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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Appeal of the Holy Father

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.20 a.m. in Saint Peter's Square, where the Holy Father Francis met with groups of pilgrims and faithful from Italy and all over the world.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued his cycle of catechesis on the Ten Commandments, focusing on the theme "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife; or anything that belongs to your neighbour" (Bible reading: from the Book of *Exodus*, 17).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. He then invited those present to remember cloistered religious communities today, *Pro Orantibus Day*.

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!

Our encounters on the Decalogue lead us today to the final commandment. We heard it at the beginning. These

are not only the last words in the text, but much more: they are the fulfilment of the journey through the Decalogue, touching the heart of all that is consigned to us in it. Indeed, looking closely, they do not add new content: the indications “You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife ... or anything that belongs to your neighbour” are implicit in the commandments on adultery and theft; so what is the function of these words? Are they a summary? Or are they something more?

Let us keep in mind that all the commandments have the task of indicating the boundary of life, the limit beyond which man destroys himself and his neighbour, breaking down his relationship with God. If you go beyond, you destroy yourself, you also destroy your relationship with God and your relationship with others. The commandments show this. This last word highlights the fact that all transgressions arise from a common root: *evil desires*. All sins are born of an evil desire. All of them. There the heart starts to move, and one enters that wave, and ends up transgressing. But not a formal, legal transgression: in a transgression that hurts oneself and others.

In the Gospel the Lord Jesus tells us explicitly: “For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come – sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (*Mk 7: 21-23*).

We therefore understand that the entire path taken by the Decalogue would have no use if it did not reach this level, *the heart of man*. From where are all these ugly things born? The Decalogue shows itself to be lucid and profound in this aspect: the point of arrival – the final commandment – of this journey is the heart, and if the heart is not freed, the rest serves little. This is the challenge: to free the heart from all these evil and ugly things. God’s precepts can be reduced merely to the beautiful façade of a life that remains nevertheless an existence of slaves and not of sons. Often, behind the Pharisaic mask of asphyxiating correctness, something ugly and unresolved is hidden.

We must instead allow ourselves to be unmasked by these commandments on desire, because they show us our poverty, to lead us to a holy humiliation. Each one of us can ask himself: but which ugly desires come to me often? Envy, greed, gossip? All these things that come from inside me. Each one of us can ask himself this, and it will do him good. Man needs this blessed humiliation, that which enables him to discover that he cannot free himself alone, that for which he cries out to God to be saved. Saint Paul explains this in an insuperable way, referring precisely to the commandment *do not covet* (cf. *Rm 7: 7-24*).

It is vain to think of being able to correct oneself without the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is futile to think of purifying our heart in a titanic effort of will alone: this is not possible. We must open ourselves to the relationship with God, in truth and in freedom: only in this way can our efforts be fruitful, because there is the Holy Spirit Who carries us forward.

The task of the Biblical Law is not that of deluding man that a literal obedience leads him to an artificial and, moreover, unattainable salvation. The task of the Law is to bring man to his truth, that is, to his poverty, which becomes authentic openness, personal openness to the mercy of God, Who transforms and renews us. God is the only one capable of renewing our heart, as long as we open our hearts to Him: it is the only condition; He does everything, but we have to open His heart.

The last words of the Decalogue educate us all to acknowledge that we are mendicants; they help to place us before the disorder of our heart, to stop living selfishly and to become poor in spirit, genuine in the presence of the Father, letting ourselves be redeemed by the Son and instructed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the teacher Who guides us: let us allow ourselves to be helped. We are mendicants, let us ask for this grace.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*Mt 5: 3*). Yes, blessed are those who cease to delude themselves, believing they can save themselves from their own weakness without the mercy of God, which alone can heal. Only God’s mercy can heal the heart. Blessed are those who recognize their own evil desires and, with a repentant and humiliated heart do not stand before God and other men as though they were righteous, but rather as sinners. It is beautiful, what Peter says to the Lord: “Go away from me, Lord; I am a

sinful man". This is a beautiful prayer: "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man".

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet the pilgrims from France and other Francophone countries, in particular the Hosanna choir of Paris. Dear friends, today we celebrate the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary. Do not be afraid to trust her, she will lead you to her Son Jesus. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Nigeria, Israel, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

German

I extend a cordial greeting to German-speaking pilgrims. God is near us like a good father. Let us acknowledge that we are His children who receive every day the gifts of His mercy. May the Lord bless you and your families!

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Spain and Latin America. On this day that we celebrate the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple, I encourage you, by following her example, to witness the mercy of God in the midst of the world, communicating the tenderness and compassion you have experienced in your own lives. Thank you.

Portuguese

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, I greet you all, in particular the "*Canção Nova*" group in Curitiba, the members of the Court of Justice of Pernambuco, the faithful of São Caetano do Sul and Santo André, as well as the pilgrims of Fatima. I encourage you to take as a model for your personal and social life the Virgin Mary, whom we venerate today in her Presentation to God. The secret of her peace and her courage is found in this certainty: "Nothing is impossible to God". In the same way, your hearts can find trust and comfort in the mercy that the Lord pours out tirelessly on you and your families. Pray for me. Thank you.

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus teaches us that from the hearts of men come the intentions of evil. Safeguard your hearts so that they allow themselves to be penetrated by the Spirit and set out on the paths of love that lead to our brothers. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I warmly welcome the Polish pilgrims. In particular I greet the present members of the Polish Culture Association of the Lviv Region in Ukraine. As I said a little earlier, the commandments orient us on the spiritual path and sensitize our hearts so that we can uncover our weaknesses and our mistaken desires, and humbly entrust them to God's mercy. May His grace and blessing always accompany you!

Italian

I address a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the groups of faithful from the parishes, especially those of Sant'Elpidio a Mare and Salerno; and the group Laboratory of Courage, accompanied by Archbishop Renato Boccardo.

I greet the delegation of the Basket project in the Holy Land; the Food Bank; the International Police Association of Apulia and the Garibaldi-Leone Institute of Trinitapoli.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newly-weds.

Today we celebrate the memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Let us look to She who generated Christ and venerate her as the Mother and powerful Help of Christians. From her, let us learn what it means to consecrate oneself fully to the plan that God has for each one of us and for the entire world.

Appeal of the Holy Father

Today, the liturgical memorial of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Temple, we celebrate the *Pro Orantibus* Day, dedicated to the memory of secluded religious communities: there are many! It is a most opportune opportunity to thank the Lord for the gift of so many people who, in monasteries and hermitages, dedicate themselves fully to God in prayer, in silence and in seclusion. May these communities not be lacking the affection, the closeness, the material support of the whole Church!
