



The Holy See

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

"Always return to the first encounter"

Monday, 27 April 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

Let us pray today for artists, who have this very great capacity for creativity, and through beauty show to us the path to follow. May the Lord give all of us the grace of creativity in this moment.

Homily

The people who had heard Jesus during the whole day, and who then had the grace of the multiplication of the loaves and had seen the power of Jesus, wanted to make Him king. First they went to Jesus to listen to His word, and also to ask for the healing of the sick. They stayed to listen to Jesus the entire day without getting bored, without tiring: they were there, happy. When they then saw that Jesus gave them something to eat, something that they did not expect, they thought: "Well, He would be a good governor for us, and He will certainly be able to free us from the power of the Romans and bring the country forward". And they were keen to make Him king. Their intention had changed, because they saw and they thought, "Well... because a person who performs this miracle, who gives His people food to eat, could be a good governor" (cf. *Jn* 6:1-15). But they had forgotten at that moment the enthusiasm that Jesus' word had provoked in their hearts.

Jesus had distanced Himself and went to pray (see v. 15). Those people stayed there and the day after they looked for Jesus, "because He must be here", they said, because they had seen that He

had not got into the boat with the others. And there was a boat there, it remained there (see *Jn* 6:22-24). But they did not know that Jesus had joined the others by walking on water (see vv. 16-21). And so they decided to go to the other side of the lake of Tiberias to look for Jesus and, when they saw Him, the first word they said to Him was: “Rabbi, when did you get here?” (v. 25). It is as if they were saying: “We don’t understand, this is something very strange”.

And Jesus makes them return to their first sentiment, what they were feeling before the multiplication of the loaves when they were listening to the word of God: “Amen, amen, I say to you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled” (v. 26). Jesus reveals their intention and says, “But you have changed your attitude”. And instead of justifying themselves - “No, Lord, no” - they were humble. Jesus continues, “Do not work for bread that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on Him the Father, God Himself, has set His seal” (v. 27). And being good, they asked Him, “What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?” (v. 29). And Jesus says, “Believe in the Son of God” (v. 28). This is an example of how Jesus corrects the attitude of the people, of the crowd, because as they were journeying they gradually strayed from that first moment, from the first spiritual consolation, and took a path that was not the right one, a path more worldly than evangelical.

This makes us understand how many times we ourselves have started out on the path of following Jesus, with the values of the Gospel, and then halfway down the road we get another idea, we see some sign or other, and we stray and conform to something more temporal, more material, more worldly - let’s say - and we lose the memory of that first enthusiasm we had when we heard Jesus speak. The Lord always makes us return to that first encounter, the first moment when He looked at us, He spoke to us and He inspired in us the desire to follow Him.

This is a grace to ask of the Lord, because in life we will always have this temptation to stray because we see something else: “But that will go really well, but that’s a good idea”, and we distance ourselves. The grace to return to the first call, the first moment: to not forget, to not forget my history, when Jesus looked at me with love and said to me, “This is your path”; when Jesus, through many people, made me understand what the path of the Gospel is, and not other paths that are more worldly, with other values. To return to the first encounter. Among the things that Jesus says on the morning of the Resurrection, it has always struck me that He says, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (see *Mt* 28:10). Galilee was the place of the first meeting with Jesus. They met Him there. Each one of us has our own Galilee within us, that specific moment in which Jesus drew near to us and said to us, “Follow me”. In life, what happens to those people happens to us: they say to Him right away, “But what should we do?”, and then we distance ourselves and we seek other values, other hermeneutics, other things, and we lose the freshness of the first call. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews refers to this: “Remember the days past” (see *Heb* 10:32). Memory, the memory of the first encounter, the memory of “my Galilee”, when the Lord looked at me with love and said, “Follow me”.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion can now make a spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

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