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General Audience

Catechesis of the Holy Father

Greetings in various languages

This morning's General Audience took place at 9.25 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 Ten Commandments, focusing on the theme "You shall not bear false witness" (cf. from the Gospel according to Matthew, 5: 14-16).

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!

In today's catechesis we will address the Eighth Word of the Decalogue: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour".

This commandment - says the Catechism - "forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others" (2464). Living in non-authentic communications is serious because it prevents relationships and therefore

prevents love. Where there is a lie there is no love, there cannot be love. And when we talk about communication between people we mean not only words, but also gestures, attitudes, even silences and absences. A person speaks with everything he is and what he does. We are all in communication, always. We all live by communicating and we are constantly poised between truth and falsehood.

But what does it mean to *tell the truth*? Does it mean being honest? Or exact? In reality, this is not enough, because one can be sincerely mistaken, or one can be precise in detail but not grasp the meaning of the whole. Sometimes we justify ourselves by saying, "But I said what I felt!" Yes, but you have rendered your point of view absolute. Or: "I only told the truth!". Maybe, but you've revealed some personal or confidential facts. How often chatter destroys communion as a result of inappropriateness or lack of delicacy! Or rather, gossip kills, and this was said by the apostle James in his Letter. Gossips are people who kill: they kill others, because the tongue kills like a knife. Be careful! A gossip is a terrorist, because with his tongue he throws a bomb and then goes away calmly, but the thing that the bomb says destroys the reputation of others. Do not forget: to gossip is to kill.

But then: what is the truth? This is the question asked by Pilate, just as Jesus, in front of him, fulfilled the eighth commandment (cf. *Jn 18: 38*). In fact, the words "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour" belong to the forensic language. The Gospels culminate in the account of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus; and this is the story of a trial, of the execution of the sentence and of an unheard-of consequence.

When asked by Pilate, Jesus says: "the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth" (*Jn 18:37*). And this "witness" Jesus gives with His passion, and with His death. The evangelist Mark narrates that "the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way He breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son (15.39). Yes, because He was consistent, He was consistent: with that way of dying, Jesus manifests the Father, His merciful and faithful love.

Truth finds its full realization in the very person of Jesus (cf. *Jn 14: 6*), in His way of living and dying, fruit of His relationship with the Father. This existence as children of God, He, risen, also gives it to us by sending the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth, who attests to our hearts that God is our Father (cf. *Rom 8:16*).

In every action man, people, affirm or deny this truth. From small everyday situations to the most demanding choices. But it is the same logic, always: what parents and grandparents teach us when they tell us not to lie.

Let us ask ourselves: what truth do the works of us Christians attest, our words, and our choices? Everyone can ask themselves: am I a witness to the truth, or am more or less a liar disguised as a *truthful* person? Everyone is asked. Christians are not exceptional men and women. We are, however, children of the heavenly Father, Who is good and does not disappoint us, and puts in His heart the love for brothers. This truth is not expressed so much in speech, it is a way of existing, a way of life and is seen in every single act (cf. *James 2:18*). This man is a *true* man, that woman is a *real* woman: you see. But why, if you do not open your mouth? But he behaves like a true person, she behaves like a true person. He tells the truth, he acts with the truth. A good way for us to live.

Truth is the marvellous revelation of God, of His Father's face, it is His boundless love. This truth corresponds to human reason but overcomes it infinitely, because it is a gift that has descended upon earth and was incarnated in the crucified and risen Christ; it is made visible by those who belong to Him and shows His same attitudes.

Not to bear false witness means to live as a child of God, Who never, never denies Himself, never tells lies; to live as children of God, letting the great truth emerge in every act: that God is Father and we can trust Him. I trust God: this is the great truth. From our trust in God, who is a Father and loves me, loves us, my truth is born, being truthful and not a liar.

Greetings in various languages

French

I am pleased to greet pilgrims from France and the various Francophone countries, in particular the members of the National Congress of Directors of Pilgrimages, accompanied by the archbishop of Rouen, Msgr. Lebrun; the parish of Herrlisheim, the chaplaincy of the hospitals of the diocese of Vannes, as well as the high school students of the Gironde. We ask the Spirit of Truth to help us not to bear false witness and to live as children of God. United to Jesus Christ, we show in each of our actions that God is Father and that we can trust Him! God bless you!

English

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially those from England, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. I also welcome the many groups of students present, particularly those from the Australian Catholic University. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

German

A warm welcome to German-speaking brothers and sisters. In particular I greet the directors and collaborators of Missio Austria. Every person is called to sincerity and truthfulness in acting and speaking. Let us follow the Lord Jesus Christ Who reveals to us the truth of God, Who is the Father, and let us live as true children of God. May the Holy Spirit make you strong in grace and in truth.

Spanish

I cordially greet Spanish-speaking pilgrims from Spain and Latin America. I encourage you to live as children who know that God loves you, so with that awareness you can increasingly build a society based on sincerity and truth. God bless you. Thank you.

Portuguese

Dear friends from Brazil and Portugal: welcome! Let us ask the Lord for the power of the Holy Spirit so that, invigorated by His gifts, we can remain steadfast in faith, bearing joyful witness to the Christian truth. God bless you!

Arabic

I extend a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially those from the Middle East! Dear brothers and sisters, live as children of God, letting it show in every action that God is Father and that you can trust Him. May the Lord bless you!

Polish

I cordially greet Polish pilgrims. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that "Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy" (2505). May this help us grow in fraternal love, in justice and in the courageous confession of faith. Praised be Jesus Christ!

Italian

I extend a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.

I am pleased to welcome the Religious of the *Istituto Figli di Sant'Anna*; the Chorales of the diocese of Saluzzo, with their bishop, Msgr. Cristiano Bodo and the Fraternity of the *Casa del Giovane* in Pavia, with the bishop Msgr. Corrado Sanguineti, on the 25th anniversary of the death of the founder, Fr. Enzo Boschetti.

I greet the Italian Transport Companies Association; the Little Giants in NIC (Neonatal Intensive Care) Association from Syracuse; the Italian Union of the blind and partially sighted from Potenza; the Nova Facility Group from Treviso; and the volunteers of the *Verona Minor Hierusalem* Project.

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

I hope for all of you that your pilgrimage to Rome may strengthen your bond with the City of the Apostles, and the joy of belonging to the Catholic Church!
