

Pope: Piety is embracing God, others with real love, not fake devotion

By Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY - Being pious is not squeezing one's eyes shut to the world and putting on a sweet little angel face, Pope Francis said.

Piety is opening up one's heart to God and one's arms to embrace everyone as brothers and sisters, he said June 4 at his weekly general audience.

"The gift of piety that the Holy Spirit gives us makes us meek; it makes us peaceful, patient and at peace with God in gentle service to others," he said.

Under a cloudless bright sunny sky in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis continued a series of audience talks about the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

Focusing on the gift of piety, the pope said he wanted to clarify its meaning right away "because some people think that being pious is closing your eyes, putting on a sweet angel face, isn't that right? To pretend to be a saint" and holier than thou.

But piety is recognizing "our belonging to God, our deep bond with him, a relationship that gives meaning to our whole life and keeps us resolute, in communion with him, even during the most difficult and troubled moments" in life, he said.

This personal bond with the Lord is not created out of obligation or force, he said; it is "a relationship lived from the heart," a friendship that "changes our life and fills us with enthusiasm and joy," gratitude, praise and "authentic worship of God."

"When the Holy Spirit helps us sense the presence of the Lord and all of his love for us, it warms our heart and drives us almost naturally to prayer and celebration," the pope said.

Once people experience the loving relationship of God as father, "it helps us pour out this love onto others and recognize them as brothers and sisters," Pope Francis said.

Piety is about identity and belonging, he said, that is why it renders people "truly capable of being joyful with those who are happy; to cry with those who weep; to be near those who are alone or in distress; to correct those in error; to console the

afflicted; to welcome and come to the aid of those in need.”

Citing a verse from St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans (8:14-15), the pope said the spirit of God is about kinship – a spirit of adoption, not “a spirit of slavery to fall back on into fear.”

“Let us ask the Lord that the gift of his Spirit overcome our fears and uncertainties, our restless and impatient spirit, too, and that it may make us joyous witnesses of God and his love.”

The pope asked that people pray they could adore God in a genuine, not forced or fake, way, and to be in service to others “with gentleness and also a smile.”

The text of the pope’s audience remarks in English is available online .

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