



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS “Being Christian means belonging to the People of God”

Thursday, 7 May 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Yesterday I received a letter from a group of artists: they thanked us for praying for them. I would like to ask the Lord to bless them because artists enable us to understand what *beauty* is, and the Gospel cannot be understood without beauty. Let us pray once again for artists.

Homily

When Paul was invited to speak in the Synagogue of Antioch [of Pisidia] to explain this new doctrine, that is, to explain Jesus, to proclaim Jesus, Paul began by speaking of salvation history (cf. *Acts* 13:13-21). Paul stood up and began: “The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt” (v. 17)... and [he recounted] all of salvation, the history of salvation. Stephen, the first martyr, did the same thing (cf. *Acts* 7:1-54) and Paul did too, another time. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews did the same thing, when he recounted the story of Abraham and “all our ancestors” (cf. *Heb* 11:1-39). We sang the same today “I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself” (*Psalms* 88[89]:2). We sang the history of David: “I have found David my servant” (v. 20). Matthew and Luke did the same thing (cf. *Mt* 1:1-14, *Lk* 3:23-38): when they started speaking about Jesus, they began with Jesus’s genealogy.

What is there behind Jesus? There is a history. A history of grace, a history of choice, a history of promise. The Lord chose Abraham and went with His people. At the beginning of Mass, in the

opening hymn, we said: “When you moved forth, Lord, before your people, and opened the path and walked beside your people, close to your people”. There is a history of God with His people. And this is why, when Paul was asked to explain the reason for faith in Jesus Christ, he did not begin with Jesus Christ: he began with the history. Christianity is a doctrine, but not only that. It is not only the things that we believe; it is a history that bears this doctrine which is God’s promise, God’s covenant, being chosen by God.

Christianity is not just an ethic. Yes, it is true, it has moral principles, but one is not Christian with only a vision of ethics. It is more. Christianity is not an elite of people chosen for truth. This sense of elitism that then goes ahead in the Church, right? For example, I am from that institute; I belong to this movement which is better than yours, than this or that other one... It is an elitist sense. No, this is not Christianity: Christianity is *belonging* to a people, a people chosen by God, freely. If we do not have this consciousness of belonging to a people, we will be ideological Christians, with a tiny doctrine for affirming the truth, with an ethic, with a moral code – that’s fine – or with an elite. We feel we are part of a group chosen by God – Christians – and the others will go to hell, or if they are saved it is by the mercy of God, but they are the discarded ones... And so on. If we do not have a consciousness of belonging to a people, we are not true Christians.

For this reason Paul explained Jesus from the beginning, of his belonging to a people. And so often, so often we fall into these partialities, be they dogmatic, moral or elitist, do we not? The sense of being elite is what does us so much harm, and we lose that sense of belonging to the holy, faithful People of God, whom God chose in Abraham and promised, the great promise, Jesus, and He let them move with hope and made a covenant with them. Consciousness of being a people.

That passage from Deuteronomy always strikes me; I believe it is the 26th chapter, when it states: “Once a year when you go to present offerings to the Lord, the first harvest, and when your son asks you, ‘Dad, why are you doing this?’, you must not tell him: ‘Because God commanded it’, no. ‘We were a people; we were this way and the Lord freed us...’” (cf. *Deut* 26:1-11). Recount the history, as Paul did here. Pass on the history of our salvation. In the same Deuteronomy the Lord advises: “When you come into the land that you did not conquer, that I conquered, and you eat of the fruits that you did not plant, and live in the houses that you did not build, in the moment to give the offering” (cf. *Deut* 26:1), recite the well-known creed of Deuteronomy: “A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt” (*Deut* 26:5)... “He remained there for 400 years, then the Lord freed him, brought him forth...”. It sings the history, *the memory of people*, of being a people.

And in this history of the People of God, up to arriving at Jesus Christ, there were saints, sinners, and many common, good people, with virtues and sins, but everyone. The well-known “crowd” that followed Jesus, that had *the sense* of belonging to a people. A self-styled Christian who does not have this sense is not a true Christian; he is a bit particular and feels justified without the people.

Belonging to a people, having the memory of the People of God. And Paul, Stephen, Paul once again, the Apostles taught this... And the advice of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: “Remember your forebears” (cf. *Heb* 11:2), that is, those who came before us on this journey of salvation.

If someone were to ask me: “What do you think is the way Christians deviate today and always? What do you think is the most dangerous deviation Christians can make?”, I would say without a doubt: the lack of memory of belonging to a people. When this is lacking, there is dogmatism, being moralistic, ethicism, elitist movements. The people are missing. A sinful people, always, we all are, but one that generally does not make mistakes, that has the sense of being a chosen people, that journeys after a promise and has made a covenant that perhaps it may not fulfil, but knows.

We ask the Lord for this consciousness of being a people, which Our Lady sang beautifully in her Magnificat (cf. *Lk* 1:46-56), which Zacchariah sang so beautifully in his Benedictus (cf. *Lk* 1:67-79), canticles which we pray every day, in the morning and in the evening. Consciousness of being a people: we are the holy, faithful People of God who, as the [First Vatican Council](#), then the [Second](#) stated, in its totality has the sense of faith and is infallible in this way of believing.

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. Amen.