



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday, 5 April 2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Morning!

Saint Peter's First Letter conveys extraordinary energy! One must read it once, twice, three times to understand this extraordinary energy: it manages to instil great solace and peace, conveying the sense that the Lord is always beside us and never abandons us, especially in the most delicate and difficult moments of our lives. But what is the "secret" of this Letter, and in particular, of the passage we have just heard? (cf. *1 Pt* 3:8-17). This is a question. I know that today you will take up the New Testament, you will look for Peter's first Letter and you will read it slowly, carefully, to understand the secret and the strength of this Letter. What is the secret of this Letter?

The secret is in the fact that this Letter is *rooted directly in Easter*, in the heart of the mystery that we are about to celebrate, thus letting us sense all the light and the joy arising from Christ's death and Resurrection. Christ has truly Risen, and this is a nice greeting to exchange on Easter: "Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen!", as many peoples do. Remembering that Jesus is Risen; he is alive among us; he is alive and lives in each of us. This is why Saint Peter firmly invites us to adore Him in our hearts (cf. v. 15). The Lord has dwelled there from the moment of our Baptism. And from there, he continues to renew us and our life, filling us anew with his love and the fullness of the Spirit. This is why the Apostle urges us to *account for the hope that is in us* (cf. v. 15). Our hope is not a concept; it is not an emotion, it is not a mobile phone, it is not an accumulation of riches! Our hope is a Person. It is the Lord Jesus whom we recognize as living and present in us and in our brothers and sisters, because Christ is Risen. Instead of saying "good morning", "good evening" when greeting each other during the Season of Easter, the Slavic people greet each other with "Christ is risen!", "*Christos voskrese!*"; and they are happy to say it! And this is the "good morning" and the "good evening" they exchange: "Christ is Risen!".

Thus, we understand that this hope must not so much be held to account at a theoretical level, in word alone, but above all, through bearing a witness of life, both within the Christian community and outside it. If Christ is alive and lives within us in our heart, then we must also allow him to make himself visible, not hide him, and [allow him] to work within us. This means that the Lord

Jesus must increasingly become the example for us: a model for life, and that we must learn how to behave as he behaved; to do as Jesus did. The hope that dwells in us, therefore, cannot remain hidden within us, in our heart: it would be a feeble hope that lacks the courage to go out and be seen; but our hope, as shines forth in Psalm 33 as mentioned by Peter, must necessarily gush forth to the outside, taking on the exquisite and unmistakable form of kindness, respect and goodwill toward others, even reaching the point of forgiving those who hurt us. A person without hope is unable to forgive, is unable to give the solace of forgiveness and to *have* the solace of forgiveness. Yes, because this is what Jesus did, and continues to do through those who make room for him in their hearts and their lives, in the awareness that evil is not overcome with evil but rather with humility, mercy and meekness. Members of the Mafia believe that evil can be overcome with evil and so they take revenge and do many things that we all know about. But they do not know what humility, mercy and meekness are. Why? Because the *mafiosi* have no hope. Think about this.

This is why Saint Peter affirms: “it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God’s will, than for doing wrong”, (v. 17). This does not mean that it is good to suffer, but that, when we suffer for the sake of goodness, we are in communion with the Lord, who accepted suffering and being put on the Cross for our Salvation. Thus, when in the least or most important situations in our life, we accept suffering for the sake of goodness, it is as if we were scattering around us seeds of the Resurrection and of life, shining the Light of Easter into the darkness. This is why the Apostle urges us to always respond with a “blessing” (cf. v. 9). A blessing is not a formality. It is not just a sign of courtesy. Rather, it is a great gift which we were the first to receive and that we have the opportunity to share with our brothers and sisters. This is the announcement of God’s love, an immeasurable love which does not end, which never fails and which constitutes the true foundation of our hope.

Dear friends, we also understand why the Apostle Peter calls us “blessed”, when we “suffer for righteousness’ sake” (v. 13). This is not just for moral or ascetic reasons. It is because each time we take the side of the least and of the marginalized, or do not respond to evil with evil, but rather with forgiveness, without vengeance, forgiving and blessing — each time we do this — we shine forth as living and bright signs of hope, thus becoming instruments of solace and of peace, according to God’s heart. Thus, let us go forth with kindness, meekness, being amiable and doing good, even to those who do not love us or who hurt us. Onward!

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly the groups from England, Ireland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Malaysia,

Korea, Vietnam and the United States of America. I offer a particular greeting to the priests of the Institute for Continuing Theological Education at the Pontifical North American College. May this Lenten journey bring us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you and your families I invoke joy and peace in Christ our Redeemer. God bless you all!

APPEAL

My thoughts turn to the grave attack which took place recently in the Saint Petersburg subway, causing death and distress among the population. As I entrust to God's Mercy those who tragically perished, I express my spiritual closeness to their families, and to all those suffering on account of this dramatic event.

We have witnessed with horror the recent events in Syria. I express my firm reproach for the unacceptable bloodshed which occurred yesterday in Idlib province, where dozens of defenceless people were killed, among them many children. I pray for the victims and their families and I appeal to the conscience of those with political responsibility at the local and international level, that this tragedy may end and that relief may be brought to those dear peoples who have been worn out by war for too long. I also encourage the efforts of those who, despite insecurity and discomfort, continue to work to ensure that aid reaches the residents of that region.

Finally, my thoughts turn in particular to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today, we remember the Dominican preacher, Saint Vincent Ferrer. Dear *young people*, at his school, you learn to speak with God and about God, avoiding useless and damaging speech. Dear *sick people*, learn from his spiritual experience to confide in Christ Crucified in every circumstance. Dear *newlyweds*, ask for his intercession to take on your parental mission with generous commitment.