



ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST IS VICTORY OVER DEATH; Says Pope Francis

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VATICAN CITY -

The Holy Father Pope Francis has assured Christians that anyone who encounters Christ has no fear of death adding that the grace of God is always available for every repentant sinner. The Pope gave this assurance in one of recent Catechesis during a recent General Audience with about 25,000 faithful at the St Peter Square, Vatican City, Rome.

Speaking on Paradise as the Goal of our hope as a sub-theme of his general theme for the month of October, captioned: Christian Hope; Pope Francis declared: “There is no one, as bad as he might have been in his life, to whom God denies His grace if he repents,” The pontiff continued, “In the rooms of so many hospitals, or in prison cells,” the miracle of forgiveness and mercy takes place—a miracle that “is repeated innumerable times.”

Speaking further Pope Francis noted that each time “a man, upon making his last examination of conscience in his life (before dying), discovers that his ‘faults’ are greater than his ‘good works,’” he “should not lose hope, but rather trust in God’s mercy.” He continued: “God is our Father, and he hopes up to the last minute for our return.” He waits for repentant men and women as for “the prodigal son, who begins to confess his sins, and whom the Father silences with a hug”

Using the encounter of the thief on the cross to buttress his point, Pope Francis stated that the word “paradise” is one of the last words pronounced by Jesus on the cross, to the repentant sinner. His words: “The good thief, in the face of his imminent death, makes a humble petition to Jesus: ‘Remember me when You enter Your Kingdom. He has no good works to offer Jesus, but he trusts in Him. “Those words of humble repentance were enough to touch Jesus’ heart.”

The Holy Father spoke of the good thief to remind his listeners that God comes “out to meet us, with compassion for us;” adding: “Before God, we find ourselves with empty hands, but we hope for His mercy.” The Bishop of Rome went further to speak on the reality of heaven saying: “Paradise isn’t a

fairy tale, nor is it a magic garden. Paradise is God's embrace, infinite Love, and we enter thanks to Jesus, who died on the cross for us."

Speaking further on Christian hope, the Pope added: "Where Jesus is, there is mercy and happiness; without Him, there is coldness and darkness. At the hour of death, Christians repeat to Jesus, 'Remember me.' And even if nobody else remembers us, Jesus is there, at our side." He concluded: "Jesus wants to "carry us to the best place that exists. He wants to take us there with the little or the much that we may have done in our lives, so that nothing of what He has redeemed will be lost. If we believe this, death will not make us afraid. Anyone who has met Jesus, fears nothing!"