



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "Christ died and
rose for us: the only medicine against the worldly spirit"

Saturday, 16 May 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Let us pray today for people who are burying the dead during the pandemic. To bury the dead is one of the works of mercy and, naturally, it is not something pleasant. Let us pray for them because they also risk their lives and risk being infected.

Homily

Especially while He was bidding farewell to the Apostles, Jesus, spoke of the world many times (see *Jn* 15:18-21). And here He says: "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before you" (v. 18). He speaks clearly of the hatred that the world had with Jesus and will have with us. And in the prayer that He says at table with the disciples during the Last Supper, He asks the Father not to take His disciples out of the world, but to defend them from the spirit of the world (see 17:15).

I think we can ask ourselves: What is *the spirit of the world*? What is this worldliness that is capable of hating, of destroying Jesus and His disciples, and more, of corrupting them and of corrupting the Church? What is this spirit of the world, what is this? It is good for us to think about it. It is a *style of life*, worldliness. But someone might think that worldliness is about partying, living life as a party...No, no.

Worldliness may be this, but fundamentally this is not so. Worldliness is a culture. It is a culture of the transitory, a culture of appearances, of *maquillage*, a culture of "today yes, tomorrow no;

tomorrow yes and today no". It has superficial values. A culture that does not know fidelity, because it always changes according to circumstances, everything is negotiable. This is the worldly culture, the culture of worldliness. And Jesus insists on defending us from this and He prays that the Father might defend us from this culture of worldliness. It is a "*use it and throw it away*" culture according to whatever suits you. It is a culture without faithfulness, it has no roots. But it is a way of life, even a way of life for many who say that they are Christians. They are Christians, but they are worldly.

In the parable of the seed that falls to the earth, Jesus says that the preoccupations of the world – that is, of worldliness – suffocate the Word of God, they do not allow it to grow (see *Lk 8:14*). And Paul to the Galatians says: "You were slaves of the world, of worldliness" (see *Gal 4:3*). It always, always hits me when I read the last pages of Henri de Lubac's book *Splendor of the Church*, the last three pages, where he speaks specifically about a worldly spirituality. And he says it is the worst of evils that can befall the Church; and he is not exaggerating, because then he talks about some terrible evils. And this is the worst: worldly spirituality, because it is *a way of interpreting life*, it is a way of life, even a way of living Christianity. And to survive in the face of the preaching of the Gospel, the person hates, kills.

When we say that the martyrs are killed in hatred of the faith, yes, it is true for many, this hatred was over a theological problem; but this is not so for the majority. In the majority [of cases] it is worldliness that hates the faith and kills them, just as they did with Jesus.

It is curious: "But Father", someone might say to me, "worldliness is a superficial way of life..." Let us not deceive ourselves! Nothing about worldliness is superficial! It has deep roots, deep roots. It is like a *chameleon*, it changes, it comes and goes according to circumstances, but the substance is the same: a style of life that enters everywhere, including in the Church. Worldliness, the worldly hermeneutic, *maquillage*, everything can be made up to appear a certain way.

The Apostle Paul went to Athens, and he remained struck at seeing many monuments to the gods in the Areopagus. And he thought about speaking about this: "You are very religious people, I see this... That altar to the 'unknown god' has attracted my attention. I know Him and I have come to tell you who He is". And he began to preach the Gospel. But when he arrived at the cross and resurrection they were scandalized and they went away (see *Acts 17:22-33*). There is one thing that worldliness does not tolerate: the *scandal of the Cross*. It does not tolerate that. And the only medicine for worldliness is Christ who died and rose for us; scandal and foolishness (see *1 Cor 1:23*).

The apostle John in his First Letter picks up the theme of the world because of this. He says: "This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith (*1 Jn 5:4*). The only thing: faith in Jesus Christ, who died and rose. This does not mean being fanatics. This does not mean neglecting to enter into dialogue with all people, no, but with the conviction of faith, beginning with the scandal of the

Cross, of the foolishness of Christ and of Christ's victory. "This is our victory", John says, "our faith."

Let us ask the Holy Spirit in these last days, during the Novena to the Holy Spirit, in the last days of the Easter Season as well, for the grace of discerning what *worldliness* is, what the *Gospel* is, and that we not allow ourselves to be deceived, because the world hates us, the world hated Jesus and Jesus prayed so that the Father would defend us from the spirit of the world (see *Jn* 17:15).