



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "Our relationship
with God is gratuitous, it is friendship"

Friday, 15 May 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Today is the International Day of Families. Let us pray for families, that the Spirit of the Lord - the spirit of love, respect and freedom - may grow in families.

Homily

In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we see that in the Church, in the beginning, there were times of peace. It says that many times: the Church was growing in peace and the Spirit of the Lord gave it growth (see *Acts* 9:31). Moments of peace. There were also moments of persecution, beginning with the persecution of Stephen (see *Acts* 6–7), then Paul the persecutor, converted, but even he persecuted... Moments of peace, moments of persecution; there were even moments of *turmoil*. And this is the theme of today's first Reading: a moment of turmoil (see 15:22-31). "We have heard that some from our number," the Apostles write to the Christians who have converted from paganism, "we have heard that some from our number who had no mandate from us have upset you – *have disturbed you* – with their teachings that have disturbed your peace of mind" (v. 24).

What happened? These Christians, who had been pagans, believed in Jesus Christ and had received baptism. And they were happy: they had received the Holy Spirit. They went from paganism to Christianity without any intermediary stage. Instead, those People who were called "Judaizers" sustained that you could not do that, that if someone had been a pagan they had to

become Jews first, a good Jew, and then become a Christian, so as to be in line with the election of the People of God. And these Christians did not understand this. “But why? Are we second-class Christians? We cannot go directly from paganism to Christianity? Didn’t Christ’s resurrection dissolve the ancient law and bring it to an even greater fullness?” They were disturbed and there were a lot of discussions among them. And those who wanted this were people who had pastoral arguments, even some moral ones. They sustained that no, you had to make the passage in this way! And this put into question the freedom of the Holy Spirit, and the free gift of Christ’s resurrection and grace. They were methodical, and also rigid.

Jesus had said about these people, these teachers, these doctors of the Law: “Woe to you who traverse sea and land to make one convert, and when that happens you make him worse than before. You make him a child of Gehenna” Jesus more or less says that in the 23rd chapter of Matthew (see v. 15). These people who were “ideological” had reduced the Law, the doctrine, to an ideology: “you have to do this, and this, and this...” A religion of prescriptions, and thus they took away the Holy Spirit’s freedom. And the people who followed them were rigid people, people who did not feel comfortable, they did not know the joy of the Gospel. The way of following Jesus to perfection was through *rigidity*: “You have to do this, this, this, and this”. These people, these doctors, “*manipulated*” the consciences of the faithful, or they made them become rigid, or they would go away.

Because of this, I repeat this many times, and I say that rigidity is not from the good Spirit because it puts into question the *free gift* of the redemption, the free gift of Christ’s resurrection. And this is something old: throughout the Church’s history this has repeated itself. Let us think of the Pelagians, of those... those famously rigid people. And even in our own times we have seen some apostolic organizations that seem to be quite well organized, who work well..., but all of them are rigid, everyone is exactly the same, and then we have learned about the corruption that was inside, even in the founders.

The Spirit of God is not where there is rigidity, because the Spirit of God is *liberty*. And these people wanted to force these passages, taking away liberty from the Spirit of God and the *gratuitousness* of the redemption: “to be justified you have to do this, this, this, and this...”. Justification is freely given. Jesus’s death and resurrection are gratuitous. You do not pay for it, it cannot be purchased: it is a gift! And these people did not want to do it that way.

The path is beautiful [the way they proceeded]: the Apostles gathered together in this council and in the end they write a letter that says this: “It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden” (*Acts 15:28*), and they put these obligations and a few common sense moral ones so as not to confuse Christianity with paganism, abstaining from meat offered to idols, etc. And in the end, these Christians who had been disturbed, gathered in an assembly, they received the letter, and “when they read it, they were delighted with the encouragement it gave them” (v. 31). From *turmoil* to *joy*. The spirit of rigidity always brings

turmoil. “Did I do this all right?. Did I not do that all right? Scrupulosity. The Spirit of evangelical freedom brings you joy because that is exactly what Jesus did by His resurrection: He brought joy! Our relationship with God, our relationship with Jesus is not a relationship of “doing things”: “I do this and You give me that”. A relationship like that – forgive me, Lord – *commercial*. No! It is free, just like the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. “You are my friends” (*Jn* 15:14). “I do not call you slaves, I call you friends” (see v. 15). “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (v. 16). This is gratuitousness.

Let us ask the Lord to help us to discern the fruit of evangelical *gratuitousness* from the fruits of non-evangelical *rigidity*, and that He might free us from every turmoil caused by those who put the Faith, the life of Faith under detailed prescriptions, prescriptions that have no meaning. I refer to those prescriptions that have no meaning, not to the Commandments. May He free us from the spirit of rigidity that robs you of freedom.