

catechesis

# HOPE

POPE FRANCIS  
& POPE LEO XIV

Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV

# CATECHESIS ON HOPE

GENERAL AUDIENCES IN THE JUBILEE OF HOPE

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## **The Genealogy of Jesus: the entry of the Son of God into our history**

Pope Francis (18 December 2024)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today we begin a series of catecheses that will unfold throughout the Jubilee Year. The theme is Jesus Christ, our hope. He is the destination of our pilgrimage, and He is the way, the path to follow.

The first part will focus on the *infancy of Jesus*, as narrated by the evangelists Matthew and Luke (cf. Mt 1–2; Lk 1–2). The Gospels of the Infancy recount Jesus' virginal conception and his birth from Mary's womb. They recall the messianic prophecies fulfilled in Him and speak of Joseph's legal fatherhood, which grafted the Son of God into the "line" of the Davidic dynasty. We see Jesus as a newborn, a child, and an adolescent: obedient to his parents and, at the same time, fully aware of his complete dedication to the Father and the Father's Kingdom. The distinction between the two evangelists is that while Luke recounts events through Mary's eyes, Matthew does so through Joseph's, showing us a fatherhood like no other.

Matthew opens his Gospel, and indeed the entire canon of the New Testament, with the "genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1). It is a list of names already present in Hebrew Scriptures, meant to reveal both the truth of history and the truth of human life. In fact, "the genealogy of the Lord is the true history, where certain names, so to speak, stand out as problematic, and the sin of King David is highlighted (cf. Mt 1:6). Yet everything concludes and blossoms in Mary and in Christ" (Letter on the Renewal of the Study of Church History, 21-XI-2024). This reveals the truth of human life transmitted from generation to generation, bearing three elements: a name encapsulating a unique identity and mission; belonging to a family and people; and, finally, adherence in faith to the God of Israel.

A genealogy is a literary genre; a narrative form intended to convey an important message. No one gives life to themselves; it is always received as a gift from others. In this case, the genealogy reflects the chosen people, who inherit the deposit of faith from their ancestors. When parents pass on life to their children, they also pass on their faith in God.

Unlike Old Testament genealogies, which include only male names (because in Israel it was the father who gave a child their name), Matthew's genealogy of Jesus includes women. There are five of them, to be exact: Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law, who, after becoming a widow, disguised herself as a prostitute to secure offspring for her late husband (cf. Gn 38); Rahab, the prostitute of Jericho who helped the Jewish scouts enter and conquer the Promised Land (cf. Jas 2); Ruth, the Moabite who, as recounted in the book bearing her name, remained faithful to her mother-in-law, cared for her, and became the great-grandmother of King David; Bathsheba, with whom David committed adultery, later marrying her after orchestrating the death of her husband, and together they bore Solomon (cf. 2 Sam 11); and lastly, Mary of Nazareth, the wife of Joseph from the house of David, from whom was born the Messiah, Jesus.

The first four women are not mentioned simply because of their sinfulness, as is sometimes claimed, but rather because they were outsiders to Israel's people. As Benedict XVI wrote: "Through them... the world of the Gentiles entered into the genealogy of Jesus: His mission to both Jews and Gentiles is revealed" (*The Infancy Narratives*, Vatican City: 2012, pg. 15).

While the previous four women are mentioned alongside the man from whom their child was born or who fathered that child, Mary stands apart. She marks a new beginning, a beginning in which human agency in generation gives way to God Himself. This is made clear by the use of the verb "was born:" "Jacob fathered Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Christ" (Mt 1:16). Jesus is the Son of David, grafted into that dynasty through Joseph, and destined to be the Messiah of Israel. Yet He is also the Son of Abraham and of foreign women, destined to be a "light to enlighten the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32) and the "Savior of the world" (Jn 4:42).

The Son of God, consecrated to the Father with the mission of revealing his face (cf. Jn 1:18; 14:9), entered the world as all human beings do, so much so that in Nazareth, He was called the "son of Joseph" (Jn 6:42) or the "carpenter's son" (Mt 13:55), truly God and truly man.

Brothers and sisters, let us awaken within ourselves a sense of grateful remembrance for our ancestors. Above all, let us give thanks to God, who, through our Mother the Church, has brought us into eternal life, the life of Jesus, our hope.

## **The Annunciation: Mary listens and is willing**

Pope Francis (22 January 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today we will resume the catecheses of the Jubilee cycle on Jesus Christ our hope.

At the beginning of his Gospel, Luke shows the effects of the transforming power of the Word of God, which reaches not only the halls of the Temple, but also the poor dwelling of a young woman, Mary, who, betrothed to Joseph, still lives with her family.

After Jerusalem, the messenger of the great divine annunciations, Gabriel, is sent to a village never mentioned in the Hebrew Bible: Nazareth. At that time, it was a small village in Galilee, in a remote area of Israel, a border area with the pagans and their contamination.

It is there that the angel brings a message of an entirely unheard-of form and content, so much so that Mary's heart is shaken, disturbed. In the place of the classic greeting, "Peace be with you," Gabriel addresses the Virgin with the invitation "Hail!," "rejoice!," an appeal dear to sacred history, because the prophets use it when they announce the coming of the Messiah (cf. Zeph 3:14; Joel 2:21-23, Zec 9:9). It is the invitation to the joy that the Lord addresses to His people when the exile ends and the Lord makes His living and active presence felt.

In addition, God calls Mary with a loving name unknown in biblical history: kecharitoméne, which means "filled with divine grace." Mary is full of divine grace. This name says that God's love has already for some time inhabited, and continues to dwell in Mary's heart. He says how "gracious" she is, and above all how God's grace has accomplished in her an inner engraving, making her His masterpiece: full of grace.

This loving moniker, which God gives only to Mary, is immediately accompanied by reassurance: "Do not be afraid!" "Do not be afraid:" the presence of the Lord always gives us this grace of not fearing, and so He says to Mary: "Do not be afraid!" God says "Do not be afraid" to Abraham, Isaac and Moses in history: "Do not be afraid!" (cf. Gen 15:1; 26:24; Dt 31:8; Joshua 8:1). And He says to us too: "Do not be afraid, keep going; do not be afraid!" "Father, I am afraid of this;" "And what do you do when...;" "I am sorry, Father, I will tell you the truth: I go to the fortune teller" - "You go to the fortune teller!" "Ah yes, I have my palm read..." Please, do not be afraid! Do not be afraid! Do not be afraid! This is good. "I am your travelling companion:" and He says this to Mary. The "Almighty," the God of the "impossible" (Lk 1:37) is with Mary, together with and beside her; He is her companion, her principal ally, the eternal "I-with-you" (cf. Gen 28:15; Ex 3:12; Jdg 6:12).

Then Gabriel announces to the Virgin her mission, making echo in her heart numerous biblical passages referring to the kingship and messianic nature of the child that must be born of her, and that the child will be presented as the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies. The Word that comes from on High calls Mary to be the mother of the Messiah, that long-awaited Davidic Messiah. She is the mother of the Messiah. He will be king, but not in the human and carnal

manner, but in the divine, spiritual manner. His name will be “Jesus,” which means “God saves” (cf. Lk 1:31; Mt 1:21), reminding everyone forever that it is not man who saves, but only God. Jesus is the One who will fulfil these words of the prophet Isaiah: “It was not an envoy or a messenger, but His presence that saved them [with] His love and pity” (Is 63:9).

This motherhood shakes Mary to the core. And as the intelligent woman she is, thus capable of reading into events (cf. Lk 2:19,51), she tries to understand, to discern what is happening to her. Mary does not look outside, but within. And there, in the depths of her open and sensitive heart, she hears the invitation to trust in God, who has prepared for her a special “Pentecost.” Just as at the beginning of creation (cf. Gen 1:2), God wants to nurture Mary with His Spirit, a power capable of opening what is closed without violating it, without encroaching on human freedom; He wants to envelop her in the “clouds” of His presence (cf. 1 Cor 10:1-2) because the Son lives in her, and her in Him.

And Mary is illuminated with trust: she is “a lamp with many lights.” Mary welcomes the Word in her own flesh and thus launches the greatest mission ever entrusted to a woman, to a human creature. She places herself in service: she is full of everything, not like a slave but as a collaborator of God the Father, full of dignity and authority in order to administer, as she will do at Cana, the gifts of divine treasure, so that many will be able to draw from it with both hands.

Sisters, brothers, let us learn from Mary, Mother of the Saviour and our Mother, to let ourselves open our ears to the divine Word and to welcome it and cherish it, so that it may transform our hearts into tabernacles of His presence, in hospitable homes where hope grows. Thank you!

## **The Annunciation to Joseph: “You are to name Him Jesus”**

Pope Francis (29 January 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today we will continue to contemplate Jesus our hope in the mystery of his origins, as narrated by the infancy Gospels.

Whereas Luke lets us do so from the perspective of the mother, the Virgin Mary, instead Matthew takes the perspective of Joseph, the man who assumes the legal paternity of Jesus, grafting him onto the trunk of Jesse and linking him to the promise made to David.

Indeed, Jesus is *the hope of Israel which is fulfilled*: He is the descendent promised to David (cf. 2 Sam 7:12; 1Cr 17:11), who makes his home “blessed for ever” (2 Sam 7:29); He is the shoot that buds from the trunk of Jesse (cf. Is 11:1), the “righteous Branch, [who] shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (cf. Jer 23:5; 33:15).

Joseph enters the scene in the Gospel of Matthew as Mary’s betrothed. For the Hebrews, betrothal was a full legal bond, which prepared for what would happen around a year later, the celebration of marriage. It was then that the woman passed from the father’s custody to that of her husband, moving into his home and making herself willing to the gift of motherhood.

It is precisely during this time that Joseph discovers Mary’s pregnancy, and his love is harshly put to the test. Faced with a similar situation, which would have led to the termination of the betrothal, the Law suggested two possible solutions: either a legal act of a public nature, such as the convocation of the woman in court, or a private action such as giving the woman a letter of repudiation.

Matthew defines Joseph as a “righteous” man (*zaddiq*), a man who lives according to the Law of the Lord, and who draws inspiration from this in every occasion of his life. Thus, following the Word of God, Joseph acts thoughtfully: he does not let himself be overcome by instinctive feelings and fear of accepting Mary with him, but prefers to be guided by divine wisdom. He chooses to part with Mary quietly, privately (cf. Mt 1:19). And this is Joseph’s wisdom, which enables him not to make mistakes and to make himself open and docile to the voice of the Lord.

In this way, Joseph of Nazareth brings to mind another Joseph, son of Jacob, dubbed the “lord of dreams” (cf Gen 37:19), greatly beloved by his father and much loathed by his brothers, whom the Lord raised up by having him sit in the Pharaoh’s court.

Now, what does Joseph of Nazareth dream of? He dreams of the miracle that God fulfils in Mary’s life, and also the miracle that he works in his own life: to take on a fatherhood capable of guarding, protecting and passing on a material and spiritual inheritance. The womb of his bride is pregnant with God’s promise, a promise that bears a name in which the certainty of salvation is given to all (cf. Acts 4:12).

As he sleeps, Joseph hears these words: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:20-21). Faced with this revelation, Joseph does not ask for further proof; he trusts. Joseph trusts in God, he accepts God’s dream for his life and that of his betrothed. He thus enters into the grace of one who knows how to live the divine promise with faith, hope and love.

Joseph, in all of this, does not utter a word, but he believes, hopes and loves. He does not express himself with “idle words,” but with concrete deeds. He belongs to the lineage of those who, according to the apostle James, “put the Word into practice” (cf. James 1:22), translating it into deeds, flesh, life. Joseph trusts in God and obeys: “His inner watchfulness for God ... leads quite spontaneously to obedience” (Benedict XVI, *The Infancy Narratives*, Milan-Vatican City 2012, 57).

Sisters, brothers, let us, too, ask the Lord for the grace to listen more than we speak, the grace to dream God’s dreams and to welcome responsibly the Christ who, from the moment of our baptism, lives and grows in our life. Thank you!

## **The Visitation and the Magnificat: “Blessed are you who believed”**

Pope Francis (5 February 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today we will contemplate the beauty of Jesus Christ, our hope, in the mystery of the Visitation. The Virgin Mary visits Saint Elizabeth; but it is above all Jesus, in His mother’s womb, who visits his people (cf. Lk 1:68), as Zechariah says in his hymn of praise.

After the astonishment and wonder at what has been announced to her by the Angel, Mary gets up and sets out on a journey, like all those who are called to in the Bible, because “the only act with which man can respond to God who is revealed to him is that of unlimited readiness” (H.U. von Balthasar, *Vocation*, Rome 2002, 29). This young daughter of Israel does not choose to protect herself from the world; she does not fear dangers and the judgements of others, but goes out towards other people.

When we feel loved, we experience a force that sets love in motion; as the apostle Paul says, “the love of Christ impels us” (2 Cor 5:14), it drives us, it moves us. Mary feels the push of this love, and goes to help a woman who is her relative, but also an elderly woman who, after a long wait, is welcoming an unhopied-for pregnancy, difficult to deal with at her age. But the Virgin also goes to Elizabeth to share her faith in the God of the impossible and her hope in the fulfilment of His promises.

The encounter between the two women produces a surprising impact: the voice of Mary, “full of grace,” who greets Elizabeth provokes the prophecy in the child the older woman is carrying in her womb, and inspires in her a dual blessing: “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Lk 1:42). And also a beatitude: “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” (v. 45).

Faced with the recognition of the messianic identity of her Son and her mission as mother, Mary does not speak of herself but of God, and raises a praise full of faith, hope and joy, a song that resounds every day in the Church during the prayer of Vespers: the *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55).

This praise to God the saviour, which gushed forth from the heart of his humble servant, is a solemn memorial that synthesizes and fulfils the prayer of Israel. It is interwoven with biblical resonances, a sign that Mary does not want to sing “out of the choir” but to tune in with the forefathers, exalting her compassion for the humble, those little ones whom Jesus in his preaching will declare “blessed” (cf. Mt 5:1-12).

The prominent presence of the paschal motif also makes the Magnificat a hymn of redemption, which has as its backdrop the memory of the liberation of Israel from Egypt. The verbs are all in the past, imbued with a memory of the love that lights up the present with faith and illuminates the future with hope: Mary sings of the grace of the past, but she is the woman of the present who carries the future in her womb.

The first part of this canticle praises God's action in Mary, a microcosm of the people of God who adhere fully to the covenant (vv. 46-50); the second ranges from the work of the Father in the macrocosm of the history of His son (vv. 51-55), through three key words: memory, mercy, promise.

The Lord, who bowed down to the humble Mary to fulfil "great things" in her and make her the mother of the Lord, began to save His people starting from the exodus, remembering the universal blessing promised to Abraham (cf. Gen 12:1-3). The Lord God who is the faithful for ever, showered an uninterrupted stream of merciful love "from age to age" (v. 50) upon the people loyal to the covenant, and now manifests the fullness of salvation in His Son, sent to save the people from their sins. From Abraham to Jesus Christ and the community of believers, the Passover thus appears as the hermeneutical category for understanding every subsequent liberation, up to that realized by the Messiah in the fullness of time.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord today for the grace to be able to wait for the fulfilment of every one of His promises; and to help us to welcome Mary's presence in our life. By following her example, may we all discover that every soul that believes and hopes "conceives and begets the Word of God" (Saint Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke 2, 26*).

## **The Birth of Jesus & the Shepherds' Visit: "To you is born this day a Saviour"**

Pope Francis (12 February 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

In our Jubilee journey of catechesis on Jesus, who is our hope, today we will reflect on the event of his birth in Bethlehem.

The Son of God enters history as our travelling companion, and begins to travel while still in his mother's womb. The evangelist Luke tells us that as soon as He was conceived, He went from Nazareth to the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth; and then, at the end of the pregnancy, from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census. Mary and Joseph were forced to go to the city of King David, where Joseph had also been born. The long-awaited Messiah, the Son of the God Most High, allows Himself to be counted, that is, counted and registered, like any other citizen. He submits to the decree of an emperor, Caesar Augustus, who thinks he is the master of all the earth.

Luke places Jesus' birth in "an exactly datable time" and in "an exactly indicated geographical setting," so that "the universal and the concrete touch each other" (Benedict XVI, *The Infancy Narratives*, 2012, pg. 77). God, who comes into history, does not dismantle the structures of the world, but wants to illuminate them and recreate them from within.

Bethlehem means "house of bread." There, the days of childbirth were fulfilled for Mary and there Jesus was born: bread descended from heaven to satisfy the hunger of the world (cf. Jn 6:51). The angel Gabriel had announced the birth of the Messianic King in the sign of greatness: "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule of the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Lk 1:32-33).

