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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.30 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 Commandments, focusing on the theme "Do not steal" (Bible reading: from the *First Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to Timothy*, 6, 7-10).

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!

Continuing the explanation of the Decalogue, today we arrive at the Seventh Word: "*Do not steal*".

When we listen to this commandment, we think of the theme of theft and respect for the property of others. There exists no culture in which theft and prevarication of goods are legal; indeed, human sensibility is very susceptible to the defence of possession.

But it is worth opening up to a broader reading of this Word, focusing on the theme of the ownership of goods in the light of Christian wisdom.

The social doctrine of the Church refers to the *universal destination of goods*. What does this mean? Let us listen to what the Catechism tells us. “

In the beginning God entrusted the earth and its resources to the common stewardship of mankind to take care of them, master them by labour, and enjoy their fruits. The goods of creation are destined for the whole human race” (2402). And again: “The universal destination of goods remains primordial, even if the promotion of the common good requires respect for the right to private property and its exercise” (2403) [i].

However, Providence has not provided for a world in “series”; there are differences, different conditions, different cultures, so that we can live by providing for each other. The world is rich in resources to ensure all primary goods. And yet many live in scandalous poverty, and resources, used without criterion, are deteriorating. But there is just one world! There is just one humanity! [ii] The wealth of the world, today, is in the hands of the minority, of the few, and poverty, or rather misery and suffering, is of many, of the majority.

If there is hunger on earth, it is not because there is a lack of food! Rather, for the needs of the market at times we even destroy it and throw it away. What is lacking is free and far-sighted enterprise, that ensures adequate production, with a fraternal approach, ensuring equitable distribution. Again, the Catechism tells us: “In his use of things man should regard the external goods he legitimately owns not merely as exclusive to himself but common to others also, in the sense that they can benefit others as well as himself” (2404). Every wealth, to be good, must have a social dimension.

From this perspective, there appears the positive and broader meaning of the commandment “Do not steal”. The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence” (*ibid*). No-one is the absolute master of goods: he is an administrator of goods. Possession is a *responsibility*: “But I am rich in everything...” This is a responsibility that you have. And every property removed from the logic of God’s Providence is betrayed: it is betrayed in the deepest sense. That which I truly possess is what I know how to give. This is the measure for valuing whether I succeed in managing wealth, if I do it well or badly; this word is important: that which I truly possess is what I know how to give. If I know how to give, I am open, then I am rich not only in what I possess, but also in generosity, generosity also as a duty to give wealth, so that all can participate in it. Indeed, if I do not succeed in giving something it is because that thing owns me, it has power over me and I am a slave to it. The possession of goods is an opportunity to multiply them with creativity and to use them with generosity, and in this way grow in charity and in freedom.

Christ Himself, while “being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage” (*Phil 2: 6-7*), and He enriched us with His poverty (cf. *2 Cor 8, 9*).

Although humanity strives to *have more*, God redeems it by making Himself poor: that Crucified Man paid an inestimable ransom on behalf of God the Father, “rich in mercy” (*Eph 2: 4*; cf. *James 5: 11*). It is not property that makes us rich, but love. Very often we hear that the people of God say, “The devil enters through the pockets”. We start with love for money, the hunger to possess; then vanity comes: “Ah, I am rich and I am proud of it”; and in the end, pride and arrogance. This is the way the devil acts in us. But the gate of entry is always the pockets.

Dear brothers and sisters, once again Jesus Christ reveals to us the full meaning of the Scriptures. “*Do not steal*” means: love with your property, make the most of your means to love as you can. In this way your life becomes good and possession truly becomes a gift. Because life is not the time for possessing, but for loving. Thank you.

[i] Cf. Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 67: Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for

subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. “The earth is the Lord’s” (Ps 24:1); to him belongs “the earth with all that is within it” (Dt 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me” (Lev 25:23).

[ii] Cf. Saint Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, 17: “Each man is also a member of society; hence he belongs to the community of man. It is not just certain individuals but all men who are called to further the development of human society as a whole. ... We are the heirs of earlier generations, and we reap benefits from the efforts of our contemporaries; we are under obligation to all men. Therefore we cannot disregard the welfare of those who will come after us to increase the human family. The reality of human solidarity brings us not only benefits but also obligations”.

Greetings in various languages

French

I cordially greet French-speaking pilgrims, in particular the *Collège Fénelon-Sainte Marie* of Paris. Our life is not made for us to possess, but to love. Let us strive, brothers and sisters, to do good, as far as possible, with the goods we possess. Our life will be good and our goods will become a gift for everyone. God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially those from Denmark, Japan, the Philippines and the United States of America. I offer a special greeting to the participants in the first International Men’s Meeting here in Rome. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord’s blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

German

With affection I greet the German-speaking pilgrims, in particular the Friends of the Vatican Secret Archives of Bamberg and the community of *Mädchenrealschule Volkach*. May the Lord give you the riches and the joy of a life spent in the spirit of the gift of oneself and of what one possesses. Sharing our goods with others makes us not poor, but rich in what really matters, rich in love. May the Lord bless you!

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. May the Lord Jesus grant that we understand life is not a time to possess, but to love with our goods, because we only have what we know how to give. May the Virgin Mary protect us and intercede for us. Thank you.

Portuguese

I warmly greet the various groups from Brazil and Portugal, together with all Portuguese-speaking pilgrims: thank you for your presence, and above all for your prayers! I entrust your steps to the Virgin Mary, aimed at the service of growth in the human and divine dignity of our brothers and sisters. May the Lord’s blessing descend upon you and your families. Thank you.

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arab-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and

sisters, love with your goods, take advantage of your means to love as you can. Because life is not time to possess, but to love. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. Dear brothers and sisters, next Sunday will be the 100th anniversary of the independence of Poland. On this occasion I join you and all your countrymen in the prayer of thanksgiving. I hope the Polish people may live the gift of freedom in peace and prosperity, building a happy future for their country, in the union based on the spiritual heritage of their ancestors and fraternal love. May you always be accompanied by the protection of Mary Queen of Poland and by God's blessing!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with lay collaborators; parish groups, especially that of Andria, and the "Saint Pius X" Faculty of Canon Law of Venice, on the 10th anniversary of its founding, accompanied by the Patriarch, Msgr. Francesco Moraglia.

I greet the national coordination centre for Italian costumes; the Association of Wine and Flavours of the Hills of Forlì and Cesena; the "Flying House" Association of Gazzo Veronese; the *San Marco dei Cavoti* Comprehensive Institute, and the group of students of the "Azuolynas" high school of Klaipeda.

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

The day after tomorrow we will celebrate the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica, the Cathedral of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope's Cathedral. Pray for me always to confirm brothers in the faith. Thank you.
