



The Holy See

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

"Seek Jesus in the poor"

Monday, 6 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

I am thinking of a serious problem that exists in many parts of the world. I would like us to pray for the problem of overcrowded prisons. Where there is overcrowding - there are many people there - there is the danger, in this pandemic, that it ends up as a grave tragedy. Let us pray for those responsible, for those who need to make decisions in this regard, so that they might find a just and creative way to solve the problem.

Homily

This passage ends with an observation: "The chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well, since it was on his account that many of the Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus" (*Jn 12:10-11*). The other day we saw the process of temptation: the initial seduction, the illusion, then it grows - second step - and the third, it grows, it spreads and one justifies oneself. But there is another step. It goes on and it never stops. Therefore it was not enough to put Jesus to death; now Lazarus too, as he was a living witness.

But today I would like to pause on one of Jesus' words. Six days before the Passover - we are right at the doorway of the Passion - Mary performs this contemplative gesture. Martha was serving, as in the other passage, and Mary opens the door to contemplation. And Judas thinks about money, and thinks about the poor, but "not because he cared about the poor, but because

he was a thief; he was in charge of the common fund and used to help himself to the contributions” (v. 6). This story of the unfaithful administrator is always current: they are always around, even at a high level. Think about some charitable or humanitarian organisations that have many, many employees, with a structure full of people, and only forty per cent of donations arrive at the poor because sixty per cent goes to pay the salaries of many people. This is a way of taking money from the poor. But Jesus is the answer. And this is where I want to stop. “You have the poor with you always” (*Jn* 12:8). This is a truth. “You have the poor with you always”. There are poor people. There are many of them: there are the poor people we see, but they are just a small part; the majority of poor people are those we do not see: the hidden poor. And we do not see them because we enter into this culture of indifference which denies their existence: “No, no, there aren’t many of them, we don’t see them; yes, maybe that case”, minimising the reality of the poor. But there are so very many.

Or even, if we enter into that culture of indifference, there is a habit of seeing the poor as ornaments in a city, like statues; yes, they are there, we see them; yes, that old woman who begs, that other one... But as if it were something normal. The poor are part of the decoration of the city. But the great majority are the poor victims of economic policies, of financial policies. Some recent statistics summarise it thus: there is a lot of money in the hands of the few, and great poverty suffered by many. And this is the poverty of many people, the victims of the structural injustice of the world economy. Many poor people are ashamed; many of them are from the middle class and go to Caritas secretly, and are ashamed to ask for help. The poor are far more numerous than the rich; far more. And what Jesus said is true: “You have the poor with you always”. But do I see them? Am I aware of the situation? In particular, the hidden reality, those who are ashamed to say that they can’t make it to the end of the month.

I remember that in Buenos Aires they told me that the building of an abandoned factory, empty for years, was inhabited by around fifteen families, who had arrived in the preceding months. I went there. They were families with children and each had claimed a part of the abandoned factory to live in. Looking closer, I saw that each family had good furniture, indicative of the middle class, with a television set. But they ended up there because they couldn’t pay their rent. The new poor, who are forced to leave their homes because they can’t afford the rent, go there. This is the injustice of the economic or financial system that led them to this. And there are very many of them, to the point that we will meet them at the judgement. The first question Jesus will ask is: “How did you get on with the poor? Did you give them something to eat? When they were in prison, did you visit them? In hospital, did you see them? Have you helped the widow, the orphan? Because that is where I was”. And on this we will be judged. We will not be judged for the luxury in which we live, or the journeys we make, or the social importance we have. We will be judged by our relationship with the poor. But if today I ignore the poor, if I cast them aside, if I think they do not exist, the Lord will ignore me on the day of judgement. When Jesus says: “The poor will always be with you”, He means: “I will always be with you in the poor. I will be present there”. And this is not being a communist, this is the centre of the Gospel. We will be judged on this.

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