



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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The Pope meets with members of the parish of Santa Maria a Setteville

In his meeting with the sick of the parish of Santa Maria a Setteville, the Pope promised he would pray for them. “Everyone has a problem, or a sickness, or a worry. Even children”, he said. “There are things that cannot be explained, but which happen; life is like this. Jesus wanted to be close to us in our pain too; He said it Himself: ‘I was sick and you visited me’. Jesus stays with the sick, with those who have problems. It is true. I know that when you suffer, when you have problems it is difficult to understand. However it is not a matter of understanding, but rather of feeling Jesus’ caresses. Do not let yourself be crushed by sadness: take courage”-

He went on to answer various questions from the young people present, insisting on the importance of witness. “Christian witness means speaking about the Lord with joy”, he affirmed, “but also with the joy of one’s own life, that is, to do with my life what I say of the Lord”. Witness also involves “going out to meet people .. and to help them with the heart and with the hands”, by practising the works of mercy.

In response to a question on how to explain to a non-believer why faith is important, Francis said, “You cannot explain. Listen well: if you have a friend who does not believe, you must not say, ‘You must believe for this reason, or that...’, and then explain everything. You must not do this! This is proselytism, and we Christians must not proselytise. What should you do? If I cannot explain, what can I do? Live in such a way that he or she asks, ‘Why do you live like this? Why did you do this?’ and then, yes, you can explain. Do you understand? But never explain first in order to convince. Faith is a grace of God, and it takes the restlessness of the Holy Spirit to have faith; and the restlessness of the Holy Spirit comes also from our witness. It is the restlessness of the heart that makes you question. First, do; then explain. And the Holy Spirit enters into the heart, makes the heart restless with the witness of Christians. This is why Jesus said to people, regarding the doctors of the law of those times: ‘Do what they say, but not what they do’. They did not bear witness. And Christian witness – what you have said about how to live, about how to be a witness – is what provokes restlessness in others”.

He went on to encounter the parents of children baptised in 2016, whom he thanked for “the great richness of children”. “It is a great gift to have a child”, he emphasised, “and also a problem, because they cry, they do not let you sleep, they do not know what to do, but it is always a joy to see them grow: it is the joy of life that goes ahead. ... Children have the grace of making us young”.

Francis gave some advice to new parents. “It is normal that couples argue, it is normal. ... It is part of life. But

the advice I give you, is not to let your children see or hear you argue. If you have things to say to each other, go into your room, close the door and say everything, argue. It is healthy, because to get things off your chest is healthy. But do not let them see, because children suffer, they feel abandoned, when parents argue”.

His second piece of advice was that couples should never let the day come to an end without making peace, as the cold war of the following day is very dangerous.

He advised the parish assistants always to help the parishioners, with their heart and with their hands, and to let themselves be helped in turn. “It is not easy to ask for help, is it? ‘Help me, I have this problem’. Ask for advice: ‘I do something this way, what do you think? Is it fine that way, or should I change a bit?’ This is important, that you help each other to improve the work you do in the parish. This is not criticism, it is saying what I think, directly. Criticism, instead, is saying ‘Good, good’, then afterwards gossiping. No, no”.

The Pope also said that he listened to music and read, but did not watch films, “because you have to go somewhere else to see them, or at least in my case. But it is good... there are some very good films that make you think. ... When I was in Buenos Aires, I did some catechesis with films. We screened a film and then asked for reflections on it, and the week after gave the catechesis. ... For example, to explain the dialogue between grandparents and children, which is very important, there is a Kurosawa film, “Rhapsody in August”, which teaches you how it should be. Another film about the gratuitousness of Jesus’ love in the Eucharist is the Danish and French film, ‘Babette’s Feast’. Watch it, and you will see how Christian gratuitousness is ... how everything is free. Jesus has given us everything freely. This film is always screened to the ministers of communion, in the course we held for them”.

A couple in mission *ad gentes* in Austria asked the Pope to address some words on mission to those who live this experience. “Going on a mission is not easy. It takes courage, but the call of the Lord is also needed. It is not a question of enthusiasm. Stop for a moment ... May the Lord call you on a mission. And it is not easy. It is not easy to leave your land, your home, that ‘salt’ as God said to Abraham. It is not easy. But there is the small mission every day: at work, in your neighbourhood, at school with children, with the young, a good word. The small mission where I work, where I live. And the great mission is this, finding new horizons. The Church has grown with the missions. ... After Pentecost, the Church that was closed became an outgoing Church, that is, she went out on a mission”.

Before returning to the Vatican he greeted the many people who had been waiting outside the Church since midday to see him, and who filled the streets. “You must be so cold!” he exclaimed. “Thank you, thank you very much: I ask you to pray for me, to pray that the parish continues to move ahead, so that the neighbourhood goes ahead, for the sick, that they may be cured, and for children, that they may grow in good health; and pray for everyone: pray for each other. And this makes the Church good, and makes the neighbourhood one of peace. When people pray for each other, things go well; it costs nothing and does so much good”.