However, Jesus is born a way entirely unprecedented for a king. Indeed, "while they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Lk 2:6-7). The Son of God is not born in a royal palace, but at the back of a house, in the space where the animals are kept.

Luke thus shows us that God does not come into the world with resounding proclamations; He does not manifest himself with noise, but begins his journey in humility. And who are the first witnesses of this event? They are shepherds: men of little culture, malodorous from constant contact with the animals, they live on the margins of society. And yet they practice the occupation by which God makes Himself known to his people (cf. Gen 48:15; 49:24; Ps 23:1; 80:2; Is 40:11). God chooses them as the recipients of the most beautiful news that has ever resounded in history: "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today in the city of David a saviour has been born for you who is

Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

The place to meet the Messiah is a manger. Indeed, in spite of the expectation that precede Him, “for the Saviour of the world, for He for whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16), there is no room” (Benedict XVI, *The Infancy Narratives*, 2012, pg. 80). The shepherds thus learn that in a very humble place, reserved to the animals, the long-awaited Messiah is born, and He is born for them, to be their Saviour, their shepherd. This news opens their hearts to wonder, praise and joyful proclamation. “Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation” (Apostolic Letter *Admirabile signum*, no. 5).

Brothers and sisters, let us, too, ask for the grace of being, like the shepherds, capable of wonder and praise before God, and capable of cherishing what He has entrusted to us: the talents, charisms, our vocation and the people he places beside us. Let us ask the Lord to be able to discern in weakness the extraordinary strength of the Child God, who comes to renew the world and transform our lives with his plan full of hope for all humanity.

## **The Magi: “They prostrated themselves and did Him homage”**

Pope Francis (19 February 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

In the Gospels of the childhood of Jesus, there is an episode which is exclusive to Matthew’s narrative: the visit of the Magi. Attracted by the appearance of a star, which in many cultures is the harbinger of the birth of an exceptional person, some wise men set out on a journey from the east, without knowing exactly where they will go. They are the Magi, people who do not belong to the people of the covenant. The last time we spoke about the shepherds of Bethlehem, marginalized by Hebrew society because they were considered “impure”; today we encounter another category, the foreigners, who immediately arrive to pay homage to the Son of God who entered into history with an entirely unprecedented kingship. Hence, the Gospels tell us clearly that the poor and foreigners are invited among the first to meet God made child, the Saviour of the world.

The Magi were considered to be representatives both of the primordial races, generated by the three sons of Noah, and of the three continents known in antiquity, Asia, Africa and Europe, as well as the three phases of human life: youth, maturity and old age. Aside from all possible interpretations, they are men who do not stay still but, like the great chosen ones of biblical history, feel the need to move, to go forth. They are men who are able to look beyond themselves, who know how to look upwards.

The attraction for the star that appeared in the sky sets them on the move to the land of Judaea, to Jerusalem, where they meet King Herod. Their naivety and trust in asking for information about the newborn king of the Jews clashes with the shrewdness of Herod, who, troubled by the fear of losing his throne, immediately tries to obtain a better view, contacting the scribes and asking them to investigate.

The power of the earthly ruler thus shows all his weakness. The experts know the Scriptures and refer the king to the place where, according to Micah’s prophecy, the leader and shepherd of the people of Israel should be born (Mi 5:1): little Bethlehem, and not great Jerusalem! Indeed, as Paul reminds the Corinthians, “God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27).

However, the scribes, who are able to identify the Messiah’s birthplace exactly, show the way to others, but they themselves do not move! Indeed, it is not enough to know the prophetic texts to tune in to the divine frequencies; one must let them to enter within and allow the Word of God to revive the yearning to seek, the kindle to desire to see God.

At this point Herod, acting in secret, as do the deceitful and violent, asks the Magi the precise moment of the appearance of the star and incites them to continue their journey and then to return to bring him news, so that he too can go and adore the newborn. For those attached to power, Jesus is not the hope to be welcomed, but a threat to be eliminated!

When the Magi set off again, the star reappears and leads them to Jesus, the sign that creation and the prophetic word represent the alphabet with which God speaks and lets Himself be found. The sight of the star inspires an irrepressible joy in those men, because the Holy Spirit, who stirs the heart of whoever sincerely seeks God, also fills it with joy. Having entered the house, the Magi prostrate themselves, adore Jesus and offer Him precious gifts, worthy of a king, worthy of God. Why? What do they see? An ancient author writes: they see “a humble little body that the Word has assumed; but the glory of divinity is not hidden from them. They see an infant child; but they worship God” (Cromazio De Aquileia, *Comment on the Gospel of Matthew*, 5:1). The Magi thus become the first believers among the pagans, the image of the Church drawn together from every language and nation.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us, too, follow in the footsteps of the Magi, these “pilgrims of hope” who, with great courage, turned their steps, hearts and goods towards the One who is the hope not only of Israel but of all peoples. Let us learn to adore God in His smallness, in His kingship that does not crush but rather sets us free and enables us to serve with dignity. And let us offer Him the most beautiful gifts, to express our faith and our love.

## **The Presentation at the Temple: “My eyes have seen your salvation”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (26 February 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today we will contemplate the beauty of “Jesus Christ, our hope” (1 Tim 1:1), in the mystery of His presentation at the Temple.

In the narratives of Jesus’ infancy, the evangelist Luke shows us Mary and Joseph’s obedience to the Law of the Lord and to all its prescriptions. In reality, in Israel there was no obligation to present the child at the Temple, but those who lived listening to the Word of the Law and wished to conform to it, considered it a valuable practice. So did Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, who was barren; God heard her prayer and she, having had her son, took him to the temple and offered him to the Lord forever (cf. 1 Sam 1:24-28).

Luke therefore recounts Jesus’ first act of worship, celebrated in the holy city, Jerusalem, which will be the destination of His entire itinerant ministry from the moment He makes the firm decision to go up there (cf. Lk 9:51), heading towards the fulfilment of His mission.

Mary and Joseph do not simply embed Jesus in a history of the family, the people, of the covenant with the Lord God. They take care of His growth, and introduce Him into the atmosphere of faith and worship. And they too gradually grow in their comprehension of a vocation that far surpasses them.

In the Temple, which is a “house of prayer” (Lk 19:46), the Holy Spirit breathes, speaks to the heart of an elderly man: Simeon, a member of the holy people of God schooled in expectation and hope, who nurtures the desire for the fulfilment of God’s promises to Israel through the prophets. Simeon perceives in the Temple the presence of the Lord’s Anointed One, he sees the light that shines in the midst of the peoples plunged “in darkness” (cf. Is 9:1) and he goes to meet that child who, as Isaiah prophesies, “is born to us,” He is the son who “is given to us,” the “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:5). Simeon embraces that child who, small and helpless, rests in his arms; but it is he, in fact, who finds consolation and the fullness of his existence by holding Him to himself. He expresses this in a canticle full of heartfelt gratitude, which in the Church has become the prayer at the end of the day:

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in sight of all the peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel” (Lk 2:29-32).

Simeon sings the joy of those who have seen Him, who have recognized Him and are able to transmit to others the encounter with the Saviour of Israel and of the peoples. He is a witness of faith received as a gift and communicated to others; he is a witness of the hope that does not

disappoint; he is a witness of God's love, which fills the heart of man with joy and peace. Filled with this spiritual consolation, the elderly Simeon sees death not as the end, but as fulfilment, fullness; he awaits it like a "sister" that does not annihilate but introduces to the true life that he has already foretasted and in which he believes.

On that day, Simeon is not the only one to see salvation made flesh in the child Jesus. The same also happens to Anna, a woman more than eighty years old, a widow, entirely devoted to service to the Temple and consecrated to prayer. Indeed, upon seeing the child, Anne celebrates the God of Israel, who has redeemed His people in that very child, and tells others about Him, generously spreading the prophetic word. The song of redemption of two elders thus emits the proclamation of the Jubilee for all the people and for the world. Hope is rekindled in hearts in the Temple of Jerusalem because Christ our hope has entered it.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us too imitate Simeon and Anna, these "pilgrims of hope" who have clear eyes capable of seeing beyond appearances, who are able to detect the presence of God in smallness, who know how to welcome God's visit with joy and rekindle hope in the heart of brothers and sisters.

## **The Finding of Jesus in the Temple: “Son, why have You done this?”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (5 March 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

In this last catechesis dedicated to the childhood of Jesus, we will start from the episode in which, at twelve years of age, He stays in the Temple without telling His parents, who are anxiously looking for Him and find Him after three days. This account presents us with a very interesting dialogue between Mary and Jesus, which helps us to reflect on the path of the mother of Jesus, a journey that was certainly not easy. Indeed, Mary set out on a spiritual itinerary during which she advanced in her understanding of the mystery of her Son.

Let us look back at the various stages of this journey. At the beginning of her pregnancy, Mary visits Elizabeth and stays with her for three months, until the birth of the little John. Then, when she is now in her ninth month, due to the census she goes with Joseph to Bethlehem, where she gives birth to Jesus. After forty days they go to Jerusalem for the presentation of the child; and they return on a pilgrimage to the Temple every year thereafter. But with Jesus still a baby they had taken refuge in Egypt for a long time to protect Him from Herod, and only after the king's death did they settle again in Nazareth. When Jesus, having become an adult, begins His ministry, Mary is present and a protagonist at the wedding at Cana; then she follows Him “at a distance,” up to His last journey to Jerusalem, and until His passion and death. After the Resurrection, Mary remains in Jerusalem, as Mother of the disciples, sustaining their faith while awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout this journey, the Virgin is a pilgrim of hope, in the strong sense that she becomes the “daughter of her Son,” the first of His disciples. Mary brought into the world Jesus, Hope of humanity; she nourished Him, made Him grow, followed Him, letting herself be the first to be shaped by the Word of God. As Benedict XVI said, “We see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God ... we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate” (Encyclical *Deus caritas est*, no. 41). This unique communion with the Word of God does not however save her the effort of a demanding “apprenticeship.”

The experience of twelve-year-old Jesus going missing during the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem frightens Mary to the point that she also speaks for Joseph as they take their son back: “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety” (Lk 2:48). Mary and Joseph felt the pain of parents with a missing child: they both thought that Jesus was in the caravan with their relatives, but after not seeing Him for an entire day, they began the search that would lead them to retrace their steps. Upon returning to the Temple, they discover that He who, in their eyes, until a short time before, was still a child to protect, suddenly seems grown up, capable now of getting involved in discussions on the Scriptures, of holding His own with the teachers of the Law.

Faced with His mother's rebuke, Jesus answers with disarming simplicity: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). Mary and Joseph do not understand: the mystery of God made child exceeds their intelligence. The parents want to protect that precious son under the wings of their love; instead, Jesus wants to live His vocation as the Son of the Father who is at His service and lives immersed in His Word.

Luke's infancy narratives thus close with Mary's final words, which recall Joseph's paternity towards Jesus, and with Jesus' first words, which recognize that this paternity traces His origins from that of His heavenly Father, whose undisputed primacy He acknowledges.

Dear brothers and sisters, like Mary and Joseph, full of hope, let us also set out in the footsteps of the Lord, who does not allow Himself to be contained by our precepts, and allows Himself to be found not so much in a place, but in the response of love to the tender divine paternity, a response of love that is filial life.

## **Nicodemus: “You must be born from above”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (19 March 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

With this catechesis we will begin to contemplate some of the encounters narrated in the Gospels, to understand the way Jesus gives hope. Indeed, they are encounters that enlighten life and bring hope. It can happen, for example, that someone helps us to see a difficulty or a problem we are experiencing from a different perspective; or it can happen that someone simply gives us a word that makes us feel that we are not alone in the pain we are going through. At times there can even be silent encounters, in which one does not say anything, and yet those moments help us to get back on track.

The first encounter I would like to look at is that of Jesus with Nicodemus, narrated in chapter 3 of the Gospel of John. I will start with this episode because Nicodemus is a man who, with his history, shows that it is possible to emerge from darkness and find the courage to follow Christ.

Nicodemus goes to Jesus at night: it is an unusual time for a meeting. In John’s language, temporal references often have symbolic value: here the night probably refers to what is in the heart of Nicodemus. He is a man who finds himself in the darkness of doubt, in that darkness that we experience when we no longer understand what is happening in our lives and do not see the way forward clearly.

If you are in the dark, of course you seek the light. And John, at the beginning of his Gospel, writes: “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (1:9). Nicodemus therefore seeks Jesus because he has sensed that He can illuminate the darkness of his heart.

However, the Gospel tells us that Nicodemus does not immediately understand what Jesus is saying to him. And so we see that there are many misunderstandings in this dialogue, and also a lot of irony, which is a characteristic of the evangelist John. Nicodemus does not understand what Jesus is telling him because he continues to think with his own logic and categories. He is a man with a well-defined personality; he has a public role, he is one of the leaders of the Jews. But probably something no longer adds up for him. Nicodemus senses that something no longer works in his life. He feels the need to change, but he does not know where to begin.

This happens to all of us in some phases of life. If we do not accept to change, if we close ourselves up in inflexibility, in habits or our ways of thinking, we risk dying. Life resides in the capacity to change to find a new way to love. Indeed, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of a new birth, which is not only possible, but even necessary at certain moments in our journey. To tell the truth, the expression used in the text is already ambivalent in itself, because *anōthen* (ἀνωθεν) can be translated as either “from above” or “again.” Slowly, Nicodemus will understand that these two meanings go together: if we allow the Holy Spirit to generate new life in us, we will be born again. We will rediscover that life, which was perhaps fading in us.

I have chosen to begin with Nicodemus also because he is a man who, with his very life, shows that this change is possible. Nicodemus is able to do it: in the end he will be among those who go to Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus (cf. Jn 19:39)! Nicodemus has finally come to the light, he is reborn, and he no longer needs to stay in the night.

Changes sometimes frighten us. On the one hand they attract us, at times we desire them, but on the other we would prefer to remain in comfort. Therefore the Spirit encourages us to face these fears. Jesus reminds Nicodemus – who is a teacher in Israel – that even the Israelites were afraid when they were walking in the desert. And they focused so much on their worries that at a certain point those fears took the form of venomous snakes (cf. Nm 21:4-9). In order to be freed, they had to look at the copper serpent that Moses had placed on a pole, that is, they had to look up and stand before the object that represented their fears. Only by looking into the face of that which frightens us can we begin to be set free.

Nicodemus, like all of us, can look at the Crucified One: the One who defeated death, the root of all our fears. Let us also lift our gaze to the One they pierced, let us also be met by Jesus. In Him we find the hope to face the changes in our lives and be born again.

## **The Samaritan Woman: “Give me a drink!”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (26 March 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

After contemplating the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, who went in search of Jesus, today we will reflect on those moments in which it seems that He is in fact waiting right there, at that crossroads in our life. They are encounters that surprise us, and at the beginning we are perhaps even a little diffident; we try to be prudent and to understand what is happening.

This was probably also the experience of the Samaritan woman, mentioned in chapter four of John’s Gospel (cf. 4:5-26). She did not expect to find a man at the well at noon; indeed she hoped to find no one at all. In fact, she goes to fetch water from the well at an unusual hour, when it is very hot. Perhaps this woman is ashamed of her life, perhaps she has felt judged, condemned, not understood, and for this reason she has isolated herself, she has broken off relations with everyone.

To go to Galilee from Judea, Jesus would have had to choose another road and not pass through Samaria. It would also have been safer, given the tense relations between the Jews and the Samaritans. Instead, He wants to pass through there, and stops at that very well, right at that time! Jesus waits for us and lets Himself be found precisely when we think that there is no hope left for us. The well, in the ancient Middle East, is a place of encounter, where at times marriages are arranged; it is a place of betrothal. Jesus wants to help this woman understand where to find the true answer to her desire to be loved.

The theme of desire is fundamental to understanding this encounter. Jesus is the first to express His desire: “Give me a drink!” (v. 10). For the sake of opening a dialogue, Jesus makes Himself appear weak, in order to put the other person at ease, making sure that she is not frightened. Thirst is often, even in the Bible, the image of desire. But Jesus here thirsts first of all for the woman’s salvation. “He who was asking drink,” says Saint Augustine, “was thirsting for the faith of the woman herself” (*Homily 15, 11*).

Whereas Nicodemus had gone to Jesus at night, here Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at midday, the time when there is most light. It is indeed a moment of revelation. Jesus makes Himself known to her as the Messiah and also sheds light on His life. He helps her to reread her history, which is complicated and painful: she has had five husbands and is now with a sixth who is not a husband. The number six is not accidental, but usually indicates imperfection. Perhaps it is an allusion to the seventh bridegroom, the one who will finally satiate this woman’s desire to be truly loved. And that bridegroom can only be Jesus.

