

**WEDNESDAY AUDIENCE: YEAR OF FAITH:
PAPAL CATECHESIS 07**
***"The God of Jesus Christ has Revealed our
Grandeur as Persons Redeemed by Love"***
28 November 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The main question that we ask today is: how can we speak of God in our time? How can we communicate the Gospel, to open roads to his saving truth in the hearts, which are often closed, of our contemporaries and in their minds, sometimes distracted by the many lights of society? Jesus himself, the Evangelists tells us, in announcing the Kingdom of God asked himself this question. "With what can we compare the kingdom of God or what parable shall we use?" (Mk 4:30). How can we speak of God today? The first answer is that we can speak of God, because He has spoken with us. The first condition of speaking of God is therefore to listen to what God himself has said. God has spoken to us! God is therefore not a distant hypothesis about the origin of the world, nor a mathematical intelligence far away from us. God cares for us, loves us, has personally entered into the reality of our history, he has communicated himself to the point of becoming incarnate. Thus, God is a reality of our lives, he is so great that he even has time for us, he cares for us. In Jesus of Nazareth, we encounter the face of God, who came down from Heaven to immerse himself into the world of men, into our world, and to teach the "art of living", the road to happiness, to free us from sin and make us children of God (cf. Eph 1:5, Rom 8:14). Jesus came to save us and show us the good life of the Gospel.

Speaking of God means first of all being clear about what we must bring to the men and women of our time: the God of Jesus Christ as the answer to the fundamental question of why and how should we live. We must not fear the humility of small steps and must trust in the yeast that penetrates the dough and mysteriously causes it to grow (cf. Mt 13:33). In speaking of God, in the work of evangelization, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we need to recover simplicity, to return to the essentials of the announcement: the Good News of God-Love who comes close to us in Jesus Christ to the point of the Cross and who in the Resurrection gives us hope and opens for us a life that has no end, eternal life. (...) That exceptional communicator who was the apostle Paul gives us a lesson that goes right to the heart of faith with great simplicity.

In the *First Letter to the Corinthians* he writes: "When I came among you, I did not set out to announce the mystery of God with eloquent speech or wisdom.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified "(2:1-2). Thus, the first thing is that Paul is not talking about a philosophy that he has developed, he's not speaking about ideas that found elsewhere or invented, but he speaks of a reality of his life, of God who came into his life, he speaks of a real God who lives, who spoke with him and will speak with us, he speaks of Christ crucified and risen. The second thing is that Paul is not seeking himself, he does not want to create a fan base, he does not want to go down in history as the head of a school of

great knowledge, he is not self-seeking. Rather, St. Paul proclaims Christ and wants to gain people for the true God. Paul speaks only with the desire to preach what has entered into his life and that is the true life that conquered him on the road to Damascus. So, to speak of God means to give space to the One who makes him known, who reveals his face of love, it means expropriating oneself offering it to Christ, knowing that we are not able to gain others to God, but we must await them from God himself, must implore them from Him. Speaking of God is thus born from listening, from our knowledge of God which is realized in familiarity with him, in the life of prayer and according to the Commandments.

Communicating the faith, for St. Paul, does not mean bearing himself, but stating openly and publicly what he has seen and heard in his encounter with Christ, what he has experienced in his life which has been transformed by that encounter: it means bringing Jesus whom he feels present within himself and who has become the true direction of his life, to make it clear to all that the world needs Him and that He is decisive for the freedom of every man. The Apostle is not content with merely proclaiming words, but involves his whole life in the great work of faith. To speak of God, we must make room for Him, in the confidence that He acts in our weakness: to make room for Him without fear, with simplicity and joy, in the profound conviction that the more we put Him at the centre and not ourselves, the more our communication will be fruitful. This also applies to the Christian communities: they are called to show the transforming action of God's grace, overcoming all individualism, closure, selfishness, indifference and by living out the love of God in their everyday relations. Are our communities really like this?

