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Pastoral Visit of the Holy Father Francis to Trieste on the occasion of the 50th Italian Catholic Social Week – Celebration of Holy Mass and recitation of the Angelus in Piazza Unità d'Italia

After leaving the “Generali Convention Center” in an open car, the Holy Father Francis transferred to Piazza Unità d'Italia where, at 10.00, he presided over Holy Mass. His Eminence Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, metropolitan archbishop of Bologna, president of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Luigi Renna of Catania, president of the Organizing Committee of the Social Weeks, and Bishop Enrico Trevisi of Trieste, concelebrated with the Pope, together with 98 bishops and 260 priests. Bishops and pastors of the Serbian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox and Lutheran Church were also present.

Before the celebration of Holy Mass in Piazza Unità d'Italia, the Pope met with Maria, a 111-year-old resident of Trieste, with whom he exchanged a brief greeting. The Pontiff gave her a rosary and blessed her.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, in which 8,500 faithful took part, after the words of thanks from Bishop Enrico Trevisi of Trieste, the Pope led the recitation of the Angelus prayer. After giving his concluding blessing, Pope Francis took his leave of the civil and religious authorities and, at 12.16, departed by helicopter from the Molo Audace of Trieste in order to return to Rome. The Holy Father arrived in the Vatican at 13.57 and returned to Santa Marta.

The following is the homily delivered by the Holy Father after the proclamation of the Gospel, and his words of introduction to the Marian prayer:

Homily of the Holy Father

To rekindle hope in broken hearts and support the burdens of the journey, God has always raised up prophets among his people. Yet, as today's First Reading recounts in the story of Ezekiel, they often encountered a rebellious people, obstinate children with hardened hearts (cf. *Ez* 2:4), and were rejected.

Jesus, too, experienced the same thing as the prophets. He returned to Nazareth, his homeland, among the people he grew up with, but he was not recognized and was even rejected: “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not” (*Jn* 1:11). The Gospel tells us that Jesus was a cause of scandal to them (cf. *Mk* 6:3), but the word “scandal” does not refer to something obscene or indecent as we use it today; scandal means “a stumbling block,” that is, an obstacle, a hindrance, something that impedes you and prevents you from going further. Let us ask ourselves: What is the obstacle that prevents believing in Jesus?

Listening to the discussions of his fellow townspeople, we see that they stop only at his earthly history, at his family origin, and so they cannot understand how such wisdom, and even the ability to perform miracles, could come from the son of Joseph the carpenter; that is, from an ordinary person. The scandal, then, is Jesus’ humanity. The obstacle preventing these people from recognizing God’s presence in Jesus is the fact that he is human, simply Joseph the carpenter’s son: how can God, the Almighty, reveal himself in the fragility of human flesh? How can an omnipotent and strong God, who created the earth and freed his people from slavery, become weak enough to come in the flesh and lower himself to wash the disciples’ feet? This is the scandal.

Brothers and sisters: a faith founded on a human God, who lowers himself towards humanity, who cares for it, who is moved by our wounds, who takes on our weariness, who for us is broken like bread. A strong and powerful God, who is on my side and satisfies me in everything, is attractive; a weak God, a God who dies on the cross out of love and who asks me to overcome all selfishness and offer my life for the salvation of the world; and this, brothers and sisters, is a scandal.

Yet, as we stand before the Lord Jesus and gaze upon the challenges that confront us, upon the many social and political issues discussed even in this Social Week, upon the concrete lives of our people and their struggles, we can say that what we need today is precisely this: scandal. *We need the scandal of faith*. We do not need a religiosity closed in on itself, that looks up to heaven without caring about what happens on earth and celebrates liturgies in the temple but forgets the dust blowing in our streets. Instead, we need *the scandal of faith*. We need *the scandal of faith*, a faith rooted in the God who became man and, therefore, a human faith, a faith of flesh, that enters history, that touches people’s lives, that heals broken hearts, that becomes a leaven of hope and a seed of a new world. It is a faith that awakens consciences from lethargy, that puts its finger in wounds, in the wounds of society — there are many of them — a faith that raises questions about the future of humanity and history; it is a restless faith, and we need to live a restless life, a faith that moves from heart to heart, a faith that receives from outside society’s problems, a restless faith that helps us overcome mediocrity and lethargy of the heart, that becomes a thorn in the flesh of a society often anaesthetized and dazed by consumerism. And I will focus on this for a moment... It is said that our society is somewhat anaesthetized and dazed by consumerism. Have you wondered if consumerism has entered your hearts? That anxiety to have, to have things, to have more, that anxiety about wasting money. Consumerism is a wound, it is a cancer: it makes your heart sick, it makes you selfish, it makes you look only at yourself. Brothers and sisters, we need, above all, a faith that disrupts the calculations of human selfishness, that denounces evil, that points a finger at injustices, that disturbs the schemes of those who, in the shadow of power, puts those who are weak at risk. And how many, how many — we know it — use faith to take advantage of people. That is not faith.

