



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Holy Mass in suffrage of Father Jacques Hamel

Wednesday, 14 September 2016

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 38, 23 September 2016)

In the Cross of Jesus Christ — today the Church is celebrating the feast of the Cross of Jesus Christ — we understand fully the mystery of Christ, this mystery of annihilation, of closeness to us. Though he “was in the form of God”, Paul says, he “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8). This is the mystery of Christ. This is a mystery that martyrdom occurs for the salvation of men. Jesus Christ, the first Martyr, the first person to give his life for us. And from this mystery of Christ began the entire history of Christian martyrdom, from the first centuries up to today.

The early Christians confessed Jesus Christ by paying with their lives. The early Christians were presented with apostasy, namely: ‘Say that our god is the real one, not yours. Make a sacrifice to our god or to our gods’. And when they did not do this, when they refused apostasy, they were killed. This story is repeated to this very day; and today in the Church there are more Christian martyrs than there were in the early days. Today Christians are murdered, tortured, imprisoned,

and slaughtered, because they refuse to deny Jesus Christ. In this history, we come to our Fr Jacques: he is part of this chain of martyrs. Christians who suffer today — whether it be in prison or by death or torture — in refusing to deny Jesus Christ, they indeed show the cruelty of this persecution. This cruelty that demands apostasy is — let us say the word — Satanic. How good it would be if all religious denominations would say: “Killing in the name of God is satanic”.

Fr Jacques Hamel had his throat cut on the Cross, precisely while he was celebrating the sacrifice of the Cross of Christ. This good, meek man of brotherhood, who was always trying to make peace, was assassinated as if he were a criminal. This is the satanic thread of persecution. But there is one thing, in this man who accepted his martyrdom there, with the martyrdom of Christ, at the altar, there is one thing that causes me to reflect a great deal: in the midst of the difficult moment that he experienced, in the midst also of this tragedy that he saw approaching, this gentle man, this good man, this man who strove for brotherhood, did not lose his clarity of thought and clearly said the name of the murderer, he said it very clearly: “Be gone, Satan!”. He gave his life for us, he gave his life so as not to deny Jesus. He gave his life in the same sacrifice of Jesus on the altar, and from there he accused the author of persecution: “Be gone, Satan!”.

And this example of courage, also the martyrdom of his own life, of emptying himself in order to help others, of creating brotherhood among people, helps each of us to move forward without fear. May he, from Heaven — we ought to pray to him, because he is a martyr! Martyrs are blessed, and we should pray to him — give us the meekness, brotherhood, peace, and also the courage to speak the truth: killing in the name of God is satanic.