



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Holy Mass for the Congolese community in Rome

At 9.30 this morning, in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father Francis presided over Holy Mass for the Congolese community in Rome.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope during the course of the Eucharistic celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

Bobóto [Peace] R/ Bondeko [Fraternity]

Bondeko [Fraternity] R/ Esengo [Joy]

Esengo, joy: the Word of God we have listened to fills us with joy. Why, brothers and sisters? Because, as Jesus says in the Gospel, “the Kingdom of God has come near” (Lk 10:11). It is near: it is not yet reached, it is partly hidden, but close to us. And this closeness of God in Jesus, this closeness of God that is Jesus, is the source of our joy: we are beloved and we are never left alone. But the joy that is born of God’s closeness, while it gives peace, it does not leave us in peace. It gives peace and does not leave us alone, a special joy. It brings about a transformation in us: it fills us with awe, it surprises, it changes our life. And the encounter with the Lord is a continual beginning, continually taking a step forward. The Lord changes our life always. It is what happens to the disciples in the Gospel: to announce God’s closeness they go far away, they go on mission. Because those who receive Jesus feel they have to imitate him, to do as he did, which was to leave heaven to serve us on earth, and they come out of themselves. So, if we ask ourselves what our task in the world is, what we must do as a Church in history, the answer of the Gospel is clear: *mission*. To go on a mission, to bring the proclamation, to make it known that Jesus came from the Father.

As Christians, we cannot content ourselves with living in mediocrity. And this is a malaise: many Christians, and we too, are in danger of living in mediocrity, reckoning with our opportunities and conveniences, living day by day. No, we are Jesus' missionaries. We are all Jesus' missionaries. But you can say: "I don't know what to do, I am not capable!". The Gospel astounds us again, showing us the Lord who sends the disciples without waiting for them to be ready and well trained: they had not been with him for very long, yet he sends them. They had not carried out studies in theology, yet he sends them. And the way in which he sends them is also full of surprises. Let us therefore take three surprises, three things that surprise us, *three missionary surprises* that Jesus reserves for the disciples and reserves to every one of us, if we listen to him.

The first surprise: *equipment*. To undertake a mission in unknown places, one must take along several things, certainly the essential ones. Jesus, on the other hand, does not say what to take, but what not to take: "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals" (v. 4). Practically nothing: no baggage, no security, no help. We often think that our church initiatives do not function properly because we lack structures, we lack money, we lack means: this is not true. Jesus himself refutes this. Brothers, sisters, let us not place our trust in riches and let us not fear our poverty, material and human. The more we are free and simple, small and humble, the more the Holy Spirit guides the mission and makes us protagonists of his wonders. Leave room for the Holy Spirit!

For Christ, the fundamental "equipment" is another: the brother. This is curious. "He sent them ... two by two" (v. 1), says the Gospel. Not alone, not by themselves, always with a brother beside them. Never without the brother, because there is no mission without communion. There is no proclamation that works without taking care of others. So, we might ask ourselves: Do I, a Christian, think more about what I lack in order to live well, or do I think about being closer to my brothers and sisters, of taking care of them?

We come to the second surprise of mission: *the message*. It is logical to think that, to prepare oneself for proclamation, the disciples must learn what to say, they must study its content in depth, prepare convincing and well-articulated discourses. This is true. I do this too. Instead, Jesus leaves them just two short phrases. The first even seems superfluous, since it is a greeting: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!'" (v.5). In this way the Lord prescribes how to present oneself, in any place, as *ambassadors of peace*. A Christian always brings peace. A Christian works to bring peace into that place. This is the distinctive sign: the Christian is a bearer of peace, because Christ is peace. From this, we can recognize whether we are his. If instead we spread gossip and suspicions, create divisions, hinder communion, place our own affiliation before all else, we do not act in the name of Jesus. Those who foment rancour, incite hatred, and override others, do not bring peace. Today, dear brothers and sisters, let us pray for peace and reconciliation in your homeland, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so wounded and exploited. We join in the Masses celebrated in the country following this intention, and pray that Christians be witnesses of peace, capable of overcoming every feeling of feeling of rancour, every feeling of revenge, overcome the temptation that reconciliation is not possible, every unhealthy attachment to one's own group that leads to contempt for others.

Brother, sister, peace begins with us; it starts from me and from you, from each one of us, from the heart of every one of us. If you live his peace, Jesus comes and your family, your society change. They change if first of all your heart is not at war, it is not armed with resentment and anger, it is not divided, it is not two-faced, it is not false. To place peace and order in your own heart, to defuse greed, to extinguish hatred and rancour, to flee from corruption, to flee from cheating and cunning: this is where peace begins. We would always like to meet gentle, good, peaceful people, starting from our relatives and neighbours. But Jesus says: "Bring peace to your home, begin by honouring your wife and loving her with your heart; by respecting and caring for your children, your elders and neighbours. Brother and sister, please live in peace, enkindle peace, and peace will dwell in your home, in your Church, in your country".

After the greeting of peace, all the rest of the message entrusted to the disciples is reduced to the few words with which we began, and which Jesus repeats twice: "The Kingdom of God has come near to you... The Kingdom of God has come near" (vv. 9-11). Announcing God's closeness, which is his style; the style of God is clear: closeness, compassion and tenderness. This is the style of God. Announcing God's closeness, here is what is essential. Hope and conversion come from here: from believing that God is close and keeps watch over us: he is the Father of all of us, who wants us all to be brothers and sisters. If we live under this gaze, the world will no longer be a battlefield, but a garden of peace; history will not be a race to arrive first, but a joint

pilgrimage. All of this – remember – does not require grand speeches, but a few words and much witness. And so we can ask ourselves: do those who meet me see me as a witness of God's peace and closeness, or an agitated, angry, impatient, belligerent person? Do I show Jesus, or do I obscure him with these belligerent attitudes?

After the *equipment* and the *message*, the third surprise of the mission relates to our *style*. Jesus asks his followers to go into the world "as lambs in the midst of wolves" (v. 3). The common sense of the world says the opposite: assert yourself, excel! Christ, on the other hand, wants us to be lambs, not wolves. He does not want us to be naïve – no, please! – but to abhor every instinct of supremacy and imposition, of greed and possession. Those who live as lambs do not attack, they are not voracious; they stay in the flock, with the others, and find security in the Shepherd, not in force or arrogance, not in the greed for money and goods that causes such evil also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The disciple of Jesus rejects violence, hurts no-one: he is peaceful, he loves everyone. And if that seems to be failing, he looks to his Shepherd, Jesus, the Lamb of God who overcame the world in this way, on the cross. In this way he overcame the world. And do I – let us ask ourselves again – live like a lamb, like Jesus, or as a wolf, as the spirit of the world teaches, that spirit that fuels war? That spirit that wages war, that destroys.

May the Lord help us to be missionaries today, going in the company of our brother and our sister, with peace and God's closeness on our lips; bearing in our heart the gentleness and goodness of Jesus, the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

Moto azalí na matói ma koyóka [Those who have ears to hear]

R/Ayóka [Hear]

Moto azalí na motéma mwa kondíma [Those who have a heart to assent]

R/Andima [Assent]
