



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS “Without witness
and prayer, apostolic preaching is not possible”

Thursday, 30 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Let us pray today for the deceased, those who have died in this pandemic; and in particular for, let us say, the anonymous deceased: we have seen the photographs of mass graves, many of them...

Homily

“No one can come to me unless he is drawn by the Father” (*Jn* 6:4). Jesus recalls that even the prophets had prophesied that “they will all be taught by God”. And God who draws us to the knowledge of the Son. Without this, no-one can know Jesus. Yes, one can study, also study the Bible, even know how He was born, what He did, all this, yes. But to know Him from within, to know the mystery of Christ, is only for those who are drawn to this by the Father.

This is what happened to this minister of the economy of Ethiopia. We can see that he is a pious man, and that he had taken the time, amid his many business affairs, to go and worship God. He is a believer. And he was returning to his homeland, reading the prophet Isaiah (see *Acts* 8:27-28). The Lord takes Philip and sends him to that place, and He says, “Go up and meet the chariot” (v. 29). And he hears the minister reading Isaiah. He approaches him and asks, “Do you understand?” - “How can I unless I have someone to guide me?” (v. 31). And so then he asks, “Who is saying this, a prophet?”, and invites him to get into the carriage. During the journey - we don’t know how long, I think at least a couple of hours - Philip explains, he explains Jesus (v. 26-

35).

That restlessness the man felt when reading the prophet Isaiah was indeed the Father, drawing him towards Jesus (see *Jn* 6:44). He had prepared him, He had brought him from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God and then, with this reading, He had prepared his heart to reveal Jesus. As soon as he sees the water he asks, "Can I be baptised?" (see v. 36). And he believed.

And this - that no one can know Jesus without the Father having drawn him or her - (cf. v. 44) - this is valid for our apostolate, for our apostolic mission as Christians. I also think of the missions. "What do you go to do in the missions?" - "I go to convert people" - "But stop, you will never convert anyone! It will be the Father who attracts those hearts to acknowledge Jesus". Going to the missions is to go and bear *witness* to one's own faith. Without witness, you will do nothing. To go to the missions, and there are some really good missionaries, is not merely about building big structures and things, and stopping there. No, the structures must be testimonies. You can make a hospital structure, an educational structure of great perfection, of great development, but if it is without Christian witness, your work will not be a work of witness, a work of the true proclamation of Jesus: it will be a charitable institution, very good - very good! - but nothing more.

If I want to go to the missions, if I want to carry out the apostolate, I must go with the disposition that the Father draws people to Jesus, and must bear witness to this. Jesus Himself says it to Peter, when he professes that He is the Messiah: "Blessed are you Simon, because it was the Father who revealed this to you" (see *Mt* 16:17). It is the Father who draws us to him through our own witness. "I will do a lot of works here, there and everywhere, this and that", but without witness they are good things, but they are not the proclamation of the Gospel, there are not places that might give people knowledge of Jesus. Work and witness.

"But what can I do so that the Father will make it His business to attract people?" *It is prayer*. This is prayer for the missions: to pray that the Father will draw people towards Jesus. *Witness and prayer*, they go together. Without witness and prayer one cannot carry out apostolic preaching, one cannot proclaim. You will give a good moral sermon, but the Father will not have the possibility of drawing people to Jesus. And this is the centre: this is the centre of our apostolate, that the Father may attract the people to Jesus (see *Jn* 6:44). Our witness opens the doors of the people and our prayer opens the heart of the Father, so that it may attract people. Witness and prayer. And this is not only for the missions, it is also for our work as Christians. Do I truly bear witness to Christian life, with my style of life? Do I pray for the Father to draw people to Jesus?

This is the great rule for our apostolate, everywhere, and in a special way for the missions. To go to the missions is not to carry out proselytism. Once a woman - a good person, you could see she had good will - came up to me with two young people, a boy and a girl, and she said to me: "This boy, Father, was a protestant and I converted him; I convinced him. And this girl was...", I don't know, animist, I don't know what she said, "and I converted her". And the woman was good, good.

But she was mistaken. I lost my patience a little and I said to her, “Listen, you haven’t converted anyone; it was God who touched the heart of the people. And do not forget: witness, yes; proselytism, no”.

Let us ask the Lord for the grace to live our work with witness and prayer, so that He, the Father, may draw people to Jesus.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive communion can now make a 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.