



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square

Fifth Sunday of Lent, 18 March 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today's Gospel (cf. Jn 12:20-33) narrates an episode which took place in the last days of Jesus' life. The scene takes place in Jerusalem where he finds himself for the feast of the Jewish Passover. Several Greeks had also arrived there for this celebration. These men were driven by religious sentiment, attracted by the faith of the Jewish People and, having heard of this great prophet, they approach Philip, one of the 12 Apostles, and say to him: "we wish to see Jesus" (v. 21). John highlights this sentence, that is centred on the verb *to see*, which in the evangelical lexicon means to go beyond appearances *in order to comprehend the mystery of a person*. The verb John uses, "to see", means to reach the depths of the heart, to reach through sight, with understanding, the depths of a person's soul, within the person.

Jesus' reaction is surprising. He does not answer with a "yes" or with a "no" but says: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified" (v. 23). These words which at first glance appear to ignore the question of those Greeks, in reality provide the true response because those who seek to know Jesus must *look within the Cross* where his glory is revealed; to look *within* the Cross. Today's Gospel invites us to turn our gaze to the Crucifix which is not an ornamental object or a clothing accessory — abused at times! Rather, it is a religious symbol to contemplate and to understand. Within the image of Jesus crucified is revealed the mystery of the death of the Son as a supreme act of love, the source of life and salvation for humanity of all ages. We have been healed in his wounds.

I may think: "How do I look at the Crucifix? As a work of art, to see if it is beautiful or not? Or do I

look within; do I penetrate Jesus' wounds unto the depths of his heart? Do I look at the mystery of God who was humiliated unto death, like a slave, like a criminal?". Do not forget this: look to the Crucifix, but look within it. There is a beautiful devotional way of praying one "Our Father" for each of the five wounds. When we pray that "Our Father", we are trying to enter within, through the wounds of Jesus, inside his very heart. And there we will learn the great wisdom of the mystery of Christ, the great wisdom of the Cross.

And in order to explain the meaning of his death and Resurrection, Jesus uses an image and says: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (v. 24). He wants to explain that his extreme fate — that is the Cross, death and Resurrection — is an act of *fruitfulness* — *his wounds have healed us* — a fruitfulness which will bear fruit for many. He thus compares himself to a grain of wheat which, rotting in the earth, generates new life. Jesus came to earth through the Incarnation, but this is not enough. He must also die to redeem man from the slavery of sin and to offer him a new life reconciled in love. I said "to redeem man": but to redeem me, you, all of us, each of us. He paid that price. This is the mystery of Christ. Go towards his wounds, enter, contemplate, see Jesus — but from within.

And this dynamism of the grain of wheat which was accomplished in Jesus must also take place within us, his disciples. We are called to take on the *Paschal law* of losing life in order to receive it renewed and eternal. And what does *losing life* mean? That is, what does it mean to be the grain of wheat? It means to think less about oneself, about personal interests and to know how to "see" and to meet the needs of our neighbours, especially the least of them. To joyfully carry out works of charity towards those who suffer in body and spirit is the most authentic way of living the Gospel. It is the necessary foundation upon which our communities can grow in reciprocal fraternity and welcome. I want to see Jesus, but from within. Penetrate his wounds and contemplate that love in his heart for you, for you, for you, for me, for everyone.

May the Virgin Mary who, from the manger in Bethlehem to the Cross on Calvary, has always kept her heart's gaze fixed on her Son, help us to meet and know him just as he desires so that we may live enlightened by Him and bring to the world fruits of justice and peace.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I cordially greet all of you present here, the faithful of Rome and those from many places around the world.

I greet the pilgrims from Slovakia and those from Madrid, the parish groups from Sant'Agnello, Pescara, Chieti and Cheremule, the youth from the Diocese of Brescia and those from the "Romana Vittoria" group from Milan.

I greet the *Unione Folclorica Italiana* (Italian Folklore Union), the group of families from Rubiera and the confirmands from Novi di Modena.

Yesterday, I went to visit Pietrelcina and San Giovanni Rotondo. I warmly greet and thank the community of the Dioceses of Benevento and Manfredonia, the Bishops — Archbishop Accrocca and Archbishop Castoro — the consecrated, the faithful and the authorities. Thank you for your warm welcome and I keep all of you in my heart but especially the sick people from the *Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza* (House for Relief of Suffering), the elderly and young people. I thank those who prepared this visit which I truly will never forget. May Padre Pio bless everyone.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!