



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "Familiarity with the Lord"

Friday, 17 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Today I would like us to pray for expectant mothers, pregnant women who will become mothers and are restless and concerned. A question: "What kind of world will my child be born into?" Let us pray for them, that the Lord may give them courage to raise these children trusting that it will certainly be a different world, but it will always be a world that the Lord will love greatly.

Homily

The disciples were fishermen: indeed, Jesus had called them when they were at work. Andrew and Peter were working with the nets. They left their nets and they followed Jesus (see *Mt* 4:18-20). John and James, the same: they left the father and the youths who worked with them and followed Jesus (see *Mt* 4:21-22). They received their call precisely as they worked as fishermen. And today's passage from the Gospel, this miracle, the miraculous catch, makes us think of another miraculous catch, the one Luke tells us about (see *Lk* 5:1-11): the same thing happened there too. They caught something when they didn't think they were going to be able to catch anything. After Jesus had preached He told them to go out to sea. "But we have been working all night and we haven't caught anything!" And Jesus said, "Go". And Peter said, "On your word we will cast out the nets". The quantity was so great, says the Gospel, that "astonishment... seized him and all those with him" (*Lk* 5:9), upon seeing that miracle. Today, in that other catch of fish one does not speak about astonishment. We can see a certain naturalness, we can see that there has been some progress, a journey of knowing the Lord, of intimacy with the Lord. I would say the

right word would be that they have grown in *familiarity* with the Lord. When John sees this, he says to Peter: "But it is the Lord!", and Peter tucks in his garment and jumps into the sea in order to go to the Lord (*Jn* 21. 7). The first time he kneeled before Him and said: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (see *Lk* 5: 8). This time he says nothing, it is more natural. No one asked, "Who are you?" They knew that He was the Lord: it was natural, the encounter with the Lord. The apostles' *familiarity* with the Lord had grown.

We Christians too, in our journey of life, are in this state of walking, of progressing in *familiarity* with the Lord. The Lord, I could say, is a bit "down to earth", but He is down to earth because He walks with us, we recognise that it is Him. No one asks Him, here, "Who are you?": they knew that He was the Lord. It is an everyday familiarity with the Lord, that of the Christian. And certainly, they ate breakfast together, with fish and bread, certainly they spoke about many things naturally.

This familiarity with the Lord, of Christians, is always in community. Yes, it is intimate, it is personal, but *within the community*. A familiarity without community, a *familiarity* without bread, a familiarity without the Church, without the people, without the sacraments, is dangerous. It can become, let's say, a gnostic familiarity, a familiarity for me by myself, detached from the people of God. The apostles's familiarity with the Lord is always a community familiarity. It always takes place *at the table*, a sign of the community. It was always with the Sacrament, always with the Bread.

I say this because someone made me reflect on the danger that we are living in this moment, this pandemic that has made us all communicate, even religiously, through the means of communication. Even this Mass, we are all communicants, but not together, we are spiritually together. The people gathered are few. There is a large number of people: we are together, but not together. The Sacrament too: today you receive the Eucharist, but the people linked up with us, only spiritual communion. And this is not the Church: this is the Church in a difficult situation, which the Lord permits, but the ideal of the Church is always with the people and with the Sacraments. Always.

Before Easter, when the news emerged that I would celebrate Easter in an empty Saint Peter's Basilica, a bishop wrote to me, a good bishop, good; and he rebuked me. "But how come, Saint Peter's is so big, why not put at least thirty people in there, so that you can see there are people? There won't be any danger". I thought: "But, what does he have in mind, to tell me this?" I didn't understand, at the time. But since he is a good bishop, very close to the people, he wanted to say something to me. When I find him, I will ask him. Then I understood. He was saying to me, "Be careful not to make the Church virtual, *virtual*; not to make the sacraments virtual, not to make the people of God virtual. The Church, the sacraments, the people of God are concrete. It is true that in this moment we must provide this familiarity with God in this way, but so as to come out of the tunnel, not to stay inside it. And this is the familiarity of the apostles: not gnostic, not virtual, not selfish, for each one of us, but a concrete familiarity, in the people. Familiarity with the Lord in

everyday life, familiarity with the Lord in the sacraments, in the midst of the people of God. They went on a journey of maturation in their familiarity with the Lord. Let us learn how to do this as well. From the very first moment, they understood that familiarity was different to what they had imagined, and they arrived at this. They knew that there was the Lord, and they shared everything: the community, sacraments, the Lord, peace, feasting.

May the Lord teach us this intimacy with Him, this familiarity with Him but *in the Church, with the sacraments, with the faithful* holy people of God.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive communion may now 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. Amen.