



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** *St Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 12 June 2019 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

We have begun a series of catecheses that will follow the ‘journey’: the journey of the Gospel narrative from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, because this Book certainly shows the journey of the Gospel, how the Gospel has gone further, and further, and further.... *Everything starts with the Resurrection of Christ*. Indeed, this is not one event among others, but is the source of new life. The disciples know it and — obedient to Jesus’ command — remain united, in harmony, and steadfast in prayer. They are close to Mary, the Mother, and prepare to receive God’s power, not passively but by strengthening the communion among themselves.

That first community was formed of 120 brothers and sisters, more or less: a number that contains within it the number 12, emblematic of Israel — because it represents the 12 tribes — and emblematic of the Church, with reference to the *12 Apostles chosen by Jesus*. But now, after the agonizing events of the Passion, the Lord’s Apostles are no longer 12, but 11. One of them, Judas, is no longer there. He has taken his own life, crushed by remorse.

He had previously begun to separate himself from the communion with the Lord and with the others, to be self-serving, to isolate himself, to become attached to money to the extent of exploiting the poor, losing sight of the horizon of gratuitousness and self-giving, to the point of allowing the virus of pride to infect his mind and heart, transforming him from “friend” (Mt 26:50) into enemy and into “guide to those who arrested Jesus” (Acts 1:16). Judas had received the great grace of belonging to the group of Jesus’ confidants and participating in His very ministry, but at a certain point he aspired to ‘save’ his own life by himself with the result of losing it (cf. Lk 9:24). He ceased to belong wholeheartedly to Jesus and placed himself outside of the communion with Him and with His own. He stopped being a disciple and placed himself above the Master. He sold Him and with the “reward of his wickedness” bought a field, which produced no fruit but was soaked with his own blood (cf. Acts 1:18-19).

While Judas preferred death to life (cf. Dt 30:19; Sir 15:17) and followed the example of the wicked whose way is like darkness and will perish (cf. Prov 4:19; Ps 1:6), the Eleven instead choose life and benediction, becoming responsible for making life in their turn flow through history, from generation to generation, from the people of Israel to the Church.

The Evangelist Luke shows us that, faced with the desertion of one of the Twelve, which inflicted a wound on the community body, it is imperative that his responsibility be passed on to another. And who could assume it? Peter indicates the qualification: the new member had to be a disciple of Jesus from the beginning, that is, from His Baptism in the Jordan to the end, namely, His Ascension into Heaven (cf. Acts 1:21-22). The group of Twelve must be restored. At this point begins the practice of *community discernment*, which consists in seeing reality with the eyes of God, with a view to unity and communion.

There are two candidates: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. So the entire community prays in this way: "Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to take the place ... from which Judas turned aside" (Acts 1:24-25). And, by casting lots, the Lord indicates Matthias, who becomes affiliated with the Eleven. Thus the body of the Twelve, is restored, a sign of communion; and communion overcomes divisions, isolation, the mentality that absolutizes private space; a sign that *communion is the first witness* that the Apostles offer. Jesus had said to them: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

In the Acts of the Apostles the Twelve manifest the Lord's way. They are accredited witnesses to Christ's work of salvation and do not show the world their presumed perfection but rather, through the grace of unity, enable the emergence of an Other who now lives in a new manner in the midst of his people. And who is this? It is the Lord Jesus. The Apostles choose to live under the lordship of the Risen One in unity among the brethren, which becomes the only possible context of authentic self-giving.

We too need to rediscover the beauty of witnessing to the Risen One, by leaving behind self-referential attitudes, by ceasing to hold back the gifts of God and by not giving in to mediocrity. The re-consolidation of the Apostolic College shows how, in the dna of the Christian community, there can be unity and freedom from self, which enable one not to fear diversity, not to be attached to things and gifts, and to become *martyrs*, that is, luminous witnesses to the living God who works in history.

Special Greetings

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Finland, Australia, Hong Kong, Korea, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri

Lanka, Taiwan, Vietnam and the United States of America. I offer a special greeting to the Divine Word Missionaries from Indonesia and the Interreligious Delegation from Hong Kong, led by Cardinal John Tong Hon. Upon all of you I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow is the liturgical memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua, eminent preacher and Patron of the poor and the suffering. May his intercession help you to experience the succour of divine mercy.