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Praying for peace in Ukraine, Pope Francis remembered both the victims of Russia's current aggression and the millions of victims of a Soviet-engineered famine 90 years ago.

"Let us pray for peace in the world and an end to all conflicts, with a special thought for the terrible suffering of the dear and tormented Ukrainian people," the pope said Nov. 23 at the end of his weekly general audience.

Speaking of Ukraine, he said, "next Saturday (Nov. 26) is the anniversary of the terrible genocide of Holodomor, the extermination by starvation artificially caused by (Josef) Stalin in Ukraine in 1932-33."

"Let us pray for the victims of this genocide and pray for so many Ukrainians -- children, women and the elderly, babies -- who suffer the martyrdom of aggression today," the pope said.

Ukrainians mark Holodomor Memorial Day Nov. 26, especially with prayer services remembering the dead.

Ukraine has long been a major producer of grain. Stalin's orders to collectivize farms in Ukraine and confiscate most of the grain led to the famine, which Ukrainians and many others believe was a deliberate attempt to destroy Ukrainian national identity after the formation of the Soviet Union.

Historians disagree on how many people died, although it is generally accepted that there were at least 3.5 million to 5 million victims. The website of the Holodomor Museum in Kyiv estimates at least 7 million people in Ukraine and 3 million Ukrainians in other regions of the Soviet Union were starved to death, but the numbers could be even higher because "the communist totalitarian regime did everything possible to conceal the consequences of its crime. It was forbidden to record the real number of deaths."

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Earlier in his general audience, the pope said that the spiritual practice of discernment, of seeing where God is at work in one's life and what God is calling one to do, includes examining what brings a sense of consolation and spurs one to do good.

Spiritual consolation "is a profound experience of interior joy, consisting in seeing God's presence in everything. It strengthens faith and hope and also the ability to do good," Pope Francis said.

Since late August, the pope has been using his general audience talks to explain discernment, especially as taught by St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Although focused on making decisions, as a spiritual practice it involves not only looking at what is good and bad, but also examining one's life and feelings to notice where God is at work and where God may be urging one to go.

Of course, everyone would like to experience spiritual consolation, the pope said. But it is a gift of the Holy Spirit and brings a joy that is not superficial.

"Consolation is an interior movement that touches our depths," the pope said. "It is not flashy but soft, delicate, like a drop of water on a sponge," as St. Ignatius

described it.

Consolation is seen in the lives of "many saints who were able to do great things, not because they thought they were magnificent or capable, but because they had been conquered by the peaceful sweetness of God's love," he said. "This is the peace that St. Ignatius discovered in himself with such amazement when he would read the lives of the saints" and "the peace that Edith Stein felt after her conversion."

"To be consoled is to be at peace with God, to feel that everything is peacefully settled, everything is harmonious within us," the pope said.

But, he said, the consolation from God does not make a person want to just "sit there enjoying it, no, it gives you peace and draws you to the Lord and sets you on the way to do things, to do good things."

"In times of consolation, when we are consoled, we get the desire to do so much good, always," he said. It is the opposite of when a person is in spiritual desolation or sadness and has the urge to withdraw "and do nothing. Consolation pushes you forward, in service to others, to society, to people."

However, the pope said, "we must be attentive. We must distinguish between consolation that is of God and false consolation," which is a weak imitation.

"If authentic consolation is like a drop on a sponge, soft and intimate, its imitations are noisier and flashier," he said, and it leads people to focus only on themselves and not reach out to care for others.

"False consolation can become a danger if we seek it obsessively as an end in itself, forgetting the Lord," the pope said. "As St. Bernard would say, this is like seeking the consolations of God rather than the God of consolations."