



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Greetings to the sick and disabled in the Paul VI Hall

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.40 a.m. in St. Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

Before proceeding to Saint Peter's Square, the Pope met with various groups of sick and disabled people in the Paul VI Hall.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Commandments, focusing on the theme "God's love precedes the law and gives it meaning" (Bible reading: from the *Book of Deuteronomy*, 4, 32-35).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

The General Audience concluded with the recital of the *Pater Noster* and the Apostolic Blessing.

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today, this audience will take place as it did last Wednesday. In the Paul VI Hall there are many sick people, and to protect them from the heat, so they are more comfortable, they are there. But they will follow the audience via the maxiscreen, and we too with them, that is, there are not two audiences. There is just one. Let us greet the people in the Paul VI Hall. And we will continue to speak about the commandments which, as we have say, rather than commandments are God's words to His people, so that it may journey well; they are the loving words of a Father. The ten Words begin like so: "*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery*" (Ex 20: 2). This beginning would appear foreign to the true and proper rules that follow. But it is not the case.

Why does God make this proclamation of Himself and of liberation? Because one arrives at Mount Sinai after crossing the Red Sea: the God of Israel first saves, then asks for trust.[1] Or rather: the Decalogue begins with God's generosity. God never asks without giving first. Never. First He saves, first He gives, then He asks. This is our Father, our good God.

And we understand the importance of the first declaration: "*I am the Lord, your God*". There is a possessive, there is a relationship, He belongs to us. God is not a stranger: He is *your* God. [2] This illuminates all the Decalogue and also reveals the secret of Christian action, because it is the same attitude of Jesus Who says: "*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you*" (Jn 15: 9). Christ is the beloved of the Father and loves us with that love. He does not start from Himself, but from the Father. Often our works fail because we start out from ourselves and not from gratitude. And those who start out from themselves, where do they arrive? They arrive at themselves! They are incapable of going ahead, and turn back on themselves. It is precisely that selfish attitude that, joking, people say: "That person is an I, me with myself and for myself". He starts out from himself and returns to himself.

Christian life is first and foremost a freely given response to a generous Father. Christians who follow only their "*duties*" complain of not having a personal experience with that God Who is "*ours*". I must do this, this and this... Only duties. But something is missing! What is the foundation of this duty? The foundation of this duty is the love of God the Father, Who first gives, then commands. To place the law before the relationship does not help the path of faith. How can a young person wish to be Christian, if we start out from obligations, commitments, consistency and not from liberation? But to be Christian is a journey of liberation! The commandments free you from your selfishness and they free you because there is the love of God that carries you forward. Christian formation is not based on the strength of will, but on the acceptance of salvation, of allowing oneself to be loved: first the Red Sea, then Mount Sinai. First salvation: God saves His people in the Red Sea; then on Sinai tells them what they must do. But the people know that they must do these things because they have been saved by a Father Who loves them.

Gratitude is a characteristic trait of the heart visited by the Holy Spirit; to obey God one must first remember the benefits. As Saint Basil says, "Those who do not let those benefits fall into oblivion, are oriented towards good virtue and towards every work of justice" (*Rule*, 56). Where does all this lead us? To perform a memory test[3]: how many beautiful things has God done for each one of us! How generous is our heavenly Father. I would now like to propose a little exercise to you, in silence: each person answer in his or her own heart. How many beautiful things has God done for me? This is the question. In silence, each one of us, answers. How many beautiful things has God done for me? And this is God's liberation. God does many beautiful things and frees us.

And yet some may feel they have not yet had a true experiences of God's liberation. This can happen. It can be that one looks inwardly and finds only a sense of duty, a spirituality of servants, not sons. What can be done in this case? Like the chosen people did. The book of Exodus says: "The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. God heard their groaning and He remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them. God thinks of me.

The liberating action of God placed at the beginning of the Decalogue – that is, the commandments – is the

answer to this lament. We do not save ourselves, by ourselves, but from us there comes a *cry for help*: “Lord, save me; Lord, show me the way; Lord, caress me; Lord, give me a little joy”. This is a cry for help. This depends on us: asking to be freed from selfishness, from sin, from the chains of slavery. This cry is important, it is prayer, it is awareness of that which is still oppressed and not freed in us. There are many things that are not freed in our soul. “Save me, help me, free me”. This is a beautiful prayer to the Lord. God awaits that cry, because He can and He wants to break our chains; God has not called us to life to remain oppressed, but to be free and to live in gratitude, obeying with joy He Who has given us so much, infinitely more than what we can give to Him. This is beautiful. May God always be blessed for all that He has done, that He does and will do in us!