When she realizes that Jesus knows her life, the woman shifts the conversion to the religious question that divided Jews and Samaritans. This happens sometimes to us too when we pray: at the moment in which God is touching our life, with its problems, we lose ourselves at times in reflections that give us the illusion of a successful prayer. In reality, we have raised barriers of protection. However, the Lord is always greater, and to that Samaritan woman, to whom

according to cultural precepts He should not even have spoken, He gives the highest revelation: He speaks to her of the Father, who is to be adored in spirit and truth. And when she, once again surprised, observes that it is better to wait for the Messiah, He tells her: "I am he, the one who is speaking with you" (v. 26). It is like a declaration of love: the One you are waiting for is Me; the One who can finally respond to your desire to be loved.

At that point the woman runs to call the people of the village, because the mission springs precisely from the experience of feeling loved. And what proclamation could she have brought, if not her experience of being understood, welcomed, forgiven? It is an image that should make us reflect on our search for new ways to evangelize.

Just like a person in love, the Samaritan forgets her water jar, leaving it at Jesus' feet. The weight of that jar on her head, every time she returned home, reminded her of her condition, her troubled life. But now the jar is left at Jesus' feet. The past is no longer a burden; she is reconciled. And it is like this for us too: to go and proclaim the Gospel, we first need to set down the burden of our history at the feet of the Lord, to consign to Him the weight of our past. Only reconciled people can bring the Gospel.

Dear brothers and dear sisters, let us not lose hope! Even if our history appears burdensome, complicated, perhaps even ruined to us, we always have the possibility of consigning it to God and setting out anew on our journey. God is merciful, and awaits us always!

## **Zacchaeus: “Today I must stay at your house”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (2 April 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will continue to contemplate Jesus’ encounters with some figures from the Gospel. This time, I would like to focus on Zacchaeus: an episode that is particularly close to my heart, because it has a special place in my spiritual journey.

The Gospel of Luke presents Zacchaeus to us and one who seems irredeemably lost. Perhaps we too feel this way at times: without hope. Instead, Zacchaeus will discover that the Lord was already looking for him.

In fact, Jesus came to Jericho, a city located below sea level, considered to be an image of the underworld, where Jesus wants to go in search of those who feel they are lost. And in reality, the Risen Lord continues to descend into today’s underworlds, in places of war, in the suffering of the innocent, in the heart of mothers who see their children die, in the hunger of the poor.

Zacchaeus, in a certain sense, is lost; perhaps he has made the wrong decisions or perhaps his life has put him in situations from which he struggles to get out. Indeed, Luke insists on describing the characteristics of this man: not only is he a publican, a person who collects taxes from his fellow citizens for the Roman invaders, but he is the chief of publicans, no less, as if to say that his sin is multiplied.

Luke then adds that Zacchaeus is rich, suggesting that he has grown rich on the backs of others, abusing his position. But all this has consequences: Zacchaeus probably feels excluded, despised by everyone.

When he comes to know that Jesus is passing through the city, Zacchaeus feels the desire to see Him. He does not dare to imagine a meeting; it would be enough to watch him from a distance. However, our desires encounter obstacles and are not automatically fulfilled: Zacchaeus is short! It is our reality: we have limitations that we have to deal with. And then there are others, who sometimes do not help us: the crowd prevents Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus. Perhaps it is something of a revenge on their part.

But when you have a strong desire, you do not lose heart. You find a solution. However, you need to be courageous and unashamed; you need a little of the simplicity of children and not to worry about your own image. Zacchaeus, just like a child, climbs a tree. It should be a good vantage point, especially in order to watch without being seen, hiding behind the branches.

But with the Lord, the unexpected always happens. Jesus, when He comes close, raises His eyes. Zacchaeus feels he has been discovered, and probably expects a public rebuke. The people may have hoped for it, but they are disappointed: Jesus asks Zacchaeus to come down immediately, almost surprised to see him in the tree, and says to him, “Today I must stay at your house!” (Lk 19:5). God does not pass by without looking for those who are lost.

Luke highlights the joy in Zacchaeus' heart. It is the joy of one who feels that he has been seen, acknowledged, and above all forgiven. Jesus' gaze is not one of reproach, but of mercy. It is that mercy we sometimes struggle to accept, especially when God forgives those who, in our opinion, do not deserve it. We grumble because we would like to impose limits on God's love.

In the scene at home, Zacchaeus, after listening to Jesus' words of forgiveness, stands up, as if he were arising from a condition of death. And he gets up to make a commitment: to return four times what he has stolen. It is not a price to be paid, because God's forgiveness is free, but rather the desire to imitate the One by whom he felt loved. Zacchaeus makes a commitment to which he was not bound, but he does so because he understands that this is his way of loving. And he does so by combining the Roman legislation regarding theft and the Rabbinic law on penance. Zacchaeus, then, is not only the man of desire; he is also one who knows how to take practical steps. His purpose is not generic or abstract, but stems precisely from his history: he looked at his life and identified the point from which to begin his transformation.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us learn from Zacchaeus not to lose hope, even when we feel we have been cast aside or are incapable of change. Let us nurture our desire to see Jesus, and above all let us allow ourselves to be found by the mercy of God, who always comes in search of us, in whatever situation we may be lost.

## **The Rich Young Man: “Jesus looked at him”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (9 April 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will look at another of Jesus’ encounters, narrated by the Gospels. This time, however, the person encountered does not have a name. The evangelist Mark presents him simply as “a man” (10:17). He is a man who has observed the commandments ever since his youth but who, despite this, has not yet found the meaning of his life. He is searching for it. Perhaps he is one who has not yet truly made up his mind, despite his appearance as a committed person. Indeed, beyond the things we do, our sacrifices and successes, what truly counts in order to be happy is what we carry in our heart. If a ship has to set sail and leave the port to navigate in the open sea, it can be a wonderful ship, with an exceptional crew, but if it does not pull up the ballast and the anchors that hold it down, it will never manage to depart. This man has made himself a luxurious ship, but he has stayed in the port!

As Jesus makes His way through the street, this fellow runs up to Him, kneels before Him and asks: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v. 17). Notice the verbs: “what must I do to have eternal life.” Since observance of the Law did not give him the happiness and security of being saved, he turns to the Master Jesus. What is striking is that this man does not know the vocabulary of gratuitousness! Everything seems to be owed. Everything is a duty. Eternal life is for him an inheritance, something that is obtained by right, through meticulous observance of commitments. But in a life lived in this way, although certainly for good purpose, what space can love have?

As always, Jesus goes beyond appearances. While on the one hand this man sets out before Jesus his fine resume, Jesus goes beyond and looks within. The verb that Mark uses is very significant: “looking at him” (v. 21). Precisely because Jesus looks within each one of us, He loves us as we truly are. Indeed, what will He have seen inside this person? What does Jesus see when He looks within every one of us and loves us, despite our distractions and our sins? He sees our fragility, but also our desire to be loved as we are.

Looking at him, says the Gospel, He “loved him” (v. 21). Jesus loves this man before He even extended the invitation to follow Him. He loves him just as he is. Jesus’ love is gratuitous: exactly the opposite of the logic of merit that has beset this person. We are truly happy when we realize we are loved in this way, freely, by grace. And this also applies to the relationships between us: as long as we try to buy love or beg for affection, those relationships will never make us feel happy.

The proposal Jesus makes to this man is to change his way of living and relating with God. Indeed, Jesus recognizes that inside him, as in all of us, something is lacking. It is the desire we carry in our heart to be loved. There is a wound that belongs to us as human beings, the wound through which love passes. To overcome this lack we do not need to “buy” recognition, affection, consideration: instead, we need to “sell off” everything that weighs us down, to make our hearts

freer. There is no need to continue to take for ourselves, but rather to give to the poor, to provide, to share.

Finally, Jesus invites this man not to stay alone. He invites him to follow Him, to be within a bond, to live a relationship. Indeed, only in this way will it be possible to emerge from his anonymity. We can hear our name only within a relationship, in which someone calls us. If we remain alone, we will never hear our name spoken, and will continue to be that “man,” anonymous. Perhaps today, precisely because we live in a culture of self-sufficiency and individualism, we find ourselves more unhappy because we no longer hear our name spoken by someone who loves us freely.

This man does not accept Jesus’ invitation and stays alone, because the ballast of his life keeps him in the port. His sadness is the sign that he has not managed to leave. At times, what we think are riches are instead only burdens that are holding us back. The hope is that this person, like each one of us, will sooner or later change and decide to set sail.

Sisters and brothers, let us entrust to the Heart of Jesus all people who are sad and undecided, so that they may feel the loving gaze of the Lord, who is moved by looking tenderly within us.

## **The Merciful Father: “He was lost and has been found”**

Prepared by Pope Francis (16 April 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

After reflecting on Jesus’ encounters with some figures from the Gospel, I would like to pause, starting with this catechesis, on some parables. As we know, they are stories that draw on images and situations from everyday reality. That is why they also touch our lives. They provoke us. And they ask us to take a position: where am I in this story?

Let us begin with the most famous parable, the one that we perhaps all remember from when we were children: the parable of the father and the two sons (Lk 15:1-3, 11-32). In this we find the heart of the Gospel of Jesus, namely God’s mercy.

The evangelist Luke says that Jesus tells this parable for the Pharisees and the scribes, who lamented that He ate with sinners. This is why it could be said that it is a parable addressed to those who are lost, but do not know it, and judge others.

The Gospel is intended to give us a message of hope, because it tells us that wherever we are lost, and however we are lost, God always comes looking for us! Perhaps we have gone astray like a sheep, which has wandered off the path to graze, or fallen behind due to fatigue (cf. Lk 15:4-7). Or maybe we have been lost like a coin, which has perhaps fallen on the ground and can no longer be found, or someone has put it somewhere and cannot remember where. Or maybe we are lost like the two sons of this father: the youngest because he got tired of being in a relationship that he felt was too demanding; but the eldest is also lost, because it is not enough to stay at home if there is pride and resentment in his heart.

Love is always a commitment, there is always something that we must lose in order to go towards the other. But the younger son in the parable thinks only of himself, as happens in certain phases of childhood and adolescence. In reality, we also see around us many adults who are like this, who are unable to maintain a relationship because they are selfish. They delude themselves that they will find themselves and instead they lose themselves, because only when we live for someone do we truly live.

This younger son, like all of us, hungers for affection, he wants to be loved. But love is a precious gift; it must be treated with care. Instead, he squanders it, he disregards it, he does not respect himself. He realizes this in times of famine, when no-one cares for him. The risk is that in those moments we beg for affection and attach ourselves to the first master we chance upon.

It is these experiences that give rise within us to the distorted belief that we can only be in a relationship as servants, as if we had to atone for a guilt or as if true love could not exist. Indeed, the younger son, when he hits rock bottom, thinks he will go back to his father’s house to pick up a few crumbs of affection from the ground.

Only those who truly love us can free us from this false view of love. In the relationship with God, we have precisely this experience. The great painter Rembrandt, in a famous painting, beautifully depicted the return of the prodigal son. Two details in particular strike me: the young man's head is shaven, like that of a penitent, but it also looks like the head of a child, because this son is being born again. And then the father's hands: one male and the other female, to describe the strength and tenderness in the embrace of forgiveness.

But it is the eldest son who represents those for whom the parable is told: he is the son who always stayed at home with his father, yet was distant from him, distant in heart. This son may have wanted to leave too, but out of fear or duty he stayed there, in that relationship. When you adapt unwillingly, however, you begin to harbour anger within you, and sooner or later this anger explodes. Paradoxically, it is precisely the eldest son who in the end risks being left out, because he does not share his father's joy.

The father goes towards him too. He does not reproach him or call him to duty. He wants only that he feels his love. He invites him to enter and to leave the door open. That door remains open for us too. Indeed, this is the reason for hope: we are able to hope because we know that the Father is waiting for us, He sees us from afar, and He always leaves the door open.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask ourselves, then, where we are in this wonderful tale. And let us ask God the Father for the grace that we too can find our way back home.

## **The Sower: “He spoke to them at length”**

Pope Leo XIV (21 May 2026)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

I am pleased to welcome you in this, my first general Audience. Today I will resume the cycle of Jubilee catecheses, on the theme “Jesus Christ Our Hope,” initiated by Pope Francis.

Let us continue today to meditate on the parables of Jesus, which help us to regain hope, because they show us how God works in history. Today I would like to dwell on a parable which is somewhat peculiar, because it is a sort of introduction to all the parables. I refer to that of the sower (cf. Mt 13:1-17). In a certain sense, in this account we can recognize Jesus’ way of communicating, which has a great deal to teach us for proclaiming the Gospel today.

Every parable tells a story that is taken from everyday life, yet wants to tell us something more, to refer us to a deeper meaning. The parable raises questions in us; it invites us not to stop at appearances. Before the story that is told or the image that is presented to me, I can ask myself: where am I in this story? What does this image say to my life? In fact, the term “parable” comes from the Greek verb *paraballein*, which means to throw in front of. The parable throws before me a word that provokes me and prompts me to question myself.

The parable of the sower talks precisely about the dynamic of the word of God and the effects it produces. Indeed, every word of the Gospel is like a seed that is thrown on the ground of our life. Jesus uses the image of the seed many times, with different meanings. In chapter 13 of the Gospel of Matthew, the parable of the sower introduces a series of other short parables, some of which talk precisely about what is happening on the terrain: the wheat and the weeds, the mustard seed, the treasure hidden in the field. What, then, is this soil? It is our heart, but it is also the world, the community, the Church. The word of God, in fact, makes fruitful and provokes every reality.

At the beginning, we see Jesus who leaves the house and gathers a great crowd around him (cf. Mt 13:1). His word fascinates and intrigues. Among the people there are obviously many different situations. The word of Jesus is for everyone, but it works in each person in a different way. This context allows us to understand better the meaning of the parable.

A rather unusual sower goes out to sow, but does not care where the seed falls. He throws the seeds even where it is unlikely they will bear fruit: on the path, on the rocks, among the thorns. This attitude surprises the listener and induces him to ask: how come?

We are used to calculating things – and at times it is necessary – but this does not apply in love! The way in which this “wasteful” sower throws the seed is an image of the way God loves us. Indeed, it is true that the destiny of the seed depends also on the way in which the earth welcomes it and the situation in which it finds itself, but first and foremost in this parable Jesus tells us that God throws the seed of his Word on all kinds of soil, that is, in any situation of ours: at times we are more superficial and distracted, at times we let ourselves get carried away by

enthusiasm, sometimes we are burdened by life's worries, but there are also times when we are willing and welcoming. God is confident and hopes that sooner or later the seed will blossom. This is how he loves us: he does not wait for us to become the best soil, but he always generously gives us his word. Perhaps by seeing that he trusts us, the desire to be better soil will be kindled in us. This is hope, founded on the rock of God's generosity and mercy.

In telling the way in which the seed bears fruit, Jesus is also talking about his life. Jesus is the Word, he is the Seed. And the seed, to bear fruit, must die. Thus, this parable tells us that God is ready to "waste away" for us and that Jesus is willing to die in order to transform our life.

I have in mind that beautiful painting by Van Gogh, *The Sower at Sunset*. That image of the sower in the blazing sun also speaks to me of the farmer's toil. And it strikes me that, behind the sower, Van Gogh depicted the grain already ripe. It seems to me an image of hope: one way or another, the seed has borne fruit. We are not sure how, but it has. At the centre of the scene, however, is not the sower, who stands to the side; instead, the whole painting is dominated by the image of the sun, perhaps to remind us that it is God who moves history, even if he sometimes seems absent or distant. It is the sun that warms the clods of earth and makes the seed ripen.

Dear brothers and sisters, in what situation of life today is the Word of God reaching us? Let us ask the Lord for the grace always to welcome this seed that is his Word. And if we realize we are not a fruitful soil, let us not be discouraged, but let us ask him to work on us more to make us become a better terrain.

## **The Good Samaritan: “When he saw him, he had compassion”**

Pope Leo XIV (28 May 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

We will continue to meditate on some parables of the Gospel, which are an opportunity to change perspective and open ourselves up to hope. The lack of hope, at times, is due to the fact that we fixate on a certain rigid and closed way of seeing things, and the parables help us to look at them from another point of view.

Today I would like to talk to you about an expert, knowledgeable person, a doctor of the Law, who however needs to change his perspective, because he is concentrated on himself and does not notice others (cf. Lk 10:25-37). Indeed, he questions Jesus on the way in which eternal life is “inherited,” using an expression that intends it as an unequivocal right. But behind this question perhaps it is precisely the need for attention that is concealed: the only word he asks Jesus to explain is the term “neighbour,” which literally means he who is near.

