



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 21 June

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On the day of Baptism the invocation of the saints echoed around us. Many of us were infants in that moment, carried in the arms of our parents. Shortly before the anointing with the Oil of Catechumens, the symbol of God's strength in the fight against evil, the priest invited the entire assembly to pray for those who were about to receive Baptism, invoking the intercession of the saints. That was the first time in which, in the course of our lives, we were given this gift of the companionship of "big" brothers and sisters — the saints — who had taken this same path before us, who knew the same struggles and who live forever in God's embrace. The Letter to the Hebrews defines this company which surrounds us with the expression: "a great cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1). So are the saints: a great cloud of witnesses.

Christians do not despair in the fight against evil. Christianity cultivates an *incurable trust*: it does not believe that negative and disintegrating forces can prevail. The last word on the history of mankind is not hatred; it is not death; it is not war. In each of life's moments, the hand of God assists us, as well as the discrete presence of all the believers who "have gone before us marked with the sign of faith" (Roman Canon). Their existence tells us, above all, that Christian life is not an unattainable ideal. And at the same time, it comforts us: we are not alone. The Church is made up of innumerable, often anonymous, brothers and sisters who preceded us and who, through the action of the Holy Spirit, are involved in the affairs of those who still live here on earth.

That of Baptism is not the only invocation of the saints that marks the journey of Christian life. When an engaged couple consecrate their love in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the intercession of saints is once again invoked for them — this time as a couple. And this invocation is a source of trust for the two young people who embark on the "journey" of married life. Those who love truly have the desire and the courage to say "for ever" — "for ever" — but they know they will need the grace of Christ and the help of saints to be able to live their married life for ever. Not as some say: "as long as love lasts". No: for ever! Otherwise, it is better that you not marry. Either for ever or not at all. For this reason, in the wedding liturgy, we invoke the presence of the saints. And in difficult

times, courage is needed to raise one's eyes to heaven, thinking of the many Christians who have undergone tribulation and have kept their baptismal garments white, bathing them in the blood of the lamb (cf. Rev 7:14): so says the Book of Revelation. God never abandons us. Each time we need it, one of his angels will come to lift us up again and give us comfort; "angels", at times with a human face and heart because God's saints are always here, hidden in our midst. This is difficult to understand and also to imagine, but saints are present in our lives. And when someone invokes a saint, it is precisely because they are near us.

Priests also cherish the memory of an invocation of saints prayed over them. It is one of the most touching moments of the Liturgy of Ordination. The candidates lie on the floor, face down. And the whole assembly, led by the bishop, invokes the intercession of the saints. A man would be crushed beneath the weight of the mission entrusted to him, but feeling that all of heaven is in his favour, that the grace of God will not be lacking because Jesus is always faithful, then one can set out feeling calm and encouraged. We are not alone.

And what are we? We are dust that aspires to the Heavens. Our strength is weak, but the mystery of the grace that is present in the life of Christians is powerful. We are faithful to this earth which Jesus loved every instant of his life, but we know and we want to hope in the transfiguration of the world, in its definitive accomplishment where finally, there will be no more tears, evil or suffering.

May the Lord give all of us *the hope of being saints*. But some of you might ask me: "Father, can one be a saint in everyday life?". Yes, it is possible. "But does this mean that we have to pray all day?". No, it means that you must do your duty all day: pray, go to work, take care of your children. But everything must be done with the heart open to God, so that work, even in illness and suffering, in difficulty too, is open to God. And in this way one can become a saint. May the Lord give us the hope to be saints. Let us not think that it is a difficult thing, that it is easier to be delinquents than saints! No. We can be saints because the Lord helps us; he is the One who helps us.

This is the great gift that each of us can make to the world. May the Lord grant us the grace to believe so profoundly in him as to become for this world the image of Christ. Our history needs "mystics": people who reject all dominion, who aspire to charity and fraternity; men and women who live, also accepting a portion of suffering because they take on the burdens of others. But without these men and women, the world would have no hope. For this reason, I wish for you — and I also wish for me — that the Lord may grant us the hope of being saints.

Thank you!

On the occasion of World Refugee Day which was celebrated by the international community yesterday, this past Monday I wished to meet representatives of refugees who are being hosted by Rome's parishes and religious institutes. I would like to take the occasion of yesterday's World

Day to express my sincere appreciation for the campaign for the new law on migration: “*Ero straniero — l’umanità che fa bene*” [“I was a foreigner ...”], which has the official support of Italian *Caritas*, *Migrantes* foundation and other Catholic organizations.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from Scotland, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the Philippines and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. On Friday we shall commemorate the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, the day on which the Church supports all priests with prayer and affection. Dear *young people*, draw nourishment for your spiritual life and the source of your hope from the Heart of Jesus; dear *sick people*, offer your suffering to the Lord so that he may spread his love in the hearts of mankind; and you, dear *newlyweds*, partake in the Eucharist so that, nourished by Christ, you may be Christian families touched by the love of that Divine Heart.