



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Wednesday, 27 September

2017 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

At this time we are speaking about hope; but today, I would like to reflect with you on *the enemies of hope* because hope has its enemies: just like any good in this world has its enemies.

The ancient myth of Pandora's box comes to mind: the opening of the box unleashes so many catastrophes in world history. Few people however, remember the last part of the story which reveals a glimmer of light: after all the evils have come out of the open box, a tiny gift appears to turn the tables on all that evil that is spreading. Pandora, the woman who had the box in her custody, sees it at last: the Greeks call it *elpis* which means *hope*.

This myth tells us why hope is so important for humanity. It is not right to say that “while there's life there is hope”. If anything, it is the contrary: it is hope that supports life, that protects it, safeguards it and makes it grow. If men and women had not nurtured hope, if they had not held on to this virtue, they would never have come out of the caves and they would have left no trace on the history of the world. It is the most divine thing that can exist in the heart of mankind.

A French poet — Charles Péguy — has left us beautiful pages on hope (cf. *The Portico of the Mystery of the Second Virtue*). He says in a poetic way, that God is not amazed so much by the faith of human beings and not even by their charity — but what really fills him with wonder and moves him — is the hope of the people: “That those poor children”, he writes, “see how things are going and believe that they will be better tomorrow morning”. The poet's image recalls the faces of many people who have transited through this world — farmers, poor labourers, migrants in search of a better future — who have struggled tenaciously despite the bitterness of a difficult present, filled with many trials, enlivened however, by the trust that their children would have a more just and serene life. They fought for their children; they fought in hope.

Hope is the force that drives the hearts of those who depart, leaving home, their homeland, at

times their relatives and families — I am thinking of the migrants —, in search of a better life which is worthier of them and their loved ones. And it is also the impulse in the heart of those who welcome: the desire to encounter, to get to know each other, to dialogue.... Hope is the force that drives us “to share the journey”, because the journey is made *jointly*: by those who come to our land, and by us who go towards their heart, to understand them, to understand their culture, their language. It is a joint journey by two parties; but without hope, that journey cannot be made. Hope is the drive to share the journey of life as the *Caritas* campaign which we are inaugurating today reminds us. Brothers and sisters, let us not be afraid of sharing the journey! Have no fear! Let us not be afraid of sharing hope!

Hope is not a virtue for people with a full stomach. That is why *the poor have always been the first bearers of hope*. And in this sense, we can say that the poor, even beggars, are history’s protagonists. In order to enter the world, God needed them: Joseph, and Mary, the shepherds of Bethlehem. On the night of the first Christmas, the world was asleep, laying upon a bed of acquired certainties. But humble, hidden people were preparing the revolution of goodness. They were poor in everything; some remained afloat just above the subsistence level but they had a wealth of the most valuable asset that exists in this world: that is, the desire for change.

At times, having had everything life offers is a misfortune. Think about a young man who was never taught the virtues of expectation and patience, who did not have to sweat over anything, who had burned his bridges and at 20 “already knows how the world turns”. He is destined to receive the worst punishment: that of not wanting anything anymore. This is the worst punishment. Closing the door to desires, to dreams. He seems like a young man, yet autumn has already descended on his heart. These are the young people of autumn.

Having an empty soul is the worst obstacle to hope. It is a danger from which no one can say they are exempt; because to be tempted against hope can happen even along the journey of Christian life. The monks of ancient times had identified one of the greatest enemies of fervour. They said this: that “midday demon” that flanks a life of labour, is precisely as the sun burns on high. This temptation surprises us when we least expect it: the days become monotonous and boring, no aim seems worthy of fatigue. This attitude is called *sloth*, that erodes life from within until it leaves it like an empty shell.

When this happens, the Christian knows that that condition must be fought against, never accepted with inertia. God created us for joy and happiness and not to wallow in melancholic thoughts. This is why it is important to safeguard one’s heart, defending ourselves from sad temptations that surely do not come from God. And whereas our strength appears weak and the battle against anxiety is particularly arduous, we can always turn to Jesus’ name. We can repeat that simple prayer, traces of which we also find in the Gospels and that has become the foundation of so many Christian spiritual traditions: A lovely prayer. “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner!”. This is a prayer of hope because I turn to Him, He who

can open the doors wide and resolve the problem and have me look to the horizon, the horizon of hope.

Brothers and sisters, we are not alone in fighting against desperation. If Jesus overcame the world, he is capable of overcoming in us all that opposes goodness. If God is with us, no one will steal from us that virtue which we absolutely need for life. No one will rob us of hope. Let's go forward!

I am pleased to greet the representatives of *Caritas* who have come here to officially launch the campaign, "Share the Journey" — a nice name for your campaign: sharing the journey —, that I wanted to coincide with this Audience. I welcome the migrants, the asylum seekers and refugees who, together with the staff and volunteers of *Caritas Italiana* and other Catholic organizations, are the sign of a Church which tries to be open, inclusive and welcoming. Thank you all for your tireless service. [*To the public:*] You have already applauded, but they all truly deserve a loud applause, from all of you!

Through your daily efforts, you remind us that Christ himself asks us to welcome our brother and sister migrants and refugees with open arms, with arms wide open. Welcoming in this way, with arms wide open. When our arms are open, we are ready for a sincere embrace, an affectionate embrace, an enveloping hug, a bit like this colonnade in the Square which represents the Mother Church which embraces all in the shared common journey. I welcome also the representatives of many organizations from civil society engaged in assistance to migrants and refugees who, together with *Caritas*, have given their support to the petition for a new law on migration better adapted to the current context. You are all welcome.

Special greetings:

A cordial welcome to Italian speaking pilgrims!

I am pleased to greet the faithful from different parishes, the priests who are celebrating their 25th anniversary of ordination, the participants of the General Chapter of the Missionaries of Faith, the Sisters of Saint Elizabeth who today recall the 175th anniversary of their foundation, the priests of the International Pontifical Missionary College *San Paolo Apostolo* in Rome, and the members of the lay Missionary Institute *Maria Madre del Redentore*. I exhort all of you to always be faithful to the charism received, witnessing in the places of apostolate the merciful love of the Father. I greet the *Opera Nazionale per il Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, the Finance police of Abruzzo, the National Association of Carabinieri of Tagliacozzo and the Filippino community from Venice. Lastly, I greet the young people, the sick and newlyweds. May the example of charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, whom today we recall is patron of charitable associations, lead you dear *young people*, to realize your future projects with joyous and disinterested service to the most needy. May it help you, dear *sick people*, to face suffering with ablative faith. and may it induce you, dear *newlyweds*, to build a family always open to the duties of hospitality and the gift of life.

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