



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *Saint Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 29 March 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

The passage from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans that we have just heard offers us a great gift. Although we are used to recognizing in Abraham our father in the faith; today the Apostle enables us to understand that Abraham is for us a *father in hope*; not only *father in faith*, but *father in hope*. And this is so because in his life story we are already able to perceive an announcement of the Resurrection, of the new life that conquers evil and death itself.

In the text, it states that Abraham believed in God “who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17); and then it explains: “He did not weaken in faith even when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead ... or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb” (v. 19). Indeed, this is the experience we too are called to live. The God who reveals himself to Abraham is the God who saves, the God who delivers from despair and from death, the God who calls into life. In the story of Abraham, everything becomes a hymn to the God who sets free and regenerates, everything becomes prophecy. It becomes so for us, because we now recognize and celebrate the fulfilment of all of this in the mystery of Easter. God in fact “raised from the dead Jesus” (v. 24), so that in Him we too might pass from death to life. Thus, truly, Abraham can be called the “father of many nations”, inasmuch as he shines as an announcement of a new humanity — us! — delivered by Christ from sin and from death, and introduced once and for all into God’s loving embrace.

At this point, Paul helps us to focus on the extremely close bond *between faith and hope*. In fact, he states of Abraham that “in hope he believed against hope” (v. 18). Our hope is not based on rationale, foresight and human confidence; it appears where there is no longer hope, where there is no longer anything to hope in, just as happened to Abraham, facing his imminent death and the barrenness of his wife Sarah. The end was approaching for them; they could not have children, in that situation. Abraham believed and had hope against all hope. And this is great! Great hope is rooted in faith, and for this very reason it is able to transcend all hope. Yes, because it is not

based upon our words, but on the Word of God. In this sense too then, we are called to follow the example of Abraham, who — despite all the evidence of a reality in which he seems bound to die — trusts in God, “fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised” (v. 21). I would like to ask you a question: Are we, all of us, convinced of this? Are we convinced that God loves us and that he is willing to bring to fulfilment all that he promised us? But Father, how much do we have to pay for this? There is a single price: “open your heart”. Open your hearts and this power of God will lead you forward; he will do miraculous things and will teach you what hope is. This is the single price: open your heart to faith, and he will do the rest.

This is the paradox, and at the same time the strongest element, our highest hope! A hope based on a promise that, from the human point of view, seems uncertain and unpredictable, but which never fails, not even in the face of death, when the One who promises is the God of the Resurrection and Life. Not just anyone promises this! The One who promises this is the God of the Resurrection and life.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, today we ask the Lord for the grace to remain grounded, not so much in our own certainties, our own abilities, but in the hope that springs from God’s promise, as true children of Abraham. When God promises, he brings to fulfilment what he has promised. He never fails to keep his word. Then our lives will take on a new light, in the awareness that the One who resurrected his Son, will also raise us and will truly make us one with Him, together with all our brothers and sisters in faith. We all believe. Today we are all in the Square; let us praise the Lord. We will sing the *Our Father*, then we will receive the blessing.... But this passes. This too is a promise of hope. If today we have an open heart, I assure you that all of us will encounter, in the Square, the Heaven that never ends; it is forever. This is God’s promise and this is our hope, if we open our hearts. Thank you.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from England, Scotland, Finland, Norway, the Philippines and the United States of America. I offer a special welcome to the United Kingdom’s All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Holy See, with appreciation for their work. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent may be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

May your visit to the Eternal City arouse in each of you communion with the Universal Church and with the Successor of Peter.

Lastly, I express a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Dear *young people*, the Lenten period is a precious time to rediscover the importance of faith in daily life. Dear

sick people, unite your suffering to Jesus' Cross for the building of the civilization of love. And you, dear *newlyweds*, promote the presence of God in your new family.