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Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

Address to the sick in the Paul VI Hall

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.35 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.

Before reaching Saint Peter's Square, in the Paul VI Hall the Pope met with various groups of sick people, and in particular the group with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, in view of the Global Day of ALS/MND Associations which will be held tomorrow, 21 June.

In his address in Italian the Pope continued the new cycle of catechesis on the Commandments, focusing on the theme "*Ten Words to live the Covenant*" (cf. *2 Cor 3: 5b-6.17*).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present. Before the conclusion of the audience, after watching a brief performance by the artistes of the *Rony Roller Circus*, the Pope addressed some words of greeting to them.

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!

This audience takes place in two places: we are here in the square, and in the Paul VI Hall there are more than 200 sick people who follow via the maxiscreen. All together we form a community. Let us greet those in the Hall with an applause.

Last Wednesday we began a new cycle of catechesis, on the commandments. We have seen that the Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfil it. But we must understand this perspective better.

In the Bible the commandments do not exist autonomously, but are *part of a relationship*. The Lord Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to bring it to fulfilment. And there is that relationship, of the Covenant^[1] between God and His People. At the beginning of Chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus we read – and this is important – “And God spoke all these words” (v. 1).

It appears to be an opening like any other, but nothing in the Bible is banal. The text does not say, “And God spoke these commandments”, but “*these words*”. The Jewish tradition always calls the Decalogue “the ten Words”. And the term “Decalogue” is intended to say precisely this. And yet they have the form of laws, they are objectively commandments. Why, then, does the holy Author use, right here, the term “ten Words”? Why? And why not “ten commandments”?

What difference is there between a *command* and a *word*? A command is essentially a communication that does not require dialogue. The word, on the other hand, is the essential means of *relations as dialogue*. God the Father creates by means of His Word, and His Son is the Word made flesh. Love is nurtured by words, like education or collaboration. Two people who do not love each other are not able to communicate. When someone speaks to our heart, our loneliness comes to an end. A word is received, communication is given, and the commandments are words of God: God communicates Himself in these ten Words, and awaits our response.

It is one thing to receive an order, another to perceive that someone is trying to speak with us. A dialogue is much more than the communication of a truth. I can say to you: “Today is the last day of spring, it is hot for spring, but today is the last day”. This is truth, it is not dialogue. But if I say to you, “What do you think of this spring?”, I initiate a dialogue. The commandments are a dialogue. Communication is carried out for the pleasure of speaking and for the real good that is communicated between those who wish each other well, by means of words. It is a good that does not consist in things, but in the same people who reciprocally give each other in dialogue (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 142).

But this difference is not something artificial. Let us look at what happened at the beginning. The temptor, the devil, wishes to deceive the man and the woman on this point: he wants to convince them that God has forbidden them to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil to keep them in submission. The challenge is precisely this: is the first rule that God gave to man the imposition of a despot who forbids and compels, or is it the care of a father who cares for his young and protects them from self-destruction? Is it a word or is it a command? The most tragic, among the many lies that the serpent tells Eve, is the suggestion of an envious deity: “But no, God is envious of you” – and of a possessive deity – “God does not want you to have freedom”. The facts show dramatically that the serpent lied (cf. *Gen* 2: 16-17; 3: 4-5), he made them believe that a word of love was a command.

Man faces this crossroads: does God impose things or does He take care of me? Are His commandments just a law, or do they contain a *word*, to care for me? Is God master or father? God is the Father: never forget this. Even in the worst situations, think that we have a Father Who loves us all. Are we subjects or offspring? This conflict, within or outside us, presents itself continually: a thousand times we must choose between the mentality of slaves or the mentality of sons. The commandment is that of a father, the word is that of a Father.

The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of sons, He is the Spirit of Jesus. A spirit of slaves cannot but receive the Law in an oppressive way, and can produce two opposing results: either a life made up of duties and obligations, or a

violent reaction of rejection. All Christianity is the passage from the letter of the Law to the Spirit that gives it life (cf. *2 Cor* 3: 6-17). Jesus is the Word of the Father, not the Father's condemnation. Jesus came to save, with His Word, not to condemn us.

We can see when a man or a woman has experienced this passage or not. People realize if a Christian reasons like a son or a slave. And we ourselves remember whether our educators took care of us like fathers or mothers, or if they simply imposed rules. The commandments are the path towards freedom, because they are the word of the Father that makes us free in this journey.

