



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 23 August 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

We have heard the Word of God in the Book of Revelation, as follows: “Behold, I make all things new” (21:5). Christian hope is based on faith in God who always creates newness in the life of mankind, creates novelty in history, creates novelty in the universe. Our God is the God who creates newness, because he is the God of surprises.

It is not Christian to walk with one’s gaze directed downward — as swine do: they always go along in this way — without lifting one’s eyes to the horizon. As if our entire journey terminated here, in the span of a few metres travelled; as if our life had no goal and no mooring, and we were compelled to wander endlessly, without any reason for our many toils. This is not Christian.

The closing pages of the Bible show us the ultimate horizon of our journey as believers: the heavenly Jerusalem, the celestial Jerusalem. It is envisioned first of all as an immense tent, where God will welcome all mankind so as to dwell with them definitively (21:3). This is our hope. And what will God do, when we are with him at last? He will be infinitely tender in our regard, as a father who welcomes his children who have long toiled and suffered. John prophesies in Revelation: “Behold the dwelling of God is with men.... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.... Behold, I make all things new” (21:3-5). The God of newness!

Try meditating on this passage of Sacred Scripture not in a distracted way, but after reading a chronicle of our days, after seeing the tv news or the front page of newspapers, where there are so many tragedies, where they report distressing news that we all risk becoming used to. And I have greeted several people from Barcelona: how many sad reports from there! I have greeted several from Congo, and how much sad news there is from there! And how very much more! To name only two countries of some of you who are here.... Try thinking about the faces of children frightened by war, of the despair of mothers, of the shattered dreams of so many young people, of

refugees who undertake terrible journeys, and who are so often exploited.... This, unfortunately, is also life. At times one might say that it is this above all.

This may be so. But there is a Father who weeps with us; there is a Father who sheds tears of infinite compassion for his children. We have a Father who knows how to weep, who weeps with us. A Father who awaits us in order to console us, because he knows our suffering and has prepared a different future for us. This is the great vision of Christian hope, which expands over all the days of our life, and seeks to raise us up once more.

God did not desire our lives by mistake, obliging himself and us to experience harsh nights of anguish. He instead created us because he wants us to be happy. He is our Father, and if we here, now, experience a life that is not what he planned for us, Jesus guarantees that God himself is working out his redemption. He is working to redeem us.

We believe and we know that death and hate are not the final words pronounced on the parabola of human existence. Being Christians entails a new perspective: a gaze full of hope. Some believe that life retains all its happiness in youth and in the past, and that living is a slow deterioration. Still others hold that our joys are only fleeting episodes, and that the life of mankind is bound in meaninglessness. Those who, in the face of many calamities, say: "Life has no meaning. Our path is meaningless". But we Christians do not think this. Rather, we believe that on mankind's horizon there is a sun that shines forever. We believe that our most beautiful days are yet to come. We are more people of the Spring than of Autumn. I would like to ask, now — each one answer in your heart, in silence, but respond: "Am I a man, a woman, a boy, a girl of the Springtime or of Autumn? Is my spirit in the Spring or in Autumn? Each one answer silently. Let us view the buds of a new world rather than the yellowed leaves on its branches. Let us not cultivate nostalgia, regret and sorrow: we know that God wants us to be heirs of a promise and tireless growers of dreams. Do not forget that question: "Am I a person of the Spring or of Autumn?". Of Springtime, which expects flowers, which expects fruit, which expects the sun that is Jesus; or of Autumn, which is always with the face looking down, disheartened and, as I have said at times, with a sour face like pickled peppers.

The Christian knows that the Kingdom of God, its dominion of Love, is growing as a great field of wheat, even if in the middle there are weeds. There are always problems; there is gossip; there are wars; there is illness ... there are problems. But the wheat ripens, and in the end evil will be eliminated. The future does not belong to us, but we know that Jesus Christ is life's greatest grace, is the embrace of God who awaits us at the end, but who is already accompanying us now and comforts us on the journey. He leads us to the great "dwelling" of God with mankind (cf. Rev 21:3), with many other brothers and sisters, and we will bring to God the memory of the days lived here on earth. It will be lovely to discover in that instant that nothing has been lost, no smile and no tear. However long our life might be, it will seem to us to have been lived in one breath. And that creation did not stop on the sixth day of Genesis, but continued tirelessly, because God is always

looking after us. Until the day in which all shall be fulfilled, in the morning in which tears shall fade away, in the very instant in which God shall pronounce his final word of blessing: “Behold” — says the Lord — “I make all things new” (v. 5). Yes, our Father is the God of newness and of surprise. And that day we will be truly happy, and we will weep, yes, but we will weep tears of joy.

Special greetings:

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today’s Audience, including those from England, India and Vietnam. In a particular way, I extend a warm welcome to pilgrims from the Cardijn Community International on the 50th anniversary of the death of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, and I encourage them in their generous service to the Gospel. May Jesus Christ confirm all of you in faith and make you witnesses to his love in the world. God bless you!

Now I greet the Italian pilgrims. In particular the Franciscan Sisters of Saint Clare, who are holding their Congregation’s General Chapter, and I exhort them to witness in a concrete way to the Gospel of hope and of love. Many seminarians are present: those attending the 25th Summer Course, those from the *Oratorio di San Filippo Neri* and those from Verona: dear youth and young men who are preparing for the priesthood, train from now on to live the Gospel with an ardent missionary spirit and with special attention to serving the poor and the needy. Remember to say the Rosary every day. I greet, additionally, the members of the *Associazione ‘AlieStese’ di Vittorio Veneto* and the other groups present, especially from the parishes. My wish for each one is that this respite at the Tombs of the Apostles may be a propitious occasion for a fruitful spiritual renewal.

I offer a cordial greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Dear brothers and sisters, let us lift our gaze toward Heaven to contemplate the splendour of the Holy Mother of God, whose Assumption we commemorated last week, and yesterday we invoked her as our Queen. Cultivate sincere devotion to her, so that she may be beside you in your everyday life.

Lastly, I turn my thoughts and express my affectionate closeness to those suffering due to the earthquake that struck the Island of Ischia on Monday evening. Let us pray for the dead, for the injured, for their families and for the people who have lost their homes.