[1] In the rabbinical tradition there is an illuminating text on the subject: “Why were the ten words not proclaimed at the beginning of the Torah? [...] What can you compare to? To a man who, assuming the government of a city, asked the inhabitants: “May I reign over you?”. But they answered: “What have you done that is good for us, so as to claim to reign over us?”. So, what did he do? He built them defensive walls and a channel to supply the city with water; then he fought for them wars. And when he asked again: “May I reign over you?”, They replied: “Yes, yes”. So the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, sent the manna down to them and raised the water in the well, brought them flying quails and finally fought for them the war against Amaleq. And when he asked them, “May I reign over you?”, They replied: “Yes, yes” (*The gift of the Torah, Commentary on the Decalogue on Ex 20 in the Mekilta* by R. Ishamael, Rome 1982, p.49) .

[2] Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est*, 17: “The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself. Then self- abandonment to God increases and God becomes our joy”.

[3] Cf. Homily in the Mass at Santa Marta, 7 October 2014: “[What does it mean to pray?]. It is to remember our history before God. Because our history is the history of His love for us”. Cf. *Detti e fatti dei padri del deserto*, Milan 1975, p. 71: “Oblivion is the root of all evil”.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France and other Francophone countries. I hope that this summer period that is beginning will be an opportunity for all to deepen their personal relationship with God, to follow Him more freely on the path of His commandments. God bless you!

English

I greet English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Greece, Australia, China, Vietnam and the United States of America. I also welcome the delegation from the *NATO Defense College*, with prayerful good wishes for their service to the cause of peace. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

I am pleased to welcome German-speaking brothers and sisters. I greet in particular the various groups of students present at this audience. The beginning of the Decalogue reminds us that God loved us first. Our life according to the commandments is a response to the initiative of God's love and expression of our gratitude.

The Holy Spirit always gives us His grace.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Spain and Latin America. I invite you, remembering all the good that God has done in you, to respond with freedom and joy to the call of God, Who loves us and frees us from our slavery so that we can live as His beloved children. God bless you. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

I extend a cordial greeting to the groups from Portugal and Brazil and to the other Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, hoping that this visit, on the occasion of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, will confirm everyone in faith, hope and charity. May Our Lady accompany you and protect you.

Arabic

I cordially greet Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular “The Perfect Letizia” choir from Egypt, “*Nousroto*” from Lebanon, the faithful of the “*Saint Saviour*” parish from Jerusalem. God gave the commandments to His people after freeing them from slavery, thus showing the generosity of His fatherly love. God desires to dissolve all our chains to live life and commandments, not with the spirit of slaves, but with the freedom of children. May the Lord bless you and protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish people from Poland and abroad, on their pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. I greet the pilgrims from Łódź accompanying their archbishop, who will receive the pallium as Metropolitan. I welcome the newly ordained deacons of the archdiocese of Krakow and the diocese of Bielsko-Żywiec. I wish that the holiday season, which is just beginning, be for all a time of rest and an opportunity to contemplate God in the masterpiece of His creation. With courage, keep the faith, always professing Jesus. I bless you from my heart.

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the General Chapter of the Franciscan Immaculate Sisters; the Carmelite Religious of Trivandrum; the School Sisters of Our Lady and confirmands of Modena.

I greet the *Sant’Antonio Abate* foster home of Sassari, the Cima Community of Milan, the Emmaus Association of Lodi, the socio-cultural music association of Orosei and the Caracciolo Academy musical school in Rome.

A special thought goes to the young, the elderly, the sick and the newlyweds.

The day after tomorrow will be the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, patrons of Rome. We learn from these Apostles of the Lord the ability to bear witness with courage to the Gospel of Jesus, going beyond their differences, preserving the harmony and friendship that establish the credibility of any proclamation of faith.

Greetings to the sick and disabled in the Paul VI Hall

Greeting of the Holy Father to the pilgrims of the Deaf Catholic Youth Initiative of the Americas (DCYIA)

Greeting of the Holy Father to the delegation from the Special Olympics Organization

Greeting of the Holy Father to the pilgrims of the Deaf Catholic Youth Initiative of the Americas (DCYIA)

Dear friends,

I offer a warm welcome to the group from the “Deaf Catholic Youth Initiative of the Americas”. I pray that your pilgrimage – “A Time to Walk with Jesus” – will help you to grow in love for Christ and for one another. The Lord has a special place in his heart for those with any kind of disability, and so does the Successor of Saint Peter! I hope that your time in Rome will be spiritually enriching and strengthen your witness to God’s love for all his children. As you continue your journey, I ask you please remember to pray for me. May Almighty God richly bless you all!

Greeting of the Holy Father to the delegation from the Special Olympics Organization

I extend a special welcome to the delegation from the “Special Olympics” organization on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its foundation. The world of sport offers a particular opportunity for people to grow in mutual understanding and friendship, and I pray that this Olympic Flame may be a sign of joy and hope in the Lord who bestows the gifts unity and peace on his children. Upon all who support the aims of the Special Olympics, I willingly invoke God’s blessings of joy and peace.
