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HOLY MASS FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Parque Bicentenario, Quito, Ecuador
Tuesday, 7 July 2015

[Multimedia]

The word of God calls us to live in unity, that the world may believe.

I think of those hushed words of Jesus during the Last Supper as more of a shout, a cry rising up from this Mass which we are celebrating in Bicentennial Park. Let us imagine this together. The bicentennial which this Park commemorates was that of Latin America's cry for independence. It was a cry which arose from being conscious of a lack of freedom, of exploitation and despoliation, of being "subject to the passing whims of the powers that be" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 213).

I would like to see these two cries joined together, under the beautiful challenge of evangelization. We evangelize not with grand words, or complicated concepts, but with "the joy of the Gospel", which "fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. For those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, loneliness, and an isolated conscience" (ibid., 1). We who are gathered here at table with Jesus are ourselves a cry, a shout born of the conviction that his presence leads us to unity, "pointing to a horizon of beauty and inviting others to a delicious banquet" (ibid., 15).

"Father, may they be one... so that the world may believe". This was Jesus' prayer as he raised his eyes to heaven. This petition arose in a context of mission: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world". At that moment, the Lord experiences in his own flesh the worst of this world, a world he nonetheless loves dearly. Knowing full well its intrigues, its falsity and its

betrayals, he does not turn away, he does not complain. We too encounter daily a world torn apart by wars and violence. It would be facile to think that division and hatred only concern struggles between countries or groups in society. Rather, they are a manifestation of that “widespread individualism” which divides us and sets us against one another (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 99), they are a manifestation of that legacy of sin lurking in the heart of human beings, which causes so much suffering in society and all of creation. But is it precisely this troubled world, with its forms of egoism, into which Jesus sends us. We must not respond with nonchalance, or complain we do not have the resources to do the job, or that the problems are too big. Instead, we must respond by taking up the cry of Jesus and accepting the grace and challenge of being builders of unity.

There was no shortage of conviction or strength in that cry for freedom which arose a little more than two hundred years ago. But history tells us that it only made headway once personal differences were set aside, together with the desire for power and the inability to appreciate other movements of liberation which were different yet not thereby opposed.

Evangelization can be a way to unite our hopes, concerns, ideals and even utopian visions. We believe this and we make it our cry. “In our world, especially in some countries, different forms of war and conflict are re-emerging, yet we Christians wish to remain steadfast in our intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships and to ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 67). The desire for unity involves the delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, the conviction that we have an immense treasure to share, one which grows stronger from being shared, and becomes ever more sensitive to the needs of others (cf. *ibid.*, 9). Hence the need to work for inclusivity at every level, to strive for this inclusivity at every level, to avoid forms of selfishness, to build communication and dialogue, to encourage collaboration. We need to give our hearts to our companions along the way, without suspicion or distrust. “Trusting others is an art, because peace is an art” (cf. *ibid.*, 244). Our unity can hardly shine forth if spiritual worldliness makes us feud among ourselves in a futile quest for power, prestige, pleasure or economic security. And this on the backs of the poorest, the most excluded and vulnerable, those who still keep their dignity despite daily blows against it.

Such unity is already an act of mission, “that the world may believe”. Evangelization does not consist in proselytizing, for proselytizing is a caricature of evangelization, but rather evangelizing entails attracting by our witness those who are far off, it means humbly drawing near to those who feel distant from God in the Church, drawing near to those who feel judged and condemned outright by those who consider themselves to be perfect and pure. We are to draw near to those who are fearful or indifferent, and say to them: “The Lord, with great respect and love, is also calling you to be a part of your people” (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 113). Because our God respects us even in our lowliness and in our sinfulness. This calling of the Lord is expressed with such humility and respect in the text from the Book of Revelations: “Look, I am at the door and I am calling; do you want to open the door?” He does not use force, he does not break the lock, but instead, quite simply, he presses the doorbell, knocks gently on the door and then waits. This is

our God!

The Church's mission as sacrament of salvation also has to do with her identity as a pilgrim people called to embrace all the nations of the earth. The more intense the communion between us, the more effective our mission becomes (cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis*, 22). Becoming a missionary Church requires constantly fostering communion, since mission does not have to do with outreach alone... We also need to be missionaries within the Church, showing that she is "a mother who reaches out, showing that she is a welcoming home, a constant school of missionary communion" (cf. *Aparecida Document*, 370).

Jesus' prayer can be realized because he has consecrated us. He says, "for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (*Jn* 17:19). The spiritual life of an evangelizer is born of this profound truth, which should not be confused with a few comforting religious exercises, a spirituality which is perhaps widespread. Jesus consecrates us so that we can encounter him, person to person; an encounter that leads us in turn to encounter others, to become involved with our world and to develop a passion for evangelization (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 78).

Intimacy with God, in itself incomprehensible, is revealed by images which speak to us of communion, communication, self-giving and love. For that reason, the unity to which Jesus calls us is not uniformity, but rather a "multifaceted and inviting harmony" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 117). The wealth of our differences, our diversity which becomes unity whenever we commemorate Holy Thursday, makes us wary of all temptations that suggest extremist proposals akin to totalitarian, ideological or sectarian schemes. The proposal offered by Jesus is a concrete one and not a notion. It is concrete: "Go and do the same" he tells that man who asked "who is my neighbor?" After having told the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus says, "Go and do the same". Nor is this proposal of Jesus something we can fashion as we will, setting conditions, choosing who can belong and who cannot; the religiosity of the 'elite'. Jesus prays that we will all become part of a great family in which God is our Father, in which all of us are brothers and sisters. No one is excluded; and this is not about having the same tastes, the same concerns, the same gifts. We are brothers and sisters because God created us out of love and destined us, purely of his own initiative, to be his sons and daughters (cf. *Eph* 1:5). We are brothers and sisters because "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father!" (*Gal* 4:6). We are brothers and sisters because, justified by the blood of Christ Jesus (cf. *Rom* 5:9), we have passed from death to life and been made "coheirs" of the promise (cf. *Gal* 3:26-29; *Rom* 8:17). That is the salvation which God makes possible for us, and which the Church proclaims with joy: to be part of that "we" which leads to the divine "we".

Our cry, in this place linked to the original cry for freedom in this country, echoes that of Saint Paul: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (*1 Cor* 9:16). It is a cry every bit as urgent and pressing as was the cry for independence. It is similarly thrilling in its ardor. Brothers and sisters,

have the same mind as Christ: May each of you be a witness to a fraternal communion which shines forth in our world!

And how beautiful it would be if all could admire how much we care for one another, how we encourage and help each other. Giving of ourselves establishes an interpersonal relationship; we do not give “things” but our very selves. Any act of giving means that we give ourselves. “Giving of oneself” means letting all the power of that love which is God’s Holy Spirit take root in our lives, opening our hearts to his creative power. And giving of oneself even in the most difficult moments as on that Holy Thursday of the Lord when he perceived how they weaved a plot to betray him; but he gave himself, he gave himself for us with his plan of salvation. When we give of ourselves, we discover our true identity as children of God in the image of the Father and, like him, givers of life; we discover that we are brothers and sisters of Jesus, to whom we bear witness. This is what it means to evangelize; this is the new revolution – for our faith is always revolutionary –, this is our deepest and most enduring cry.

Remarks of the Holy Father at the end of Mass at the Parque Bicentenario

Dear brothers and sisters: I thank you for this celebration, for our having come together at the altar of the Lord who asks us to be one, that we be truly united as brothers and sisters, that the Church be one home of brothers and sisters. May God bless you and I ask you not to forget to pray for me.