



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"Asking for forgiveness implies forgiving"

Tuesday, 17 March 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

Today I would like us to pray for the elderly who are suffering in a particular way at this moment: with great inner solitude, many times with a lot of fear. Let us pray to the Lord that He might be near our grandparents and all the elderly, that He might give strength to those who have given us wisdom, life, our story. May we also be near them with our prayer.

Homily

Jesus has just given a catechesis on the unity of brothers and sisters, and concluded it with beautiful words: "Truly I tell you that if two or three of you agree on earth about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven" (cf. *Mt* 18:19). Unity, friendship, peace between brothers and sisters attracts God's benevolence. And Peter asks the question: "Yes, but what are we to do to the people who offend us?" "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (v. 21). And Jesus answered with that word which means, in their language, "always": "Seventy times seven" (v. 22). One must always forgive.

It is not easy to forgive because our self-centred hearts are always attached to hatred, to revenge, to resentment.

We have all seen families destroyed by family hatred that is passed down from one generation to

the next. Siblings who, in front of a parent's coffin do not greet each other because they are still carrying past resentments. It seems that attachment to hatred is stronger than that of love- This is precisely - let's say - the devil's "treasure" . He always lurks among our grudges, among our hatreds, and makes them grow. He keeps them like that to destroy, to destroy everything. He often destroys over small things.

It is what destroyed this God who came not to condemn but to forgive. This God who is able to throw a feast for a sinner who draws near to Him and forget everything. When God forgives us, He forgets all the evil we've done. Someone has said "it's God's sickness". He doesn't have a memory. He can lose His memory in these cases. God loses his memory regarding the ugly story of so many sinners, of our sins. He forgives us and goes on. He only asks us to do the same: to learn to forgive, not to continue to bear this fruitless cross of hatred, of resentment, of "You're going to pay for this".

This teaching is neither Christian nor human. Jesus' generosity teaches us that to enter into heaven, we must forgive. Moreover, He says: "You, do you go to Mass?" "Yes." " 'But if when you go to Mass, you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, be reconciled first' (cf. *Mt* 5:23-4). Do not come to me with love for me in one hand and hatred for your brother or sister in the other". Consistency in love. Forgiving. Forgiving from the heart.

There are people who live by condemning people, speaking ill of people, continually harming their co-workers' reputations, and that of their neighbours, their relatives... Because they do not pardon something that was done to them, or they do not forgive something that they did not like. It seems that the wealth of the devil is this: sowing the love of non-forgiveness, living attached to non-forgiveness. Indeed, forgiveness is a condition for going to heaven.

The parable that Jesus tells us (cf. *Mt* 18:23-25) is very clear: forgive. May the Lord teach us this wisdom of forgiving, which is not easy. And let us do something: when we go to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, let us first ask ourselves: "Do I forgive?" If I feel that I do not forgive, I cannot make believe that I am asking forgiveness because I will not be forgiven. Asking forgiveness means forgiving. Both go together. They cannot be separated. Moreover, those who ask for forgiveness for themselves, like that man whose master forgives everything, but do not forgive others, end up like that man (cf. vv. 32-34). "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart" (v. 35).

May the Lord help us understand this, to lower our heads so as not to be proud but magnanimous in forgiving. At least to forgive "out of interest". Why? Yes, to forgive, because if I do not forgive, I will not be forgiven. At least this. But always forgiveness.