The world needs not legalism, but care. It needs Christians with the heart of sons.[2] It needs Christians with the heart of sons: do not forget this.

[1] Chapter 20 of the Book of Exodus is preceded by the offering of the Covenant at Chapter 19, in which the following pronouncement is central: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Ex* 19,5-6). This terminology finds its emblematic synthesis in *Lev* 26,12: "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people", and even reaches the name foretold by the Messiah, in Isaiah 7: 14, or rather "*Immanuel*", which is found in Matthew: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God with us'" (*Mt* 1: 23). All this indicates the essentially relational nature of the Jewish faith and, to the highest degree, of the Christian faith.

[2] Cf John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis splendor*, 12: "The gift of the Decalogue was a promise and sign of the New Covenant, in which the law would be written in a new and definitive way upon the human heart (cf. *Jer* 31:31-34), replacing the law of sin which had disfigured that heart (cf. *Jer* 17:1). In those days, "a new heart" would be given, for in it would dwell "a new spirit", the Spirit of God (cf. *Ez* 36:24-28).

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French speakers, in particular the pilgrims from Haiti, the youth of Chablais, of Switzerland and of Nouméa, in New Caledonia, as well as the pilgrims of Saint Brieuç, accompanied by their bishop, Monsignor Denis Moutel. Brothers and sisters, let us remember that the world needs the witness of Christians from the filial spirit and not the slaves of the law. We give this testimony with our behaviour throughout our lives. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, particularly those from England, Sweden, Switzerland, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

With joy I greet the pilgrims from the German-speaking countries. The Decalogue of the commandments is a gift of God's covenant with us men. We live as children our relationship with the Lord, following his word and the

Holy Spirit who gives life. Pray for me and for my ecumenical pilgrimage to Geneva tomorrow. The Lord guards you and your loved ones.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. Our world does not need legalism, but to feel loved and cared for. Let us ask the Lord with confidence for the gift of His Holy Spirit, so that He may grant us to accept His commandments with a filial spirit, and to live as brothers in the freedom of the children of God. Thank you very much.

Portuguese

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, welcome! In greeting you all, especially the faithful of the *Nossa Senhora Medianeira* parish of Paraná, I hope that you may live and grow in friendship with God the Father, letting His love always regenerate you as children and reconcile you with Him and with your brothers. May the abundance of his blessings come upon you and your families.

Arabic

I cordially greet Arabic speakers, especially those from Lebanon, Jordan and the Middle East. God has given us His Holy Spirit to live as His children, and we see in His Word and His commandments, not rules and prohibitions that make us slaves, but His parental love, which gives us life, freedom and illuminate our path. May the Lord bless you and protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims and in particular the youth representatives who will sail the world on the boat "Dar Młodzieży", before arriving in Panama, where World Youth Day will be held next January. I greet the faithful of the archdiocese of Szczecin-Kamień, accompanied by the Metropolitan Archbishop Andrea Dzięga, here to bless the papal crowns that will be placed on the image of Our Lady of Częstochowa, in the Basilica of St. John the Baptist. May the Victorious Queen of Poland intercede for us and teach us to live the commandments of God ever more faithfully. Jesus Christ be praised.

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to the faithful of the Italian language.

I am pleased to welcome the Vincentian Fathers; the parish of San Girolamo in Este, with a group of children from Chernobyl; married couples from the diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro, accompanied by their bishop, Msgr. Andrea Turazzi and those of the diocese of Tivoli. I hope that the visit to the Tombs of the Apostles will be an opportunity for renewed Christian witness.

I greet the group of the Meyer Children's Hospital in Florence; the Italian Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association; the *Gioacchino da Fiore* Institute from San Giovanni in Fiore; the choirs participating in the International Rome Song Festival; the civic band of Magenta and the artistes and workers of the *Rony Roller Circus*.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds.

In June, popular piety makes us pray more fervently the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May that Merciful Heart teach you to love without asking for anything in return, and support you in the most difficult choices in life. Please also pray to it for me and for my ministry, but also for all priests, so that you may strengthen fidelity to the call of the

Lord.

Address to the sick in the Paul VI Hall

Good morning!

Thank you for this visit. Before going to the Square, I wanted to greet you. You will follow the audience in the Square via the maxiscreen; we will all be joined together. Thank you for this visit. I assure you that I pray for you and I ask you to pray for me. I now invite you to pray to Our Lady together.

Recital of Hail Mary

Blessing
