



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "To be born from the
Spirit"

Monday, 20 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Let us pray today for the men and women who have a vocation to political life. Politics is a very high form of charity. For the political parties in the various countries, so that in this moment of pandemic they may seek together the good of the country and not the good of their own party.

Homily

This man Nicodemus is one of the leaders of the Jews, an authoritative man. He felt the need to go to Jesus and he went by night. He went by night because he had to be careful, as those who went to talk with Jesus were not looked upon well. He was a Pharisee, a just man. Not all of the Pharisees were bad, no, there were also good Pharisees. He was a just Pharisee. He felt restless. He was a man who had read the prophets and knew that what Jesus was doing had been announced by the prophets. He felt that restlessness, and so he went to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who comes from God". This is a confession up to a certain point. "For no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him". And then he stops. He stops before the "therefore", and Jesus responds mysteriously, in a way that Nicodemus does not expect. He responds with the symbol of being born: "Unless a man is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God". And he, Nicodemus, feels confused, he does not understand and takes Jesus' answer literally: "But how can someone who is already an adult be born again?" To be born from high, from the spirit. It is the leap forward that Nicodemus needs to make but he does not know how to make it. Because the spirit is unpredictable. The definition of the spirit that Jesus

gives here is interesting: “The wind blows where it pleases you hear it sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. That is how it is with all who are born of the Spirit”, that is, free. A person who allows himself to be carried from one place to another by the Holy Spirit: this is the freedom of the Spirit. And one who does this is a docile person, and here we speak about docility to the Spirit.

Being a Christian is not only obeying the Commandments: we need to do that, this is true; but if you stop there, you are not a good Christian. Being a good Christian means letting the Spirit enter within you and lead you, lead you where He wants. In our Christian life very often we stop, like Nicodemus, before that “therefore”. We do not know what step to take, we do not know how to do it, and we do not have the trust in God to make this step and let the Spirit enter. Being born again means letting the Spirit enter into us, so that I am led by the Spirit, not by myself, free, with this freedom of the Spirit, and you never know where it will end.

The apostles, who were in the Cenacle when the Spirit came, went out to preach with that courage, that boldness ... they did not know that this would have happened; and they did it, because the Spirit guided them. The Christian must never stop at the fulfilment of the Commandments; one must do this, but go beyond, towards that new birth that is birth in the Spirit, which gives you the freedom of the Spirit.

That is what happened to this Christian community in the first Reading. After John and Peter returned from the interrogation with the high priests, they went to their brothers and sisters, to their community, and told them everything the high priests and elders had said to them. And the community, when it heard this, was rather afraid. And what did they do? They prayed. They did not stop at precautionary measures: “No, now we will do this, we’ll be a bit calmer” - no. They prayed. So that the Spirit would tell them what they should do. They raised their voice to God, saying: “Lord!”, and they prayed. This beautiful prayer in a dark moment, a moment in which they have to make decisions and do not know what to do. They want to be born from the Spirit, they open their heart to the Spirit, that He might tell them what to do.

And they say: “Herod, Pontius Pilate with the Pagan nations against Jesus”. They tell the story and they say, “Lord, do something!” “Lord, take note of their threats” - those of the group of priests - “and tell your servants to proclaim your word with all boldness”. They ask for the boldness, the courage, not to be afraid. “Stretch out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of Jesus”. And when they finished their prayer “the house where they were assembled rocked, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God boldly”. A second Pentecost took place here.

Faced with difficulties, faced with a closed door, when they did not know how to go forward, they went to the Lord, they open their heart and the Spirit comes and gives them what they need, and they go out to preach, with courage. This is what it means to be born of the Spirit. This means not

stopping at the “therefore”, at the things we have always done, at the “therefore” after the Commandments, at the “therefore” after religious habits: no! This means being reborn. And how does one prepare to be reborn? With prayer. Prayer is what opens the door to the Spirit and gives us this freedom, this boldness, this courage of the Holy Spirit. You will never know where it will take you. But it is the Spirit.

May the Lord help us always to be open to the Spirit, as it will be He who leads us forward in our life of service to the Lord.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion may 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.