The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS**"The gift of the Holy Spirit: frankness, courage, parresia"

Saturday, 18 April 2020

[Multimedia]

Introduction

Yesterday I received a letter from a sister who works as a sign language translator for the deaf and mute, and she told me about the very difficult work that healthcare workers, nurses, and doctors have to do with disabled people affected by COVID-19. Let us pray for those who are always at the service of those who have different abilities, but who do not have the abilities that we have.

Homily

The chief priests, the elders, the scribes were astonished, seeing these men and the boldness with which they spoke, and knowing they were uneducated people, perhaps they didn't even know how to write. They did not understand: "But it is something we cannot understand, how these people are so courageous, they have this boldness" (*Acts* 4:13). This word is very important, and becomes the style typical of Christian preachers, especially in the Acts of the Apostles: frankness, boldness, courage. It means all of this. It says so clearly. It comes from the Greek root that means all of this, and we, too, use this word very frequently, the Greek word itself, *parrhesia*, to indicate frankness and courage. And they saw this frankness, this courage, this *parrhesia* in them, and they did not understand. Boldness. The courage and the frankness with which the first apostles preached… For example, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is full of this: it says that Paul and Barnabas sought to explain the mystery of Jesus to the Hebrews with frankness, and that they preached the Gospel with frankness (see *Acts* 13:46).

But there is a verse in the Letter to the Hebrews that I like a lot, when the author of the Letter to the Hebrews realises that there is something in the community that is waning, that something is being lost, that these early Christians are becoming lukewarm. And he says this - I don't remember the citation well… he says "Remember the days past when… you endured a great contest of suffering… Do not throw away your confidence" (see *Heb* 10:32-35). "Start again", recover the frankness, the Christian courage to go ahead. One cannot be Christian without this boldness: if it does not come, you are not a good Christian. If you do not have courage, if to explain your position you slip and slide on ideological positions or casuistical explanations, then you lack that boldness, you lack that Christian style, the freedom to speak, to say everything. Courage. And we see that the chief priests and the scribes are victims of this boldness, because it backs them into a corner - they do not know what to do. Realising that "they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say" (*Acts* 4:13-15). Instead of accepting the truth as it could be seen, their hearts were so closed that they sought the way of diplomacy, the way of compromise: "Let's frighten them a little, tell them that they will be punished, and we'll see if that way they are silent" (see *Acts* 4:16-17). They were truly backed into a corner by this boldness; they did not know how to get out of it. But it did not come to mind to them to say, "Could this be true?", because their hearts were already closed, they were hard: their hearts were corrupt. This is one of the tragedies: the strength of the Holy Spirit, that manifests itself in this boldness of preaching, in this folly of preaching, cannot enter into corrupt hearts. Therefore, let us be careful: sinners yes, corrupt never. And never arrive at this corruption, which manifests itself in many forms. .. But, they were backed into a corner and did not know what to say. And in the end, they found a compromise: "Let's threaten them a bit, frighten them a little", and they invited them, they called them back and ordered them, they invited them not to say at any moment, nor to teach, the name of Jesus. "Let us make peace: go in peace but do not speak in the name of Jesus, do not teach" (see *Acts* 4:18). Peter knew them: he was not born courageous. He was a coward, he denied Jesus. But what happened, now? They answer: "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (*Acts* 4:19-20). But where does this courage come from, to this coward who denied the Lord? What happened in the heart of this man? The gift of the Holy Spirit: frankness, courage, *parrhesia*, is a gift, a grace that the Holy Spirit gives on the day of Pentecost. Right after receiving the Holy Spirit they went out to preach: somewhat courageously, as it was something new to them. This is consistency, the mark of the Christian, the true Christian: he or she is courageous and tells all the truth, because he or she is consistent.

And this consistency is what the Lord appeals to when He sends them out. After Mark's summary in the Gospel: "When he had risen, early on the first day of the week…" (16:9) - a summary of the resurrection - He "rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw Him after He had been raised" (v. 14). But with the strength of the Holy Spirit - it is Jesus' greeting, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Jn* 20:22) - He said to them, "Go into the

whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (*Mk* 16: 15). Go with courage, go with boldness, do not be afraid. Do not - I return to the verse in the Letter to the Hebrews - "Do not throw away your confidence", do not throw away this gift of the Holy Spirit (see *Heb* 10:35). The mission is born right there. It is that gift that makes us courageous, bold in the proclamation of the Word.

May the Lord help us always to be like that, courageous. This does not mean imprudent: no, no. Courageous. Christian courage is always prudent, but it is courage.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion may make a spiritual communion:

At Your feet, O my Jesus, I prostrate myself and I offer You repentance of my contrite heart, which is humbled in its nothingness and in Your holy presence. I adore You in the Sacrament of Your love, the ineffable Eucharist. I desire to receive You into the poor dwelling that my heart offers you. While waiting for the happiness of sacramental communion, I wish to possess You in spirit. Come to me, O Jesus, since I, for my part, am coming to You! May Your love embrace my whole being in life and in death. I believe in You, I hope in You, I love You.

At the end of Mass

Tomorrow Holy Mass will be celebrated in the parish of *Santo Spirito in Sassia*, at 11.00. And on Monday we will start here again, at 7.00. The Mass is ended, go in peace: Hallelujah, hallelujah.

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