

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 180415d

Sunday 15.04.2018

Pastoral visit to the Roman parish of San Paolo della Croce in Corviale

Homily of the Holy Father

Meeting with children

Meeting with the elderly and the poor

Farewell greeting from the Holy Father

This afternoon, Third Sunday of Easter, the Holy Father Francis paid a pastoral visit to the Roman parish of *San Paolo della Croce* in Corviale.

Upon arrival, at 15.40, the Pope was received by Archbishop Angelo de Donatis, vicar general of the diocese of Rome; by H.E. Msgr. Paolo Selvadagi, auxiliary bishop for the West sector; by the parish priest, Don Roberto Cassano; by the co-operator vicar, Don Gabriele Petreni; and by two parish collaborators.

In the field, Pope Francis met with the children of the catechism group and their families, and conversed with four children. Subsequently, in the parish hall, the Pope met with a large group of elderly and poor people. Then, in the corridor, he greeted the representatives of the associations in the area. In a catechism room, Pope Francis met with some detainees participating in a programme of social reintegration through artisanal work. Finally, he confessed several penitents. At 17.20, the Holy Father presided over Holy Mass in the parish church. The representatives of the XXXI Prefecture and various priests, friends of the community, concelebrated with the Pope. After the proclamation of the Gospel, Pope Francis pronounced an off-the-cuff homily.

At the end, the parish priest addressed some words of greeting to the Holy Father, and after the exchange of gifts, the Pope returned to the Vatican.

The following is the transcript of the homily and the texts of the words that the Holy Father pronounced in the various meetings during his parish visit:

Homily of the Holy Father

The disciples knew that Jesus had risen, because Mary Magdalene had said it in the morning; then Peter had seen Him; then the disciples who had returned from Emmaus had recounted the meeting with the resurrected Jesus. They knew it: He has risen and lives. But that truth had not entered the heart. That truth, yes, they knew it, but they doubted. They preferred to have that truth in their mind, perhaps. It is less dangerous to have a truth in the mind than to have it in your heart. It is less dangerous.

They were all gathered together and the Lord appeared. And they first got scared and thought He was a ghost. But Jesus Himself said to them: "No, look, touch me. See the wounds. A ghost has no body. See, it's me!" But why did not they believe? Why did they doubt? There is a word in the Gospel that gives us the explanation: "They still did not believe it because of joy and amazement". For *joy* they could not believe. It was so much joy! If this is truth, it is an immense joy! "Ah, I do not believe it. I cannot". They could not believe there was so much joy; the joy that leads to Christ.

It happens to us when they give us good news. Before welcoming it to the heart we say: "Is it true? But how do you know? Where did you hear it?" We do it to be sure, because, if this is true, it is a great joy. What happens to us in a small way, imagine the disciples! It was so much joy that it was better to say: "No, I do not believe it". But He was there! Yes, but they could not. They could not accept; they could not let the truth they saw pass through their hearts. And in the end, obviously, they believed. And this is the "renewed youth" that the Lord gives us. In the Collect prayer we talked about it: the "renewed youth". We are used to aging with sin ... Sin ages the heart, always. It gives you a hard, old, tired heart. Sin tires the heart and we lose a little faith in the Risen Christ: "No, I do not think ... This would be so much joy ... Yes, yes, He is alive, but He is in Heaven for His business ...". But His business is me! Each one of us! But we are not capable of making this connection.

The apostle John, in the second Letter, says: "If anyone has sinned, we have an advocate with the Father". Do not be afraid, He forgives, He renews us. Sin ages us, but Jesus, risen, living, renews us. This is the strength of the risen Jesus. When we approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation it is to be renewed, to be rejuvenated. And the risen Jesus does this. It is the risen Jesus Who is in our midst today: He will be here on the altar, He is in the Word... And on the altar He will be thus: risen! It is Christ Who wishes to defend us, the Advocate, when we have sinned, to rejuvenate us.

Brothers and sisters, let us ask for the grace to believe that Christ is alive, is risen! This is our faith, and if we believe in this, the other things are secondary. This is our life, this is our true youth. Christ's victory over death, Christ's victory over sin. Christ is living. "Yes, yes, now I will take Communion..." But when you take Communion, are you sure that Christ is living there, that He is risen? "Yes, it is a bit of blessed bread...". No, it is Jesus! Christ is alive, He is risen in our midst and if we do not believe this, we will never be good Christians, we cannot be so.

"They still did not believe it because of joy and amazement". Let us ask the Lord for the grace that joy may not prevent us from believing, the grace of touching the risen Jesus: to touch Him in the encounter through prayer; in the encounter through the Sacraments; in the encounter with His forgiveness that is the renewed youth of the Church; in the encounter with the sick, when we go to visit them; with the imprisoned, with those who are most in need, with children, with the elderly. If we feel the desire to do something good, it is the risen Jesus Who drives us to this. It is always joy, joy that makes us young.

Let us ask for the grace to be a joyful community, because each one of us is secure, has faith, has encountered the risen Christ.

Meeting with children

I. Leonardo:

Hello, Pope Francis!

