
Pope at audience: “It is time to say enough to indiscriminate arms trafficking”

“In fact, with all our progress, with all our prosperity, we have really become a ‘society of weariness’. Think about it: we are the society of weariness”, the Pope denounced in his catechesis at Wednesday’s general audience, delivered in St Peter’s Square and dedicated once again to old age, drawing on the book of Qoheleth. In his final remarks, Francis made an appeal to “say enough to indiscriminate arms trafficking.” “We were supposed to have produced widespread well-being and we tolerate a market that is scientifically selective with regard to health”, Francis said in his catechesis:

“We were supposed to have put an insuperable threshold for peace, and we see more and more ruthless wars against defenceless people.

Science advances, of course, and that is good. But the wisdom of life is something else entirely, and it seems to be stalled. Finally, this an-affective and ir-responsible reason also takes away meaning and energy from the knowledge of truth.” “The emptiness of meaning and lack of strength opened up by this knowledge, which rejects any ethical responsibility and any affection for the real good, is not harmless”, the Pope pointed out: “It not only takes away the strength for the desire for the good: by counterreaction, it opens the door to the aggressiveness of the forces of evil. These are the forces of reason gone mad, made cynical by an excess of ideology.”

“It is no coincidence that ours is the age of fake news, collective superstitions, and pseudo-scientific truths”,

Francis argued, and added off-text: “in this culture of knowledge, of knowing everything, even of the precision of knowledge, **a lot of witchcraft has spread, but cultured witchcraft.** It is witchcraft with a certain culture but that leads you to a life of superstition. On the one hand, to go forward with intelligence in knowing things down to the roots; on the other hand, the soul that needs something else and takes the path of superstitions, and ends up in witchcraft.” “From the wry wisdom of Qoheleth, old age can learn the art of bringing to light the deception hidden in the delirium of a truth of the mind devoid of affection for justice”, the Pope’s thesis: “Elderly people rich in wisdom and humour do so much good for the young! They save them from the temptation of a knowledge of the world that is dreary and devoid of the wisdom of life. And these elderly people also bring the young back to Jesus’ promise: ‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.’ They will be the ones to sow the hunger and thirst for justice in the young.” “Take courage and go forward!”, the final invitation: Take courage and go forward!” “All of us older people” “have a very great mission in the world. But, please, we must not seek refuge in this somewhat non-concrete, unreal, rootless idealism – let us speak clearly – in the witchcraft of life.”

“Old age makes this encounter with disenchantment almost inevitable”,

Francis said in his the catechesis. “Faced with a reality that at certain times seems to us to accommodate every opposite, attributing the same destiny to all of them – which is to end up in nothingness – the path of indifference may also appear to us as the only remedy to a painful disillusionment”, said the Pope, for whom “the resistance of old age to the demoralising effects of this disenchantment is decisive: if the elderly, who have seen it all by that time, keep intact their passion for justice, then there is hope for love, and also for faith.” For the contemporary world, the passage through this crisis, a healthy crisis, has become crucial. Why? Because *a culture that*

presumes to measure everything and manipulate everything also ends up producing a collective demoralisation of meaning, a demoralization of love, a demoralization of goodness.” Indeed, the knowledge that exempts us from morality “soon turns into a paralysis of the soul”, caused by a “delirium of omniscience”, by a “new cynical reason – that combines knowledge and irresponsibility.” “With its irony, Qoheleth has already unmasked this deadly temptation of an omnipotence of knowledge – a delirium of omniscience - that generates an impotence of the will”, Francis said, recalling that “the monks of the most ancient Christian tradition had precisely identified this illness of the soul, which suddenly discovers the vanity of knowledge without faith and without morality, the illusion of truth without justice. They called it ‘acedia’. And this is a temptation for everyone, even the elderly. It is a temptation for everyone.” “It is not simply laziness; no, it’s more than that”, the Pope pointed out: “It is not simply depression. No. Rather, acedia it is the surrender to knowledge of the world devoid of any passion for justice and consequent action.”

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