



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS WHO DIED OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica, Altar of the Chair of Saint Peter

Monday, 4 November 2019

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The readings we have heard remind us that we came into this world in order to be raised up; we were not born for death but for resurrection. As Saint Paul writes in the second reading, even now “our citizenship is in heaven” (*Phil* 3:20) and, as Jesus says in the Gospel, we shall be raised up on the last day (cf. *Jn* 6:40). It is likewise the thought of the resurrection that leads Judas Maccabaeus in the first reading to do “an excellent and noble thing” (*2 Macc* 12:43). Today we can ask ourselves: how does the thought of the resurrection affect me? How do I respond to my call to be raised up?

Help comes to us first from Jesus, who in today’s Gospel says: “Anyone who *comes to me* I will never drive away” (*Jn* 6:37). That is his invitation: “Come to me” (cf. *Mt* 11:28). To come to Jesus, the living one, in order to be inoculated against death, against the fear that everything will end. To come to Jesus: this might seem a generic and even banal spiritual exhortation. But let us try to make it concrete by asking a few questions. Today, in the files that I handled in the office, did I draw nearer to the Lord? Did I make them an occasion for speaking to him? In the persons whom I met, did I involve Jesus? Did I bring them to him in prayer? Or did I do everything while thinking only of my concerns, rejoicing only in things that went well for me and complaining about those that didn’t? In a word, did I live my day *coming to the Lord*, or was I simply orbiting around myself? And where am I headed? Do I seek only to make a good impression, to protect my role, my schedule and my free time? Or do I come to the Lord?

Jesus words are striking: “*Anyone who comes to me I will never drive away*”. As if to say that any Christian who does not come to him will be driven away. For those who believe, there is no middle ground. We cannot belong to Jesus and orbit around ourselves. Those who belong to Jesus live by constantly going forth from ourselves and towards him.

Life itself is a constant going forth: from our mother’s womb to our birth, from infancy to adolescence, from adolescence to adulthood and so on, until the day of our going forth from this world. Today, as we pray for our brother cardinals and bishops who have gone forth from this life in order to meet the risen Lord, we cannot forget the most important and difficult “going forth”, the one that gives meaning to all the others: that of going forth from our very selves. Only by going forth from ourselves do we open the door that leads to the Lord. Let us implore this grace: “Lord, I want to come to you, along the roads and with my traveling companions each day. Help me to go out of myself in order to come towards you, for you are life itself”.

I would like to propose a second thought, about the resurrection, drawn from the first reading and the “noble thing” that Judas Maccabeus did for those who had died. He did it, we are told, because “he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep *in godliness*” (2 *Macc* 12:45). Godliness, piety, is richly rewarded. Piety towards others opens the gates of eternity. To bow down before the needy in order to serve them is to be on the path to heaven. If, as Saint Paul says, “love never ends” (1 *Cor* 13:8), then love is itself the bridge linking earth to heaven. We can ask ourselves whether we are advancing along this bridge. Do I let myself be touched by the situation of someone in need? Can I weep with those who are suffering? Do I pray for those whom no one thinks about? Do I help someone who has nothing to give back to me? This is not to be sentimental or to engage in little acts of charity; these are questions of life, questions of resurrection.

Lastly, I would offer a third thought about the resurrection. I take it from the *Spiritual Exercises*, where Saint Ignatius suggests that before making any important decision, we should imagine ourselves standing before God at the end of time. That is the final and inevitable moment, one that all of us will have to face. Every life decision, viewed from that perspective, will be well directed, since it is closer to the resurrection, which is the meaning and purpose of life. As the departure is calculated by the goal, as the planting is judged by the harvest, so life is best judged by starting from its end and purpose. Saint Ignatius writes: “Let me consider myself as standing in the presence of my judge on the last day, and reflect what decision on the present matter I would then wish to have made; I will choose now the rule of life that I would then wish to have observed” (*Spiritual Exercises*, 187). It can be a helpful exercise to view reality through the eyes of the Lord and not only through our own; to look to the future, the resurrection, and not only to this passing day; to make choices that have the flavour of eternity, the taste of love.

Do I go forth from myself each day in order to come to the Lord? Do I feel and practise compassion for those in need? Do I make important decisions in the sight of God? Let us allow

ourselves to be challenged at least by one of these three thoughts. We will be more attuned to the desire that Jesus expresses in today's Gospel: that he lose nothing of what the Father has given him (cf. *Jn* 6:39). Amid so many worldly voices that make us forget the meaning of life, let us grow attuned to the will of Jesus, risen and alive. Thus we will make of our lives this day a dawn of resurrection.