, especially when it touches us closely, or when it takes the little ones, the defenseless in such a way that it seems “scandalous”. I have always been struck by the question: why do children suffer? why do children die? If it is understood as the end of everything, death frightens us, it terrifies us, it becomes a threat that shatters every dream, every promise, it severs every relationship and interrupts every journey. This happens when we consider our lives as a span of time between two poles: birth and death; when we fail to believe in a horizon that extends beyond that of the present life; when we live as though God did not exist. This concept of death is typical of atheistic thought, which interprets life as a random existence in the world and as

a journey toward nothingness. But there is also a practical atheism, which consists in living for one's own interests alone and living only for earthly things. If we give ourselves over to this mistaken vision of death, we have no other choice than to conceal death, to deny it, or to trivialize it so that it does not make us afraid.

2. However, the "heart" of man, with its desire for the infinite, which we all have, its longing for eternity, which we all have, rebels against this false solution. And so what is the *Christian meaning of death*? If we look at the most painful moments of our lives, when we have lost a loved one — our parents, a brother, a sister, a spouse, a child, a friend — we realize that even amid the tragedy of loss, even when torn by separation, the conviction arises in the heart that everything cannot be over, that the good given and received has not been pointless. There is a powerful instinct within us which tells us that our lives do not end with death.

This thirst for life found its true and reliable answer in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' Resurrection does not only give us the certainty of life after death, it also illumines the very mystery of the death of each one of us. If we live united to Jesus, faithful to him, we will also be able to face the passage of death with hope and serenity. In fact, the Church prays: "If the certainty of having to die saddens us, the promise of future immortality consoles us". This is a beautiful prayer of the Church! A person tends to die as he has lived. If my life has been a journey with the Lord, a journey of trust in his immense mercy, I will be prepared to accept the final moment of my earthly life as the definitive, confident abandonment into his welcoming hands, awaiting the face to face contemplation of his Face. This is the most beautiful thing that can happen to us: to contemplate face to face the marvellous countenance of the Lord, to see Him as he is, beautiful, full of light, full of love, full of tenderness. This is our point of arrival: to see the Lord.

3. Against this horizon we understand Jesus' invitation to be ever ready, watchful, knowing that life in this world is given to us also in order to prepare us for the afterlife, for life with the heavenly Father. And for this there is a sure path: *preparing oneself well for death*, staying close to Jesus. This is surety: I prepare myself for death by staying close to Jesus. And how do we stay close to Jesus? Through prayer, in the Sacraments and also in the exercise of charity. Let us remember that he is present in the weakest and the most needy. He identified himself with them, in the well known parable of the Last Judgment, in which he says: "for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... 'as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (Mt 25:35-36, 40).

Therefore, a sure path comes by recovering the meaning of Christian charity and fraternal sharing, by caring for the bodily and spiritual wounds of our neighbour. Solidarity in sharing sorrow and infusing hope is a premise and condition for receiving as an inheritance that Kingdom which has been prepared for us. The one who practices mercy does not fear death. Think well on this: the

one who practices mercy does not fear death! Do you agree? Shall we say it together so as not to forget it? The one who practices mercy does not fear death. And why does he not fear it? Because he looks death in the face in the wounds of his brothers and sisters, and he overcomes it with the love of Jesus Christ.

If we will open the door of our lives and hearts to our littlest brothers and sisters, then even our own death will become a door that introduces us to heaven, to the blessed homeland, toward which we are directed, longing to dwell forever with God our Father, with Jesus, with Our Lady and with the Saints.

To special groups

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's Audience, including those from England, the Philippines and the United States. Upon you and your families I invoke God's blessings of joy and peace!

Lastly, my affectionate thoughts turn to *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. This Sunday we will begin the liturgical season of Advent. Dear *young people*, prepare your hearts to receive Jesus the Saviour; dear *sick people*, offer up your suffering that others may recognize Christmas as Christ's encounter with frail human nature; and you, dear *newlyweds*, live out your marriage as a reflection of God's love in your personal history.