A poet from this city, describing in a poem his usual return home in the evening, says he crosses a somewhat dark street, a place of decay where the people and the goods of the port are “debris”, that is, scraps of humanity; yet precisely here, he writes — I quote: “I discover, passing by, the infinite in humility”, because the prostitute and the sailor, the quarrelsome woman and the soldier, “are all creatures of life and of sufferance; He stirs up within them, same as in me, our Lord” (U. Saba, “*Città vecchia*”, in *Il canzoniere (1900-1954) Edizione definitiva*, Torino, Einaudi, 1961). Let us not forget this: God is hidden in the dark corners of the life of our city — have you thought about this? — in the dark corners of the life of our city. His presence reveals itself precisely in the faces hollowed out by suffering and where degradation seems to triumph. God’s infinity is concealed in human misery, the Lord stirs and makes himself present, and he becomes a friendly presence precisely in the wounded flesh of the least, the forgotten and the discarded. The Lord manifests himself there. And we, who are sometimes scandalized unnecessarily by so many little things, would do well instead to ask ourselves: Why are we not scandalized in the face of rampant evil, life being humiliated, labour issues, the sufferings of migrants? Why do we remain apathetic and indifferent to the injustices of the world? Why do we not take to heart the situation of prisoners, which even from this city of Trieste rises as a cry of anguish? Why do we not contemplate

misery, pain, the rejection of so many people in the city? We are afraid, we are afraid of finding Christ there.

Dear friends, Jesus lived in his flesh the prophecy of everyday life, entering into the daily lives and stories of the people, manifesting compassion within events, and he manifested his being God, who is compassionate. And because of this, some people were scandalized by him. He became an obstacle, he was rejected even to the point of being tried and condemned; yet, he remained faithful to his mission. He did not hide behind ambiguity, did not compromise with the logic of political and religious power. He made his life an offering of love to the Father. So, too, we Christians are called to be prophets and witnesses of the Kingdom of God, in all the situations we live in, in every place we inhabit.

Brothers and sisters, from this city of Trieste, overlooking Europe, a crossroads of peoples and cultures, a borderland, let us nurture the dream of a new civilization founded on peace and fraternity; let us not be scandalized by Jesus but, on the contrary, let us be indignant at all those situations where life is degraded, wounded and killed; let us bear the prophecy of the Gospel in our flesh, with our choices even before our words. That coherence between choices and words. And to this Church of Trieste, I would like to say: Go forward! Onward! Continue to be on the front line to spread the Gospel of hope, especially towards those arriving from the Balkan route and towards all those who, in body or spirit, need to be encouraged and comforted. Let us commit ourselves together: because by discovering that we are loved by the Father, we can all live as brothers and sisters. All brothers and sisters, with that smile of welcoming and of peace in the soul. Thank you.

The Pope's words at the Angelus prayer

I wanted to thank the Archbishop, for many things, but especially for one: that he did not “talk” about the sick... He named them! He knows them by name! And this is an example, because charity is tangible, love is tangible. I thank the Archbishop very much because he has this habit. Every person, healthy or sick, big or small, every person has dignity. Dignity is seen with a name, and he knows their names. Very beautiful. Now I hope he will keep going with this knowledge, because once I came across a parish priest from the mountains — he was the parish priest of three villages — and I said to him, “But tell me, do you know the people by name?”. And he answered, “I even know the names of the families’ dogs!”. Now I hope he will continue on and learn the dogs’ names.

Before the final blessing, I would like to greet you all, gathered in this evocative square. I thank the bishop for his words and above all for the preparation of the visit, and along with him those who have collaborated, especially for the liturgy — they are good, these liturgy ones; a round of applause for the maestro and everyone — and for the many services; as well as the many people who have participated with prayer. I assure my closeness to the sick — I greeted many of them — the inmates, who wanted to be present, migrants — Trieste is an open door for migrants — and to all those who are struggling the most.

Trieste is one of those cities that have the vocation of making diverse people meet: first and foremost because it is a port. It is an important port, and then because it is situated at the crossroads between Italy, central Europe and the Balkans. In these situations, the challenge for the ecclesial and civil communities is to know how to combine openness and stability, acceptance and identity. And then it makes me want to say: you have your “papers in order”. Thank you! You have your “papers in order” to face this challenge! As Christians we have the Gospel, which gives meaning and hope to our life; and as citizens you have the Constitution, a reliable “compass” for the path of democracy.

And so, keep going! Keep going. Without fear, open and steadfast in human and Christian values, welcoming but without compromises on human dignity. This is nothing to joke about.

From this city, let us renew our commitment to pray and work for peace: for martyred Ukraine, for Palestine and Israel, for Sudan, Myanmar and every people that suffers because of war. Let us invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary, venerated on Monte Grisa as Mother and Queen.
