

In Address to Catechists, Pope Points Out 1st Lesson of Faith

Pope Francis / General audiences

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(ZENIT, Vatican City, September 25, 2016).- Pope Francis celebrated the Jubilee for Catechists today, celebrating Mass in St. Peter's Square, and reminding the catechists of the first lesson that we must understand about the faith: Jesus is risen, and he loves you.

Drawing from the Second Reading, the Pope began his homily noting that St. Paul makes reference to "the commandment."

"Among other things, [Paul] charges [Timothy] 'to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach,'" Francis said. "He speaks simply of a commandment. It seems that he wants to keep our attention fixed firmly on what is essential for our faith."

And this center of the faith, the Holy Father explained, is the Paschal proclamation: "the Lord Jesus is risen, the Lord Jesus loves you, and he has given his life for you; risen and alive, he is close to you and waits for you every day."

"We must never forget this," the Pope asserted. "[...] Nothing is more important; nothing is clearer or more relevant than this. Everything in the faith becomes beautiful when linked to this centrepiece."

He told the catechists that "we are called always to live out and proclaim the newness of the Lord's love: 'Jesus truly loves you, just as you are. Give him space: in spite of the disappointments and wounds in your life, give him the chance to love you. He will not disappoint you.'"

Loving others

The Bishop of Rome went on to note Jesus' new commandment of love.

"It is by loving that the God-who-is-Love is proclaimed to the world," he said, adding that this proclamation doesn't come from "the power of convincing," or "imposing the truth" or "growing fixated on some religious or moral obligation."

The Lord is not an idea, but a living person, he emphasized, and thus "his message is passed on through simple and authentic testimony, by listening and welcoming, with joy which radiates outward. We do not speak convincingly about Jesus when we are sad."

The Gospel of today, which recounts the story of the rich man and Lazarus, "helps us understand what it means to love," Francis continued.

He noted that the rich man is not presented as a bad person, but simply as suffering from a "terrible blindness" — "because he is not able to look beyond his world, made of banquets and fine clothing. He cannot see beyond the door of his house to where Lazarus lies, because what is happening outside does not interest him."

His heart has been anesthetized with worldliness, the Pope noted, and he is indifferent to others, seeing only outward appearances.

"But the Lord looks at those who are neglected and discarded by the world," the Holy Father said. "Lazarus is the only one named in all of Jesus' parables. His name means 'God helps.' God does not forget him."

Needs and right

Pope Francis noted another element of the parable: "The opulent life of this nameless man [the rich man] is described as being ostentatious: everything about him concerns needs and rights. Even when he is dead he insists on being helped and demands what is to his benefit."

"Lazarus' poverty, however, is articulated with great dignity: from his mouth no complaints or protests or scornful words issue."

The Pope said this is a "valuable teaching," exhorting his listeners to avoid seeking glory or being "full of complaints."

"We are not prophets of gloom who take delight in unearthing dangers or deviations; we are not people who become ensconced in our own surroundings, handing out bitter judgments on our society, on the Church, on everything and everyone, polluting the world with our negativity," he said.

Instead, one who "proclaims the hope of Jesus carries joy and sees a great distance; such persons have the horizon open before them; there is no wall closing them in; they see a great distance because they know how to see beyond evil and beyond their problems. At the same time, they see clearly from up close, because they are attentive to their neighbour and to their neighbour's needs."

The Pope concluded the homily praying that God "give us the strength to live and proclaim the commandment of love, overcoming blindness of

appearances, and worldly sadness. May he make us sensitive to the poor, who are not an afterthought in the Gospel but an important page, always open before all."