



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE DIOCESES OF
CAMPOBASSO-BOIANO
AND
ISERNIA-VENAFRO

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Old Romagnoli Stadium (Campobasso)
Saturday, 5 July 2014

Video

“Wisdom rescued from troubles those who served her” (Wis 10:9).

The First Reading recalls the characteristics of Divine Wisdom, which frees from evil and oppression those who put themselves at the service of the Lord. He, indeed, is not neutral, but with his wisdom stands on the side of those fragile, discriminated and oppressed people, who abandon themselves in trust to Him. The experience of Jacob and Joseph, told in the Old Testament, brings to light two essential aspects of the life of the Church: the Church is a people who serves God; and the Church is a people who lives in the freedom granted by Him.

Above all, we are *a people who serve God*. Service to God is realized in different ways, in particular in prayer and in adoration, in proclaiming the Gospel and in the testimony of love. And always, the icon of the Church is the Virgin Mary, the “handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38; cf. 1:48). Immediately after having received the news from the Angel and having conceived Jesus, Mary sets out in haste to go and help her elderly relative Elizabeth. And thus, she reveals that the privileged path to serve God is to serve our brothers and sisters in need.

In the school of the Mother, the Church learns to become each day the “handmaid of the Lord”, to be ready to set out to meet the situations of greatest need, to be attentive to the little ones and the excluded. But we are all called to live this service of love in ordinary situations, that is, in the family, in the parish, at work, with our neighbours.... It is everyday love, ordinary charity.

The testimony of love is the royal road of evangelization. In this the Church has always been “on the front lines”, a motherly and brotherly presence that shares in the difficulties and frailties of the people. In this way, the Christian community seeks to instill in society that “supplement of soul” that allows one to watch over others and to hope.

It is what you, too, dear brothers and sisters of this Diocese, are doing generously, sustained by the pastoral zeal of your Bishop. I encourage you all, priests, consecrated persons, lay faithful, to persevere on this path, serving God in service to your brothers, and spreading everywhere the culture of solidarity. There is so much need for this commitment, in the face of situations of material and spiritual instability, especially in the face of unemployment, an open sore that demands every effort and a great deal of courage on the part of all to heal. The issue of employment particularly challenges the institutions, the world of finance and the entrepreneurial sector to react. It is necessary to put the dignity of the human person at the centre of every prospect and of every action. Other interests, even legitimate ones, are secondary. The dignity of the human person is at the centre! Why? Because the human person is the image of God, created in the image of God and we are all images of God!

Therefore, the Church is the people who serve the Lord. Thus, she is the people who *experience liberation and live in this freedom which he grants to her*. True freedom is always given to her by the Lord. Freedom first of all from sin, from selfishness in all its forms: freedom to give oneself and to do it with joy, like the Virgin of Nazareth who is free of herself, does not close in on herself in her condition — and she would indeed have had cause! — but thinks of those who in that moment are in greater need. She is free in the freedom of God, which is manifest in love. And this is the freedom that God has given to us, and we must not lose it: the freedom to adore God, to serve God and to serve him also in our brothers.

This is the freedom which, by the grace of God, we experience in the Christian community, when we put ourselves at the service of one another. Without jealousy, impartially, without chatter.... Serving one another, serving! Then, the Lord frees us of ambition and rivalry, which undermine unity and communion. He frees us from distrust, from sadness — this sadness is dangerous because it casts us down. It casts us down. It is dangerous. Be careful! He frees us from fear, from interior emptiness, isolation, regret, and complaints. Even in our communities, in fact, there is no shortage of negative attitudes that make people self-referential, more concerned with defending themselves than with giving of themselves. But Christ frees us from this existential grayness, as we proclaimed in the Responsorial Psalm, “You are my help and my deliverer”. For this reason, we disciples of the Lord, though still always weak and sinners — we are all so! — but although weak

and sinners, we are called to live our faith with joy and courage, communion with God and with our brothers, in adoration of God, and to face with fortitude life's labours and trials.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Holy Virgin, whom you venerate in particular with the title of *Madonna della Libera*, obtain for you the joy of serving the Lord and of walking in the freedom that He has given us: in the freedom of adoration, prayer and service to others. May Mary help you to be a maternal Church, welcoming and caring towards everyone. May she always be beside you, your sick, your elderly, who are the wisdom of the people, and your youth. For all your people, may she be a sign of consolation and sure hope. May the *Madonna della Libera* accompany us, help us, console us and give us peace and joy!