



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 14 June

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

Today we are holding the audience in two places, but we are connected by jumbo screens: the sick are in the Paul VI Hall so that they do not suffer the heat so much, and we are here. But we are still all together and we are connected by the Holy Spirit, who always creates unity. Let us greet those who are in the Hall!

None of us can live without love. And a bad form of slavery to which we can all fall victim is that of thinking that love must be earned. Perhaps a good part of contemporary man's anguish comes from this: believing that, if we are not strong, attractive and beautiful, no one will take care of us. Many people nowadays seek visibility only to fill an interior void, as though we were always in need of approval. However, can you imagine a world in which everyone is looking for ways to attract the attention of others, and in which no one is instead willing to *freely give love to another person*? Imagine a world like this: a world without freely given love! It appears to be a human world but in reality it is hellish. Much of mankind's narcissism conceals a feeling of loneliness and orphanhood. Behind many forms of behaviour that seem to be unexplainable there lies a question: is it possible that I do not deserve to be called by name, that is, to be loved? Because love always calls [us] by name....

When an adolescent is not loved or does not feel loved, this can lead to violence. Behind many forms of social hatred and "hooliganism", there is very often a heart which has not been given due recognition. There are no bad children just as there are no adolescents who are entirely evil, but *unhappy* people do exist. And what can make us feel *happy* if not the experience of giving and receiving love? The life of human beings is an exchange of *glances*: someone who, by looking at us, steals a first *smile*. Thus, we who smile freely at those who are locked up in sadness, open a way out for them: an exchange of glances, looking people in the eye will open the doors of hearts.

The *first step* that God takes towards us is that of a love that anticipates and is unconditional. God is the first to love. God does not love because there is something in us that engenders love. God loves us because he himself *is love*, and, by its very nature, love tends to spread and give itself. God does not even condition his benevolence on our conversion. If anything, this is a consequence of God's love. Saint Paul expresses this perfectly: "God shows his love for us in that *while we were yet sinners* Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). *While we were yet sinners*. An unconditional love. We were "distant", as was the prodigal son in the parable: "while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion ..." (Lk 15:20). Out of love for us, God undertook an exodus from himself, to come and find us in this wasteland where it made no sense for him to pass. God loved us even when we were wrong.

Who among us loves in this way, if not a father or a mother? A mother continues to love her son even if he is in prison. I remember [seeing] many mothers queuing up to enter prison, in my previous diocese. And they were not ashamed. Their son was in jail, but he was *their* son. And they suffered many humiliations during searches before being allowed to enter but: "He is *my* son!" — "But, madam, your son is a delinquent!" — "He is my son!". Only this love from a mother or a father helps us to understand how God's love is. A mother does not ask for human justice to be rescinded, because each mistake demands atonement. But a mother never stops suffering for her own child. She loves the child even though a sinner. God does the same with us: *we are his beloved children!* But is it possible that God has some children whom he does not love? No. We are all God's beloved children. There is no curse on our life, but just a benevolent word from God, who drew us into life from nothing. The truth of everything is that *relationship of love* which links the Father to the Son through the Holy Spirit, a relationship into which we are welcomed thanks to grace. In him, in Jesus Christ, we were all wanted, loved, desired. There is Someone who has impressed within us a primordial beauty, which no sin, no bad choice can ever completely erase. In the eyes of God, we are always small fountains made to gush forth good water. Jesus says to the Samaritan woman: "the water that I shall give [you] will become in [you] a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:14).

What medicine is needed in order to change the heart of an unhappy person? What medicine can change the heart of a person who is not happy? [they reply: "love!"] Louder! [they shout: "love!"] Good! Very good, well done everyone! And how do we make the person feel that we love them? We must first embrace them. Make them feel wanted, which is important, and they will stop being sad. *Love calls for love* in a stronger way than hatred calls for death. Jesus did not die and rise for himself, but for us, so that our sins might be forgiven. It is therefore the time of resurrection of all: time to raise the poor once again from their discouragement, in particular those who have been lying in the sepulchre for much longer than three days. A wind of liberation blows here on our faces. Here, the gift of hope is sprouting up. And the hope is that of God the Father who loves us as we are: he loves us all and always. Thank you!

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the groups from England, Sweden, Hong Kong, Pakistan, the Philippines, Korea, Thailand, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, I address a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Yesterday, in our Liturgy, we remembered Saint Anthony of Padua, "eminent preacher and Patron Saint of the poor and the suffering". Dear *young people*, imitate his exemplary Christian life; dear *sick people*, never tire of asking God the Father, through his intercession, for what you need; and you dear *newlyweds*, aim for knowledge of the Word of God, at his school.