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Angelus: seek the substance of the Commandments, avoiding the risk of formalism

At midday today Pope Francis appeared at the window of his study to pray the Angelus with the faithful and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square. Continuing his reflection on the Sermon on the Mount, this time he spoke about how Jesus wishes to help his listeners to reflect on the Mosaic Law.

"What was said in the ancient Covenant was not everything", the Holy Father explained. "Jesus came to fulfil and promulgate God's law definitively, to the last iota. He manifests its original purposes and fulfils the authentic aspects, and He does all this through His preaching and, even more so, with the offer of Himself on the cross. In this way Jesus teaches how to carry out fully the will of God, with a 'higher justice' than that of the scribes and the Pharisees. A justice inspired by love, charity and mercy, and therefore capable of realising the substance of the commandments, avoiding the risk of formalism. Formalism: I can do this, I can't do that; I can up to this point, up to here I can't... No. It is more, more".

"In particular, in today's Gospel Jesus examines three aspects, three Commandments: murder, adultery and swearing".

With regard to the commandment, "You shall not kill", He affirms that it is violated not only by effective homicide, but also by behaviour that offends the dignity of the person, including insulting words. "Certainly, these do not have the same gravity and culpability as killing, but they are on the same line, as they are its premises and reveal the same malevolence", the Pope observed. "Jesus invites us not to establish a scale of offence, but rather to consider them all harmful, inasmuch as they are motivated by the intention to do harm to our neighbour. And Jesus gives us an example. Insulting: we are used to insulting; it is like saying 'hello' And this is along the same lines as killing. When we insult our brother, we kill him in his heart. Please, do not insult! We gain nothing by doing so".

Another fulfilment is related to matrimonial law. "Adultery was considered a violation of a man's right of ownership over a woman. Jesus instead goes to the root of the evil. Just as one arrives at homicide through insults and offence, one arrives at adultery through the intentions of possession with regard to a woman other than one's wife. Adultery, like theft, corruption and other sins, is conceived first within and, once the wrong decision is made in the heart, it is made manifest in concrete behaviour. And Jesus says: he who looks at a

woman who is not his own with the spirit of possession is an adulterer in his heart. He has already set out on the path to adultery. Let us think a little about this: the evil thoughts that head in this direction”.

Jesus also says to His disciples not to take an oath, in as much as the oath is a sign of the insecurity and duplicity of human relations. God’s authority is exploited to guarantee our human affairs. Instead, we are called to establish among us, in our families and in our communities, an atmosphere of clarity and mutual trust, so that we can be considered sincere without resorting to higher interventions to be believed. Diffidence and mutual suspicion always threaten serenity!”

“May the Virgin Mary, woman of docile listening and joyous obedience”, he concluded, “help us draw ever closer to the Gospel, to be Christians of substance, not superficial. “And this is possible with the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who enables us to do everything with love, and thereby to carry out fully the will of God”.

After praying the Angelus, the Pope greeted all those present, especially families, parish groups and associations. In particular, he mentioned the students of the Carolina Coronado Institute of Almendralejo and the faithful of Tarragona, Spain, and Italian groups from Caltanissetta, Valgoglio, Ancona, Pesaro, Turin and Pisa, and the San Francesco di Paola Neocatechumenal community of Turin.

“I wish you all a good Sunday, and do not forget: do not insult, do not look with bad eyes, with eyes of possession of your neighbour’s wife, and do not take oaths. Three things that Jesus says: it is very easy! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and goodbye”.
