



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS “The tangibility and
simplicity of the small”

Wednesday, 29 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Today is the feast day of Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, Patroness of Europe. Let us pray for Europe, for the unity of Europe, for the unity of the European Union: so that all together we might go forward as brothers and sisters.

Homily

In the First Letter of Saint John the Apostle there are many contrasts: between light and dark, lies and truth, sin and innocence (see *1 Jn* 1:5-7). But the Apostle always calls to concreteness, to truth, and he says that we cannot be in union with God while living in the darkness because He is light. It is either one thing or the other: a grey area is even worse, because the grey area makes you think you are walking in the light, because you are not in the dark, and this soothes you. The grey area is treacherous. Either one thing or another.

The Apostle continues: “If we say we have no sin in us; we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth” (*1 Jn* 1:8). Because we have all sinned. We are all sinners. And here is something that might deceive us: saying that we are all sinners, as in the same way we say “Hello”, or “Good morning”, something habitual, even something social, so that we do not have a true awareness of sin. No: I am a sinner because of this, this and this. Concreteness: the concreteness of truth: the truth is always tangible; lies are ethereal, they are like the air, you cannot take hold of them. The truth is concrete. And you cannot go to confess your sins in an abstract way: “Yes, I... yes, once I

lost my patience, another time...”, in an abstract way. “I am a sinner”. Concreteness: “I have done this. I thought that. I said this”. Concreteness is what makes me feel I am a sinner in a specific and serious way, instead of keeping it up in the air.

Jesus says in the Gospel, “I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children” (*Mt 11:25*). The concreteness of the little ones. It is good to listen to children when they come to confess: they do not say strange things, “up in the air”; they say concrete things, at times even too specific, as they have that simplicity that God gives to the little ones. I always remember a child who once came to tell me that he was sad because he had argued with his aunt. But then he continued. And I said, “But what did you do?” - “I was at home, I wanted to go out and play football” - he was a child - but the aunt (the mother wasn't there) said, “No, you can't go out, you must do your homework first”. One word followed another, and eventually he told his aunt to go to hell. He was a child with a good geographical knowledge - he even told me the name of that place where he had sent his aunt! Children are like this: simple, concrete.

We too need to be simple, concrete. Concreteness leads you to humility, because humility is concrete. “We are all sinners” is something abstract. No: “I am a sinner because of this, this, and this”. And this leads me to the shame of looking at Jesus and saying, “Forgive me”. The true attitude of the sinner. “If we say we have no sin in us; we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth” (*1 Jn 1:8*). This vague abstract attitude is a way of saying we are not sinners. “Yeah, I lost my patience one time”, but everything is “up in the air”. I am not aware of the reality of my sins. “But you know, we all do these things. I am sorry, I am sorry”. No. “It pains me, I won't do it again, I don't want to do it again, I don't want to think it again”. It is important that within us we name our sins. Concreteness. Because if we keep them up in the air, we end up in the dark. Let us become like the little ones, who say what they feel, what they think: they still have not learned the art of saying things that are “gift-wrapped” a bit, so that they are understood without saying. This is the art of adults, which very often is not good for us.

Yesterday I received a letter from a boy from Caravaggio, called Andrea. And he told me about himself. Letters from young people and children are beautiful, because they are concrete. And he told me that he had watched the Mass on the television and he had to “rebuke” me for something: I invite people to give a sign of peace and he said I can't say that, because in this time of the pandemic we can't touch each other. He does not see that you [here in the church] bow your heads without touching each other. But he has the freedom to say things as they are.

And we too, with the Lord, should have the freedom to say things as they are: “Lord, I am in sin, help me”. Like Peter after the first miraculous catch: “Leave me, Lord, for I am a sinful man” (*Lk 5:8*). To have this wisdom of the concrete. Because the devil wants us to live in a tepid way, in the grey area, neither good nor bad, neither white nor black, but grey, a life that is not pleasing to the Lord. The Lord does not like those who are tepid, mediocre. Concreteness. So as not to be liars.

“If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins” (*1 Jn 1:9*). He will forgive us when we are concrete. The spiritual life is so simple, so simple; but we make it complicated with these shades of grey, and in the end we never get there...

Let us ask the Lord for the grace of simplicity. May He give us this grace that He gives to the simple, to children, who say what they feel. They do not hide what they feel. Even if it is wrong, they say it. And with Him too, saying things: transparency. And not living a life that is neither one thing nor the other. The grace of the freedom to say these things; and also the grace of knowing well who we are before God.

Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.