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# **BOLLETTINO**

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180808a

Wednesday 08.08.2018

## **General Audience**

### **Catechesis of the Holy Father**

### **Greetings in various languages**

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.30 a.m. in the Paul VI Hall, 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 Commandments, focusing on the theme of idolatry (Bible passage: *Ex 32: 7-8*).

After summarising his catechesis in several languages, the Holy Father addressed special greetings to the groups of faithful present.

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!

Let us continue today to meditate on the Decalogue, looking more closely at the theme of idolatry: we spoke about it last week. Now we will take up the theme again as it is very important to know about it. Let us take our cue from the quintessential idol, the golden calf, mentioned in the Book of Exodus (32: 1-8) – we have just heard a passage. This episode has a precise context: the desert, where the people await Moses, who climbed the mountain to receive instructions from God.

What is the desert? It is a place where precariousness and insecurity reign – in the desert there is nothing – where water is lacking, food is lacking, and shelter is lacking. The desert is an image of human life, whose condition is uncertain and has no inviolable guarantees. This insecurity generates in man primary anxieties, which Jesus mentions in the Gospel: “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear?” (Mt 6,31). They are the primary concerns, and the desert provokes these concerns.

And in that desert something happens that triggers idolatry: “Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain” (Ex 32: 1). He stayed there for forty days and the people grew impatient. The reference point, who was Moses, is missing: the leader the head, the reassuring guide, and this becomes unsustainable. Then the people ask for a visible god to be able to identify and orientate themselves. And they say to Aaron: “Come, make us gods who will go before us!”, “Make us a head, make us a leader!”. Human nature, to escape from precariousness – the precariousness of the desert – seeks a “do-it-yourself” religion: if God does not show Himself, we make ourselves a made-to-measure god. “Before an idol, there is no risk that we will be called to abandon our security, for idols ‘have mouths, but they cannot speak’ (Ps 115: 5). Idols exist, we begin to see, as a pretext for setting ourselves at the centre of reality and worshipping the work of our own hands” (Encyclical *Lumen fidei*, 13).

Aronne can not oppose the people’s requests, and he creates a golden calf. The calf had a twofold meaning in the ancient Near East: on the one hand it represented fruitfulness and abundance, and on the other it represented energy and strength. But above all it is golden, so it is a symbol of wealth, success, power and money. These are the great idols: success, power and money. These are the temptations of all time! Here is what the golden calf is: the symbol of all the desires that give the illusion of freedom, and instead enslave, because the idol always enslaves. It is appealing, and you go. That charm of the snake, who looks at the little bird and the bird stays there, without being able to move, and the snake takes him. Aaron did not know how to resist it.

But everything stems from the inability to trust above all in God, to place our safety in Him, to let Him give true depth to our heart’s desires. This also allows us to bear weakness, uncertainty and insecurity. Reference to God makes us strong in weakness, uncertainty and even in precariousness. Without God’s primacy one easily falls into idolatry and settles for meagre assurances. But this is a temptation we always read in the Bible. And think carefully about this: freeing the people from Egypt did not cost God much work; He did so with a sign of power, of love. But the great work of God was removing Egypt from the heart of the people, that is, removing idolatry from the heart of the people. And God still continues to work to remove it from our hearts. This is God’s great task: removing “that Egypt” that we carry within ourselves, that is the fascination of idolatry.

When we welcome the God of Jesus Christ, who made Himself poor for us (cf. 2 Cor 8: 9), we discover that recognizing our weakness is not the misfortune of human life, but it is the condition for opening up to He Who is truly strong. Then God’s salvation enters through the door of weakness (cf. 2 Cor 12:10): it is because of his own insufficiency that man opens himself to the fatherhood of God. Man’s freedom arises from letting the true God be the only Lord. This allows us to accept our own fragility and reject the idols of our hearts.

We Christians turn our gaze to Christ crucified (cf. Jn 19:37), Who is weak, despised and stripped of all possession. But in Him the face of the true God is revealed, the glory of love and not that of glittering deception. Isaiah says: “By his wounds we are healed” (53: 5). We have been healed precisely by the weakness of a man Who was God, by His wounds. And from our weakness, we can open ourselves up to God’s salvation. Our healing comes from He Who became poor, Who accepted failure, Who took our precariousness to its limit so as to fill it with love and strength. He comes to reveal to us the fatherhood of God; in Christ our fragility is no longer a curse, but a place of encounter with the Father and the source of a new force from above.

## Greetings in various languages

### *French*

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France, Cote d'Ivoire and the various Francophone countries. I hope that this summer will help us turn our gaze to Christ crucified, Who took our precariousness to its limit so as to fill it with love and strength. May the Lord help us to reject the idols of our hearts. God bless you!

### ***English***

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today's audience, particularly the groups from Malta and Indonesia. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

### ***German***

I am pleased to welcome pilgrims from German-speaking countries. This holiday season invites us to admire the beauty of God's creation and to nurture our relationship with the Lord in prayer. Only God can give true depth to our heart's desires. May the Holy Spirit fill you with His joy. Have a good stay in Rome.

### ***Spanish***

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Spain and Latin America. I encourage you to look at the crucified Christ. He reveals to us the true face of God and teaches us that weakness is not a curse, but a place of encounter with God the Father and His love the source of our strength and joy. May the Lord bless you. Thank you very much.

### ***Portuguese***

Dear Portuguese-speaking pilgrims, I warmly welcome you all, especially groups from Portugal and Brazil. I hope that this pilgrimage to Rome will confirm your purpose of following the Lord with courage, bringing to everyone the luminous testimony of His love. God bless you.

### ***Arabic***

I cordially greet Arabic-speaking pilgrims, in particular those from the Holy Land, Jordan and the Middle East. In the face of Christ crucified we discover the richness of the love of God, Who made Himself poor to enrich us, whereas idols impoverish us and increasingly render us slaves. No freedom is true unless we free ourselves first from the slavery of idols, so as to welcome Christ Who makes us children of the one God and brothers among ourselves. May the Lord bless you and protect you from the evil one!

### ***Polish***

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Brothers and sisters, in Christ denuded and despised, the face of the true God is revealed, the glory of love and not that of glittering deception. "By His wounds we are healed" (Is 53: 5). Always, and especially when difficulties arise and perspectives are missing, remember that in Christ our fragility is no longer a curse, but a place of encounter with the Father and the source of a new force from above. May His blessing always be with you!

### ***Italian***

Dear Italian-speaking pilgrims: welcome!

I am pleased to welcome the Capuchin Sisters of the Holy Family.

I greet the parish groups, the Good Shepherd Institute of Piacenza, the Scout Group of Palermo, the participants

in the "Sacred Heart" school camp in Padua, the "Waiting for an Angel" Association and the members of the "Torchlight for Peace" of Val Brembilla: I hope that you may all spread the joy of the Gospel with credible enthusiasm.

I address a particular thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and the newlyweds. Today is the liturgical memorial of Saint Dominic of Guzmán, founder of the Order of Preachers. May His example as a faithful servant of Christ and His Church be an encouragement and stimulus for us all. A special wish to those who bear this name. And tomorrow, in Europe, we celebrate the feast of Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein). A martyr, a woman of consistency, a woman who sought God with honesty, with love and a woman martyred to her Jewish and Christian people. May she, patroness of Europe, pray and protect Europe. God bless you all!

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