Jesus therefore tells a parable that is a path for transforming that question, to pass from who loves me? to who has loved? The first is an immature question, the second is the question of an adult who has understood the meaning of his life. The first question is the one we ask when we sit in the corner and wait, the second is the one that drives us to set out on the path.

The parable that Jesus tells has, in fact, a road as its setting, and it is a difficult and impervious road, like life. It is the road travelled by a man going down from Jerusalem, the city on the mountain, to Jericho, the city below sea level. It is an image that already foreshadows what might happen: it happens that the man is attacked, beaten, robbed and left half dead. It is the experience that happens when situations, people, sometimes even those we have trusted, take everything from us and leave us in the middle of the road.

However, life is made up of encounters, and in these encounters, we emerge for what we are. We find ourselves in front of others, faced with their fragility and weakness, and we can decide what to do: to take care of them or pretend nothing is wrong. A priest and a Levite go down that same road. They are people who serve in the Temple of Jerusalem, who live in the sacred space. And yet, the practice of worship does not automatically lead to being compassionate. Indeed, before being a religious matter, compassion is a question of humanity! Before being believers, we are called to be human.

We can imagine that, after staying a long time in Jerusalem, that priest and that Levite are in a hurry to return home. It is indeed haste, so present in our lives, that very often prevents us from feeling compassion. Those who think that their own journey must take precedence are not willing to stop for another.

But here comes someone who is actually able to stop: he is a Samaritan, hence a person belonging to a despised people (cf. 2 Kings 17). In his case, the text does not specify the

direction, but only says that he was travelling. Religiosity does not enter into this. This Samaritan simply stops because he is a man faced with another man in need of help.

Compassion is expressed through practical gestures. The Evangelist Luke ponders the actions of the Samaritan, whom we call “good,” but in the text he is simply a person: a Samaritan approaches, because if you want to help someone, you cannot think of keeping your distance, you have to get involved, get dirty, perhaps be contaminated; he binds the wounds after cleaning them with oil and wine; he loads him onto his horse, taking on the burden, because one who truly helps if one is willing to feel the weight of the other’s pain; he takes him to an inn where he spends money, “two silver coins,” more or less two days of work; and he undertakes to return and eventually pay more, because the other is not a package to deliver, but someone to care for.

Dear brothers and sisters, when will we too be capable of interrupting our journey and having compassion? When we understand that the wounded man in the street represents each one of us. And then the memory of all the times that Jesus stopped to take care of us will make us more capable of compassion.

Let us pray, then, that we can grow in humanity, so that our relationships may be truer and richer in compassion. Let us ask the Heart of Jesus for the grace increasingly to have the same feelings as him.

## **The Labourers in the Vineyard: “You too, go into my vineyard”**

Pope Leo XIV (4 June 2025)

Dear brothers and sisters,

I would like to look at one of Jesus’ parables again. Also in this case, it is a story that fosters our hope. Indeed, at times we have the impression that we cannot find meaning for our lives: we feel useless, inadequate, just like the labourers who wait in the marketplace, waiting for someone to hire them to work. But sometimes time passes, life goes by, and we do not feel acknowledged or appreciated. Perhaps we did not arrive in time, others appeared before us, or problems held us up elsewhere.

The metaphor of the marketplace is very appropriate for our times too, because the market is the place of business, where unfortunately even affection and dignity are bought and sold, in the attempt to earn something. And when we do not feel appreciated, acknowledged, we risk selling ourselves to the first bidder. Instead, the Lord reminds us that our life is worthy, and his wish is to help us discover this.

Also in the parable we are commenting on today, there are labourers awaiting someone who will hire them for the day. We are at Chapter 20 of the Gospel of Matthew, and here too we find a character whose behaviour is unusual, who surprises and challenges us. He is the owner of a vineyard, who comes out in person in search of his labourers. Evidently, he wants to establish a personal relationship with them.

As I was saying, it is a parable that gives hope, because it tells us that this landowner goes out several times to go and look for those who are waiting to give meaning to their lives. The landowner goes out immediately at dawn and then, every three hours, he returns in search of workers to send to his vineyard. Following this schedule, after going out at three o’clock in the afternoon, there would be no reason to go out again, because the working day ended at six.

This tireless master, who wants at all costs to give value to the life of every one of us, instead goes out at five. The labourers who had remained in the marketplace had probably given up all hope. That day had come to nothing. Nevertheless, someone still believed in them. What point is there to take on labourers only for the last hour of the working day? And yet, even when it seems we are able to do little in life, it is always worthwhile. There is always the possibility to find meaning, because God loves our life.

And the originality of this landowner is also seen at the end of the day, at pay time. The master had agreed to pay the first workers, who go into the vineyard at dawn, one denarius, which was a typical day’s wage. He tells the others he will give them what is fair. And it is right here that the parable provokes us: what is fair? For the owner of the vineyard, that is, for God, it is just that each person has what he needs to live. He called the labourers personally, he knows their dignity, and on the basis of this, he wants to pay them, and he gives all of them one denarius.

The story says that the labourers from the first hour are disappointed: they cannot see the beauty of the gesture of the landowner, who was not unjust, but simply generous; who looked not only at merit, but also at need. God wants to give his Kingdom, that is, full, eternal and happy life, to everyone. And this is what Jesus does with us: he does not establish rankings, he gives all of himself to those who open their hearts to him.

In the light of this parable, today's Christian might be tempted to think, "Why start work immediately? If the pay is the same, why work more?" Saint Augustine responds to these doubts, saying: "Why dost thou put off him that calleth thee, certain as thou art of the reward, but uncertain of the day? Take heed then lest peradventure what he is to give thee by promise, thou take from thyself by delay" (*Sermon 87, 6, 8*).

I would like to say, especially to the young, do not wait, but respond enthusiastically to the Lord who calls us to work in his vineyard. Do not delay, roll up your sleeves, because the Lord is generous and you will not be disappointed! Working in his vineyard, you will find an answer to that profound question you carry within you: what is the meaning of my life?

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not be discouraged! Even in the dark moments of life, when time passes without giving us the answers we seek, let us ask the Lord who will come out again and find us where we are waiting for him. He is generous, and he will come soon!

## **Bartimaeus: “Take courage; get up, He is calling you”**

Pope Leo XIV (11 June 2025)

Dear brothers and sisters,

With this catechesis I would like to bring our attention to another essential aspect of the life of Jesus, namely his healings. For this reason, I invite you to bring before the Heart of Christ your most painful and fragile parts, those places in your life where you feel stuck and blocked. Let us trustfully ask the Lord to listen to our cry, and to heal us!

The character who accompanies us in this reflection will help us to understand that we must never give up hope, even when we feel lost. He is Bartimaeus, a blind man and a beggar, whom Jesus meets in Jericho (cf. Mk 10:46-52). The place is significant: Jesus is going to Jerusalem, but he begins his journey, so to speak, in the “underworld” of Jericho, a city situated below sea level. Indeed, Jesus, with his death, went to take back that Adam who fell to the bottom and who represents each one of us.

Bartimaeus means “son of Timaeus”: the man is described through a relationship, and yet he is dramatically alone. This name, though, could also mean “son of honour” or “of admiration,” exactly the opposite of the situation in which he finds himself. (This is the interpretation also given by Augustine in *The Harmony of the Gospels*, 2, 65, 125: PL 34, 1138.) And since the name is so important in Jewish culture, it means that Bartimaeus fails to live up to what he is called to be.

Then, unlike the great movement of people who walk behind Jesus, Bartimaeus is still. The Evangelist says that he is sitting by the roadside, and so he needs someone to lift him up onto his feet and help him resume his journey.

What can we do when we find ourselves in a situation that seems to have no way out? Bartimaeus teaches us to appeal to the resources we have within us and which form a part of us. He is a beggar, he knows how to ask, indeed, he can shout! If you truly want something, you do everything in order to be able to reach it, even when others reproach you, humiliate you and tell you to let it be. If you really desire it, you keep on shouting!

The cry of Bartimaeus, in the Gospel of Mark – “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!” (v. 47) – has become a very well-known prayer in the Eastern tradition, which we too can use: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have pity on me, a sinner.”

Bartimaeus is blind, but paradoxically he sees better than the others, and he recognizes who Jesus is! Before his cry, Jesus stops and has him called (cf. 49), because there is no cry that God does not hear, even when we are not aware we are addressing him (cf. Ex 2:23). It seems strange that, in front of a blind man, Jesus does not go immediately to him; but, if we think about it, it is the way to reactivate Bartimaeus’ life: He spurs him to get up again, He trusts in his ability to walk. That man can get up on his feet again, he can rise from the throes of death. But in order to do this, he must perform a very meaningful gesture: he must throw away his cloak (cf. v. 50)!

For a beggar, the cloak is everything: it is his safety, it is his house, it is the defence that protects him. Even the law protected the beggar's cloak, and imposed that it be returned in the evening if taken as a pledge (cf. Ex 22:25). And yet, many times, it is precisely our apparent securities that stand in our way – what we have put on to defend ourselves and which instead prevent us from walking. To go to Jesus and let himself be healed, Bartimaeus must show himself to Him in all his vulnerability. This is the fundamental step in any journey of healing.

Even the question that Jesus asks him seems strange: “What do you want me to do for you?” (v.51). But, in reality, it is not given that we want to be healed from our ailments; at times we prefer to stay still so as not to take responsibility. Bartimaeus' reply is profound: he uses the verb *anablepein*, which can mean “to see again,” but which we can also translate as “to look up.” Indeed, Bartimaeus does not want only to see again; he wants to regain his dignity! To look up, we must raise our heads. At times people are stuck because life has humiliated them, and they just want to find their worth again.

What saves Bartimaeus, and each one of us, is faith. Jesus heals us so that we can become free. He does not invite Bartimaeus to follow him, but tells him to go, to set out on his way (cf. v.52). However, Mark concludes the story by saying that Bartimaeus began to follow Jesus: he freely chose to follow him, He who is the Way!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us trustfully bring our ailments before Jesus, and also those of our loved ones; let us bring the pain of those who feel lost and without a way out. Let us cry out for them too, and we will be certain that the Lord will hear us and stop.

## **The Healing of the Paralytic: “Do you want to be well?”**

Pope Leo XIV (18 June 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Let us continue to contemplate Jesus who heals. In a particular way, I would like to invite you to think about the situations in which we feel “blocked” and stuck in a dead end. At times, in fact, it seems to be pointless to continue to hope; we become resigned and no longer have the desire to fight. This situation is described in the Gospels with the image of paralysis. This is why today I would like to dwell on the healing of a paralytic, narrated in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Saint John (5:1-9).

Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. He does not immediately go to the Temple; instead, he stops at a door, where the sheep were probably washed before being offered as a sacrifice. Near this door there were also many sick people who, unlike the sheep, were excluded from the Temple because they were considered unclean! And so it is Jesus himself who reaches out to them in their suffering. These people hoped for a miracle that might change their fate; indeed, next to the door there was a pool, whose waters were considered thaumaturgical, that is, capable of healing: at certain moments the water would stir and, according to the belief of the time, whoever immersed themselves first would be healed.

In this way a sort of “war among the poor” came to be created: we can imagine the sorry scene of these sick people who wearily dragged themselves to enter the pool. That pool was called Betzatà, which means “house of mercy”: it could be an image of the Church, where the sick and the poor gather and where the Lord comes to heal and give hope.

Jesus specifically addresses a man who has been paralyzed for some thirty-eight years. By now he is resigned, because he never manages to immerse himself in the pool when the water stirs (cf. v. 7). In effect, what paralyzes us, very often, is disappointment. We feel discouraged and risk falling into apathy.

Jesus asks the paralytic a question that may seem superfluous: “Do you want to be well?” (v. 6). Instead, it is a necessary question, because when one is stuck for so many years, even the will to heal may fade. Sometimes we prefer to remain in the condition of sickness, forcing others to take care of us. It is sometimes also an excuse for not deciding what to do with our lives. Jesus instead takes this man back to his truest and deepest desire.

Indeed, this man replies in a more articulate way to Jesus’ question, revealing his true vision of life. He says first of all that he has no-one to immerse him in the pool: so he is not to blame, but the others who do not take care of him. This attitude becomes the pretext for avoiding responsibility. But is it really true that he had no-one to help him? Here is Saint Augustine’s enlightening answer: “Truly he had need of a ‘man’ to his healing, but that ‘man’ one who is also God. ... He came, then, the Man who was needed: why should the healing be delayed?” (*Tractate* 17, 7).

The paralytic then adds that when he tries to immerse himself in the pool, there is always someone who arrives before him. This man is expressing a fatalistic view of life. We think that things happen to us because we are not fortunate, because destiny is against us. This man is discouraged. He feels defeated in the struggle of life.

Instead, Jesus helps him to discover that his life is also in his hands. He invites him to get up, to raise himself up from his chronic situation, and to take his stretcher (cf. v. 8). That mat is not to be left or thrown away: it represents his past of sickness, his history. Until that moment, the past had blocked him; it had forced him to lie like a dead man. Now it is he who can take that mat and carry it wherever he wishes: he can decide what to make of his history! It is a matter of walking, taking responsibility for choosing what road to take. And this is thanks to Jesus!

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord for the gift of understanding where our life is stuck. Let us try to give voice to our desire to be healed. And let us pray for all those who feel paralyzed, who do not see a way out. Let us ask to return to dwell in the Heart of Christ, which is the true house of mercy!

## **The Bleeding Woman & Jairus' Daughter: "Do not be afraid; have faith!"**

Pope Leo XIV (25 June 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will again consider the healings of Jesus as a sign of hope. In Him, there is a strength that we too can experience when we enter into a relationship with His Person.

A very widespread ailment of our time is the fatigue of living: reality seems to us to be too complex, burdensome, difficult to face. And so we switch off, we fall asleep, in the delusion that, upon waking, things will be different. But reality has to be faced, and together with Jesus, we can do it well. At times we feel blocked by the judgment of those who claim to put labels on others.

It seems to me that these situations can find an answer in a passage from the Gospel of Mark, where two stories intertwine: that of the twelve-year-old girl, who is sick in bed and is dying; and that of a woman who has been bleeding for precisely twelve years, and seeks out Jesus in order to be healed (cf. Mk 5:21-43).

Between these two female figures, the Evangelist places the character of the girl's father: he does not stay at home complaining about his daughter's illness, but rather he goes out and asks for help. Although he is an official of the synagogue, he makes no demands on account of his social position. When it is necessary to wait, he does not lose his patience, and he waits. And when they come to tell him that his daughter is dead and it is pointless to disturb the Master, he continues to have faith and to hope.

The conversation between this father and Jesus is interrupted by the bleeding woman, who manages to come close to Jesus and to touch his cloak (v. 27). This woman, with great courage, made the decision that would change her life: everyone continued to tell her to keep her distance, to keep out of view. They had condemned her to stay hidden and isolated. At times, we too can be victims of the judgment of others, who presume to put a robe on us that is not our own. And then we suffer, and cannot come out of it.

That woman embarks on the path of salvation when the faith that Jesus can heal her germinates: so, she finds the strength to come out and go in search of him. She wants to reach out and at least touch his garment.

Around Jesus there is a large crowd, and therefore many people were touching him, and yet nothing happens to them. Instead, when this woman touches Jesus, she is healed. Where does the difference lie? In his commentary on this point of the text, Saint Augustine says – in Jesus' name – "The crowd jostles, faith touches" (Sermon 243, 2, 2). It is thus: every time we perform an act of faith addressed to Jesus, contact is established with Him, and immediately his grace comes out from Him. At times we are unaware of it, but in a secret and real way, grace reaches us and gradually transforms our life from within.

Perhaps today too, many people approach Jesus in a superficial way, without truly believing in his power. We walk the surfaces of our churches, but maybe our heart is elsewhere! This woman, silent and anonymous, conquers her fears, touches the heart of Jesus with her hands, considered unclean because of her illness. And she is immediately healed. Jesus says to her: “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (Mk 5:34).

In the meantime, the father receives the news that his daughter is dead. Jesus says to him: “Do not be afraid; just have faith” (v. 36). He then goes to the house and, seeing that everyone is weeping and wailing, says: “The child is not dead but asleep” (v. 39). He enters the chamber where the child is lying, takes her hand, and says to her: “Talità kum,” “Little girl, arise!” The girl stands up and starts to walk (cf. vv. 41-42). Jesus’ act shows us that not only does He heal from every illness, but He also awakens from death. For God, who is eternal Life, death of the body is like sleep. True death is that of the soul: of this we must be afraid!

One last detail: Jesus, after reviving the child, tells the parents to give her something to eat (cf. v. 43). Here is another very concrete sign of Jesus’ closeness to our humanity. But we can also understand it in a deeper sense, and ask ourselves: when our children are in crisis and need spiritual nourishment, do we know how to give it to them? And how can we, if we ourselves are not nourished by the Gospel?

