

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE: CULTURE OF WASTE TREATS PERSONS AS IF THEY WERE GARBAGE**

Vatican City, 5 June 2013 (VIS) – Pope Francis dedicated the catechesis of today's Wednesday morning general audience to the environment, noting that today marks the World Environment Day promoted by the United Nations.

“When we speak of the environment, of creation, my thoughts go to the first pages of the Bible, to the Book of Genesis, where it affirms that God puts man and woman on earth 'to cultivate and care for it'. And the question comes to me:” the Pope said to the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, “What does it mean to cultivate and care for the earth? Are we truly cultivating and caring for creation? Or are we exploiting and neglecting it?”

“Cultivating and caring for creation,” explained the Holy Father, “is God's indication, given not only at the beginning of history, but to each one of us. It is part of his plan. It means responsibly making the world grow, transforming it so that it becomes a garden, a place that all can inhabit.”

“Benedict XVI recalled many times that this task entrusted to us by God the Creator requires that we understand the rhythm and logic of creation. Instead, we are often guided by the arrogance of dominating, possessing, manipulating, and exploiting. We don't 'take care' of it; we don't respect it; we don't consider it as a freely-given gift to be cared for. We are losing the attitude of wonder, of contemplation, of listening to creation. Thus we are no longer able to read in it what Benedict XVI called 'the rhythm of the story of God's love for humanity'. Why is this happening? Because are we thinking and living 'horizontally'; we are drawing away from God; we are not reading his signs.”

“But cultivating and caring for doesn't just refer to our relationship with the environment, the relationship between humanity and creation. It also concerns human relationships. ... We are living a moment of crisis. We see it in the environment but above all we see it in humanity. The human person is in danger. ... This is the urgency of human ecology! The danger is serious because the root of the problem is profound, not superficial. It isn't just a question of economics but of ethics and anthropology. ... The dynamics of an economy and finance that lack ethics are dominating.”

Speaking off the cuff, the pontiff added: “What is in charge today isn't the human person but money. Money is in command. And God our Father has given us the task of caring for the earth not for the money, but for us: for men and women. This is our charge. Instead, men and women are sacrificed to the idols of profit and consumption. It is a 'culture of waste'.”

“If, for example, on a winter's night,” he continued, “a person dies here in [nearby] Via Ottaviano, that's not news. If in so many parts of the world there are children who have nothing to eat, that's not news. It seems normal. It must not be this way! And yet these things come to be normal ... On the other hand, a drop of ten points on the stock exchange constitutes a tragedy. If someone dies that isn't news but a ten point drop in the markets is a tragedy! Thus people are discarded, as if they were garbage.”

“Human life, the person, is no longer felt to be the primary value to respect and care for ... This culture of waste has also made us insensitive to a squandering and wastefulness of food ... Consumerism has caused us to get used to the daily excess and waste of food, which we are no longer capable of seeing for its true worth, which goes well beyond mere economic parameters. Remember, however, that the food that is thrown away is as if we had stolen it from the table of the poor, from those who are hungry!”

“I invite you all to reflect on the problem of the loss and the waste of food ... Let us all make the serious commitment to respect and care for creation, to be attentive to every person, to oppose the culture of wastefulness and waste, and to promote a culture of solidarity and encounter.”

You can find more information at: [www.visnews.org](http://www.visnews.org)