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“Only when we speak with God can we also speak about Him”

In his 14 January general audience, Pope Leo XIV continued the catechetical cycle on the Second Vatican Council, speaking about the dogmatic constitution “Dei Verbum” and the way Jesus Christ transforms our relationship with God.

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

We have started the cycle of catechesis on Vatican Council II. Today we will begin to look more closely at the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, on the divine Revelation. It is one of the most beautiful and important of the Council and, to introduce it, it may be helpful to recall the words of Jesus: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you” (*Jn* 15:15). This is a fundamental point of Christian faith, which *Dei Verbum* reminds us of: Jesus Christ radically transforms man’s relationship with God, which is henceforth a relationship of friendship. Therefore, the only condition of the new covenant is love.

Saint Augustine, commenting on this passage of the Fourth Gospel, insists on the perspective of grace, which alone can make us friends of God in his Son (*Commentary on the Gospel of John, Homily 86*). Indeed, an ancient motto stated: “*Amicitia aut pares invenit, aut facit,*” “friendship is born between equals, or makes them so.” We are not equal to God, but God himself makes us similar to Him in his Son.

For this reason, as we can see in all the Scripture, in the Covenant there is a first moment of distance, in which the pact between God and mankind always remains asymmetrical: God is God and we are creatures. However, with the coming of the Son in human flesh, the Covenant opens up to its final purpose: in Jesus, God makes us sons and daughters, and calls us to become like Him, albeit in our fragile humanity. Our resemblance to God,

then, is not reached through transgression and sin, as the serpent suggests to Eve (cf. *Gen* 3:5), but in our relationship with the Son made man.

The words of the Lord Jesus that we have recalled – “I have called you friends” – are reprised in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*, which affirms: “Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see *Col* 1:15; *1 Tim* 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see *Ex* 33:11; *Jn* 15:14-15) and lives among them (see *Bar* 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself” (no. 2). The God of Genesis already conversed with our first parents, engaging in dialogue with them (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 3); and when this dialogue was interrupted by sin, the Creator did not cease to seek an encounter with his creatures and to establish a covenant with them. In

the Christian Revelation, that is, when God became man in his Son in order to seek us out, the dialogue that had been interrupted is restored in a definitive manner: the Covenant is new and eternal, nothing can separate us from his love. The Revelation of God, then, has the dialogical nature of friendship and, as in the experience of human friendship, it does not tolerate silence, but is nurtured by the exchange of true words.

The Constitution *Dei Verbum* also reminds us of this: God speaks to us. It is important to recognize the difference between words and chatter: this latter stops at the surface and does not achieve communion between people, whereas in authentic relationships, the word serves not only to exchange information and news, but to reveal who we are. The word possesses a revelatory dimension that creates a

relationship with the other. In this way, by speaking to us, God reveals Himself to us as an Ally who invites us into friendship with Him.

From this perspective, the first attitude to cultivate is listening, so that the divine Word may penetrate our minds and our hearts; at the same time, we are required to speak with God, not to communicate to him what He already knows, but to reveal ourselves to ourselves.

Hence the need for prayer, in which we are called to live and to cultivate friendship with the Lord. This is achieved first of all in liturgical and community prayer, in which we do not decide what to hear from the Word of God, but it is He Himself who speaks to us through the Church; it is then achieved in personal prayer, which takes place in the interiority of the heart and mind. Time dedicated to prayer, meditation

and reflection cannot be lacking in the Christian's day and week. Only when we speak *with* God can we also speak *about* Him.

Our experience tells us that friendships can come to an end through a dramatic gesture of rupture, or because of a series of daily acts of neglect that erode the relationship until it is lost. If Jesus calls us to be friends, let us not leave this call unheeded. Let us welcome it, let us take care of this relationship, and we will discover that friendship with God is our salvation.

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