Dear brothers and sisters, in life there are moments of disappointment and discouragement, and there is also the experience of death. Let us learn from that woman, from that father: let us go to Jesus: He can heal us, He can revive us. Jesus is our hope!

## **The Healing of a Deaf Man: “He has done all things well”**

Pope Leo XIV (30 July 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

With this catechesis, we conclude our journey through the public life of Jesus, marked by encounters, parables, and healings.

This time in which we live also needs healing. Our world is marked by a climate of violence and hatred that demeans human dignity. We live in a society that is becoming ill due to a kind of “bulimia” of social media connections: we are hyperconnected, bombarded by images, sometimes false or distorted. We are overwhelmed by countless messages that stir within us a storm of contradictory emotions.

In this scenario, it is possible that within us arises the desire to turn everything off. We may come to prefer not to feel anything anymore. Even our words risk being misunderstood, and we may be tempted to close ourselves in silence, into a lack of communication where, despite our closeness, we are no longer able to say to one another the most simple and profound things.

In this regard, today I would like to reflect on a passage from the Gospel of Mark that presents us with a man who cannot speak or hear (cf. Mk 7:31–37). Just as it can sometimes happen to us, perhaps this man chose not to speak anymore because he did not feel understood; he chose to shut off every voice because he had been disappointed and wounded by what he had heard. In fact, it is not he who goes to Jesus to be healed, but others bring him. One may think that the people who take him to the Master are concerned about his isolation. The Christian community, however, has also seen in these people an image of the Church, which accompanies each person to Jesus so that they may listen to His word. The episode takes place in pagan territory, so we are in a context where other voices tend to drown out God’s voice.

Jesus’ behavior may initially seem strange, because He takes this person aside (v. 33a). In this way, He seems to emphasize his isolation, but on closer look, it helps us to understand what lies behind the silence and closure of this man, as if Jesus had perceived his need for intimacy and closeness.

Before anything else, Jesus offers him silent closeness, through gestures that speak of a profound encounter: He touches this man’s ears and tongue (cf. v. 33b). Jesus does not use many words; He says only what is necessary in that moment: “Be opened!” (v. 34). Mark uses the word in Aramaic—Eph’phatha—as though to let us hear, almost “in person” its sound and breath. This simple and beautiful word contains the invitation that Jesus addresses to this man who had stopped listening and speaking. It is as if Jesus were saying to him: “Be opened to this world that frightens you! Be opened to the relationships that have disappointed you! Be opened to the life you have given up facing!” Closing in on oneself, in fact, is never a solution.

After the encounter with Jesus, that person not only begins to speak again, but he does so “plainly” (v. 35). This adverb, inserted by the Evangelist, seems to suggest something deeper

about the reasons for his silence. Perhaps this man had stopped speaking because he felt he was saying things the wrong way, perhaps he felt inadequate. All of us experience what it means to be misunderstood, to feel that we are not truly heard. All of us need to ask the Lord to heal our way of communicating, not only so that we may be more effective, but also so that we may avoid wounding others with our words.

To begin speaking correctly again is the start of a journey, it is not yet the destination. In fact, Jesus forbids that man from talking about what has happened to him (cf. v. 36). To truly know Jesus, one must complete a journey; one must remain with Him and also pass through His Passion. When we have seen Him humiliated and suffering, when we have experienced the saving power of His Cross, then we can say that we have truly come to know Him. There are no shortcuts to becoming disciples of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us ask the Lord that we may learn to communicate with honesty and prudence. Let us pray for all those who have been wounded by the words of others. Let us pray for the Church, that she may never fail in her mission to lead people to Jesus, so that they may hear His Word, be healed by it, and in turn become bearers of His message of salvation.

## **The Preparation of the Supper: “Make the preparations for us there”**

Pope Leo XIV (6 August 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Let us continue our Jubilee journey in the discovery of the face of Christ, in whom our hope takes shape and consistency. Today we will start to reflect on the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. Let us begin by meditating on a word that seems simple but holds a precious secret of Christian life: prepare.

In the Gospel of Mark, it is told that “on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, ‘Where do you want us to go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?’” (Mk 14:12). It is a practical question, but also filled with anticipation. The disciples perceive that something important is about to happen, but they do not know the details. Jesus’ answer seems almost to be a riddle: “Go into the city and a man will meet you, carrying a jar of water” (v. 13). The details become symbolic: a man carrying a jar, a typically feminine gesture at that time; an upstairs room already prepared; an unknown host. It is as if everything has been arranged in advance. In fact, this is exactly the case. In this episode, the Gospel shows that love is not the result of chance, but of a conscious choice. It is not a simple reaction, but a decision that requires preparation. Jesus does not face his passion out of fatalism, but out of fidelity to a path freely and carefully accepted and followed. This is what comforts us: knowing that the gift of his life stems from conscious intention, not a sudden impulse.

That “upstairs room already prepared” tells us that God always precedes us. Even before we realize we need to be welcomed, the Lord has already prepared a space for us where we can recognize ourselves and feel we are his friends. This place is, fundamentally, our heart: a “room” that may seem empty, but which awaits only to be recognized, filled and cherished. The Passover, which the disciples must prepare, is in reality already present in Jesus’ heart. He has already thought of everything, arranged everything, decided everything. However, he asks his friends to do their part. This teaches us something essential for our spiritual life: grace does not eliminate our freedom, but rather awakens it. God’s gift does not eliminate our responsibility, but makes it fruitful.

Today too, like then, there is a supper to prepare. It is not only a matter of the liturgy, but of our readiness to enter into a gesture that transcends us. The Eucharist is not celebrated only at the altar, but also in daily life, where it is possible to experience everything as an offering and giving of thanks. To prepare to celebrate this thanksgiving does not mean doing more, but leaving room. It means removing what encumbers us, reducing our demands and ceasing to hold unrealistic expectations. Indeed, too often we confuse preparations with illusions. Illusions distract us; preparations guide us. Illusions seek a result; preparations make an encounter possible. True love, the Gospel reminds us, is given before it is reciprocated. It is an anticipatory gift. It is not based on what is received, but on what one wishes to offer. It is what Jesus lived with his disciples: while they still did not understand, while one of them was about to betray him and another to deny him, he was preparing a communion supper for them all.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too are invited to “prepare the Passover” of the Lord. Not only the liturgical one: that of our life too. Every gesture of willingness, every gratuitous act, every forgiveness given in advance, every effort patiently accepted, is a way to prepare a place where God can dwell. We can ask ourselves, then: what spaces in my life do I need to put in order so that they are ready to receive the Lord? What does it mean for me today to “prepare”? Perhaps to renounce a demand, to stop waiting for others to change, to take the first step. Perhaps to listen more, to act less, or to learn how to trust in what has already been prepared.

If we accept the invitation to prepare the place of communion with God and among ourselves, we will discover we are surrounded by signs, encounters and words that guide us towards that room, spacious and already prepared, in which the mystery of an infinite love, sustaining us and always preceding us, is celebrated unceasingly. May the Lord grant us to be humble preparers of his presence. And, in this daily readiness, may that serene trust also grow in us, allowing us to face everything with a free heart. Because where love has been prepared, life can truly flourish.

## **The Betrayal: “Surely it is not I?”**

Pope Leo XIV (13 August 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Let us continue our journey in the school of the Gospel, following Jesus’ steps in the final days of his life. Today we will pause at an intimate, dramatic, yet also profoundly true scene: the moment at which, during the Passover supper, Jesus reveals that one of the Twelve is about to betray him: “Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me” (Mk 14:18).

Strong words. Jesus does not utter them to condemn, but to show how love, when it is true, cannot do without the truth. The room on the upper floor, where shortly beforehand everything was carefully prepared, suddenly fills with a painful silence, made up of questions, suspicions, vulnerability. It is a pain we too know well, when the shadow of betrayal is cast over the closest relationships.

And yet, the way in which Jesus speaks about what is about to happen is surprising. He does not raise his voice, nor point his finger, nor utter the name of Judas. He speaks in such a way that each one can ask himself the question. And this is exactly what happens. Saint Mark tells us: “They began to be distressed and to say to him, one by one, ‘Surely it is not I?’” (Mk 14:19).

Dear friends, this question – “Surely it is not I?” – is perhaps among the sincerest that we can ask ourselves. It is not the question of the innocent, but of the disciple who discovers himself to be fragile. It is not the cry of the guilty, but the whisper of him who, while wanting to love, is aware of being able to do harm. It is in this awareness that the journey of salvation begins.

Jesus does not denounce in order to humiliate. He tells the truth because he wants to save. And in order to be saved, it is necessary to feel: to feel that one is involved, to feel that one is beloved despite everything, to feel that evil is real but that it does not have the last word. Only those who have known the truth of a deep love can also accept the wound of betrayal.

The disciples’ reaction is not anger, but sadness. They are not indignant, they are sorrowful. It is a pain that arises from the real possibility of being involved. And precisely this sorrow, if welcomed with sincerity, becomes a place for conversion. The Gospel does not teach us to deny evil, but to recognize it as a painful opportunity for rebirth.

Jesus then adds a phrase that troubles us and makes us think. “But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born” (Mk 14:21). They are harsh words, certainly, but they must be understood well: it is not a curse, but rather a cry of pain. In Greek, that “woe” sounds like a lamentation, an “alas,” an exclamation of sincere and deep compassion.

We are used to judging. Instead, God accepts suffering. When he sees evil, he does not avenge it, but grieves. And that “better if he had never been born” is not a condemnation imposed a priori,

but a truth that any of us can recognize: if we deny the love that has generated us, if by betraying we become unfaithful to ourselves, then we truly lose the meaning of our coming into the world, and we exclude ourselves from salvation.

And yet, precisely there, at the darkest point, the light is not extinguished. On the contrary, it starts to shine. Because if we recognize our limit, if we let ourselves be touched by the pain of Christ, then we can finally be born again. Faith does not spare us from the possibility of sin, but it always offers us a way out of it: that of mercy.

Jesus is not scandalized by our fragility. He knows well that no friendship is immune from the risk of betrayal. But Jesus continues to trust. He continues to sit at the table with his followers. He does not give up breaking bread, even for those who will betray him. This is the silent power of God: he never abandons the table of love, even when he knows he will be left alone.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too can ask ourselves today, with sincerity: “Surely it is not I?” Not to feel accused, but to open a space for truth in our hearts. Salvation begins here: with the awareness that we may be the ones who break our trust in God, but that we can also be the ones who gather it, protect it and renew it.

Ultimately, this is hope: knowing that even if we fail, God will never fail us. Even if we betray him, he never stops loving us. And if we allow ourselves to be touched by this love – humble, wounded, but always faithful – then we can truly be reborn. And we can begin to live no longer as traitors, but as children who are always loved.

## **Forgiveness: “He loved them to the end”**

Pope Leo XIV (20 August 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will look at one of the most striking and luminous gestures in the Gospel: the moment when Jesus, during the last supper, offers a morsel to the one who is about to betray him. It is not only a gesture of sharing: it is much more; it is love’s last attempt not to give up.

Saint John, with his profound spiritual sensibility, tells us about this moment as follows: [During supper, when] “the devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over... Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass ... he loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1-2). To love until the end: here is the key to understanding Christ’s heart. A love that does not cease in the face of rejection, disappointment, even ingratitude.

Jesus knows the time, but he does not submit to it: he chooses it. It is he who recognizes the moment in which his love must pass through the most painful wound, that of betrayal. And instead of withdrawing, accusing, defending himself... he continues to love: he washes their feet, dips the bread and offers it.

“It is the one to whom I hand the morsel after I have dipped it” (Jn 13:26). With this simple and humble gesture, Jesus carries his love forward and to its depths, not because he is ignoring what is happening, but precisely because he sees it clearly. He has understood that the freedom of the other, even when it is lost in evil, can still be reached by the light of a meek gesture, because he knows that true forgiveness does not await repentance, but offers itself first, as a free gift, even before it is accepted.

Judas, unfortunately, does not understand. After the morsel – says the Gospel – “Satan entered him” (v. 27). This passage strikes us: as if evil, hidden until then, manifested itself after love showed its most defenceless face. And precisely for this reason, brothers and sisters, that morsel is our salvation: because it tells us that God does everything – absolutely everything – to reach us, even in the hour when we reject him.

It is here that forgiveness reveals all its power and manifests the true face of hope. It is not forgetfulness; it is not weakness. It is the ability to set the other free, while loving him to the end. Jesus’ love does not deny the truth of pain, but it does not allow evil to have the last word. This is the mystery Jesus accomplishes for us, in which we too, at times, are called to participate.

How many relationships are broken, how many stories become complicated, how many unspoken words remain suspended. And yet the Gospel shows us that there is always a way to continue to love, even when everything seems irredeemably compromised. To forgive does not mean to deny evil, but to prevent it from generating further evil. It is not to say that nothing has happened, but to do everything possible to ensure that resentment does not determine the future.

When Judas leaves the room, “it was night” (v. 30). But immediately afterwards, Jesus says, “Now is the Son of Man glorified” (v. 31). The night is still there, but a light has already begun to shine. And it shines because Christ remains faithful to the end, and so his love is stronger than hatred.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too experience painful and difficult nights. Nights of the soul, nights of disappointment, nights in which someone has hurt or betrayed us. In those moments, the temptation is to close ourselves up, to protect ourselves, to return the blow. But the Lord shows us the hope that that another way exists, always exists. He teaches us that one can offer a morsel even to someone who turns their back on us. That one can respond with the silence of trust. And that we can move forward with dignity, without renouncing love.

Let us ask today for the grace to be able to forgive, even when we do not feel understood, even when we feel abandoned. Because it is precisely in those hours that love can reach its pinnacle. As Jesus teaches us, to love means to leave the other free — even to betray — without ever ceasing to believe that even that freedom, wounded and lost, can be snatched from the deception of darkness and returned to the light of goodness.

When the light of forgiveness succeeds in filtering through the deepest crevices of the heart, we understand that it is never futile. Even if the other does not accept it, even if it seems to be in vain, forgiveness frees those who give it: it dispels resentment, it restores peace, it returns us to ourselves.

Jesus, with the simple gesture of offering bread, shows that every betrayal can become an opportunity for salvation, if it is chosen as a space for a greater love. It does not give in to evil, but conquers it with good, preventing it from extinguishing what is truest in us: the capacity to love.

## **The Surrender: “Whom are you looking for?”**

Pope Leo XIV (27 August 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Today we will focus on a scene that marks the beginning of the Passion of Jesus: the moment of his arrest in the Garden of Olives. The evangelist John, with his usual depth, does not present a frightened Jesus who flees or hides. On the contrary, he shows us a free man, who comes forward and speaks, openly facing the hour in which the light of the greatest love can be revealed.

“Jesus, knowing all that was to befall him, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’” (Jn 18:4). Jesus knows. However, he decides not to retreat. He gives himself up. Not out of weakness, but out of love. A love so full, so mature, that it does not fear rejection. Jesus is not seized: he lets himself be taken. He is not the victim of an arrest, but the giver of a gift. In this gesture, he embodies a hope of salvation for our humanity: to know that, even in the darkest hour, one can remain free to love to the end.

When Jesus replies, “I am he,” the soldiers fall to the ground. It is a mysterious passage, since this expression, in biblical revelation, recalls the very name of God: “I am.” Jesus reveals that God’s presence is manifested precisely where humanity experiences injustice, fear, loneliness. Right there, the true light is ready to shine without fear of being overcome by the advancing darkness.

In the middle of the night, when everything seems to be falling apart, Jesus shows that Christian hope is not evasion, but decision. This attitude is the result of profound prayer in which God is not asked to spare us from suffering, but rather to give us the strength to persevere in love, knowing that life offered freely for love cannot be taken away by anyone.

“If you seek me, let these men go” (Jn 18:8). At the time of his arrest, Jesus does not worry about saving himself: he wishes only for his friends to go free. This shows that his sacrifice is a true act of love. Jesus lets himself be taken and imprisoned by the guards only so that his disciples may be set free.

Jesus lived every day of his life as preparation for this dramatic and sublime hour. This is why when it comes, he has the strength not to seek an escape route. His heart knows well that to lose one’s life for love is not a failure, but rather a mysterious fruitfulness, like a grain of wheat that falls to the ground and does not remain alone, but dies and becomes fruitful.

Jesus too is troubled when faced with a path that seems to lead only to death and to the end. But he is equally persuaded that only a life lost for love, at the end, is found again. This is what true hope consists of: not in trying to avoid pain, but in believing that the seed of new life is hidden, even in the heart of the most unjust suffering.

