

# **"Progress in society requires giving oneself from the heart"**

In his 30 September general audience, Pope Francis continued his catechesis on the Church's social teaching, stressing the need "to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus."

09/30/2020

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!*

In recent weeks we have reflected together, in the light of the Gospel, on how to heal the world that is suffering from a malaise that the pandemic has highlighted and accentuated. The malaise was already there: the pandemic highlighted it more, it accentuated it. We have walked the paths of dignity, solidarity and subsidiarity, paths that are essential to promote human dignity and the common good. And as disciples of Jesus, we have proposed to follow in His steps, opting for the poor, rethinking the use of material goods and taking care of our common home. In the midst of the pandemic that afflicts us, we have anchored ourselves to the principles of the social doctrine of the Church, letting ourselves be guided by faith, by hope and by charity. Here we have found solid help so as to be transformers who dream big, who are not stopped by the meanness that divides and hurts,

but who encourage the generation of a new and better world.

I hope this journey will not come to an end with this catechesis of mine, but rather that we may be able to continue to walk together, to “keep our eyes fixed on Jesus” (*Heb 12:2*), as we heard at the beginning; our eyes fixed on Jesus, who saves and heals the world. As the Gospel shows us, Jesus healed the sick of every type (see *Mt 9:35*), He gave sight to the blind, the word to the mute, hearing to the deaf. And when He cured diseases and physical infirmity, He also healed the spirit by forgiving sins, because Jesus always forgives, as well as “social pains” by including the marginalised (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1421). Jesus, who renews and reconciles every creature (see *2 Cor 5:17*; *Col 1:19-20*), gives us the gifts necessary to love and heal as He knew how to do (see *Lk 10:1-9*; *Jn 15:9-17*), to take care of

all without distinction on the basis of race, language or nation.

So that this may truly happen, we need to contemplate and appreciate the beauty of every human being and every creature. We were conceived in the heart of God (see *Eph* 1:3-5). “Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary”. [1] Furthermore, every creature has something to say to us about God the creator (see Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 69, 239). Acknowledging this truth and giving thanks for the intimate bonds in our universal communion with all people and all creatures activates “generous care, full of tenderness” (*ibid.*, 220). And it also helps us to recognise Christ present in our poor and suffering brothers and sisters, to encounter them and to listen to their cry and the cry of the earth that echoes it (see *ibid.*, 49).

Inwardly mobilised by these cries that demand of us another course (see *ibid.*, 53), that demand we change, we will be able to contribute to the restoration of relations with our gifts and capacities (cf. *ibid.*, 19). We will be able to regenerate society and not return to so-called “normality”, which is an ailing normality, which was ailing before the pandemic: the pandemic highlighted it! “Now we return to normality”: no, this will not do, because this normality was sick with injustice, inequality and environmental degradation. The normality to which we are called is that of the Kingdom of God, where “the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor” (*Mt 11:5*). And nobody plays dumb by looking the other way. This is what we have to do in order

to change. In the normality of the Kingdom of God, there is bread for all and more to spare, social organisation is based on contributing, sharing and distributing, not on possessing, excluding and accumulating (see *Mt 14:13-21*).

The gesture that enables progress in a society, a family, a neighbourhood, or a city, all of them, is to give oneself, to give, which is not giving alms, but to give from the heart. A gesture that distances us from selfishness and the eagerness to possess. But the Christian way of doing this is not a mechanical way: it is a human way. We will never be able to emerge from the crisis that has been highlighted by the pandemic, mechanically, with new tools - which are very important, they allow us to move forward, and we must not be afraid of them - but knowing that even the most

sophisticated means, able to do many things, are incapable of one thing: tenderness. And tenderness is the very sign of Jesus' presence.

Approaching others in order to walk together, to heal, to help, to sacrifice oneself for others.

So it is important, that normality of the Kingdom of God: there is bread for everyone, social organisation is based on contributing, sharing and distributing, with tenderness; not on possessing, excluding and accumulating. Because at the end of life, we will not take anything with us into the other life!

A small virus continues to cause deep wounds and to expose our physical, social and spiritual vulnerabilities. It has laid bare the great inequality that reigns in the world: inequality of opportunity, inequality of goods, inequality of access to health care, inequality of technology, education:

millions of children cannot go to school, and so the list goes on. These injustices are neither natural nor inevitable. They are the work of man, they come from a model of growth detached from the deepest values. Food waste: with that waste one can feed others. And this has made many people lose hope and has increased uncertainty and anguish. That is why, to come out of the pandemic, we must find the cure not only for the *coronavirus* -- which is important! -- but also for the great human and socio-economic *viruses*. They must not be concealed or whitewashed so they cannot be seen. And certainly we cannot expect the economic model that underlies unfair and unsustainable development to solve our problems. It has not and will not, because it cannot do so, even though some false prophets continue to promise the “trickle-down” that never comes.<sup>[2]</sup> You have heard yourselves, the

theory of the glass: it is important that the glass is full, and then overflows to the poor and to others, and they receive wealth. But there is a phenomenon: the glass starts to fill up and when it is almost full it grows, it grows and it grows, and never overflows. We must be careful.

We need to set to work urgently to generate good policies, to design systems of social organisation that reward participation, care and generosity, rather than indifference, exploitation and particular interests. We must go ahead with tenderness. A fair and equitable society is a healthier society. A participatory society -- where the “last” are taken into account just like the “first” -- strengthens communion. A society where diversity is respected is much more resistant to any kind of virus.

Let us place this healing journey under the protection of the Virgin

Mary, Our Lady of Health. May she, who carried Jesus in her womb, help us to be trustful. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we can work together for the Kingdom of God that Christ inaugurated in this world by coming among us. It is a Kingdom of light in the midst of darkness, of justice in the midst of so many outrages, of joy in the midst of so much pain, of healing and of salvation in the midst of sickness and death, of tenderness in the midst of hatred. May God grant us to “viralise” *love* and to “globalise” *hope* in the light of *faith*.

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[1] Benedict XVI, *Homily for the beginning of the Petrine ministry* (24 April 2005); see Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 65.

[2] “*Trickle-down effect*” in English, “*derrame*” in Spanish (see Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 54).

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