



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "To be filled with joy"

Thursday, 16 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

In these days I have been reproached because I have forgotten to thank a group of people who are also working. I thanked doctors, nurses, volunteers... "But you have forgotten pharmacists": they too have been working hard to help the sick get better. Let us pray for them as well.

Homily

In these days, in Jerusalem, people had many feelings: fear, amazement, doubt. "In those days, while the healed cripple clung to Peter and John, all the people were astonished..." (Acts 3:11): there was not a tranquil environment because things were happening that were not understood. And the Lord went to His disciples. Even they knew that He had already risen, even Peter knew it because he had spoken with Him that morning. These two who returned from Emmaus knew it, but when the Lord appeared they were afraid. "They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost" (Lk 24:37); they had the same experience on the lake, when Jesus came walking on the water. But at that time Peter had been courageous and placed His bet on the Lord, saying: "But if it is you, bid me to walk on the water" (see Mk 14:28). But this day Peter was quiet; he had spoken with the Lord, that morning, and nobody knows what they had said to each other in that dialogue and so he remained silent. But they were so filled with fear, upset, they thought they were seeing a ghost. And He said: "Why are you so agitated, and why are these doubts rising in your hearts? Look at my hands, my feet..." He lets them see His wounds (see Lk 24:38-39). That treasure that Jesus took in Heaven to show to the Father and to intercede for us. "Touch me and see for yourselves; a ghost has no flesh and bones." And then there is a phrase that gives me a lot

of consolation and for this reason, this passage of the Gospel is one of my favourites: “But they didn't believe for joy...” (see *Lk* 24:41) again, and were full of astonishment, the joy prevented them from believing. Their joy was so great that “No, this cannot be true. This joy is not real, it is too much joy”. And this keeps them from believing. Joy. They were both filled with joy and paralysed by joy. And joy is one of the desires that Paul has for his community in Rome: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy” (see *Rom* 15:13), he says. To fill with joy, to be filled with joy. It is the experience of the greatest consolation, when the Lord makes us understand that this is something different from being happy, positive or radiant... No, it is something different. To be joyful...but filled with joy, an overflowing joy that really gets us. And this is why Paul wishes the Romans that “the God of hope might fill you with joy”. And that word, that expression, to fill with joy is repeated many, many times. For example, what happened in the jail, when Paul saves the life of the jailer who was about to commit suicide after the doors had been opened by the earthquake, and then he proclaims the Gospel to him, he baptises him, and the jailer, the Bible says, was “filled with joy” for having believed (see *Acts* 16:29-34). The same happened with the minister of economy of Candace, when Philip baptised him; he disappeared, he went on his way “filled with joy” (see *Acts* 8:39). The same happened on the day of the Ascension: the disciples returned to Jerusalem, says the Bible, “filled with joy” (see *Lk* 24:52). It is the fullness of consolation, the fullness of Lord's presence. Because, as Paul says to the Galatians, “joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit” (see *Gal* 5:22). It is not the consequence of emotions that emerge because of something marvellous... No, it is something more. This joy that fills us is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we cannot have joy. To receive the joy of the Spirit is a grace. I am reminded of the last numbers, the last paragraphs of Paul VI's Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (see 79-80), when he speaks of joyful Christians, of joyful evangelisers, and not of those who are always down. Today is a good day to read it. Filled with joy. This is what the Bible says to us: “But they didn't believe for joy...”. Their joy was so great that they did not believe. There is a passage in the book of Nehemiah that will help us today in this reflection on joy. The people, after returning to Jerusalem, rediscovered the book of the law; they discovered it again - because they knew the law by heart, they could not find the book of the law - they had a great feast and all the people gathered together to listen to the priest Ezra reading the book of the law. The people were moved and wept, they wept with joy because they had found the very book of the law and they wept, it was joyful, the weeping... In the end when the priest Ezra finished, Nehemiah said to the people: “Be calm, do not weep anymore, preserve this joy because the joy in the Lord is your strength” (see *Ne* 8:1-12). This word from the book of Nehemiah will help us today. The great strength that we have to transform, to preach the Gospel, to go forward as witnesses of life is the joy of the Lord which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Today, let us ask Him to grant us this fruit.