



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"With a "naked heart""

Saturday, 21 March 2020

[Multimedia]

Introduction

Today I would like to remember the families who cannot leave their homes. Perhaps the only horizon they have is the balcony. And inside, the family, with the children, teenagers, parents... May they find the way to communicate well with each other, to build loving relationships in the family, and may they succeed in vanquishing the anguish of this time, together, as a family. Let us pray for the peace of families today, in this crisis, and for creativity.

Homily

The Word of the Lord that we heard yesterday: "Return, come home" (cf. *Hos* 14:2); in the same book of the prophet Hosea we also find the answer: "Come, let us return to the Lord" (*Hos* 6:1). It is the answer when that "return home" touches the heart: "Let us return to the Lord: He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us. He has injured us but He will bind up our wounds ... Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear" (*Hos* 6:1.3). The trust in the Lord is sure: "He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth" (v. 3). And with this hope, the people commence their journey to rediscover the Lord. And one of the ways, one of the methods for finding the Lord is prayer. Let us pray to the Lord, let us return to Him.

In the Gospel (cf. *Lk 18:9-14*), Jesus teaches us *how to pray*. There are two men, a presumptuous one who goes to pray, but in order to say that he is good, like saying to God: “Look at me, I am so good: if you need anything, tell me, and I will solve your problem”. He addresses God in this way. Presumptuously. Perhaps he did all the things that the Law said, he says: “I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get” (v. 12)... “I am good”. This reminds us also of the other two men. It reminds us of the older son in the parable of the prodigal son, when he says to the father : ”I have been so good but you never throw a party for me, but he is a wretch and you celebrate for him...” Presumptuous (see *Lk 15:29-30*). The other, whose story we have heard in these days, is that rich man, the man without a name, but who was rich; incapable of making a name for himself but rich, and the misery of others did not matter to him (see *Lk 16:19-21*). These are the ones who are sure of themselves or of their money or their power.

Then there is the other, the publican. He does not go to the altar but stays at a distance. “The tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God be merciful to me a sinner’” (*Lk 18:13*). This also leads us to the memory of the prodigal son: he is aware of the sins he has committed, of the bad things he has done; he too beat his breast: “I shall... go to my father and I shall say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned’”. Humiliation (*Lk 15:17-19*). It reminds us of the other, the beggar Lazarus, at the door of the rich man, who lived out his misery in front of the presumptuousness of that lord (cf. *Lk 16:20-21*). There is always this combination of people in the Gospel.

In this case, the Lord teaches us how to pray, how to approach, how we must approach the Lord: with humility. There is a beautiful image in the liturgical hymn of the feast of Saint John the Baptist. It says that the people came to the Jordan to receive baptism, “naked in soul and foot”: to pray with the naked soul, unembellished, without dressing up in one’s own virtues. He, we read at the beginning of the Mass, forgives all sins but needs us to show Him our sins, with our nakedness. To pray in this way, exposed, with a naked soul, without covering up, without trusting even in what I have learned about the way to pray... To pray, you and I, face to face, with a naked soul. This is what the Lord teaches us. Instead, when we go to the Lord, a bit too sure of ourselves, we fall into the presumptuousness of this man [the Pharisee], or of the elder son, or of that rich man who lacked nothing. We will have the same sureness from the other side. “I will go to the Lord... I want to go, to be educated... and I will speak to Him face to face, practically...”. This is not the way. The way is by lowering oneself. Lowering oneself. The way is reality. And the only man who, in this parable, had understood reality, was the tax collector: “You are God and I am a sinner”. This is reality. But I say that I am a sinner not with the mouth: with the heart. To feel that one is a sinner.

Let us not forget this, which the Lord teaches us: justifying oneself is arrogance, it is pride, it is exalting oneself. It is dressing oneself up as something that one is not. And the miseries remain within. The Pharisee justified himself. [Instead he needed to] Confess directly his own sins, without justifying them, without saying: “But no, I did this but it was not my fault...”. The naked soul. The naked soul.

May the Lord teach us to understand this, this attitude to begin to pray. When we begin prayer with our justifications, with our certainties, it will not be a prayer: it will be speaking to the mirror. Instead, when we begin prayer with true reality - "I am a sinner" - it is a good step towards letting the Lord look upon us. May Jesus teach us this.

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