At this point we must ask ourselves how Jesus communicated. Jesus, in his uniqueness, speaks of his Father – *Abbà* – and of the Kingdom of God, with eyes full of compassion for the hardships and difficulties of human existence. He speaks with great realism and, I would say, the most important aspect of the announcement of Jesus is that it makes the world clear and that our life is valuable for God. Jesus shows that in the world and in creation there appears the face of God and this shows us how in the everyday events God is present in our lives. Both in the parables of nature, the mustard seed, the field with different seeds, or in our lives, for instance in the parable of the prodigal son, Lazarus and other parables of Jesus. From the Gospels we see how Jesus is interested in every human situation he encounters, he is immersed in the reality of the men and women of his time, with full confidence in the Father's help. And that really in this story, in a hidden way, God is present and if we are attentive we can meet him. And the disciples, who live with Jesus, the crowds who meet him, see his reaction to different problems, they see how he speaks, how he behaves, they see in him the action of the Holy Spirit, the action of God. In Him announcement and life are intertwined: Jesus acts and teaches, always starting from an intimate relationship with God the Father. This style becomes an essential indication for us Christians: our way of living in faith and charity becomes a speaking of God in the present time, because it shows, with a life lived in Christ, the credibility, the realism of what we say with words, which are not just words, but show the reality, the true reality. And in this we must be careful to read the signs of the times in our epoch, that is, to identify the potentials, the desires, the obstacles encountered in contemporary culture, in particular the desire for authenticity, the yearning for transcendence, the sensitivity for safeguarding creation, and to communicate without fear the response that faith in God offers. The

Year of Faith is an opportunity to discover, with our imaginations animated by the Holy Spirit, new paths on the personal and community level, so that everywhere the power of the Gospel may be wisdom of life and the orientation for existence.

In our time, a privileged place to talk about God is the family, the first school for communicating the faith to the new generations. The Second Vatican Council speaks of parents as the first messengers of God (cf. Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 11; Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11), called to rediscover their mission, taking responsibility to educate, to open the minds of children to the love of God as an essential service to their lives, in being the first catechists and teachers of the faith for their children. And in this task, above all *vigilance* is important, which means knowing how to seize the favourable opportunities to introduce in the family the discourse on faith and helping children reflect critically on the many forms of conditioning to which they are subjected. This attention of parents also means sensitivity in recognizing the possible religious questions present in the minds of children, sometimes obvious, sometimes hidden. Then, *joy*: the communication of the faith must always have a tone of joy. It is the joy of Easter, which is neither silent about nor hides the realities of pain, suffering, toil, difficulties, misunderstanding and death itself, but can offer criteria for interpreting everything from the perspective of Christian hope. The good life of the Gospel is precisely this new outlook, this ability to see every situation with the eyes of God. It is important to help all members of the family to understand that faith is not a burden but a source of profound joy, it is to perceive the action of God, recognizing the presence of good, that makes no noise, and provides valuable guidance for living well one's own existence. Finally, the *ability to listen and dialogue*: the family must be an environment where family members learn to be together, to reconcile their conflicts in mutual dialogue, an environment made of listening and speaking, to understand and love each other, to be a sign for each other of the merciful love of God.

Speaking of God, therefore, means showing through one's words and life that God is not a competitor for our life, but rather is its true guarantor, the guarantor of the greatness of the human person. Thus, we return to where we started: speaking about God means communicating with strength and simplicity, by one's word and life, what is essential: the God of Jesus Christ, the God who has shown us a love so great that it became incarnate, died and rose for us; that God who asks us to follow him and to let ourselves be transformed by his immense love in order to renew our lives and our relationships; the God who has given us the Church, to walk together and, through the Word and the Sacraments, to renew the entire City of men, so that it may become the City of God. Thank you.

In English Pope Benedict XVI said...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our continuing catechesis for the Year of Faith, we now consider the question of how we are to speak about God to our contemporaries, communicating the Christian faith as a response to the deepest longings of the human heart. This means bringing the God of Jesus Christ to the men and women of our time. It means bearing quiet and humble witness each day to the core of the Gospel

message. This is the Good News of the God who is Love, who has drawn near to us in Jesus Christ even to the Cross, and who in the Resurrection brings us the hope and promise of eternal life. Jesus gave us an example: by his loving concern for people's questions, struggles and needs, he led them to the Father. In the task of bringing God to our contemporaries, families play a privileged role, for in them the life of faith is lived daily in joy, dialogue, forgiveness and love. The God of Jesus Christ has revealed our grandeur as persons redeemed by love and called, in the Church, to renew the city of man, so that it can become the city of God.