



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 14 November 2018

[Multimedia]

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 — the Catechism says — “forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others” (n. 2464). To live with false communication is serious because it impedes relationships and, therefore, impedes love. Where there are lies there is no love; there can be no love. And when we speak about interpersonal communication we do not mean words alone, but also gestures, attitudes, even silence and absence. A person *speaks* with all that he is and does. We are always communicating. We all live by communicating and we are always poised between truth and lies.

But what does it mean to *tell the truth*? Does it mean being sincere? Or precise? In fact, this is not enough, because one can be genuinely mistaken, or one can be precise in the details but not grasp the overall sense. At times we justify ourselves by saying: ‘But I said what I felt!’. Yes, but you have presented your point of view as an absolute. Or: ‘I only told the truth!’. Perhaps, but you revealed personal or private matters. How much gossip destroys communion by inopportune comments or lack of sensitivity! Indeed, gossip kills, and James the Apostle said this in his Letter. Those who gossip are people who kill: they kill others because the tongue kills as much as a knife. Be careful! Those who gossip are like terrorists because their tongues throw a bomb and then they calmly walk away, but what they say with that bomb destroys the reputation of others. Do not forget: gossiping kills.

So: what is truth? This is the question Pilate asked, just as Jesus, standing before him, fulfilled the

eighth Commandment (cf. Jn 18:38). Indeed, the words “you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour” pertain to forensic language. The Gospels culminate in the narrative of Jesus’ Passion, Death and Resurrection; and this is the narrative of a process, of the execution of the sentence and of an unprecedented consequence.

As he is interrogated by Pilate, Jesus says: “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, *to bear witness to the truth*” (Jn 18:37). And Jesus bears this “witness” through his passion and through his death. The Evangelist Mark recounts that “the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, [and] said: ‘Truly this man was the Son of God!’” (15:39). Yes, because he was consistent. He was consistent: in the way that he dies, Jesus manifests the Father, his merciful and steadfast love.

Truth is fully realized in the very person of Jesus (cf. Jn 14:6), in his *way* of living and of dying, fruit of his relationship with the Father. This existence as children of God. He, the Risen One, gives it to us too, sending the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of truth, who attests to our heart that God is our Father (cf. Rom 8:16).

In every action, man, people, either affirm or deny this truth. From the little everyday situations to the most binding choices. But the logic is always the same: what our parents and grandparents teach us when they tell us not to tell lies.

Let us ask ourselves: to what truths do our — we Christians’ — deeds, our words, our choices, attest? Everyone can ask themselves: am I a witness of truth, or am I more or less a liar disguised as *true*? Everyone ask themselves. We Christians are not exceptional men and women. However, we are children of the heavenly Father, who is good and does not disappoint us, and instills in our hearts love for our brothers and sisters. This truth is not expressed so much in speech; it is a way of life, a way of living, and is seen in every single action (cf. Jas 2:18). This man is a *true* man, that woman is a *true* woman: one can see it. But how, if they do not open their mouths. But they behave like *true* men and women. They tell the truth, they act with truth. It is a good way for us to live.

The truth is the marvelous revelation of God, of his Fatherly face; it is his boundless love. This truth corresponds to human reason, but infinitely transcends it, because it is a gift descended to the earth and embodied in Christ crucified and Risen; it is made visible by those who belong to him and demonstrate his same disposition.

Not bearing false witness means living as children of God, who never, ever contradict themselves, never tell lies; living as children of God, letting shine forth in every deed the supreme truth: that God is Father and that we can trust in him. I trust God: this is the great truth. From our trust in God — who is Father and who loves me, loves us — springs *my* truth, being truthful and not a liar.

Special Greetings

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!

I address a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. I wish for all of you that the pilgrimage to Rome may strengthen the bond with the City of the Apostles and the joy of belonging to the Catholic Church!