



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 27 June 2018

[Multimedia]

Greetings of the Holy Father in the Paul VI Hall

Catechesis 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!

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.

CATHECHESIS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today, this Audience is taking place as it did last Wednesday: there are many sick people in the Paul VI Hall. To protect them from the heat, and to make them more comfortable, they are there. But they will follow the Audience on the jumbo screen, and so we are together, that is, there are not two Audiences. There is only one. Let us greet the sick people in the Paul VI Hall. And let us continue speaking about the Commandments which, as we have said, more than commandments are the words of God to his people to help them journey properly, obeying the Father's loving words.

The Ten Words begin in this way: "*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage*" (Ex 20:2). This beginning would seem foreign to the true and proper laws that follow. But it is not so.

Why does God make this proclamation about himself and about liberation? Because one reaches Mount Sinai after having crossed the Red Sea: the God of Israel first saves, then asks for trust.^[1] In other words: the Decalogue begins from God's generosity. God never asks without giving first. First he saves; first he gives; then he asks. Such is our Father: a good God.

Let us understand the importance of the first declaration: "*I am the Lord, your God*". There is a possessive; there is a relationship; there is belonging. God is not extraneous: he is *your* God.^[2] This illuminates the entire Decalogue and also reveals the secret of Christian action, because it is the very same attitude of Jesus, who says: "*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you*" (Jn 15:9). Christ is loved by the Father, and he loves us with that love. He puts not himself but the Father first. Often our deeds fail because we put ourselves, and not gratitude first. And one who begins with himself: where does he end up? He ends up with himself! He is incapable of making headway; he turns in on himself. It is precisely this selfish attitude that, in jest, people say: "that person is just I; me; with me and for me". He begins and ends with himself.

Christian life is above all the *grateful response* to a generous Father. Christians who only fulfil their 'duties' do not have a personal experience with that God who is 'ours'. I must do this, this, that... Only duties. But you lack something! What is the foundation of this duty? The foundation of this duty is the love of God the Father, who gives first, then commands.

Placing the law before the relationship does not help the journey of faith. How can a young person want to be Christian, if we start with obligations, responsibilities, consistency and not with

liberation? But being Christian is a journey of liberation! The Commandments free you from your selfishness and free you because it is God's love that leads you forward. Christian formation is not based on willpower, but on the acceptance of salvation, on letting oneself be loved: first the Red Sea, then Mount Sinai. First salvation: God saves his people in the Red Sea; then on Sinai he tells them what they have to do. But those people know that they are doing these things because they have been saved by a Father who loves them.

Gratitude is a characteristic of a heart that has been visited by the Holy Spirit. In order to obey God, it is above all necessary to remember his benefits. Saint Basil says: "Those who do not let such benefits fall into disregard orient themselves towards good virtue and towards all works of justice" (*Shorter Rules*, 56). Where does all this take us? To perform a memory exercise:^[3] how many wonderful things God has done for each of us! How generous our Heavenly Father is! I would now like to propose a small exercise in silence. Each can answer in his or her own heart. How many beautiful things has God done for me? This is the question. Let each of us reply in silence. How many beautiful things has God done for me? And this is the liberation of God. God does many beautiful things and he frees us.

And yet some may feel that they have not yet truly experienced God's liberation. This can happen. It may be that one looks inside oneself and finds only a sense of duty, a spirituality of servants, not of sons and daughters. What should be done in this case? As the Chosen People did. The Book of Exodus reads: "And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage, and cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition" (Ex 2:23-25). God thinks of me.

God's liberating action placed at the beginning of the Decalogue — that is, the Commandments — is the response to this groaning. We do not save ourselves on our own, but a *cry for help* can escape us: "Lord save me; Lord teach me the way; Lord caress me; Lord give me some joy". This is a cry for help. It is up to us to ask to be liberated from selfishness, from sin, from the chains of slavery. This cry is important. It is prayer; it is being conscious of what is still oppressed and not liberated within us. There are many things fettered in our soul. "Save me; help me; set me free". This is a beautiful prayer to the Lord. God awaits that cry because he can and wants to break our chains. God did not call us to life to remain oppressed but rather to be free and to live in gratitude, obeying with joy to the One who has given us so much, infinitely more than we could ever give to him. This is beautiful. May God always be blessed for all that he has done, does and will do within us!

Special Greetings

I greet the 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!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*.

The day after tomorrow is the [Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul](#), Patrons of Rome. Let us learn from these Apostles of the Lord the ability to witness courageously to the Gospel of Jesus, beyond our differences, preserving the harmony and friendship that is the basis for the credibility of any message of faith.

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[1] In rabbinic tradition there is an enlightening text on the matter: “Why were the 10 words not proclaimed at the beginning of the Torah? ... To what can they be compared? A man, taking on the governing of a city, asked its inhabitants : ‘May I govern you?’ But they answered: ‘What good have you done that you would claim to govern us?’ So, what did he do? He built them a protective wall and channels to provide water for the city; then he fought wars for them. And when he asked again: ‘May I govern you?’, they answered, ‘Yes, yes.’ Just as the Lord made Israel leave Egypt, split the sea for them, made manna descend for them and water rise from the well, brought them quails flying and lastly fought the war against Amalek for them. And when he asked them: ‘May I govern you?’, they answered: ‘Yes, yes’” (“The gift of the Torah, Commentary on the Decalogue of Ex 20” in R. Ishmael’s *Mekilta*, 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 Domus Sanctae Marthae](#), 7 October 2014: “What is prayer? It means “remembering our history, before God. Because our history” is “the history of his love for us”, ore, 10 October 2014, p. 17; cf. *Deti e fatti dei padri del deserto*, Milan 1975, p. 71 “Disregard is the root of all evil”.