And us? How often do we defend our lives, our plans, our certainties, without realizing that, by doing so, we remain alone? The logic of the Gospel is different: only what is given flourishes; only the love that becomes free can restore trust even where everything seems lost.

The Gospel of Mark also tells us about a young man who runs away naked when Jesus is arrested, (cf. Mk 14:51). It is an enigmatic image, but profoundly evocative. We too, in the attempt to follow Jesus, experience moments in which we are caught off guard and stripped of our certainties. Those are the most difficult moments, in which we are tempted to abandon the way of the Gospel because love seems to be an impossible journey to us. And yet, at the end of the Gospel, it is a young man who announces the resurrection to the women. He is no longer naked, but clothed in a white robe.

This is the hope of our faith: our sins and our hesitations do not prevent God from forgiving us and from restoring to us the desire to resume following, to make us capable of giving our life for others.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us also learn how to deliver ourselves to the Father's good will, letting our life be a response to the good we have received. In life, it is not necessary to have everything under control. It is enough to choose to love freely every day. This is true hope: knowing that, even in the darkness of trial, God's love sustains us and ripens the fruit of eternal life in us.

## **The Crucifixion: “I thirst”**

Pope Leo XIV (3 September 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

At the heart of the account of the Passion, in the most luminous and at the same time darkest moment of Jesus’ life, the Gospel of John gives us two words that contain an immense mystery: “I thirst” (19:28), and immediately afterwards: “It is finished” (19:30). These are his last words, but they are filled with a whole lifetime, revealing the meaning of the entire existence of the Son of God. On the cross, Jesus does not appear as a victorious hero, but as a supplicant for love. He does not proclaim, condemn or defend himself. He humbly asks for what he, alone, cannot give to himself in any way.

The thirst of the Crucified Lord is not only the physiological need of a tortured body. It is also, and above all, the expression of a profound desire: that of love, of relationship, of communion. It is the silent cry of a God who, having wished to share everything of our human condition, also lets himself be overcome by this thirst. A God who is not ashamed to beg for a sip, because in that gesture he tells us that love, in order to be true, must also learn to ask and not only to give.

I thirst, says Jesus, and in this way he manifests his humanity and also ours. None of us can be self-sufficient. No-one can save themselves. Life is “fulfilled” not when we are strong, but when we learn how to receive. It is precisely at that moment, after receiving from unknown hands a sponge soaked in vinegar, that Jesus proclaims: It is finished. Love has made itself needy, and precisely for this reason it has accomplished its work.

This is the Christian paradox: God saves not by doing, but by letting himself do. Not by defeating evil with force, but by accepting the weakness of love to the very end. On the cross, Jesus teaches us that man does not realize himself in power, but in trustful openness to others, even when they are hostile and enemies. Salvation is not found in autonomy, but in humbly recognizing one’s own need and in being able to express it freely.

The fulfilment of our humanity in God’s plan is not an act of strength, but a gesture of trust. Jesus does not save with a dramatic twist, but by asking for something that he cannot give himself. And it is here that the door to true hope opens: if even the Son of God chose not to be self-sufficient, then our thirst too – for love, for meaning, for justice – is a sign not of failure, but of truth.

This truth, seemingly so simple, is difficult to accept. We live in a time that rewards self-sufficiency, efficiency, performance. And yet the Gospel shows us that the measure of our humanity is not given by what we can achieve, but by our ability to let ourselves be loved and, when necessary, even helped.

Jesus saves us by showing us that asking is not unworthy, but liberating. It is the way out of the hiddenness of sin, so as to re-enter the space of communion. Ever since the beginning, sin has

begotten shame. But forgiveness – real forgiveness – is born when we can face up to our need and no longer fear rejection.

Jesus' thirst on the cross is therefore ours too. It is the cry of a wounded humanity that seeks living water. And this thirst does not lead us away from God, but rather unites us with him. If we have the courage to acknowledge it, we can discover that even our fragility is a bridge towards heaven. It is precisely in asking – not in possessing – that a way of freedom opens up, because we cease to pretend to be self-sufficient.

In fraternity, in the simple life, in the art of asking without shame and offering without ulterior motives, a joy is born that the world does not know. A joy that restores us to the original truth of our being: we are creatures made to give and receive love.

Dear brothers and sisters, in Christ's thirst we can recognize all of our own thirst. And to learn that there is nothing more human, nothing more divine, than being able to say: I need. Let us not be afraid to ask, especially when it seems to us that we do not deserve. Let us not be ashamed to reach out our hand. It is right there, in that humble gesture, that salvation hides.

## **The Death of Jesus: “Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last”**

Pope Leo XIV (10 September 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Good morning, and thank you for your presence: a beautiful witness!

Today we will contemplate the culmination of Jesus’ life in this world: his death on the cross. The Gospels attest to a very precious detail, which is worthy of contemplation with the intelligence of faith. On the cross, Jesus does not die in silence. He does not fade away gradually, like a light that burns out, but rather he leaves life with a cry: “Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last” (Mk 15:37). That cry contains everything: pain, abandonment, faith, offering. It is not only the voice of a body giving way, but the final sign of a life being surrendered.

The cry of Jesus is preceded by a question, one of the most heart-rending that could be uttered: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is the first verse of Psalm 22, but on Jesus’ lips it assumes a singular weight. The Son, who always lived in intimate communion with the Father, now experiences silence, absence, the abyss. It is not a crisis of faith, but the final stage of a love that is given up to the very end. Jesus’ cry is not desperation, but sincerity, truth taken to the limit, trust that endures even when all is silent.

At that moment, the sky darkens and the veil of the temple is torn (cf. Mk 15:33,38). As if creation itself was participating in that pain, and at the same time revealing something new. God no longer dwells behind a veil – his face is now fully visible in the Crucified One. It is there, in that broken man, that the greatest love manifests itself. It is there that we can recognize a God who does not remain distant, but who traverses our pain to the very end.

The centurion, a pagan, understands this. Not because he has listened to a speech, but because he saw Jesus die in that way: “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (Mk 15:39). It is the first confession of faith after the death of Jesus. It is the fruit of a cry that did not vanish in the wind, but touched a heart. At times, what we are unable to say in words, we express with the voice. When the heart is full, it cries. And this is not always a sign of weakness; it can be a profound act of humanity.

We are accustomed to thinking of crying out as something disorderly, to be repressed. The Gospel confers an immense value to our cry, reminding us that it can be an invocation, a protest, a desire, a surrender. It can even be the extreme form of prayer, when there are no words left. In that cry, Jesus gave all that he had left: all his love, all his hope.

Yes, because there is this too, in crying out: a hope that is not resigned. One cries out when one believes that someone can still hear. One cries not out of desperation, but out of desire. Jesus did not cry out against the Father, but to him. Even in silence, he was convinced that the Father was there. And, in this way, he showed us that our hope can cry out, even when all seems lost.

To cry out therefore becomes a spiritual gesture. It is not only the first act of our birth, when we come into the world crying: it is also a way of staying alive. One cries when one suffers, but also when one loves, one calls, one invokes. To cry out is saying who we are, that we do not want to fade away in silence, that we still have something to offer.

In the journey of life, there are moments in which keeping something inside can slowly consume us. Jesus teaches us not to be afraid to cry out, as long as it is sincere, humble, addressed to the Father. A cry is never pointless, if it is born of love. And it is never ignored, if it is delivered to God. It is a way to not give in to cynicism, to continue to believe that another world is possible.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us learn this too from the Lord Jesus: let us learn the cry of hope when the hour of extreme trial comes. Not to hurt, but to entrust ourselves. Not to shout at someone, but to open our hearts. If our cry is genuine, it can be the threshold of a new light, of a new birth. As with Jesus: when everything seemed to be over, in reality salvation was about to begin. If it is made manifest with the trust and freedom of the children of God, the suffering voice of our humanity, united with the voice of Christ, can become a source of hope for us and for those around us.

## **Burial: “In the garden was a new tomb”**

Pope Leo XIV (17 September 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

In our journey of catechesis on Jesus our hope, today we will contemplate the mystery of Holy Saturday. The Son of God lies in the tomb. But this “absence” of his is not emptiness: it is expectation, a restrained fullness, a promise kept in the dark. It is the day of the great silence, in which the sky seems mute and the earth immobile, but it is precisely there that the deepest mystery of the Christian faith is fulfilled. It is a silence laden with meaning, like the womb of a mother who carries her unborn but already living child.

The body of Jesus, taken down from the cross, is carefully wrapped, as one does with something precious. John the Evangelist tells us that he was buried in a garden, inside “a new tomb where no one had ever been laid” (Jn 19:41). Nothing is left to chance. That garden recalls the lost Eden, the place where God and man were united. And that tomb, never used, speaks of something that has still to happen: it is a threshold, not an end. At the beginning of creation, God planted a garden; now the new creation also begins in a garden: with a closed tomb that will soon be opened.

Holy Saturday is also a day of rest. According to the Jewish Law, no work is to be done on the seventh day: indeed, after the six days of creation, God rests (cf. Gen 2:2). Now, the Son too, after completing his work of salvation, rests. Not because he is tired, but because he loved up to the very end. There is nothing left to add. This rest is the seal on the completed task; it is the confirmation that what should have been done has truly been accomplished. It is a repose filled with the hidden presence of the Lord.

We struggle to stop and rest. We live as if life were never enough. We rush to produce, to prove ourselves, to keep up. But the Gospel teaches us that knowing how to stop is an act of trust that we must learn to perform. Holy Saturday invites us to discover that life does not always depend on what we do, but also on how we know how to take leave of what we have been able to do.

In the tomb, Jesus, the living Word of the Father, is silent. But it is precisely in that silence that the new life begins to ferment. Like a seed in the ground, like the darkness before dawn. God is not afraid of the passing time, because he is also the God of waiting. Thus, even our “useless” time, that of pauses, emptiness, barren moments, can become the womb of resurrection. Every silence that is welcomed can be the premise of a new Word. Every suspended time can become a time of grace, if we offer it to God.

Jesus, buried in the ground, is the meek face of a God who does not occupy all space. He is the God who lets things be done, who waits, who withdraws to leave us freedom. He is the God who trusts, even when everything seems to be over. And we, on that suspended Sabbath, learn that we do not have to be in a hurry to rise again; first we must stay and welcome the silence, let ourselves be embraced by limitation. At times we seek quick answers, immediate solutions. But

God works in depth, in the slow time of trust. The Sabbath of the burial thus becomes the womb from which the strength of an invincible light, that of Easter, can spring forth.

Dear friends, Christian hope is not born in noise, but in the silence of an expectation filled with love. It is not the offspring of euphoria, but of trustful abandonment. The Virgin Mary teaches us this: she embodies this expectation, this trust, this hope. When it seems to us that everything is at a standstill, that life is a blocked road, let us remember Holy Saturday. Even in the tomb, God was preparing the greatest surprise of all. And if we know how to welcome with gratitude what has been, we will discover that, precisely in smallness and silence, God loves to transfigure reality, making all things new with the fidelity of his love. True joy is born of indwelt expectation, of patient faith, of the hope that what has been lived in love will surely rise to eternal life.

## **The Descent: “He also went to preach to the spirits in prison”**

Pope Leo XIV (24 September 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today, again, we will look at the mystery of Holy Saturday. It is the day of the Paschal Mystery in which everything seems immobile and silent, while in reality an invisible action of salvation is being fulfilled: Christ descends into the realm of the dead to bring the news of the Resurrection to all those who were in the darkness and in the shadow of death.

This event, which the liturgy and tradition have handed down to us, represents the most profound and radical gesture of God’s love for humanity. Indeed, it is not enough to say or to believe that Jesus died for us: it is necessary to recognize that the fidelity of his love sought us out where we ourselves were lost, where only the power of a light capable of penetrating the realm of darkness can reach.

The underworld, in the biblical conception, is not so much a place as an existential condition: that condition in which life is depleted, and pain, solitude, guilt and separation from God and others reign. Christ reaches us even in this abyss, passing through the gates of this realm of darkness. He enters, so to speak, in the very house of death, to empty it, to free its inhabitants, taking them by the hand one by one. It is the humility of a God who does not stop in front of our sin, who is not afraid when faced with the human being’s extreme rejection.

The apostle Peter, in the brief passage from his first Letter that we have just heard, tells us that Jesus, made alive in the Holy Spirit, went to take the news of salvation even “to the spirits in prison” (1Pt 3:19). It is one of the most moving images, which is expressed not in the canonical Gospels, but in an apocryphal text entitled the Gospel of Nicodemus. According to this tradition, the Son of God entered the deepest darkness to reach even the last of his brothers and sisters, to bring his light down there too. In this gesture there is all the strength and tenderness of the Paschal message: death is never the last word.

Dear friends, this descent of Christ does not relate only to the past, but touches the life of every one of us. The underworld is not only the condition of the dead, but also of those who live death as a result of evil and sin. It is also the daily hell of loneliness, shame, abandonment, and the struggle of life. Christ enters into all these dark realities to bear witness to the love of the Father. Not to judge, but to set free. Not to blame, but to save. He does so quietly, on tiptoe, like one who enters a hospital room to offer comfort and help.

The Fathers of the Church, in pages of extraordinary beauty, described this moment as a meeting: that between Christ and Adam. An encounter that is the symbol of all the possible encounters between God and man. The Lord descends where man has hidden out of fear, and calls him by name, takes him by the hand, raises him up, and brings him back to the light. He does so with full authority, but also with infinite gentleness, like a father with the son who fears that he is no longer loved.

In the eastern icons of the Resurrection, Christ is depicted breaking down the doors of the underworld, stretching out his arms and grasping Adam and Eve by the wrists. He does not save only himself; he does not return to life alone, but carries all of humanity with him. This is the true glory of the Risen One: it is the power of love, it is solidarity with a God who does not want to save himself without us, but only with us. A God who does not rise again unless he embraces our miseries and lifts us up to a new life.

Holy Saturday, then, is the day in which heaven visits earth most deeply. It is the time in which every corner of human history is touched by the light of Easter. And if Christ was able to descend all the way down there, nothing can be excluded from his redemption. Not even our nights, not even our oldest faults, not even our broken bonds. There is no past so ruined, no history so compromised that it cannot be touched by mercy.

Dear brothers and sisters, to descend, for God, is not a defeat, but the fulfilment of his love. It is not a failure, but the way by which he shows that no place is too far away, no heart is too closed, no tomb too tightly sealed for his love. This consoles us, this sustains us. And if at times we seem to have hit rock bottom, let us remember: that is the place from which God is able to begin a new creation. A creation made of people lifted up, hearts forgiven, tears dried. Holy Saturday is the silent embrace with which Christ presents all creation to the Father to restore it to his plan of salvation.

## **The Resurrection: “Peace be with you!”**

Pope Leo XIV (1 October 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

The centre of our faith and the heart of our hope are firmly rooted in the resurrection of Christ. When we read the Gospels carefully, we realize that this mystery is surprising not only because a man – the Son of God – rose from the dead, but also because of the way he decided to do so. Indeed, Jesus’ resurrection is not a bombastic triumph, nor is it revenge or retaliation against his enemies. It is a wonderful testimony to how love is capable of rising again after a great defeat in order to continue its unstoppable journey.

When we get up again after a trauma caused by others, often the first reaction is anger, the desire to make someone pay for what we have suffered. The Risen One does not react in this way. When he emerges from the underworld of death, Jesus does not take revenge. He does not return with gestures of power, but rather with meekness he manifests the joy of a love greater than any wound and stronger than any betrayal.

The Risen One does not feel any need to reiterate or affirm his own superiority. He appears to his friends – the disciples – and he does so with extreme discretion, without forcing the pace of their capacity for acceptance. His only desire is to return to communion with them, helping them to overcome the sense of guilt. We see this very well in the Upper Room, where the Lord appears to his friends who are enclosed in fear. It is a moment that expresses extraordinary power: Jesus, after descending into the abysses of death to liberate those who were imprisoned there, enters the closed room of those who are paralyzed by fear, bringing them a gift that no-one would have dared to hope for: peace.

His greeting is simple, almost ordinary: “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20:19). But it is accompanied by a gesture so beautiful that it is almost disconcerting: Jesus shows the disciples his hands and his side, with the marks of the passion. Why show his wounds to those who, in those dramatic hours, had denied and abandoned him? Why not hide those signs of pain and avoid reopening the wound of shame?

Yet, the Gospel says that, seeing the Lord, the disciples rejoiced (cf. Jn 20:20). The reason is profound: Jesus is now fully reconciled with everything he has suffered. There is not a shadow of resentment. The wounds serve not to reproach, but to confirm a love stronger than any infidelity. They are the proof that, even in the moment of our failure, God did not retreat. He did not give up on us.

