



Pope Francis dedicated the catechesis of his general audience of Wednesday, September 19, to **the fourth commandment: "Honour your father and mother"**.

“Honouring parents leads to a long happy life,” said Pope Francis during Wednesday’s general audience, pointing out that the word “happiness” in the Ten Commandments appears only in relation to parents. In fact, the fourth commandment a promise – “so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”

Through the help of human sciences, the Pope said, we are able to understand whether someone has grown up in a healthy and balanced environment or has experienced abandonment or violence in childhood.

Imperfect parents

The Holy Father said that the fourth commandment does not require mothers and fathers to be perfect, and speaks about the children’s duty regardless of their parents’ merits. Even if not all parents are good and not every childhood is happy, all children can be happy, because the achievement of a full and happy life depends on being grateful to those who have given birth.

Regarding this, the Pope pointed to several examples of saints and Christians who despite a painful childhood have lived a “luminous life”, thanks to Jesus Christ, they have reconciled with life. One such example is the 19-year old Italian Nunzio Sulprizio, who will be declared a saint next month. He died reconciled with much pain and many things, because his heart was serene and he never denied his parents.

Saint Camillus de Lellis who built a life of love and service from a disorderly childhood; Saint Josephine Bakhita was raised in horrible slavery; Blessed Carlo Gnocchi was orphaned and poor; and Saint John Paul II lost his mother at an early age.

Born again

Whatever be a man's past, the Pope said, the fourth commandment gives us the orientation that leads to Christ in whom the true Father is manifested who invites us to "be born again from on high". Hence the "enigmas of our lives are enlightened when we discover that God has always prepared us for a life as His children, where every act is a mission received from Him."

Through grace our wounds gain power to discover that the true enigma is no longer "why", but "for whom?" Thus everything is reversed and becomes precious and constructive.

In the light of love, our sad and painful experience becomes a source of health for others. Hence we can begin honouring our parents with the freedom of adult children and with a merciful acceptance of their limits.

Insult, never

In conclusion, **Pope Francis urged Christians to visit their parents in their old age, and also never to insult the parents of others using ugly and abusive words, saying they have given life.**