



The Holy See

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

Wednesday, 15 February 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

From the time we were small we are taught that it is not nice to boast. In my land, those who boast are called ‘pavoni’ (peacocks). It is right, because boasting about what one is or what one has, apart from a certain arrogance, also reveals a lack of respect toward others, especially toward those who are less fortunate than we are. In this passage from the Letter to the Romans, however, the Apostle Paul surprises us, as at least twice he exhorts us to boast. Of what, then, is it right to boast? Because if he exhorts us to boast, it is right to boast about something. And how is it possible to do this, without offending others, without excluding someone?

In the first case, we are invited to *boast of the abundance of the grace with which we are permeated in Jesus Christ*, by way of the faith. Paul wants to make us understand that, if we learn to read everything in the light of the Holy Spirit, we realize that everything is grace! Everything is a gift! If we pay attention, in fact — in history, as in our life — it is not only we who are acting, but above all it is God. He is the absolute protagonist who creates every thing as a gift of love, who weaves his plan of salvation and who leads it to fulfillment for us, through his Son Jesus. We are asked to recognize all this, to welcome it with gratitude and to make it become a source of praise, of blessing and of great joy. If we do this, we are at peace with God and we experience freedom. This peace is then extended to all areas and to all the relationships of our life: we are at peace with ourselves, we are at peace in our family, in our community, at work and with the people we encounter each day on our journey.

Paul, however, exhorts us to *boast even in tribulation*. This is not easy to understand. This is more difficult for us and it may seem to have nothing to do with the condition of peace just described. However, it constitutes its truest, most authentic premise. Indeed, the peace the Lord offers us and guarantees us is not to be understood as the absence of worry, of disappointment, of failure, of reasons for suffering. If it were so, supposing we had managed to be at peace, that moment would end quickly, and we would inevitably fall prey to unease. Instead, the peace that springs from faith is a gift: it is the grace of feeling that God loves us and that he is always beside us; he does not leave us on our own even for a moment of our life. This, as the Apostle states, generates patience,

because we know that, even at the hardest and most disturbing moment, the Lord's mercy and goodness are greater than everything, and nothing will tear us from his hands and from communion with him.

Here then is why Christian hope is steadfast; here is why *it does not disappoint*. Never does it disappoint. Hope does not disappoint! It is not based on what we can do or be, nor even on what we may believe in. Its foundation, that is, the foundation of Christian hope, is what we can be most faithful and certain of, that is to say, the love that God himself has for each of us. It is easy to say: God loves us. We all say it. But think a bit: each one of us is able to ask: am I sure that God loves me? It is not so easy to say it. But it is true. This is a good exercise, to say to oneself: God loves me. This is the root of our certainty, the root of hope. The Lord has abundantly poured into our hearts the Spirit — which is the love of God — as artisan, as guarantor, precisely so that he may nourish the faith within us and keep this hope alive. This is a certainty: God loves me. 'But in this difficult moment?' — God loves me. 'I, who have done this bad and cruel thing?' — God loves me. No one can take this certainty away. We must repeat it as a prayer: God loves me. I am sure that God loves me. I am sure that God loves me.

Now we can understand why the Apostle Paul exhorts us to always boast about all this. I boast of God's love because he loves me. The hope that we have been given never divides us from others, much less does it lead us to discredit or marginalize them. Instead it is an extraordinary gift of which we are called to make ourselves 'channels', with humility and simplicity, for everyone. So our boastfulness is because we have as Father a God who is impartial, who does not exclude anyone, but who opens his house to all human beings, beginning with the least and the most distant, so that as his children we may learn to console and support one another. And never forget: hope does not disappoint.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Denmark and the United States of America. Upon all of you, I invoke the grace of the Lord Jesus, that you may be a sign of Christian hope in your homes and communities. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Yesterday we celebrated the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, evangelizers of the Slavs and Co-patrons of Europe. May their example help you, dear *young people*, to become missionary disciples in every environment; may their tenacity encourage you, dear *sick people*, to offer up your suffering for the conversion of those who are distant; and may their love of the Lord enlighten you, dear *newlyweds*, to place the Gospel as the fundamental rule of your family life.

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