I wanted to know something – what is your favourite passage from the Gospel, and why?

Pope Francis:

What is your name?

Leonardo:

Leonardo

Pope Francis:

Leonardo. Good, Leonardo. The Gospel is full of beautiful passages. But you asked me which was my favourite. I will answer provided that, when you return home, you will look for the passage in the Gospel and read it. Promise?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

All of you?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

A passage that I like very much is the one in the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus encounters that businessman, that traitor of the homeland who was called Matthew. He was right at the city gate, attached to his money, and he made tourists pay taxes. Did you pay taxes to enter here?

Children:

No!

Pope Francis:

No! But you can see that there is no Matthew here, thank God! They do not make you pay to enter. That is good. And that man was a traitor to the country because he collected taxes and gave them to the army that occupied Palestine in that time- it was the Roman army – he gave them to the Romans. And this was an ugly sin, no? How ugly! A person attached to money is an ugly person! But this, even more so, because he had forgotten that he belonged to his homeland; he sold his homeland every time he made someone pay the tax. And Jesus passed – these people were disdained by everyone – Jesus passed, looked at him, and said, “Follow me”. And this man could not believe it. A man who was disdained, a traitor, a sinner. And that man arose and followed Jesus.

And why do I like it? – the second question – because there we see the strength of Jesus in changing a heart. This man was one of the worst, but Jesus managed to change him. Perhaps you know people who say, “Ah, I could never be good, because I have too many things in my past, I will never be able to change”. And Jesus is capable of changing the worst and turning him into an evangelist, an apostle and a saint. This is why I like this passage from the Gospel so much: because we see Jesus’ strength in changing our hearts, in making them good. Do not forget the promise: what was the promise?

Children:

To read the Gospel.

Pope Francis:

But not all of it! Read that passage. Search for it. This one of Matthew, he was called Matthew, but his name was Levi at that time. Levi, Matthew. Look for it, read it at home and say, "But look at him, look at him...". It is beautiful. Thank you, Leonardo, thank you!

II. Carlotta:

Hello Pope Francis! When we receive Baptism we become children of God, and people who are not baptized, are they not children of God?

Pope Francis:

Stay there. What is your name?

Carlotta:

Carlotta.

Pope Francis:

Carlotta. Tell me, Carlotta: what do you think? People who are not baptized, are they or are they not children of God? What does your heart say to you?

Carlotta:

Yes.

Pope Francis:

Yes. Here, now I will explain. She responded well, she has Christian flair, this one! We are all children of God. Everyone, everyone. Even the unbaptized? Yes. Even those who believe in other religions, far away, who have idols? Yes, they are children of God. Are the mafia also God's children? ... You are not sure ... Yes, even mafiosi are children of God. They prefer to behave like children of the devil, but they are children of God. All, all are children of God, everyone. But what is the difference? God created everyone, loved everyone and put conscience in the heart to recognize good and distinguish it from evil. All men have this. They know, they perceive what is good and what is healthy; even people who do not know Jesus, who do not know Christianity, all have this in the soul, because this has been sown by God. But when you were baptized, in that conscience the Holy Spirit entered and strengthened your belonging to God and in that sense you have become even more a daughter of God, because you are daughter of God like everyone, but also with the power of the Holy Spirit that has entered inside. Did you understand, Carlotta? I ask – everyone, answer – are all people children of God?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

Good people, are they children of God?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

Bad people, are they children of God?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

Yes. People who do not know Jesus, and have other faraway religions, who have idols, are they children of God?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

Mafiosi, are they children of God?

Children:

Yes!

Pope Francis:

And we must pray that they return and truly recognize God! No-one answer now, but may your heart answer: who among you prays for mafiosi, that they may convert? Each one of you, answer in his or her heart. Then, when we are baptized, who enters into our heart? ... Louder!

Children:

The Holy Spirit!

Pope Francis:

Good! You are good! What are you called?

Lorenzo:

Lorenzo.

Pope Francis:

Good, Lorenzo! The Holy Spirit enters, and this Holy Spirit makes us increasingly children of God, gives us more strength to behave like children of God. That is why Saint Paul has a sentence, and I would like you to say it like me. He says: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit". Why do you say that phrase? Because a Christian, a baptized person who behaves badly, saddens the Holy Spirit who is in us. The phrase is this: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit, with Whom you were sealed". "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with Whom you were sealed". "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with Whom you were sealed". Shall we say it?

Pope Francis, together with the children:

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with Whom you were sealed".

Pope Francis:

Again!

Pope Francis, together with the children:

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit with Whom you were sealed"

Pope Francis:

And we, children of God, who by Baptism have the Holy Spirit within, when we behave badly, when we sin, we sadden the Holy Spirit Who is in us. Thank you, Carlotta!

III. Edoardo:

Dear Pope Francis, how did you feel when you were elected Pope?

Pope Francis:

What is your name?

Edoardo:

Edoardo.

