



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 12 September 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters Good morning!

In today's catechesis we return again to the *third Commandment*, the one regarding the day of rest. The Decalogue proclaimed in the Book of Exodus is repeated in the Book of Deuteronomy almost identically, except for this Third Word in which a precious difference appears: whereas in Exodus the motive for rest is the *blessing of creation*, in Deuteronomy, it commemorates the *end of slavery*. On this day, the slave has to rest just like the owner, to celebrate the memory of the Passover of liberation.

Indeed by definition, slaves cannot rest. But there are many forms of slavery, both interior and external constraints. There are exterior coercions such as oppression, lives seized by violence and other types of injustice. There are interior prisons which are for example, mental blocks, complexes, character limitations and more. Is there rest under these conditions? Can a recluse or an oppressed man or woman be free? And can a person who is tormented by inner difficulties be free?

Actually, there are people who experience great freedom of spirit even in prison. Let us think for example of Saint Maximilian Kolbe or Cardinal Van Thuan who transformed dark oppression into places of light. There are also people marked by great interior fragility who, however, know about the rest of mercy and how to transmit this. God's mercy frees us. And when you encounter God's mercy, you feel great interior freedom and you are also able to transmit it. This is why it is important to open oneself to God's mercy so as not to be slaves to ourselves.

What then is true freedom? Does it consist, perhaps, in the freedom of choice? Certainly this is part of freedom and we commit ourselves to ensure this to every man and woman (cf. [Second](#)

Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 73). But we very well know that being able to do what one wants is not enough to be truly free nor even to be happy. True freedom is much more.

Indeed there is slavery which shackles more than a prison, more than a panic attack, more than any other kind of imposition: it is *slavery to one's ego*.^[1] Those people who spend the whole day in front of the mirror in order to see their ego. And one's own ego is taller than one's body. They are slaves to their ego. One's ego can become a slave driver that tortures a person wherever he or she is, and causes that person the greatest oppression, namely "*sin*", which is not the banal breach of a code, but the failure of existence and the condition of slavery (cf. Jn 8:34).^[2] In the end, the ego is sin, saying: "I want to do this and I do not care if there is a limit, if there is a commandment, and I do not even care if there is love".

Let us think, for example of ego in human passions: the glutton, the lustful, the miserly, the quick tempered, the envious, the bitter, the arrogant — and so forth — they are slaves to their vices which oppress and torment them. There is no relief for the greedy because gluttony is the hypocrisy of the stomach that is full but makes one think it is empty. The hypocritical stomach makes one a glutton. We are slaves to the hypocritical stomach. There is no respite for the glutton and the lustful who must live for pleasure; the anxiety of possession destroys the miser; they always hoard money, hurting others; the fire of anger and the woodworm of envy ruin relationships. Writers say that envy makes the body and soul yellow, like a person with hepatitis: they turn yellow. The envious have a yellow soul because they can never have the fresh complexion of a healthy soul. Envy destroys. Bitterness which eschews all effort and makes life impossible; arrogant egocentricity; that ego I was talking about digs a trench between itself and others.

Dear brothers and sisters, who then is the real slave? Who is the one who knows no rest? Those who are not capable of love! And all these vices, these sins, this egoism distance us from love and they make us unable to love. We are our own slaves and we cannot love because love is always outgoing.

The third Commandment which invites us to celebrate freedom with rest is, for us Christians, a prophecy of the Lord Jesus who breaks the interior slavery of sin, in order to make mankind capable of loving. True love is true freedom: it detaches us from possession, rebuilds relationships, knows how to welcome and value others, transforms all toil into a joyful gift and makes us capable of communion. Love makes people free even in prison, even if one is weak and limited.

This is the freedom that we receive from our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Nigeria, Australia, Malaysia, Canada and the United States of America. In particular I greet the International Young Catholic Students meeting in Rome in preparation for the forthcoming [Synod on Young People](#). I also greet the journalists and teachers taking part in a seminar organized by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. I welcome too the members of the Green Affordable Housing Project from the United States. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. To *newlyweds* I say that they are brave because these days it takes courage to get married. And they are good for doing this. Today is the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Mary. All we Christians are called to understand in the name of Mary, the grand project that God had for this sublime creature and, at the same time, the answer of love which, as Mother, she gave to her Son Jesus by contributing to his work of salvation, sparing no effort.

[1] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1733: "The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'the slavery of sin'".

[2] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1739: "Freedom and sin. Man's freedom is limited and fallible. In fact, man failed. He freely sinned. By refusing God's plan of love, he deceived himself and became a slave to sin. This first alienation engendered a multitude of others. From its outset, human history attests the wretchedness and oppression born of the human heart in consequence of the abuse of freedom".