

"The Lord Jesus leads us into true life"

On Wednesday 13 June, Pope Francis began a series of catecheses on the role of the ten commandments in Christian life.

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Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Today is the feast of Saint Anthony of Padua. Who among you is called Anthony? An applause to all the

“Anthonies.” Today we will begin a new itinerary of catechesis. It will be on the theme of the Commandments. The Commandments of the law of God. To introduce it, let us take as a starting point the passage we have just heard: the encounter between Jesus and a man, he is a young man, who, on his knees, asks Him how he can inherit eternal life (cf. *Mk* 10: 17-21). And in that question there is the challenge of every existence: ours too: the desire for a full, infinite life. But how can we arrive at this? What path should we take? To live truly, to live a noble existence. How many young people seek to “live” and then destroy themselves in the pursuit of ephemeral things.

Some think that it is better to extinguish this impulse, the impulse to live, because it is dangerous. I would like to say, especially to the young: our worst enemy is not concrete problems, however serious

and dramatic they may be: the greatest danger in life is a poor spirit of adaptation that is not meekness or humility, but rather *mediocrity*, *pusillanimity*.^[1] Is a mediocre young person a young person with a future, or not? No! He stays there, he doesn't grow, he will not be successful.

Mediocrity or pusillanimity. Those young people are afraid of everything: "No, I am this way..."

These young people will not go ahead. Meekness, strength and no pusillanimity, no mediocrity. Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati – who was a young man – used to say that it is necessary to live, not to get by.^[2] The mediocre get by. Live with the strength of life. We must ask the heavenly Father, for the young people of today, the gift of a healthy *restlessness*. But at home, in your houses, in every family, when you see a young person who stays seated all day, at times the mother and father thing, "But he is ill, he has

something,” and they take him to the doctor. The life of the young person is about going ahead, being restless, healthy restlessness, the capacity not to settle for a life without beauty, without colour. If young people are not hungry for authentic life, I wonder, where will humanity end up? Where will humanity end up with quiet young people who are not restless?

The question of that man in the Gospel passage we have heard is within each one of us: how do we find life, life in abundance, happiness? Jesus answers: “*You know the Commandments*” (19), and cites a part of the Decalogue. It is a pedagogical process, by which Jesus wishes to lead to a precise place: indeed it is already clear from his question that the man does not have a full life, he seeks more and he is restless. What must he therefore understand? He says: “Teacher, all

these I have kept since I was a boy" (v. 20).

How do we pass from youth to maturity? When we begin to accept our own limits. One becomes an adult when one becomes relative and aware of what is missing (cf. v. 21). This man is compelled to acknowledge that everything he can "do" does not go beyond a roof, it does not go beyond a margin.

How good it is to be men and women! How precious our existence is! And yet there is a truth in the history of recent centuries that man has often refused, with tragic consequences: the truth of his limits.

Jesus, in the Gospel, says something that can help us: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Mt. 5: 17). The Lord Jesus gives fulfilment, He came for this. That man had to arrive

at the threshold of taking a leap, where there opens up the possibility of stopping living for oneself, one's own works, one's own goods and, precisely because full life is lacking, leave all to follow the Lord.[3]

Seemingly in Jesus' final invitation – immense, wonderful – there is not the offer of poverty, but of wealth, of the true kind: “One thing you lack... Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (v. 21).

Who, given the choice between the original and a copy, would choose the copy? Here is the challenge: to find the original of life, not the copy. Jesus does not offer surrogates, but *true* life, *true* love, *true* wealth! How can the young follow us in faith if they do not see us choose the original, if they see us addicted to half measures? It is bad to find Christians of half measures, if I may permit myself the

word, “dwarf” Christians; they grow up to a certain point and no further; Christians with a shrunken, closed heart. It is bad to find this. There needs to be the example of someone who invites me “beyond” to “more”, to grow a little. Saint Ignatius called it the “magis,” “the fire, the fervour of action that rouses the dormant.”[4]

The road of what is missing passes for what there is. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil. We have to start from reality to make the jump to “what is missing”. We must scrutinize the ordinary to open ourselves to the extraordinary.

In these catecheses we will take the two tablets of Moses as Christians, hand in hand with Jesus, to pass from the illusions of youth to the treasure that is in heaven, walking behind Him. We will discover, in

each of those laws, ancient and wise, the door opened by the Father Who is in heaven because the Lord Jesus, who has passed through it, leads us into real life. His life. The life of the children of God.

[1] The Fathers spoke of pusillanimità (oligopsychìa). Saint John of Damascus defined it as “fear of acting” (*De fide ortodoxa*, II, 15) and Saint John Climacus adds that “pusillanimity is a puerile disposition in a soul that is no longer young” (*The Ladder*, XX, 1, 2).

[2] Cf *Letter to Isidoro Bonini*, 27 February 1925.

[3] “The eye was created for light, the ear for sound, everything for its purpose, and the desire of the soul to hasten towards Christ (Nicholas Kabasilas, *Life in Christ*, II, 90).

[4] *Address to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*, 24 October 2016: “It is a *magis*, that *plus* which leads Ignatius to undertake initiatives, to follow them through, and to evaluate their real impact on people’s lives in matters of faith, justice, mercy and charity.”

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