Pope Francis:

Edoardo, good. I felt only that God wanted that, I got up, and I went ahead. I did not feel anything spectacular, but perhaps, it seems a little boring, this answer, but I did not feel afraid, nor did I feel a special joy. I felt that the Lord wanted that, and to go ahead, Edoardo. The Lord very often calls. I greeted one of you who is in the search for a vocation because he feels that the Lord is saying something to him within. But when the Lord calls and says to you, "Now you go there", it gives you peace. It is what one feels when there is a true call from the Lord: peace. I felt peace. Thank you, Edoardo.

IV. Emanuele:

I can't do it!

Pope Francis:

Come, come to me, Emanuele! Come to me and tell me in my ear. Whisper in my ear. Come, come, come to me.

[Emanuele goes to Pope Francis and whispers his question in his ear]

Pope Francis:

Perhaps all of us could cry like Emanuele when we have a pain as he has in his heart. He cried for his father and had the courage to do it in front of us, because in his heart there is love for his father. I asked Emanuele permission to say the question in public and he said yes. This is why I will say to you: "A short time ago my father died. He was an atheist, but he had all four children baptized. He was a good man. Is Daddy in Heaven?" How nice for a son to say of his father: "He was good". What beautiful witness that man bore to his children, because his children will be able to say: "He was a good man". It is a beautiful testimony of the son who inherited the strength of his father and, also, had the courage to cry in front of us all. If that man was able to make children like that, it's true, he was a good man. He was a good man. That man did not have the gift of faith, he was not a believer, but he had his children baptized. He had a good heart. And he [Emanuele] has the doubt that his father, not having been a believer, may not be in Heaven. It is God Who says who goes to Heaven. But how is the heart of God, faced with such a father? How is it? How does it seem to you? ... The heart of a father! God has a father's heart. And before a non-believer father, who was able to baptize his children and give that goodness to his children, do you think that God would be able to leave him far away? Do you think this? ... Out loud, bravely ...

Everyone:

No!

Pope Francis:

Does God abandon His children?

Everyone:

No!

Pope Francis:

Does God abandon His children when they are good?

Everyone:

No!

Pope Francis:

So, Emanuele, this is the answer. God was certainly proud of your father, because it is easier to be a believer and baptize your children, than to baptize them while not a believer. Certainly this pleased God greatly. Speak with your father, pray to your father. Thank you, Emanuele, for your courage.

We have spoken of fathers, and our father is God. Let us all pray to our father, God.

“Our Father...”.

And now I will give you my blessing. Each one of you, think of those people you love, of those people you care for, of those people who care about you, and also of those whom we do not love and who are perhaps our enemies. Let us pray for them too, so that the Lord may bless them too. May He bless all of us and enlighten our heart.

[Blessing]

Meeting with the elderly and the poor

Parish priest:

Your Holiness, we are here – to paraphrase Saint Lawrence- with the treasure of our parish: the poor and the elderly. We have 100 families whom every month we help with a monthly package, thanks also to the support of the Knights of Malta, who take on the task of helping the poorest; we help them, when possible, in all material forms, such as with bills and such things, but also in intangible ways, for example, needs also from a psychological point of view, when it is necessary, or simply a chat, because one of the main problems of this parish is the loneliness of the elderly. And, since it is a neighbourhood that is becoming elderly, they are the great majority.

Unfortunately, we have only been able to give a representation: these are just one hundred.

Over to you, Your Holiness.

Pope Francis:

I was with the young people: they were restless, asking questions. Now I am with you, and you are calmer ... You go ahead slowly, because life has taught you, you have experience. Someone says that young people run, but the elderly know, they know the way. And you know the ways of life: many good roads, [others] not so good, and also the sufferings, even the privations ... The Lord loves you, and what the parish does with you is a duty, it is a duty . Because those who need it most are at the centre of the parish and at the centre of the Gospel. And that is why I like what the parish priest said about the work he is doing with you. I know that each one of you has so many problems, or illnesses, or sorrows, or spiritual problems, of the family, so many things that we all know. Everyone has his or her own pain, everyone has his or her own scourge, everyone. But this does not take away your hope and does not take away your joy, because Jesus came to “pay” for wounds with His wounds. And this is joy: Jesus paid for us, is near us, loves us and when we are with our pain, with our problems we think of the problems and pains of Jesus, with which He wanted to pay for all of us; and so let us go ahead. And let us do good to others: we can all do good, everyone. Beginning with a prayer for others, and also doing good to others. All. And let us do it joyfully, with the joy of being a Christian. Thank you for coming to the parish. The parish priest said that you are the treasure of the parish. Ahead!

Let us pray to Our Lady to keep this treasure.

“Hail, Mary...”

[Blessing]

And pray for me, please! But pray for me, and not against me! [Laughter]

Farewell greeting from the Holy Father

Thank you so much for your company, for being there. Thank you.

Thank you so much for the welcome and for the things you showed me today. I carry you in my heart and I promise to pray; and I also ask you to pray for me.

And let us go ahead, let us go ahead. We all need each other, everyone. Together, forward. Sins? We all have them. Desire to serve Jesus and be good? We all have it. Let us go ahead. The Lord always awaits us with love, with mercy, to make us younger.

Now, if you wish, let us pray to Our Lady, and then I give you my blessing.

“Hail, Mary...”

[Blessing]

Good evening!
