



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE DIOCESES OF PIAZZA ARMERINA AND PALERMO,
FOR THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH
OF BLESSED PINO PUGLISI

**CELEBRATION OF HOLY MASS ON THE LITURGICAL MEMORIAL OF BLESSED PINO
PUGLISI**

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

Foro Italico (Palermo)
Saturday, 15 September 2018

[Multimedia]

Today God speaks to us of *victory* and *defeat*. In his First Letter, Saint John presents faith as “the victory that overcomes the world” (1 Jn 5:4), while the Gospel quotes Jesus’ words: “he who loves his life loses it” (Jn 12:25).

This is the defeat: the one who loves his life loses. Why? Certainly not because one should detest life: life is to be loved and defended; it is God’s first gift! What leads to defeat is loving one’s *own* life, that is, self love. Those who live for themselves lose; they are selfish, as we say. It would seem the opposite. Those who live for themselves, those who multiply ill-gotten gains, who are successful, who fully satisfy their own needs, seem to be winners in the eyes of the world. Advertisements pummel us with this idea — the idea of self-realization, of selfishness —, even Jesus disagrees and overturns it. According to Him, those who live for themselves do not lose just something, but their whole life; whereas those who give of themselves find the meaning of life and win.

Thus there is a choice to be made: love or selfishness. The egoist thinks about pampering his own life and is attached to things, to money, to power, to pleasure. So the devil finds the door open. The devil 'enters through the pocket' if you are attached to money. The devil makes one believe that everything is fine but in reality the heart is anaesthetized by selfishness. Selfishness is a very powerful anaesthetic. This path always ends badly: in the end one is alone, with emptiness inside. The egoist's end is sad: empty, lonely, surrounded only by those who expect to inherit. It is like the grain of wheat in the Gospel: if one remains closed within himself, he remains alone in the soil. If instead he opens himself and dies, he bears fruit above ground.

But you might tell me: giving oneself, living for God and for others is a great effort for nothing, this is not the way the world turns: to advance, grains of wheat are not useful, money and power are useful. But it is a great illusion: money and power do not free man; they enslave him. You see, God does not exercise power to resolve our ills and those of the world. His way is always that of humble love: only love that is free within gives peace and joy. Therefore, true power, power according to God, is service. Jesus says so. And the strongest voice is not that of those who shout the loudest. The strongest voice is prayer. And the greatest success is not one's own fame, like a peacock, no. The greatest glory, the greatest success is one's own witness.

Dear brothers and sisters, today we are called to choose which side to take: to live for ourselves — with a closed hand [*he gestures*] — or to give life — with an open hand [*he gestures*].

Only by giving one's life is evil overcome. A high price, but only in this way [*is evil overcome*]. Fr Pino taught it: he was not ostentatious; he did not live by making anti-mafia appeals; nor was he content to do no harm; but rather, he sowed good, so much good. His seemed to be a losing logic, while the logic of the pocketbook seemed to win. But Fr Pino was right: the logic of the money-god is always a losing one. Let us look inside ourselves. *Having* always leads to *wanting*: I have one thing and straight away I want another, and then another, and ever more, endlessly. The more you have the more you want: it is a bad addiction. It is drug dependency. It is like a drug. Those who overindulge explode. Instead, those who love find themselves and discover how beautiful it is to help, how beautiful it is to serve; they find inner joy and express a smile, as it was for Fr Pino.

Twenty-five years ago as today, when he died on his birthday, he crowned his victory with a smile, with that smile that kept his killer awake at night. His killer said: "there was a kind of light in that smile". Fr Pino was defenceless, but his smile transmitted the power of God: not a blinding glare, but a gentle light that delves in and enlightens the heart. It is the light of love, of giving, of service. We need many *smiling priests*. We need many *smiling Christians*, not because they take things lightly, but because they are rich only in the joy of God, because they believe in love and live to serve. It is in giving one's life that joy is found, because there is more joy in giving than in receiving (cf. Acts 20:35). So, I would like to ask you: do you too wish to live this way? Do you want to give your life, without expecting others to take the first step? Do you want to do good without expecting to be repaid, without waiting for the world to become better? Dear brothers and sisters, do you

wish to risk taking this path, to take a risk for the Lord?

Fr Pino, yes him, he knew that he was taking a risk, but he knew above all that the true danger in life lies not in taking risks, but in getting by amid comforts, ploys and shortcuts. May God free us from contrivance, being content with half truths. Half truths do not satisfy the heart; they do not do good. May God free us from a petty life, which revolves around 'small things'. May he free us from thinking that everything is fine if it is fine for me, and the other can fend for himself. May he free us from thinking we are just if we do nothing to hinder injustice. One who does nothing to hinder injustice is not an upright man or woman. May he free us from thinking we are good just because we do no evil. 'It is good' — one saint said — 'to do no evil. But it is evil to do no good' [Saint Alberto Hurtado]. Lord, give us the desire to *do good*; to seek the truth and detest falsehood; to choose sacrifice, not laziness; love, not hate; forgiveness, not revenge.

Life is to be given to others; life is to be given to others, it is not taken. One cannot believe in God and hate a brother, take a life with hate. The first reading recalls it: "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 Jn 4:20). A liar because he belies the faith he claims to have, the faith that professes God-love. God-love repudiates all violence and loves *all* people. This is why the word 'hate' should be erased from Christian life; this is why one cannot believe in God and oppress a brother or sister. One cannot believe in God and be a mafioso. Those who are mafiosi do not live as Christians, because they blaspheme with their life the name of God-love. Today we need men and women of love, not men and women of honour; of service, not of oppression. We need to walk together, not pursue power. If the mafia's litany is: 'You do not know who I am', the Christian one is: 'I need you'. If the mafia's threat is: 'You will pay for this', the Christian one is: 'Lord, help me to love'. Thus, I say to mafiosi, change, brothers and sisters! Stop thinking of yourselves and your money. You know, you all know, that 'the shroud has no pockets'. You cannot take anything with you. Convert to the true God of Jesus Christ, dear brothers and sisters! I say to you, mafiosi: if you do not do this, your own life will be lost and it will be the worst of defeats.

Today's Gospel passage ends with Jesus' invitation: "If any one serves me, he must follow me" (Jn 12:26). He must follow me, that is, set out on the path. One cannot follow Jesus with ideas, one must get to work. "If everyone does something, a great deal can be done", Fr Pino used to say. How many of us put these words into practice? Today, before him, let us ask ourselves: what can I do? What can I do for others, for the Church, for society? Do not wait for the Church to do something for you: you can start. Do not wait for society to do it: you can begin! Do not think about yourself; do not shirk your responsibilities; choose love! Feel the pulse of your people in need; listen to your people. Fear the deafness of not listening to your people. This is the only populism possible: listen to your people, the only "Christian populism": listen and serve the people, without shouting, accusing and causing disputes.

This is what Fr Pino did; he was poor among the poor of his land. In his room the chair where he studied was broken. But the chair was not the centre of his life, because he did not sit down to

rest, but lived on the move in order to love. This is the winning mentality. This is the victory of faith, that is born from the daily gift of self. This is the victory of faith, which brings the smile of God to the streets of the world. This is the victory of faith, which is born from the scandal of martyrdom. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13). These words of Jesus, engraved on the tomb of Fr Puglisi, remind everyone that *giving his life* was the secret of his victory the secret of a beautiful life. Today, dear brothers and sisters, let us too choose a beautiful life. So be it.