



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION ON THE OCCASION OF THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Vatican Basilica

Saturday, 12 December 2015

[Multimedia]

“The Lord, your God, is in your midst [...] he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love, he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zeph 3:17).

These words of the prophet Zephaniah, addressed to Israel, may also be referred to our Mother, the Virgin Mary, to the Church, to each one of us, to our souls, all of which God loves with merciful love. Yes, God loves us so much that he even rejoices and takes pleasure in us. He loves us with gratuitous love, limitless love and expects nothing in return. He does not like Pelagianism. His merciful love is the most striking attribute of God, whose synthesis is condensed in the Gospel message, the faith of the Church.

The word “mercy” [*miser cordia*] is composed of two words: misery and heart [*miseria* and *cuore*]. The heart indicates the capacity to love; mercy is that love which embraces the misery of the human person. It is a love that “feels” our poverty as its own, with a view to freeing us of it. “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10). “The Word became flesh” with the intention of sharing all our frailties — with the intention of experiencing our human condition, even unto taking the Cross upon himself, with all the pain of human existence. Such is the depth of his compassion and mercy: self-abasement in order to become a companion at the service of wounded humanity. No sin can erase his merciful closeness or prevent him from outpouring the grace of conversion, provided we invoke it. Indeed, sin itself renders more radiant the love of God who sacrificed his Son to ransom a slave. This mercy of God comes to us with the gift of the Holy Spirit which, in Baptism, enables, generates and nourishes the new life of his disciples. For, howsoever serious and grave the sins of the world may be, the Spirit, who renews the face of the earth, makes possible the miracle of a life that is

more human, more full of joy and hope. Let us, too, shout with jubilation: “The Lord is my God and Saviour!”.

“The Lord is near”, the Apostle Paul tells us, and nothing should perturb us. He is close by. He is not alone but is with his Mother. She said to St Juan Diego: “Why are you afraid? Am I not here who am your Mother?”. He is near. He and his Mother. The greatest mercy lies in his being in our midst, in our being in his presence and company. He walks with us, he shows us the path of love, he lifts us up when we fall and with such tenderness he supports us in our labours, he accompanies us in every circumstance of life. He opens our eyes to see our wretchedness and that of the world, but at the same time he fills us with hope. “The peace of God [...] will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4:7), St Paul tells us. This is the source of our peaceful and happy life; nothing can deprive us of this peace and joy, despite the suffering and trials of life. The Lord gently opens his heart to us, opens us to his love. The Lord is allergic to formality. Let us cultivate this experience of mercy, peace and hope during the journey we are on during Advent and in the light of the Jubilee Year. Proclaiming the Good News to the poor, like John the Baptist, performing works of mercy, is a good way to await Jesus’ Birth at Christmas. It is in emulating him, who gave everything, who gave himself. This is his mercy, expecting nothing in return.

In Mary, God rejoices and is especially pleased. In one of the prayers dearest to Christians, the *Salve Regina*, we call Mary “Mother of Mercy”. She has experienced divine mercy, and has hosted in her womb the very source of this mercy: Jesus Christ. She, who has always lived intimately united to her Son, knows better than anyone what He wants: that all men be saved, and that God’s tenderness and consolation never fail anyone. May Mary, Mother of Mercy, help us to understand how much God loves us.

To Holy Mary we entrust the suffering and joy of the peoples throughout the American Continent, who love her as mother and recognize her as “Patroness” under the beloved title of Our Lady of Guadalupe. May “the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness” (cf. Bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 24). We ask her that this Jubilee Year may be a planting of merciful love in the hearts of individuals, families and nations. May she repeat to us: “Do not be afraid. Am I not here who am your Mother?”, Mother of Mercy. May we convert and become merciful people, and may all Christian communities be oases and sources of mercy, witnesses to a charity that does not permit exclusion. To profoundly supplicate her for this I shall go to venerate her at her Shrine on 13 February. Thus, I shall implore her for all this for the whole of America, of whom she is the special Mother. I shall implore her to guide the footsteps of her American people, a pilgrim people looking for the Mother of Mercy and asking her for just one thing: to show them her Son Jesus.