



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS “The small everyday
lynching of gossip”

Tuesday, 28 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

At this time, when indications have been given to start coming out of quarantine, we pray that the Lord will grant to His people, to all of us, the grace of prudence and obedience to these indications, so that the pandemic will not return.

Homily

In the first Reading of these days we have heard about the martyrdom of Stephen: it is simple, how it happened. The Doctors of the law did not tolerate the clarity of [his] doctrine, and as soon as it was proclaimed, they went out to ask people who declared they had heard it said that Stephen blasphemed against God, against the Law (see *Acts* 6:11-14). And after this, they pounced on him and stoned him: just like that, simply (see *Acts* 7:57-58). It is a structure of action, and is not the first: they did the same with Jesus too (see *Mt* 26:60-62). The people, who were there, tried to convince him that he was a blasphemer, and cried out, “Crucify him”. Acting like beasts. It is acting like beasts, to begin with false witness in order to arrive at “justice”. In the Bible there are things of this nature: they did the same to Susanna (see *Dn* 13:1-64), they did the same to Naboth (see *I Kings* 21:1-16), then Aman tried to do the same thing with the people of God (see *Est* 3:1-14). Fake news, calumny that agitates people who then ask for justice. It is a lynching, a real lynching.

And so, they take him to the judge, so that the judge can give legal form to this: but he has already

been judged. The judge would have to be very, very courageous to go against such a “popular” judgement, already made on purpose, prepared. It is the case of Pilate: Pilate saw clearly that Jesus was innocent, but he saw the people, and he washed his hands of Him (see *Mt 27:24-26*). It is a way of applying the law. We see this today, too: even today it happens, in some countries, when they want to perform a *coup d'état* or get rid of a politician so that they do not go to elections, they do this: fake news, calumny, then they take it to a judge, one of those who like to practise the law with this “situationalist” positivism which is in vogue, and then it leads to a condemnation. It is a social lynching. And this is what was done to Stephen, this is how justice was done with Stephen: they bring to justice a person already judged by the people, who have been deceived.

This happens today, to the martyrs of today: judges do not have the possibility of bringing justice to those who have already been judged. Let us think of Asia Bibi, for example, whom we have seen: ten years in jail because she had been judged on the basis of calumny and a people who clamour for death. Faced with this avalanche of fake news that form opinion, very often nothing can be done, nothing can be done.

In relation to this I think a lot about the Shoah. The Shoah is a case in point. An opinion was created against a people, and then it became normal to say, “Yes, yes, they must be killed, they must be put to death”. A way of proceeding in order to do away with people who are bothersome, who are disturbing to others.

We all know that this is not good, but what we do not know is that there are small everyday lynchings that seek to condemn people, to create a bad reputation among the people, to discard and condemn. The small daily lynchings of gossip, which creates an opinion. Very often we hear someone speak badly of someone else, and another says, “No, this person is a good person!” - “No, no, I heard that...”, and with that “*I heard that...*”, an opinion is created that can finish a person. The truth is something else: the truth is testimony of what is true, of the things a person believes; the truth is clear, it is transparent. The truth does not tolerate pressure. Look at Stephen, martyr: the first martyr after Jesus. The first martyr. Think of the apostles: they all bore witness. And think of many martyrs, even the one we celebrate today, Saint Peter Chanel: it was gossip that created the opinion that he was against the king. Notoriety was created, and he was put to death. And think of us, of our tongue: very often we, with our comments, initiate a lynching of this type. And in our Christian institutions, we have seen many everyday lynchings born out of gossip. May the Lord help us be just in our judgements, not to begin or follow this type of mass condemnation that gossip causes.

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.