



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 13 June 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today is the Feast of Saint Anthony of Padua. Who among you is named Anthony? A round of applause for all the 'Anthonys'.

Today, we shall begin a new series of catecheses on the theme of the Commandments. The Commandments of the Law of God. To introduce it, let us draw from the passage just heard: the encounter between Jesus and a man — he is a young man — who, on his knees, asks Jesus how he can inherit eternal life (cf. Mk 10:17-21). And in that question is the challenge of every life, ours too: the desire for a full, infinite life. What must we do to achieve it? What path must we take? To truly live, to live a noble life.... How many young people try to 'live' and destroy themselves by following things that are fleeting.

Some think that it would be better to extinguish this impulse — the impulse to live — because it is dangerous. I would like to say, especially to young people: our worst enemy is not practical problems, no matter how serious and dramatic: life's greatest danger is a poor spirit of adaptation which is neither meekness nor humility, but *mediocrity, cowardice*.^[1] Is a mediocre young person a youth with a future or not? No! He or she remains there, will not grow, will not have success. Mediocrity or cowardice. Those young people who are afraid of everything: 'No, this is how I am...'. These young people will not move forward. Meekness, strength, and not cowardice, not mediocrity.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati — he was a young man — used to say that one must live, not just get by. ^[2] The mediocre just get by, living by their life force. One must ask the heavenly Father, for today's young people, for the gift of a healthy *restlessness*. But, at home, in your homes, in

every family, when a young person is seen sitting idle all day, at times mom and dad wonder: “is he sick; is something wrong?”, and they take him to the doctor. The life of young people is about moving forward, being restless, healthy restlessness, the capacity not to be content with a life without beauty, without colour. If young people are not hungry for an authentic life, I wonder, where will humanity end up? Where will humanity go with young people who are idle and not restless?

The question of that man in the Gospel passage that we have heard is inside of each of us: how can we find life, life in abundance, happiness? Jesus answers: “*You know the commandments*” (v. 19), and cites part of the Ten Commandments. It is a pedagogical process, by which Jesus wishes to lead to an exact place; in fact it is already clear, from that man’s question, that he does not have a full life; he seeks more and is restless. Thus, what does he need in order to understand? He says: “Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth” (v. 20).

How do we pass from *youth* to *maturity*? When we begin to *accept our own limitations*. We become adults when we ‘relativize’ and become aware of ‘what is lacking’ (cf. v. 21). This man is forced to acknowledge that everything he is able to “do” does not rise above a “ceiling”; it does not exceed a margin.

How great it is to be men and women! How precious our existence is! Yet, there is a truth that, in the history of the last centuries, mankind has often rejected, with tragic consequences: the truth of our limitations.

In the Gospel Jesus says something that can help us: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to *fulfil them*” (Mt 5:17). The Lord Jesus gives us the fulfilment; he came for this. That man had to come to the brink, where he had to take a decisive leap, where the possibility was presented to stop living for himself, for his own deeds, for his own goods and — precisely because he lacked a full life — to leave everything to follow the Lord.^[3] Clearly, in Jesus’ final — immense, wonderful — invitation, there is no proposal of poverty, but of wealth, of the true richness: “*You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me*” (Mk 10:21).

Being able to choose between an original and a copy, who would choose the copy? Here is the challenge: finding life’s original, not the copy. Jesus does not offer surrogates, but *true* life, *true* love, *true* richness! How will young people be able to follow us in faith if they do not see us choose the original, if they see us adjusting to half measures? It is awful to find half-measure Christians, — allow me the word — ‘dwarf’ Christians; they grow to a certain height and no more; Christians with a miniaturized, closed heart. It is awful to find this. We need the example of someone who invites me to a ‘*beyond*’, a ‘*plus*’, to grow a little. Saint Ignatius called it the ‘*magis*’, “the fire, the fervour of action that rouses us from slumber”.^[4]

The path of what is lacking passes through what there is. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law nor the Prophets, but to fulfil. We must start from reality in order to take the leap into '*what we lack*'. We must scrutinize the ordinary in order to open ourselves to the extraordinary.

In these catecheses we will take the two tablets of Moses as Christians, taking Jesus' hand, in order to pass from the illusions of youth to the treasure that is in heaven, walking behind Him. We will discover, in each of these laws, ancient and wise, the door opened by the Father who is in heaven so that the Lord Jesus, who has crossed the threshold, may lead us to true life. His life. The life of the children of God.

Special Greetings

Tomorrow the Football World Cup will open in Russia. I would like to extend my cordial greeting to the players and to the organizers as well as to those who are following, through the means of social communications, this event which surpasses every border.

May this important sporting event be an occasion of encounter, dialogue and fraternity among different cultures and religions, fostering solidarity and peace among the nations.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Scotland, Malta, Australia, Indonesia, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, the Philippines, Canada 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!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today is the memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua, Doctor of the Church and Patron of the Poor. May he teach you the beauty of authentic and freely given love; only by loving as He loved, will no one around you feel marginalized and, at the same time, will you yourselves feel ever stronger in the trials of life.

[1] The Fathers speak of *cowardice (oligopsychia)*. Saint John Damascene defines it as "the fear of completing an action" (*Exact exposition of the Orthodox faith*, ii, 15) and Saint John Climacus adds that "cowardice is a childish disposition, in an old, vainglorious soul" (*Ladder of Divine Ascent*, xxi, 2).

[2] Cf. *Letter to Isidoro Bonini*, 27 February 1925.

[3] "The eye was created for light, the ear for sounds, each thing for its particular purpose, and the desire of the soul for soaring toward Christ" (Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ*, ii, 90).

[4] Address to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus, 24 October 2016: “It is a *magis*, that *plus* that leads Ignatius to undertake initiatives, to follow them through, and to evaluate their real impact on peoples’ lives in matters of faith, justice, mercy, and charity”.