In this way, the Lord shows himself to be naked and defenceless. He does not demand, he does not hold us to ransom. His is a love that does not humiliate; it is the peace of one who has suffered for love and can now finally affirm that it was worthwhile.

Instead, we often mask our wounds out of pride, or for fear of appearing weak. We say, “it doesn’t matter,” “it is all in the past,” but we are not truly at peace with the betrayals that have

wounded us. At times we prefer to hide our effort to forgive so as not to appear vulnerable and to risk suffering again. Jesus does not. He offers his wounds as a guarantee of forgiveness. And he shows that the Resurrection is not the erasure of the past, but its transfiguration into a hope of mercy.

Then, the Lord repeats: “Peace be with you!” And he adds, “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (v. 21). With these words, he entrusts the apostles with a task that is not so much a power as a responsibility: to be instruments of reconciliation in the world. As if he said: “Who will be able to proclaim the merciful face of the Father, if not you, who have experienced failure and forgiveness?”

Jesus breathes on them and gives them the Holy Spirit (v. 22). It is the same Spirit who sustained him in obedience to the Father and in love even to the cross. From that moment, the apostles will no longer be able to remain silent about what they have seen and heard: that God forgives, lifts up, and restores trust.

This is the heart of the mission of the Church: not to administer power over others, but to communicate the joy of those who are loved precisely when they did not deserve it. It is the strength that gave rise to the Christian communities and made them grow: men and women who discovered the beauty of returning to life to be able to give it to others.

Dear brothers and sisters, we too are sent. The Lord shows us his wounds and says: *Peace be with you*. Do not be afraid to show your wounds healed by mercy. Do not be afraid to draw close to those who are trapped in fear or guilt. May the breath of the Spirit make us, too, witnesses of this peace and this love that is stronger than any defeat.

## **Rekindling: “Were not our hearts burning within us?”**

Pope Leo XIV (8 October 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

Today I would like to invite you to reflect on a surprising aspect of Christ's Resurrection: his humility. If we think back to the Gospel accounts, we realize that the risen Lord does nothing spectacular to impose himself on the faith of his disciples. He does not appear surrounded by hosts of angels, he does not perform spectacular feats, he does not deliver solemn speeches to reveal the secrets of the universe. On the contrary, he approaches discreetly, like any other wayfarer, like a hungry man asking to share some bread (cf. Lk 24:15, 41).

Mary Magdalene mistakes him for a gardener (cf. Jn 20:15). The disciples of Emmaus believe him to be a stranger (cf. Lk 24:18). Peter and the other fishermen think he is just a passer-by (cf. Jn 21:4). We would have expected special effects, signs of power, overwhelming evidence. But the Lord does not seek this: he prefers the language of proximity, of normality, of sharing a meal.

Brothers and sisters, there is a valuable message in this: the Resurrection is not a theatrical coup; it is a silent transformation that fills every human gesture with meaning. The risen Jesus eats a piece of fish in front of his disciples: this is not a marginal detail, it is confirmation that our body, our history, our relationships are not a shell to be thrown away. They are destined for the fullness of life. Resurrection does not mean becoming evanescent spirits, but entering into a deeper communion with God and with our brothers and sisters, in a humanity transfigured by love.

In the Pasch of Christ, everything can become grace. Even the most ordinary things: eating, working, waiting, taking care of the house, supporting a friend. The Resurrection does not remove life from time and effort, but changes its meaning and “flavour.” Every gesture performed in gratitude and communion anticipates the Kingdom of God.

However, there is an obstacle that often prevents us from recognizing Christ's presence in our daily lives: the assumption that joy must be free from suffering. The disciples of Emmaus walk sadly because they hoped for a different ending, for a Messiah who did not know the cross. Although they have heard that the tomb is empty, they cannot smile. But Jesus walks alongside them and patiently helps them understand that pain is not the denial of the promise, but the way through which God has manifested the measure of his love (cf. Lk 24:13-27).

When they are finally seated at the table with him and break bread, their eyes are opened. They realize that their hearts were already burning, even though they did not know it (cf. Lk 24:28-32). This is the greatest surprise: to discover that beneath the ashes of disenchantment and weariness there is always a living ember, waiting only to be rekindled.

Brothers and sisters, Christ's resurrection teaches us that no history is so marked by disappointment or sin that it cannot be visited by hope. No fall is definitive, no night is eternal,

no wound is destined to remain open forever. However distant, lost or unworthy we may feel, there is no distance that can extinguish the unfailing power of God's love.

Sometimes we think that the Lord comes to visit us only in moments of contemplation or spiritual fervour, when we feel worthy, when our lives appear orderly and bright. Instead, the Risen One is close to us precisely in the darkest places: in our failures, in our frayed relationships, in the daily struggles that weigh on our shoulders, in the doubts that discourage us. Nothing that we are, no fragment of our existence, is foreign to him.

Today, the risen Lord walks alongside each of us, as we travel our paths – those of work and commitment, but also those of suffering and loneliness – and with infinite delicacy asks us to let him warm our hearts. He does not impose himself loudly; he does not demand to be recognized immediately. He waits patiently for the moment when our eyes will open to see his friendly face, capable of transforming disappointment into hopeful expectation, sadness into gratitude, resignation into hope.

The Risen One desires only to manifest his presence, to become our companion on the road and to kindle in us the certainty that his life is stronger than any death. Let us then ask for the grace to recognize his humble and discreet presence, not to expect a life without trials, to discover that every pain, if inhabited by love, can become a place of communion.

And so, like the disciples of Emmaus, we too return to our homes with hearts burning with joy. A simple joy that does not erase wounds, but illuminates them. A joy that comes from the certainty that the Lord is alive, walks with us, and gives us the possibility to start again at every moment.

## **The Risen One, the Living Source of Human Hope**

Pope Leo XIV (15 October 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

In the Jubilee Year catecheses, until now, we have retraced the life of Jesus, following the Gospels, from his birth to his death and resurrection. In so doing, our pilgrimage of hope has found its solid foundation, its sure way. Now, in the last part of the journey, we will allow the mystery of Christ, which culminates in the Resurrection, to radiate its light of salvation in contact with the current human and historical reality, with its questions and challenges.

Our lives are marked by countless events, full of different nuances and experiences. At times we feel joyful, other times sad, other times fulfilled or stressed, gratified or demotivated. We live busy lives, we concentrate on achieving results, and we even attain lofty, prestigious goals. Conversely, we remain suspended, precarious, awaiting success and recognition that are delayed or do not arrive at all. In short, we find ourselves experiencing a paradoxical situation: we would like to be happy, and yet it is very difficult to be happy in a continuous way, without any shadows. We come to terms with our limitations and, at the same time, with the irrepressible urge to try to overcome them. We feel deep down that we are always missing something.

In truth, we were not created for lack, but for fullness, to rejoice in life, and life in abundance, according to Jesus' expression in the Gospel of John (cf. 10:10).

This deep desire in our hearts can find its ultimate answer not in roles, not in power, not in having, but in the certainty that there is someone who guarantees this constitutive impulse of our humanity; in the awareness that this expectation will not be disappointed or thwarted. This certainty coincides with hope. This does not mean thinking in an optimistic way: often optimism lets us down, causing our expectations to implode, whereas hope promises and fulfils.

Sisters and brothers, the Risen Jesus is the guarantee of this deliverance! He is the wellspring that satisfies our thirst, the infinite thirst for fullness that the Holy Spirit imbues into our hearts. Indeed, the Resurrection of Christ is not a simple event of human history, but the event that transformed it from within.

Let us think about a source of water. What are its characteristics? It quenches thirst and refreshes creatures, irrigates the land, renders fertile and living what would otherwise remain barren. It gives refreshment to the weary traveller, offering him the joy of an oasis of freshness. A wellspring appears as a freely-given gift for nature, for creatures, for human beings. Without water it is not possible to live.

The Risen One is the living wellspring that does not dry up and does not change. It always stays pure and ready for anyone who is thirsty. And the more we taste the mystery of God, the more we are attracted to it, without ever becoming completely satiated. Saint Augustine, in the tenth Book of the Confessions, captures exactly this inexhaustible longing of our hearts and expresses it in his famous Hymn to Beauty: "You exhaled odours, and I drew in my breath and do pant

after you. I tasted, and do hunger and thirst. You touched me, and I burned for your peace” (X, 27, 38).

Jesus, with his Resurrection, has guaranteed for us a permanent source of life: he is the living one (cf. Rev 1:18), the lover of life, the victor over all death. Therefore, he is able to offer us refreshment in our earthly journey and assure us of perfect peace in eternity. Only Jesus, who died and rose again, responds to the deepest questions of our heart: is there really a destination for us? Does our existence have any meaning? And the suffering of so many innocents, how can it be redeemed?

The Risen Jesus does not bestow upon us an answer “from above,” but becomes our companion on this often arduous, painful and mysterious journey. Only He can fill our empty flask when our thirst becomes unbearable.

And he is also the destination of our journey. Without his love, the voyage of life would become wandering without a goal, a tragic mistake with a missed destination. We are fragile creatures. Mistakes are part of our humanity; it is the wound of sin that makes us fall, give up, despair. To rise again instead means to get up and stand on our feet. The Risen One guarantees our arrival, leading us home, where we are awaited, loved, saved. To journey with him means to experience being sustained despite everything, to have our thirst quenched and to be refreshed in the hardships and struggles that, like heavy stones, threaten to block or divert our history.

Dear friends, from Christ’s Resurrection springs the hope that gives us a foretaste, despite the fatigue of living, of a deep and joyful calm: that peace only he can give us in the end, without end.

## **The Resurrection of Christ, the Response to Human Sadness**

Pope Leo XIV (22 October 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning, and welcome to you all!*

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an event that one never finishes contemplating and meditating on, and the more one explores it, the more one is filled with wonder, drawn in as if by an overwhelming yet fascinating light. It was an explosion of life and joy that changed the meaning of reality itself, from negative to positive; yet it did not happen in a striking way, much less a violent one, but gently, hidden, one might say humbly.

Today we will reflect on how Christ's resurrection can heal one of the malaises of our time: sadness. Intrusive and widespread, sadness accompanies the days of many people. It is a feeling of precariousness, at times profound desperation, which invades one's inner space and seems to prevail over any impetus to joy.

Sadness robs life of meaning and vigour, turning it into a directionless and meaningless journey. This very current experience reminds us of the famous account in the Gospel of Luke (24: 13-29) of the two disciples of Emmaus. Disappointed and discouraged, they leave Jerusalem, leaving behind the hopes they held in Jesus, who has been crucified and entombed. In the opening lines, this episode presents a paradigm of human sadness: the end of the objective to which so much energy has been invested, the destruction of what seemed to be the essence of their lives. Their hope is dashed; desolation has taken hold of their hearts. Everything has imploded in a very short space of time, between Friday and Saturday, in a dramatic sequence of events.

The paradox is truly emblematic: this sad journey of defeat and return to ordinary life occurs on the same day as the victory of light, of the Pasch that has been fully consummated. The two men turn their backs on Golgotha, on the terrible scene of the cross, still imprinted on their eyes and their hearts. It seems that all is lost. They must return to their former lives, keeping a low profile and hoping not to be recognized.

At a certain point, a traveller joins the two disciples, perhaps one of the many pilgrims who have been to Jerusalem for Easter. It is the risen Jesus, but they do not recognize him. Sadness clouds their gaze, erasing the promise that the Master had made several times: that he would be killed and that on the third day he would rise again. The stranger approaches and shows interest in what they are saying. The text says that the two "stood still, looking sad" (Lk 24:17). The Greek adjective used describes an all-encompassing sadness: the paralysis of the soul is apparent on their faces.

Jesus listens to them, allowing them to unburden their disappointment. Then, with great frankness, he rebukes them for being "foolish ... and slow of heart to believe that all the prophets have declared!" (v. 25), and through the Scriptures he shows that Christ had to suffer, die and rise again. The warmth of hope is rekindled in the hearts of the two disciples, and then, when night falls and they arrive at their destination, they invite their mysterious travelling companion to stay with them.

Jesus accepts, and takes his seat at the table with them. Then he takes the bread, breaks it and offers it. At that moment, the two disciples recognize him... but he immediately disappears from their view (vv. 30-31). The gesture of the breaking of the bread reopens the eyes of the heart, illuminating once again the vision clouded by despair. And then everything becomes clear: the shared journey, the tender and powerful word, the light of truth... Immediately, joy is rekindled, energy flows back into their weary limbs, and gratitude returns to their memory. And the two hurry back to Jerusalem to tell the others everything.

“The Lord has risen indeed” (cf. v. 34). In this adverb, indeed, the certain outcome of our history as human beings is fulfilled. It is no coincidence that this is the greeting Christians exchange on Easter Day. Jesus did not rise in words, but in deeds, with his body bearing the marks of his passion, a perennial seal of his love for us. The victory of life is not an empty word, but a real, tangible fact.

May the unexpected joy of the disciples of Emmaus be a gentle reminder to us when the going gets tough. It is the Risen One who radically changes our perspective, instilling the hope that fills the void of sadness. On the paths of the heart, the Risen One walks with us and for us. He bears witness to the defeat of death and affirms the victory of life, despite the darkness of Calvary. History still has much goodness to hope for.

To recognize the Resurrection means to change one's outlook on the world: to return to the light to recognize the Truth that has saved us, and that saves us. Sisters and brothers, let us remain watchful every day in the wonder of the Pasch of the risen Jesus. He alone makes the impossible possible!

## **Easter Gives Hope to Everyday Life**

Pope Leo XIV (5 November 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning, and welcome to you all!*

The Pasch of Jesus is an event that does not belong to a distant past, now settled into tradition like so many other episodes in human history. The Church teaches us to make a living remembrance of the Resurrection every year on Easter Sunday and every day in the Eucharistic celebration, during which the promise of the risen Lord is most fully realized: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20).

For this reason, the Paschal Mystery is the cornerstone of Christian life, around which all other events revolve. We can say, then, without any irenicism or sentimentality, that every day is Easter. In what way?

Hour by hour, we have so many different experiences: pain, suffering, sadness, intertwined with joy, wonder, serenity. But through every situation, the human heart longs for fullness, a profound happiness. A great twentieth-century philosopher, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, born Edith Stein, who delved deeply into the mystery of the human person, reminds us of this dynamism of the constant search for fulfilment. “The human being,” she writes, “always longs to have being given to him anew, so that he can draw on what the moment gives him and at the same time takes away from him” (*Finite and Eternal Being: An Attempt to Ascend to the Meaning of Being*, Rome 1998, 387). We are immersed in limitation, but we also strive to surpass it.

The Paschal proclamation is the most beautiful, joyful and overwhelming news that has ever resounded in all of history. It is the quintessential “Gospel,” which attests to the victory of love over sin and of life over death, and this is why it is the only thing capable of satisfying the demand for meaning that troubles our minds and our hearts. Human beings are inspired by an inner movement, striving towards a beyond that continually attracts them. No contingent reality satisfies us. We tend towards the infinite and the eternal. This contrasts with the experience of death, anticipated by suffering, loss, and failure. As Saint Francis sings, “*nullu homo vivente po skampare*” (“no living man can escape”) from death (cf. *Canticle of the Sun*).

Everything changes thanks to that morning when the women had gone to the tomb to anoint the body of the Lord, and found it empty. The question posed by the Magi who came from the East to Jerusalem: “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” (Mt 2:1-2), finds its definitive answer in the words of the mysterious youth dressed in white, who speaks to the women at Easter dawn: “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here” (Mk 16:6).

From that morning until today, every day, Jesus will also have this title: the Living One, as He presents himself in Revelation: “I am the First and the Last, and the Living One: I died, and behold I am alive for evermore” (Rev 1:17-18). And in Him, we have the assurance of always being able to find the lodestar towards which we can direct our seemingly chaotic lives, marked

by events that often appear confusing, unacceptable, incomprehensible: evil in its many forms, suffering, death, events that affect each and every one of us. Meditating on the mystery of the Resurrection, we find an answer to our thirst for meaning.

Faced with our fragile humanity, the Paschal proclamation becomes care and healing, nourishing hope in the face of the frightening challenges that life presents us with every day on a personal and global level. In the perspective of Easter, the *Via Crucis*, the Way of the Cross, is transfigured into the *Via Lucis*, the Way of Light. We need to savour and meditate on the joy after the pain, to retrace in the new light all the stages that preceded the Resurrection.

Easter does not eliminate the cross, but defeats it in the miraculous duel that changed our human history. Even our time, marked by so many crosses, invokes the dawn of Paschal hope. Christ's Resurrection is not an idea, a theory, but the Event that is the foundation of faith. He, the Risen One, through the Holy Spirit, continues to remind us of this, so that we can be His witnesses even where human history does not see light on the horizon. Paschal hope does not disappoint. To believe truly in the Pasch through our daily journey means revolutionizing our lives, being transformed in order to transform the world with the gentle and courageous power of Christian hope.

