



The Holy See

HOLY MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS

VISIT TO THE GEMELLI HOSPITAL AND TO THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE
OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF THE SACRED HEART OF ROME

*HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS
READ BY CARDINAL ANGELO SCOLA*

Friday, 27 June 2014

Due to an “unforeseen indisposition” Pope Francis was unable to visit Agostino Gemelli Polyclinic in Rome. The Mass in the square in front of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart Faculty of Medicine and Surgery was instead presided at by Cardinal Angelo Scola, Archbishop of Milan and President of the Giuseppe Toniolo Institute. The following is a translation of the Italian text of the homily prepared for the occasion by Pope Francis, which was read by Cardinal Scola:

“The Lord set his love upon you and chose you” (Dt 7:7).

God is bound to us, he chose us, and this bond is for ever, not so much because we are faithful, but because *the Lord is faithful* and endures our faithlessness, our indolence, our lapses.

God was not afraid to bind himself. This may seem odd to us: at times we call God “the Absolute”, which literally means “free, independent, limitless”; but in reality our Father is always and only “absolute” in love: he made the Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob for love, and so forth. He loves bonds, he creates bonds; bonds that liberate, that do not restrict.

We repeated with the Psalm that “the love of the Lord is everlasting” (cf. Ps 103[102]:17). However, another Psalm states about we men and women: “the faithful have vanished from

among the sons of men” (cf. Ps 12[11]:1). Today especially, faith is a value that is in crisis because we are always prompted to seek change, supposed innovation, negotiating the foundation of our existence, of our faith. Without faithfulness at its foundation, however, a society does not move forward, it can make great technical progress, but not a progress that is integral to all that is human and to all human beings.

God’s steadfast love for his people is manifest and wholly fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*, who, in order to honour God’s bond with his people, he made himself our slave, stripped himself of his glory and assumed the form of a servant. Out of love he did not surrender to our ingratitude, not even in the face of rejection. St Paul reminds us: “If we are faithless, he, Jesus, remains faithful for he cannot deny himself” (2 Tm 2:13). Jesus remains faithful, he never betrays us: even when we were wrong, He always waits for us to forgive us: He is the face of the merciful Father.

This love, this steadfastness of the Lord manifests *the humility of His heart*. Jesus did not come to conquer men like the kings and the powerful of this world, but He came to offer love with gentleness and humility. This is how He defined himself: “learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29). And the significance of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which we are celebrating today, is to discover ever more and to let ourselves be enfolded by the humble faithfulness and the gentleness of Christ’s love, revelation of the Father’s mercy. We can experience and savour the tenderness of this love at every stage of life: in times of joy and of sadness, in times of good health and of frailty and those of sickness.

God’s faithfulness teaches us to accept life as a circumstance of his love and he allows us to witness this love to our brothers and sisters in *humble and gentle service*. This is what doctors and healthcare workers in particular are called to do in this Polyclinic of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. Here, each of you brings a bit of the love of the Heart of Christ to the sick, and you do so with proficiency and professionalism. This means remaining *faithful to the founding values* that Fr Gemelli established as the foundation of the Italian Catholic University, to unite scientific research enlightened by faith with the education of skilled Christian professionals.

Dear brothers and sisters, in Christ we contemplate God’s faithfulness. Every act, every word of Jesus reveals the merciful and steadfast love of the Father. And so before him we ask ourselves: how is my love for my neighbour? Do I know how to be faithful? Or am I inconsistent, following my moods and impulses? Each of us can answer in our own mind. But above all we can say to the Lord: Lord Jesus, render my heart ever more like yours, full of love and faithfulness.