



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL I

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Wednesday, 6 September 1978

On my right and on my left there are Cardinals and Bishops, my brothers in the episcopate. I am only their elder brother. My affectionate greeting to them and also to their dioceses!

Just a month ago, Paul VI died at Castelgandolfo. In fifteen years he rendered enormous services to the Church. The effects are partly seen now already, but I think that they will be seen especially in the future. Every Wednesday he came here and spoke to the people. At the 1977 Synod several bishops said:

"Pope Paul's Wednesday addresses are a real catechesis adapted to the modern world". I will try to imitate him, in the hope that I, too, will be able, somehow, to help people to become better.

To be good, however, it is necessary to be in place before God, before our neighbour and before ourselves. Before God, the right position is that of Abraham, who said:

"I am only dust and ashes before you, O Lord!" We must feel small before God. When I say, "Lord I believe" I am not ashamed to feel like a child before his mother; one believes in one's mother; I believe in the Lord, in what he has revealed to me. The commandments are a little more difficult to observe; but God gave them to us not to satisfy a whim, not in his own interest, but solely in our interest.

Once a man went to buy a motorcar from the agent. The latter talked to him plainly: "Look here, it's a good car; mind that you treat it well: premium petrol in the tank, and for the joints, oil the good stuff." But the other replied: "Oh, no, for your information, I can't stand even the smell of petrol, nor oil; I'll put champagne, which I like so much, in the tank and I'll oil the joints with jam" "Do what you

like: but don't come and complain if you end up in a ditch, with your car!" The Lord did something similar with us: he gave us this body, animated by an intelligent soul, a good will. He said, "this machine is a good one, but treat it well."

Here are the commandments. Honour your father and your mother; do not kill; do not get angry; be gentle; do not tell lies; do not steal... If we were able to observe the commandments, we would be better off and so would the world. Then there is our neighbour... But our neighbour is at three levels: some are above us; some are at our level; some are below. Above, there are our parents. The catechism said: respect them, love them, obey them. The Pope must instil respect and obedience in children for their parents. I am told that the choir-boys of Malta are here. Let one come here, please ... the choir-boys of Malta, who have served in St Peter's for a month. Well, what is your name?

—James!

—James. And listen, have you ever been ill?

—No.

—Ah, never?

—No.

—Never been ill?

—No.

—Not even a temperature?

—No.

—Oh, how lucky you are! But when a child is ill, who brings him a little broth, some medicine? Isn't it his mother? That's it. After wards you grow up, and your mother gets old; you become a fine gentleman, and your mother, poor thing, will be in bed, ill. That's it. Well, who will bring the mother a little milk and medicine? Who will?

—My brothers and I.

—Well said! "His brothers and he," he said. I like that. Did you understand?

But it does not always happen. As Bishop of Venice, I sometimes went to homes. Once I found an elderly woman, sick.

—How are you?

—Well, the food is all right!

—Are you warm? Is there heating?

—It's good.

—So you are content?

—"No" She almost began to cry.

—But why are you crying?

—My daughter-in-law, my son, never come to see me. I would like to see my grandchildren.

Heat and food are not enough, there is the heart; we must think of the heart of our old people. The

Lord said that parents must be respected and loved, even when they are old. And besides our parents, there is the State, there are superiors. May the Pope recommend obedience? Bossuet, who was a great bishop, wrote: "Where no one commands, everyone commands. Where everyone commands, no one commands any longer, but chaos." Sometimes something similar is seen in this world too. So let us respect those who are our superiors.

Then there are our equals. And here, there are usually two virtues to observe: justice and charity. But charity is the soul of justice. We must love our neighbour, the Lord recommended it so much. I always recommend not only great acts of charity, but little ones. I read in a book, written by Carnegie, an American, entitled "How to Make Friends", the following little episode:

A lady had four men in the house: her husband, a brother, two grown-up sons. She alone had to do the shopping, the washing, the ironing and the cooking: everything all alone. One Sunday they come home. The table is laid for dinner, but on the plate there is only a handful of hay. "Oh!", the others protest and say: "What! Hay!" And she says, "No, everything is ready. Let me tell you: I prepare your food, I keep you clean, I do everything. Never once have you said: 'That was a good dinner you made for us.' But say something! I'm not made of stone."

People work more willingly when their work is recognized. These are the little acts of charity. In our home we have all some one who is waiting for a compliment.

There are those who are smaller than we are; there are children, the sick, even sinners. As Bishop, I was very close even to those who do not believe in God. I formed the idea that they often combat not God, but the mistaken idea they have of God. How much mercy it is necessary to have! And even those who err.... We must really be in place with ourselves. I will just recommend one virtue so dear to the Lord. He said, "Learn from me who am meek and humble of heart". I run the risk of making a blunder, but I will say it: the Lord loves humility so much that, sometimes, he permits serious sins. Why? In order that those who committed these sins may, after repenting remain humble. One does not feel inclined to think oneself half a saint, half an angel, when one knows that one has committed serious faults. The Lord recommended it so much: be humble. Even if you have done great things, say: "We are useless servants." On the contrary the tendency in all of us, is rather the contrary: to show off. Lowly, lowly: this is the Christian virtue which concerns ourselves.

To Participants in the Seventh International Congress of the Organ Transplant Society

We owe a special greeting to members of the Seventh International Congress of the Organ Transplant Society . We are very touched by your visit, which is a homage to the Pope, and particularly by your desire to throw light on and to study more deeply the serious human and moral problems at stake in the researches or in the surgical technique which are your lot. We encourage you, in this field, to request the help of Catholic friends, expert in theology and in morality and with

a thorough knowledge of your problems, possessing a sound knowledge of Catholic doctrine and a deeply human understanding.

We are content today to express to you our congratulations and our trust, for the immense work that you put in the service of human life in order to prolong it in better conditions. The whole problem is to act with respect for the person and for one's neighbours, whether it is a question of donors of organs or beneficiaries, and never to transform man into an object of experiment. There is respect for his body, there is also respect for his spirit. We pray to God, the Author of life, to inspire you and assist you in these magnificent and formidable responsibilities. May he bless you, with all your dear ones!

Now, if you permit, I should like to invite you to join with me in prayer for an intention that I have much at heart. You have learned from the press, from television, that today at Camp David an important meeting begins between the rulers of Egypt, Israel and the United States, in the hope of finding a solution to the conflict in the Middle East. This conflict, which for more than thirty years has been continued on the land of Jesus, has already caused so many victims, so much suffering, both among the Arabs and the Israeli. Like an evil malady it has infected the neighbouring countries. Think of the Lebanon, a martyred Lebanon, upset by the repercussions of this crisis. For this, then, I should like to pray together with you for the success of the Camp David meeting: that these talks may pave the way towards a full and just peace. Just: that is, to the satisfaction of all the parties in the conflict. Full: without leaving any problem unresolved; the problem of the people of Palestine, the security of Israel, the Holy City of Jerusalem. Let us ask the Lord to enlighten those responsible for all the peoples concerned, so that they may be far-seeing and courageous in taking the decisions that should bring serenity and peace to the Holy Land and to the whole world of the East.