## **Easter Animates Fraternity: “Love one another as I have loved you”**

Pope Leo XIV (12 November 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

To believe in the death and resurrection of Christ and to live paschal spirituality imbues life with hope and encourages us to invest in goodness. In particular, it helps us to love and nurture fraternity, which is without doubt one of the great challenges for contemporary humanity, as Pope Francis saw clearly.

Fraternity stems from something deeply human. We are capable of forming relationship and, if we want, we are able to build authentic bonds between us. Without relationships, which support and enrich us from the very beginning of our life, we would not be able to survive, grow or learn. They are manifold, varied in form and depth. But it is certain that our humanity is best fulfilled when we exist and live together, when we succeed in experiencing authentic, not formal, bonds with the people around us. If we turn in on ourselves, we risk falling ill with loneliness, and even a narcissism that is concerned with others only out of self-interest. The other is then reduced to someone from whom we can take, without ever being truly willing to give, to offer ourselves.

We are well aware that even today fraternity cannot be taken for granted, it is not immediate. Many conflicts, many wars all over the world, social tensions and feelings of hatred would seem to prove the opposite. However, fraternity is not a beautiful but impossible dream; it is not the desire of a deluded few. But to overcome the shadows that threaten it, we need to go to the source, and above all to draw light and strength from Him who alone frees us from the poison of enmity.

The word “fraternity” derives from a very ancient root, which means to care for, to have at heart, to support and sustain. Applied to every human person, it becomes an appeal, an invitation. Often, we think that the role of a brother, a sister, refers to kinship, to being related, to being part of the same family. In truth, we know well how disagreement, division and sometimes hatred can devastate even relationships between relatives, not only between strangers.

This shows the need, more urgent today than ever, to reflect on the greeting with which Saint Francis of Assisi addressed everyone, regardless of their geographical, cultural, religious and doctrinal origins: *omnes fratres* was the inclusive way in which the Saint placed all human beings on the same level, precisely because he recognized them in their common destiny of dignity, dialogue, welcome and salvation. Pope Francis repropounded this approach of the Poverello of Assisi, emphasizing its relevance after eight hundred years, in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

That “*tutti*,” everyone, which meant for Saint Francis the welcoming sign of a universal fraternity, expresses an essential feature of Christianity, which ever since the beginning has been the proclamation of the Good News destined for the salvation of all, never in an exclusive or private form. This fraternity is based on Jesus’ commandment, which is new insofar as He accomplished it Himself, the superabundant fulfilment of the will of the Father: thanks to Him,

who loved us and gave Himself for us, we can in turn love one another and give our lives for others, as children of the one Father and true brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Jesus loved us up to the very end, says the Gospel of John (cf. 13:1). As the passion draws near, the Master knows well that his historical time is coming to an end. He fears what is about to happen; He experiences the most terrible torment and abandonment. His Resurrection, on the third day, is the beginning of a new history. And the disciples become fully brothers and sisters, after so much time of life spent together, not only when they live through the pain of the death of Jesus, but above all, when they recognize Him as the Risen One, receive the gift of the Spirit and become witnesses to Him.

Brothers and sisters support each other in hardship, they do not turn their back on those who are in need, and they weep and rejoice together in the active pursuit of unity, trust and mutual reliance. The dynamic is that which Jesus Himself gives to us: "Love one another as I have loved you" (cf. Jn 15:12). The fraternity given by Christ, who died and rose again, frees us from the negative logic of selfishness, division and arrogance, and restores to us our original vocation, in the name of a love and a hope that are renewed every day. The Risen One has shown us the way to journey with Him, to feel and to be "brothers and sisters all."

## **Easter Spirituality & Integral Ecology**

Pope Leo XIV (19 November 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!*

We are reflecting, in this Jubilee Year dedicated to hope, on the relationship between the Resurrection of Christ and the challenges of the contemporary world, that is, our challenges. At times, Jesus, the Living One, wants to ask us too: “Why do you weep? Who do you seek?” Indeed, challenges cannot be faced alone and tears are a gift of life when they purify our eyes and liberate our gaze.

John the Evangelist draws to our attention a detail that we do not find in the other Gospels: weeping near the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene did not immediately recognize the risen Jesus, but thought he was the gardener. Indeed, already narrating the burial of Jesus, at sunset on Good Friday, the text was very precise: “Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there” (Jn 19:40-41).

Thus, in the peace of the Sabbath and the beauty of a garden, the dramatic struggle between darkness and light that began with the betrayal, arrest, abandonment, condemnation, humiliation and killing of the Son, who “having loved his own who were in the world ... loved them to the end” (Jn 13:1), comes to a close. Cultivating and keeping the garden is the original task (cf. Gen 2:15) that Jesus brought to fulfilment. His last words on the cross – “It is finished” (Jn 19:30) – invite each of us to rediscover the same task, our task. For this reason, “he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (v. 30).

Dear brothers and sisters, Mary Magdalene was not entirely mistaken then, believing she had encountered the gardener! Indeed, she had to hear her own name again and understand her task from the new Man, the one who in another text of John says: “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). Pope Francis, with the Encyclical *Laudato si'*, showed us the extreme need for a contemplative gaze: if he is not the custodian of the garden, the human being becomes its destroyer. Christian hope therefore responds to the challenges to which all humanity is exposed today by dwelling in the garden where the Crucified One was laid as a seed, to rise again and bear much fruit.

Paradise is not lost, but found again. In this way, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the foundation of a spirituality of integral ecology, outside of which the words of faith have no hold on reality and the words of science remain outside the heart. “Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance” (*Laudato si'*, 111).

For this reason, we speak of an ecological conversion, which Christians cannot separate from the reversal of course that Jesus asks of them. A sign of this is Mary’s turning around on that Easter

morning: only by conversion after conversion do we pass through that vale of tears to the new Jerusalem. This passage, which begins in the heart and is spiritual, changes history, engages us publicly, and activates solidarity that now protects people and creatures from the longings of wolves, in the name and power of the Lamb-Shepherd.

In this way, the sons and daughters of the Church can now meet millions of young people and other men and women of good will who have heard the cry of the poor and the earth, letting it touch their hearts. There are also many people who desire, through a more direct relationship with creation, a new harmony that will lead them beyond so many divisions. On the other hand, still “the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Ps 18:1-4).

May the Spirit give us the ability to listen to the voice of those who have no voice. We will see, then, what the eyes do not yet see: that garden, or Paradise, which we will only reach by welcoming and fulfilling our own task.

## **Meaning: “Hoping in life in order to beget life”**

Pope Leo XIV (26 November 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!*

The Pasch of Christ illuminates the mystery of life and allows us to look at it with hope. This is not always easy or obvious. Many lives, in every part of the world, appear laborious, painful, filled with problems and obstacles to be overcome. Yet human beings receive life as a gift: they do not ask for it, they do not choose it, they experience it in its mystery from the first to the last day. Life has its own extraordinary specificity: it is offered to us, we cannot give it to ourselves, but it must be constantly nurtured: it needs care to maintain, energize, protect and revive it.

One could say that the question about life is one of the most profound concerns of the human heart. We entered life without having done anything to decide to do so. The questions of all ages gush forth from this fact, like an overflowing river: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What is the ultimate meaning of this journey?

Indeed, living invokes meaning, direction, hope. And hope acts as the deep-seated drive that keeps us walking in difficulty, that prevents us from giving up in the fatigue of the journey, that makes us certain that the pilgrimage of existence will lead us home. Without hope, life risks appearing to be a parenthesis between two eternal nights, a brief pause between the before and the after of our journey on earth. To hope in life means instead to anticipate the destination, to believe as certain what we still cannot see or touch, to trust and to entrust ourselves to the love of a Father who created us because he wanted us with love, and wants us to be happy.

Dear friends, there is a widespread sickness in the world: the lack of confidence in life. It is as if we have resigned ourselves to a negative fatalism, to renunciation. Life risks no longer representing a gift, but an unknown, almost a threat from which to protect ourselves so as not to end up disappointed. For this reason, the courage to live and to generate life, to bear witness that God is the quintessential “lover of life,” as the Book of Wisdom (11:26) affirms, is today a more urgent call than ever.

In the Gospel, Jesus constantly confirms his concern for healing the sick, restoring wounded bodies and spirits, and giving life back to the dead. By doing so, the incarnate Son reveals the Father: he restores dignity to sinners, grants the forgiveness of sins, and includes everyone, especially the desperate, the excluded, those who are far from his promise of salvation.

Begotten by the Father, Christ is life and has generated life without reserve, to the point of giving his own, and he invites us too to give our lives. To generate means to bring someone else to life. The universe of the living has expanded via this law, which in the symphony of creatures experiences a wonderful “crescendo” culminating in the duet of man and woman: God created them in his own image and entrusted them with the mission of generating in his image, that is, for love and in love.

From the beginning, Sacred Scripture reveals to us that life, precisely in its highest form, the human form, receives the gift of freedom and becomes a tragedy. In this way, human relationships are also marked by contradiction, even to the point of fratricide. Cain perceives his brother Abel as a rival, a threat, and in his frustration, he feels unable to love him and respect him. Here we see jealousy, envy, and bloodshed (Gen 4:1-16). God's logic, instead, is completely different. God always stays faithful to his plan of love and life; he does not tire of supporting humanity even when, following in Cain's footsteps, it obeys the blind instinct of violence in war, discrimination, racism, and the many forms of slavery.

To generate, then, means to trust in the God of life and to promote humanity in all its expressions: first and foremost, in the wonderful adventure of motherhood and fatherhood, even in social contexts in which families struggle to bear the burden of daily life, and are often held back in their plans and dreams. According to this same logic, to generate is to be committed to an economy based on solidarity, striving for a common good equally enjoyed by all, respecting and caring for creation, offering comfort through listening, presence, and concrete and selfless help.

Brothers and sisters, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the strength that supports us in this challenge, even when the darkness of evil obscures the heart and the mind. When life seems to have been extinguished, obstructed, the Risen Lord still passes by, until the end of time, and walks with us and for us. He is our hope.

## **The Pasch of Jesus Christ, the Final Answer to the Question of Death**

Pope Leo XIV (10 December 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning! Welcome to you all!*

The mystery of death has always raised profound questions in human beings. Indeed, it seems to be the most natural and at the same time most unnatural event that exists. It is natural, because every living being on earth dies. It is unnatural, because the desire for life and eternity that we all feel for ourselves and for the people we love makes us see death as a sentence, as a “contradiction.”

Many ancient peoples developed rites and customs linked to the cult of the dead, to accompany and to recall those who journeyed towards the supreme mystery. Today, however, we see a different trend. Death seems to be a sort of taboo, an event to keep at a distance; something to be spoken of in hushed tones, to avoid disturbing our sensibilities and our tranquillity. This is often why we avoid visiting cemeteries, where those who have gone before us rest as they await resurrection.

So what is death? Is it truly the last word on our lives? Only human beings ask themselves this question, because only they know they must die. But being aware of this does not save them from death; on the contrary, in a certain sense it “burdens” them compared to other living creatures. Animals suffer, of course, and they realize that death is near, but they do not know that death is part of their destiny. They do not question the meaning, purpose and outcome of life.

Considering this aspect, one might then think that we are paradoxical, unhappy creatures, not only because we die, but also because we are certain that this event will happen, even though we do not know how or when. We find ourselves aware and at the same time powerless. This is probably where the frequent repressions and existential flights from the question of death originate.

Saint Alphonsus Maria de’ Liguori, in his famous work *Apparecchio alla morte* (Preparation for Death), reflects on the pedagogical value of death, emphasizing that it can be a great teacher of life. To know that it exists, and above all to reflect on it, teaches us to choose what we really want to make of our existence. Praying, in order to understand what is beneficial in view of the kingdom of heaven, and letting go of the superfluous that instead binds us to ephemeral things, is the secret to living authentically, in the awareness that our passage on earth prepares us for eternity.

Yet many current anthropological views promise immanent immortality, theorize the prolongation of earthly life through technology. This is the transhuman scenario, which is making its way into the horizon of the challenges of our time. Could death really be defeated by science? But then, could science itself guarantee us that a life without death is also a happy life?

The event of the Resurrection of Christ reveals to us that death is not opposed to life, but rather is a constitutive part of it, as the passage to eternal life. The Pasch of Jesus gives us a foretaste, in this time still full of suffering and trials, of the fullness of what will happen after death.

The Evangelist Luke seems to grasp this harbinger of light in the dark when, at the end of that afternoon when darkness had shrouded Calvary, he writes: "It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning" (Lk 23:54). This light, which anticipates Easter morning, already shines in the darkness of the sky, which still appears overcast and mute. The lights of the Sabbath, for the first and only time, herald the dawn of the day after the Sabbath: the new light of the Resurrection. Only this event is capable of illuminating the mystery of death to its full extent. In this light, and only in this, what our heart desires and hopes becomes true: that death is not the end, but the passage towards full light, towards a happy eternity.

The Risen One has gone before us in the great trial of death, emerging victorious thanks to the power of divine Love. Thus, he has prepared for us the place of eternal rest, the home where we are awaited; he has given us the fullness of life in which there are no longer any shadows and contradictions.

Thanks to Him, who died and rose again for love, with Saint Francis we can call death our "sister." Awaiting it with the sure hope of the Resurrection preserves us from the fear of disappearing forever and prepares us for the joy of life without end.

## **Easter as Refuge of the Restless Heart**

Pope Leo XIV (17 December 2025)

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!*

Human life is characterized by a constant movement that drives us to do, to act. Nowadays speed is required everywhere in order to achieve optimal results in a wide variety of fields. How does Jesus' resurrection shed light on this aspect of our experience? When we participate in his victory over death, will we rest? Faith tells us: yes, we will rest. We will not be inactive, but we will enter into God's repose, which is peace and joy. So, should we just wait, or can this change us right now?

We are absorbed by many activities that do not always leave us satisfied. A lot of our actions have to do with practical, concrete things. We have to assume responsibility for many commitments, solve problems, face difficulties. Jesus too was involved with people and with life, not sparing himself, but rather giving himself to the end. Yet we often perceive how too much doing, instead of giving us fulfilment, becomes a vortex that overwhelms us, takes away our serenity, and prevents us from living to the fullest what is truly important in our lives. We then feel tired and dissatisfied: time seems to be wasted on a thousand practical things that do not, however, resolve the ultimate meaning of our existence. Sometimes, at the end of days full of activities, we feel empty. Why? Because we are not machines, we have a "heart"; indeed, we can say that we are a heart.

The heart is the symbol of all our humanity, the sum of our thoughts, feelings and desires, the invisible centre of our selves. The Evangelist Matthew invites us to reflect on the importance of the heart, quoting this beautiful phrase of Jesus: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt 6:21).

It is therefore in the heart that true treasure is kept, not in earthly safes, not in large financial investments, which today more than ever before are out of control and unjustly concentrated at the bloody price of millions of human lives and the devastation of God's creation.

It is important to reflect on these aspects, because in the numerous commitments we continually face, there is an increasing risk of dispersion, sometimes of despair, of meaninglessness, even in apparently successful people. Instead, interpreting life in the light of Easter, looking at it with the Risen Jesus, means finding access to the essence of the human person, to our heart: *cor inquietum*. With this adjective "restless," Saint Augustine helps us understand the human being's yearning for fulfilment. The full sentence refers to the beginning of the Confessions, where Augustine writes: "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (I, 1,1).

Restlessness is the sign that our heart does not move by chance, in a disordered way, without a purpose or a destination, but is oriented towards its ultimate destination, the "return home." The authentic approach of the heart does not consist in possessing the goods of this world, but in achieving what can fill it completely; namely, the love of God, or rather, God who is Love. This

treasure, however, can only be found by loving the neighbour we meet along the way: brothers and sisters in flesh and blood, whose presence stirs and questions our heart, calling it to open up and give itself. Our neighbour asks us to slow down, to look them in the eye, sometimes to change our plans, perhaps even to change direction.

Dear friends, here is the secret of the movement of the human heart: returning to the source of its being, delighting in the joy that never fails, that never disappoints. No one can live without a meaning that goes beyond the contingent, beyond what passes away. The human heart cannot live without hope, without knowing that it is made for fullness, not for want.

Jesus Christ, with his Incarnation, Passion, Death and Resurrection, has given us a solid foundation for this hope. The restless heart will not be disappointed, if it enters into the dynamism of the love for which it was created. The destination is certain, life has triumphed, and in Christ it will continue to triumph in every death of daily life. This is Christian hope: let us always bless and thank the Lord who has given it to us!

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