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## **The Pope receives the Italian Biblical Association: spread the dignity of being sons of God**

This morning in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the members Italian Biblical Association on the occasion of National Bible Week, during which they have reflected on the theme “Let us be human beings ... male and female: declinations of the man-woman polarity in the Scriptures”, focusing on some aspects of the relationship between man and woman in various fundamental biblical texts.

In his greetings, Pope Francis recalled that St. John Paul II dedicated a memorable cycle of catechesis to this issue, which Francis has also considered in his own. “Reflecting on how we were created, formed in the image and semblance of the Creator, and the differences with other creatures and with all creation is essential”, explained the Holy Father. “This helps us to understand the dignity that all of us, men and women, have, a dignity that has its roots in the same Creator. It has always struck me that our dignity is indeed that of being sons of God, and throughout the Scripture this relationship is expressed in the fact that He guides us as a Father does with a son. In the second account of creation, it appears that God has made us as a craftsman might, moulding us with clay from the earth; that is, the hands of God have compromised with our lives. He created us not only with His word, but also with His hands and His vital breath, almost as if all the being of God was involved in giving life to the human being”.

“However, there exists the possibility that this dignity, conferred to us by God, can degrade. To put it in terms of football, man is capable of scoring ‘own goals’. This happens when we negotiate our dignity, when we embrace idolatry, when we make room in our heart for the experience of idols. During the exodus from Egypt, when the people were tired because Moses delayed in ascending the mount, they were tempted by the devil and constructed an idol. And the idol was gold: this leads us to think of the attractive power of wealth, of the fact that man loses his dignity when in his heart wealth takes the place of God”.

Instead, God gave us the dignity of being His sons and daughters. From this there derives the question: how can I share this dignity, so that it develops into positive reciprocity? How can I ensure that the other feels worthy? How can I ‘spread’ dignity? When someone is disdainful, segregates, discriminates, he or she does not spread dignity, but rather the contrary. It is good for us to ask ourselves often: how can I assume my dignity? How can I make it grow? And it is also good for us to interrogate ourselves to discover if and when we do not spread dignity to our neighbour”, concluded the Pope.