



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 5 September 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

The journey through the Decalogue takes us today to the Commandment regarding the day of rest. It sounds like an easy command to respect, but that is the wrong impression. True rest is not simple, because there is false rest and true rest. How can we recognize them?

Today's society thirsts for amusement and holidays. The entertainment industry is really flourishing, and advertising portrays the ideal world as one great amusement park where everyone has fun. The prevailing concept of *life* today does not have its centre of gravity in activity and commitment, but in *escapism*. Earning money to have fun, to satisfy oneself. The model is the image of a successful person who can afford ample room for diverse forms of enjoyment. But this mentality makes one slip toward the dissatisfaction of a life anaesthetized by fun that is not rest, but alienation and the escape from reality. Man has never rested as much as today, yet man has never experienced as much emptiness as today! Opportunities to amuse oneself, to go out, cruises, travels; but many things do not give you fullness of heart. Indeed: they do not give you rest.

The words of the Decalogue seek and find the crux of the problem, casting a different light on what rest is. The commandment has a particular element: it provides a motive. Rest in the name of the Lord has a precise reason: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex 20:11).

This takes us back to the end of creation, when God says: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). And so begins the day of rest, which is God's joy for all

that he has created. It is the day of contemplation and blessing.

What, then, is rest according to this commandment? It is the moment of contemplation, it is the moment of praise, not that of escapism. It is the time to look at reality and say: how beautiful life is! Contrary to rest as an escape from reality, the Decalogue proposes rest as the *blessing of reality*. For us Christians, the centre of the Lord's day, Sunday, is the Eucharist, which means "*thanksgiving*". It is the day to say to God: thank you Lord for life, for your mercy, for all your gifts. Sunday is not the day to forget the other days but to remember them, bless them and make peace with life. How many people there are who have many opportunities to amuse themselves, who are not at peace with life! Sunday is the day to make peace with life, saying: life is precious; it is not easy, sometimes it is painful, but it is precious.

To be introduced to authentic rest is a work of God in us, but it requires us to distance ourselves from the devil and his attraction (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 83). In fact, it is very easy for the heart to succumb to unhappiness, dwelling on reasons for discontent. Blessing and joy imply an openness to good that is a mature movement of the heart. Goodness is loving and is never imposed. It is chosen.

Peace is chosen; it cannot be imposed and it is not found by chance. Distancing himself from the bitter wounds of his heart, man needs to make peace with what he is fleeing from. It is necessary to reconcile oneself with one's own history, with facts that one does not accept, with the difficult parts of one's own existence. I ask you: is each of you reconciled with your own history? A question to ponder: Am I reconciled with my own history? True peace, in fact, is not about changing one's own history but about welcoming it and valuing it, just as it has unfolded.

How many times have we met sick Christians who have comforted us with a serenity that is not found in pleasure-seekers and hedonists! And we have seen humble and poor people rejoice in little graces with a happiness that knew of eternity.

The Lord says in Deuteronomy: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (30:19). This choice is the "*fiat*" of the Virgin Mary; it is an opening to the Holy Spirit who places us in the footsteps of Christ, the One who gives himself to the Father in the most dramatic moment and thus takes the path that leads to the Resurrection.

When does life become beautiful? When we begin to think well of it, whatever our history. When the gift of a doubt makes its way: that all is grace^[1], and that holy thought breaks down the inner wall of dissatisfaction, giving way to authentic rest. Life becomes beautiful when the heart opens to Providence and one discovers that what the Psalm says is true: "For God alone my soul waits in silence" (62[61]:2; 5). This passage from the Psalm is beautiful: "For God alone my soul waits in silence".

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Denmark, Hungary, Malta, New Zealand, India, the Philippines, Vietnam and the United States of America. I also greet the priests of the Institute for Continuing Theological Education of the Pontifical North American College. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*.

Next Saturday is the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This recurrence coincides with the end of summer and of the harvest and reminds us that God is faithful to his promises and, in Mary Most Holy, he prepared a living temple in which his Son became flesh, wishing to live in our midst and to bring us salvation.

May God Bless you!

[1] As Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus reminds us in G. Bernanos' "Diary of a Country Priest", Milan, 1965, 270.
