



The Holy See

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

“Attitudes that prevent us from knowing Christ”

Tuesday, 5 May 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

Today let us pray for the departed who have died due to the pandemic. They died alone; they died without the caress of their loved ones, many even without a funeral. May the Lord welcome them in glory.

Homily

Jesus was in the temple. It was close to the Feast of the Dedication (cf. *Jn* 10:22-30). During that time the Jews, too, “gathered round him and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly’” (v. 24). They would make one lose patience, but quite meekly “Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe’” (v. 25). They continued to say: “But is it you? Is it you?” – “Yes, I said so, but you do not believe!”. “But you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep” (v. 26). And this, perhaps, raises a doubt: I believe and I belong to Jesus’s sheep; but if Jesus says to us: “You cannot believe because you do not belong”, is there a faith prior to the encounter with Jesus? What is this *belonging* to Jesus’s faith? What is it that stops me at the door which is Jesus?

There are attitudes prior to professing Jesus. For us too, who are in Jesus’s flock. They are like “prior aversions”, that do not allow us to go forward in knowledge of the Lord. The first of them is *wealth*. Many of us too, who have entered through the door of the Lord, stop and do not go

forward because we are imprisoned in wealth. The Lord was harsh, about wealth, he was very harsh, very harsh. To the point of saying that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Mt* 19:24). This is harsh. Wealth is an obstacle to moving forward. But must we fall into pauperism? No. But do not be slaves to wealth, do not live for wealth, because wealth is a lord, it is the lord of this world, and we cannot serve two lords (cf. *Lk* 16:13). And wealth stops us.

Another thing that prevents moving forward in knowledge of Jesus, in belonging to Jesus, is *rigidity*: rigidity of heart. Also rigidity in the interpretation of the Law. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, the doctors of the Law for this rigidity (cf. *Mt* 23:1-36). Which is not faithfulness: faithfulness is always a gift to God; rigidity is a security for myself. I remember a time when I was entering a parish and a lady – a good lady – came up to me and said: “Father, a piece of advice...” – “Go on” – “Last week, Saturday, not yesterday, last Saturday, we went as a family to a wedding: it was with a Mass. It was Saturday afternoon, and we thought that with this Mass we had fulfilled the Sunday precept. But then, upon returning home, I thought that the Readings for that Mass were not those for Sunday. And so I realised that I am in mortal sin, because I did not go on Sunday because I had gone on Saturday, but to a Mass *that was not real*, because the Readings were not *real*”. That rigidity.... And that lady belonged to an ecclesial movement. Rigidity. This distances us from the wisdom of Jesus, from the wisdom, beauty of Jesus: it takes away your freedom. And so many pastors cause this rigidity to grow in the souls of the faithful; and this rigidity does not help us enter through the door of Jesus (cf. *Jn* 10:7): observing the law as it is written or as I interpret it is more important than the freedom of moving forward following Jesus.

Another thing that does not allow us to move forward in the knowledge of Jesus is *sloth*. That weariness.... Let us think of that man at the pool: 38 years there (cf. *Jn* 5:1-9). Sloth. It takes away our will to go forward, and everything is “yes, but... no, not now, no, but...”, which leads you to get cosy and makes you tepid. Sloth is another thing that prevents us from moving forward.

Another which is rather ugly is a *clericalist* attitude. Clericalism in put in Jesus’s place: He says: “No, this must be like this, like this, like this...” – “But, the Teacher” – “Leave the Teacher be: this is like this, like this, like this, and if you do not do like this, like this, like this, you cannot enter”. Clericalism takes away the freedom of believers. This is an ugly disease in the Church: the clericalist attitude.

Then, another thing that prevents us from going forward, from entering to know Jesus and profess Jesus, is *the worldly spirit*. When the observance of faith, the practice of faith ends up in worldliness. And everything is mundane. Let us consider the celebration of a few sacraments in some parishes: how much worldliness there is! And one does not really understand the grace of Jesus’s presence.

These are the things that prevent us from belonging to Jesus’s sheep. We are “sheep” [in pursuit]

of all these things: wealth, sloth, rigidity, worldliness, clericalism, methods, ideologies, forms of life. Freedom is lacking. And you cannot follow Jesus without freedom. “But sometimes freedom goes beyond, and one slips”. Yes, it's true. It is true. We can slip while moving. But it is worse to slip *before* moving, with these things that prevent us from beginning to move.

May the Lord enlighten us to see, within us, that there is freedom to pass through the door which is Jesus, and to go beyond Jesus in order to become a flock, to become sheep in his flock.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion can now partake in 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.