



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "Day of fraternity,
day of penance and prayer"

Thursday, 14 May 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Today, the *Higher Committee for Human Fraternity* has called for a day of prayer and fasting to ask the merciful God for an end to this tragic moment of the pandemic. We are all brothers and sisters. St Francis of Assisi used to say: "All brothers and sisters". And so, men and women of every religious confession are uniting themselves today in prayer and penance to ask for the grace of healing from this pandemic.

Homily

In the first Reading, we heard the story of Jonah, in the style used at that time (see *Jon* 3:1-10). Since there was some type of pandemic, we do not know, in the city of Nineveh, a "moral pandemic" perhaps, it was about to be destroyed (see v. 4). And God sends Jonah to preach: prayer and penance, prayer and fasting (see vv. 7-8). Having to face that pandemic, Jonah [at first] got frightened and escaped (see 1:3). Then the Lord called him a second time and he agreed to go and preach this (see 3:1-3). And today, all of us, brothers and sisters of every religious tradition, are praying: a day of prayer and fasting and penance, organized by the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity. Each of us should pray, communities should pray, religious confessions should pray, pray to God: all of us *brothers and sisters*, united in the fraternity that unites us in this painful and tragic moment.

We were not expecting this pandemic, it came without us expecting it, but now it is here. And

many people are dying. Many people are dying alone and many people are dying without being able to do anything. Often the thought can arise: ‘Well, at least I haven’t been affected. Thank God I’m safe’. But think about others. Think about the tragedy and its consequences on the economy and education, the consequences ... that will come afterwards.

And it is for this that today, everyone, brothers and sisters, of whatever religious confession, are praying to God. Perhaps someone will say: “This is religious relativism and you cannot do that”. But how can we not pray to the Father of all? Everyone prays as they know how, as they can, according to what they have received from their own culture. We are not praying against each other, this religious tradition against that one, no! We are all united as human beings, as *brothers and sisters*, praying to God according to each one’s culture, according to each one’s own tradition, according to each one’s own beliefs, but brothers and sisters praying to God, this is what is important! Brothers and sisters, fasting, asking God to forgive our sins, so that the Lord might have mercy on us, so that the Lord will forgive us, so that the Lord may end this pandemic. Today is a day of fraternity, looking to the one Father: brothers and sisters and paternity. Day of prayer.

Last year, rather in November of last year, we did not know what a pandemic was: it came upon us like a flood, it came all of a sudden. Now we are waking up a bit. But there are many other pandemics that make people die and we are not even aware of it, we look the other way. We are a bit unaware before the tragedies that are happening in the world right now. I would like to tell you one official statistic from the first four months of this year that is not connected with the coronavirus pandemic, but about another one. During the first four months of this year, 3,700,000 people died of hunger. There is a *pandemic of hunger*. In four months, almost 4 million people. Today’s prayer to ask that the Lord end this pandemic must make us think of other pandemics in the world. There are so many of them! The pandemic of war, of hunger and many others. What is important is that today – together, and thanks to the *courage* that this Higher Committee for Human Fraternity had – together, we are invited to pray, each one according to his or her own tradition and to observe a day *of penance, of fasting and also of charity*, of helping others. This is what is important. In the book of Jonah, we heard that the Lord, when He saw how the people responded – that they had converted – the Lord stopped, He refrained from doing what He had wanted to do.

May God put an end to this tragedy, may He stop this pandemic. May God have mercy on us and may He also put a stop to the other terrible pandemics of hunger, war, and uneducated children. This is what we ask as *brothers and sisters*, all together. May God bless us all, and have mercy on us.