SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 190331b

Sunday 31.03.2019

Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis to Morocco (30 to 31 March 2019) – Holy Mass in the "Prince Moulay Abdellah" Sports Complex

Homily of the Holy Father

Final greeting of the Holy Father

After lunch at the apostolic nunciature in Rabat, the Holy Father Francis transferred by car to the "Prince Moulay Abdellah" Sports Complex to celebrate Holy Mass.

At 14.48 local time (15.48 in Rome), the Pope presided at the Eucharistic Celebration in Spanish. After the proclamation of the Gospel he pronounced his homily.

At the end of the Holy Mass, H.E. Msgr. Cristóbal López Romero, S.D.B., archbishop of Rabat, gave thanks to the Holy Father. Then, before the final blessing, the Pope addressed some words of greeting to the faithful and pilgrims present.

Immediately afterwards, Pope Francis left the "Prince Moulay Abdellah" sports complex and transferred by car to Rabat-Salé International Airport for the farewell ceremony.

The following are the homily and final greeting pronounced during the Holy Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

"While he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (*Lk* 15:20).

Here the Gospel takes us to the heart of the parable, showing the father's response at seeing the return of his son. Deeply moved, he runs out to meet him before he can even reach home. A son long awaited. A father rejoicing to see him return.

That was not the only time the father ran. His joy would not be complete without the presence of his other son. He then sets out to find him and invites him to join in the festivities (cf. v. 28). But the older son appeared upset by the homecoming celebration. He found his father's joy hard to take; he did not acknowledge the return of his brother: "that son of yours", he calls him (v. 30). For him, his brother was still lost, because he had already lost him in his heart.

By his unwillingness to take part in the celebration, the older son fails not only to recognize his brother, but his father as well. He would rather be an orphan than a brother. He prefers isolation to encounter, bitterness to rejoicing. Not only is he unable to understand or forgive his brother, he cannot accept a father capable of forgiving, willing to wait patiently, to trust and to keep looking, lest anyone be left out. In a word, a father capable of compassion.

At the threshold of that home, something of the mystery of our humanity appears. On the one hand, celebration for the son who was lost and is found; on the other, a feeling of betrayal and indignation at the celebrations marking his return. On the one hand, the welcome given to the son who had experienced misery and pain, even to the point of yearning to eat the husks thrown to the swine; on the other, irritation and anger at the embrace given to one who had proved himself so unworthy.

What we see here yet again is the tension we experience in our societies and in our communities, and even in our own hearts. A tension deep within us ever since the time of Cain and Abel. We are called to confront it and see it for what it is. For we too ask: "Who has the right to stay among us, to take a place at our tables and in our meetings, in our activities and concerns, in our squares and our cities?" The murderous question seems constantly to return: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (cf. *Gen* 4:9).

At the threshold of that home, we can see our own divisions and strife, the aggressiveness and conflicts that always lurk at the door of our high ideals, our efforts to build a society of fraternity, where each person can experience even now the dignity of being a son or daughter.

Yet at the threshold of that home, we will also see in all its radiant clarity, with no ifs and buts, the father's desire that all his sons and daughters should share in his joy. That no one should have to live in inhuman conditions, as his younger son did, or as orphaned, aloof and bitter like the older son. His heart wants all men and women to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (*1 Tim* 2:4).

It is true that many situations can foment division and strife, while others can bring us to confrontation and antagonism. It cannot be denied. Often we are tempted to believe that hatred and revenge are legitimate ways of ensuring quick and effective justice. Yet experience tells us that hatred, division and revenge succeed only in killing our peoples' soul, poisoning our children's hopes, and destroying and sweeping away everything we cherish.

Jesus invites us, then, to stop and contemplate the heart of our Father. Only from that perspective can we acknowledge once more that we are brothers and sisters. Only against that vast horizon can we transcend our shortsighted and divisive ways of thinking, and see things in a way that does not downplay our differences in the name of a forced unity or a quiet marginalization. Only if we can raise our eyes to heaven each day and say "Our Father", will we be able to be part of a process that can make us see things clearly and risk living no longer as enemies but as brothers and sisters.

"All that is mine is yours" (*Lk* 15:31), says the father to his older son. He is not speaking so much about material wealth, as about sharing in his own love and own compassion. This is the greatest legacy and wealth of a Christian. Instead of measuring ourselves or classifying ourselves according to different moral, social, ethnic or religious criteria, we should be able to recognize that another criterion exists, one that no one can take away or

destroy because it is pure gift. It is the realization that we are beloved sons and daughters, whom the Father awaits and celebrates.

“All that is mine is yours”, says the Father, including my capacity for compassion. Let us not fall into the temptation of reducing the fact that we are his children to a question of rules and regulations, duties and observances. Our identity and our mission will not arise from forms of voluntarism, legalism, relativism or fundamentalism, but rather from being believers who daily beg with humility and perseverance: “May your Kingdom come!”

The Gospel parable leaves us with an open ending. We see the father asking the older son to come in and share in the celebration of mercy. The Gospel writer says nothing about what the son decided. Did he join the party? We can imagine that this open ending is meant to be written by each individual and every community. We can complete it by the way we live, the way we regard others, and how we treat our neighbour. The Christian knows that in the Father’s house there are many rooms: the only ones who remain outside are those who choose not to share in his joy.

Dear brothers and dear sisters, I want to thank you for the way in which you bear witness to the Gospel of mercy in this land. Thank you for your efforts to make each of your communities an oasis of mercy. I encourage you to continue to let the culture of mercy grow, a culture in which no one looks at others with indifference, or averts his eyes in the face of their suffering (cf. *Misericordia et Misera*, 20). Keep close to the little ones and the poor, and to all those who are rejected, abandoned and ignored. Continue to be a sign of the Father’s loving embrace.

May the Merciful and Compassionate One – as our Muslim brothers and sisters frequently invoke him – strengthen you and make your works of love ever more fruitful.

Final greeting of the Holy Father

At the conclusion of this Eucharist, I wish once more to bless the Lord for enabling me to make this journey in order to be, among you and with you, *a servant of hope*.

I express my gratitude to His Majesty King Mohammed VI for his invitation; I am also grateful for his wish to be close to us by sending his representatives; I thank, too, the Authorities and all those who helped at every stage of this visit.

I extend my gratitude to my brother Bishops, the Archbishops of Rabat and Tangier, and the other Bishops, together with the priests, men and women religious and all the lay faithful who are present here in Morocco as servants of the Church’s life and mission. Thank you, dear brothers and sisters, for all that you did to prepare for this visit and for everything that we have shared in faith, hope and charity, for everything that we have shared in fraternity between Christians and Muslims: thank you!

With these sentiments of gratitude, I once more encourage you to persevere on the path of dialogue between Christians and Muslims and to cooperate so that this fraternity be made visible and universal, for God is its source. May all of you be servants of the hope that this world of ours so urgently needs.

And, please, do not forget to pray for me.