



The Holy See

HOLY MASS IN THE PARISH OF ST. ANNA IN THE VATICAN

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Fifth Sunday of Lent, 17 March 2013

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This is a beautiful story. First we have Jesus alone on the mountain, praying. He was praying alone (cf. *Jn* 8:1). Then he went back to the Temple, and all the people went to him (cf. v. 2). Jesus in the midst of the people. And then, at the end, they left him alone with the woman (cf. v. 9). That solitude of Jesus! But it is a fruitful solitude: the solitude of prayer with the Father, and the beautiful solitude that is the Church's message for today: the solitude of his mercy towards this woman.

And among the people we see a variety of attitudes: there were all the people who went to him; he sat and began to teach them: the people who wanted to hear the words of Jesus, the people with open hearts, hungry for the word of God. There were others who did not hear anything, who could not hear anything; and there were those who brought along this woman: Listen, Master, this woman has done such and such ... we must do what Moses commanded us to do with women like this (cf. vv. 4-5).

I think we too are the people who, on the one hand want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think – and I say it with humility – that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy. It was he himself who said: "I did not come for the righteous". The righteous justify themselves. Go on, then, even if you can do it, I cannot! But they believe they can. "I came for sinners" (*Mk* 2:17).

Think of the gossip after the call of Matthew: he associates with sinners! (cf. *Mk* 2:16). He comes for us, when we recognize that we are sinners. But if we are like the Pharisee, before the altar, who said: I thank you Lord, that I am not like other men, and especially not like the one at the door, like that publican (cf. *Lk* 18:11-12), then we do not know the Lord's heart, and we will never have the joy of experiencing this mercy! It is not easy to entrust oneself to God's mercy, because it is an abyss beyond our comprehension. But we must! "Oh, Father, if you knew my life, you would not say that to me!" "Why, what have you done?" "Oh, I am a great sinner!" "All the better! Go to Jesus: he likes you to tell him these things!" He forgets, he has a very special capacity for forgetting. He forgets, he kisses you, he embraces you and he simply says to you: "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (*Jn* 8:11). That is the only advice he gives you. After a month, if we are in the same situation ... Let us go back to the Lord. The Lord never tires of forgiving: never! It is we who tire of asking his forgiveness. Let us ask for the grace not to tire of asking forgiveness, because he never tires of forgiving. Let us ask for this grace.

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After Mass and the greetings of the parish priest and Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the Pope concluded with these words:

There are some here who are not parishoners, including a few from Argentina — one is my Auxiliary Bishop — but today they are parishoners. I want to introduce to you a priest who comes from far away, a priest who works with children and with drug addicts on the street. He opened a school for them; he has done many things to make Jesus known, and all those boys and girls off the street, they today work with the studies they have done; they have the ability to work, they believe and they love Jesus. I ask you Gonzalo, come greet the people: pray for him. He works in Uruguay; he is the founder of *Jubilar Juan Pablo II*. This is his work. I do not know how he came here, but I will find out! Thanks. Pray for him.