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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 kill*" according to Jesus (Bible reading: from the Gospel according to Matthew, 5: 21-24).

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!

Today I would like to continue the catechesis on the Fifth Word of the Decalogue, "*Do not kill*". We have already unlined how this commandment reveals that in the eyes of God, human life is precious, sacred and inviolable. No-one can disregard the life of others or his own; indeed man carries within him the image of God and is the object of His infinite love, whatever the condition may be in which he is called to existence.

In the Gospel reading we have just listened to, Jesus reveals to us an even deeper meaning to this commandment. He affirms that, before God's tribunal, even anger against a brother is a form of homicide. For this reason the apostle John writes: "Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer" (*1 Jn 3: 15*). But Jesus does not stop at this, and by the same logic He adds that even insults and disdain can kill. And we are accustomed to insulting, it is true. And an insult comes as easily to us as if it were a breath. And Jesus says to us, "Stop, because the insult hurts, it kills". Disdain. "But I ... this people, I disdain them". And this is a way of killing the dignity of a person. It would be good if this teaching of Jesus entered into the mind and heart, and each one of us said: "Do not insult anyone ever again". It would be a good intention, because Jesus tells us: "Look, if you disdain, if you insult, if you hate, this is murder".

No human code of law equates such different acts by assigning them the same degree of judgment. And coherently Jesus even invites us to interrupt the offering of the sacrifice in the temple if we remember that a brother is offended by us, to go and look for him and reconcile with him. We too, when we go to Mass, should have this attitude of reconciliation with the people we have had problems with. Even if we thought bad about them, we insulted them. But many times, while we wait for the priest to say Mass, we chat and talk badly about the others. But this must not be done. Think of the gravity of the insult, of contempt, of hatred: Jesus puts them on the line of killing.

What does Jesus mean by extending the field of the Fifth Word to this point? Man has a noble life, very sensitive, and possesses a hidden self no less important than his physical being. Indeed, an inappropriate sentence is enough to offend the innocence of a child. A gesture of coldness is enough to hurt a woman. To break the heart of a young person is enough to deny his trust. To annihilate a man, just ignore him. Indifference kills. It is like saying to the other person: "You are a dead man for me", because you killed him in your heart. Not to love is the first step to killing; and *not killing* is the first step to love.

In the Bible, at the beginning, we read that terrible phrase that came out of the mouth of the first murderer, Cain, after the Lord asked him where his brother is. Cain replies: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen 4: 9*). [1] This is how killers: "It does not concern me", "It is your business, not mine" and similar things. Let us try to answer this question: are we our brothers' keepers? Yes, we are! We are each other's keepers! And this is the path of life, it is the path of non-killing.

Human life needs love. And what is authentic love? It is what Christ showed us, that is, mercy. The love we cannot do without is the one that forgives, which welcomes those who have harmed us. None of us can survive without mercy, we all need forgiveness. So, if killing means destroying, suppressing, eliminating someone, then *not killing* will mean curing, valuing, including. And also forgiving.

No one can deceive himself by thinking, "I'm fine because I do not do anything wrong". A mineral or a plant has this kind of existence, but a man does not. A person – a man or a woman – no. More is demanded of a man or woman. There is good to be done, prepared for each of us, each to his own, which makes us truly ourselves. "Do not kill" is an appeal to love and mercy, it is a call to living according to the Lord Jesus Who gave His life for us and rose for us. Once we all repeated, here in the Square, a phrase of a saint on this. Perhaps it will help us: "Doing no harm is a good thing. But not doing good is not good". We must always do good. We must go further.

He, the Lord, Who incarnating Himself sanctified our existence; He, Who with His blood made it priceless; He, "the author of life" (*Acts 3: 15*), thanks to Whom each person is a gift from the Father. In him, in His love stronger than death, and through the power of the Spirit that the Father gives us, we can accept the Word "*Do not kill*" as the most important and essential appeal: that is, not killing means a call to love.

Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2259: "In the account of Abel's murder by his brother Cain, Scripture reveals the presence of anger and envy in man, consequences of original sin, from the beginning of human history. Man has become the enemy of his fellow man. God declares the wickedness of this fratricide: 'What have you done? the voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. and now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand' (*Gen 4: 10-11*)".

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France and various Francophone countries, especially the pilgrims of Chambéry and Nancy, with their bishops: Msgr. Ballot and Msgr. Papin; young people from Versailles, Paris, Fougères, Bucquoy, Rouen and Evreux, as well as the pilgrims of Namur. We can welcome in Jesus, in His love stronger than death, and in the gift of the Spirit of the Father, the commandment “Do not kill”. It is the most important and essential appeal of our lives: the call to love! God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, particularly those from England, Scotland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Indonesia, Canada and the United States of America. In this month dedicated to praying the rosary, may Our Lady of the Rosary accompany you, and upon all of you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

German

I am pleased to welcome German-speaking pilgrims. I greet in particular the “Schützen” of Drolshagen-Schreibershof and the various groups of young people, especially the *Maria Ward Realschule Augsburg*, the *Liebfrauenschule Berlin*, the ministers of St. Remigius Viersen and the pilgrimage of the ministers of the archdiocese of Cologne. Many of you have come, thank you! May the Lord help you grow in love and always protect you.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. May the Lord Jesus, author of life, grant us to understand that the commandment “Do not kill” is, first of all, a call to love and mercy, an invitation to live as He did, He Who died for us and rose again. Holy Mary, Mother of Mercy, protect us and intercede for us. Thank you.

Portuguese

I greet the pilgrims from Portugal and Brazil, especially the faithful from Itu, Várzea Paulista and Tubarão. Dear friends, taking care of brothers, especially those in need or discarded by the throwaway culture, means believing that each man and woman is a gift from God. Let us spare no effort in ensuring that all people may always feel welcomed and loved in our Christian communities. God bless you!

Arabic

I cordially greet the Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Syria, Iraq and the Middle East. Jesus made it clear that the commandment of “not killing” also includes all acts and words that offend and humiliate others, diminishing their dignity, such as anger, slander and mistreatment. Jesus presented this commandment that goes beyond the simple prohibition of killing, to open it to the wide space of love: not killing means love and do as you will. May the Lord bless you all and protect you from the evil one!

Polish

I welcome Polish pilgrims. Yesterday we celebrated forty years since the election of Karol Wojtyła, Saint John Paul II, to the See of Peter. Applause for Saint John Paul II! The words he spoke on the day of the inauguration of his pontificate are always current: Do not be afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ!" May they continue to inspire your personal, family and social life; they are an encouragement to follow Christ faithfully, to see His presence in the world and in others, especially in the poor and needy. In fact, as the Pope of Polish lineage taught, the man is the way of the Church. I bless you from the heart.

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the Capitulars of the Missionary Benedictines of Tutzing and the participants in the World Conference of Radio Maria.

I greet the parish groups; the military and civil personnel of the Air Force Logistic Command; the Delegation of the "People of the Family"; the Italian Centre for aid in childhood; the Hematopoietic Child Association and the Villa San Francesco Community.

I address a special thought to the young, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds. Today is the liturgical memorial of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr in Rome. We learn from this holy bishop of ancient Syria to courageously bear witness to our faith. By his intercession, may the Lord give each of us the strength of perseverance, despite adversity and persecution.
