



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO MEXICO

(12-18 FEBRUARY 2016)

HOLY MASS IN THE AREA OF THE STUDY CENTRE OF ECATEPEC

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

First Sunday of Lent, 14 February 2016

[Multimedia]

Last Wednesday we began the liturgical season of Lent, during which the Church invites us to prepare ourselves to celebrate the great feast of Easter. This is a special time for recalling the gift of our baptism, when we became children of God. The Church invites us to renew the gift she has given us, not to let this gift lie dormant as if it were something from the past or locked away in a “memory chest”. Lent is a good time to recover the joy and hope that make us feel like beloved sons and daughters of the Father. The Father who waits for us in order to cast off our garments of exhaustion, of apathy, of mistrust, and so clothe us with the dignity which only a true father or mother knows how to give their children, with the garments born of tenderness and love.

Our Father, He is the Father of a great family; he is our Father. He knows that he has a unique love, but he does not know how to bear or raise an “only child”. He is the God of the home, of brotherhood, of bread broken and shared. He is the God who is “Our Father”, not “my father” or “your stepfather”.

God’s dream makes its home and lives in each one of us so that at every Easter, in every Eucharist we celebrate, we may be the children of God. It is a dream which so many of our brothers and sisters have had through history. A dream witnessed to by the blood of so many martyrs, both from long ago and from now.

Lent is a time of conversion, of daily experiencing in our lives how this dream is continually threatened by the father of lies — and we hear in the Gospel how he acted towards Jesus — by

the one who tries to separate us, making a divided and confrontational family; a society which is divided and at loggerheads, a society of the few, and for the few. How often we experience in our own lives, or in our own families, among our friends or neighbours, the pain which arises when the dignity we carry within is not recognized. How many times have we had to cry and regret on realizing that we have not acknowledged this dignity in others. How often — and it pains me to say it — have we been blind and impervious in failing to recognize our own and others' dignity.

Lent is a time for reconsidering our feelings, for letting our eyes be opened to the frequent injustices which stand in direct opposition to the dream and the plan of God. It is a time to unmask three great temptations that wear down and fracture the image which God wanted to form in us: There are three temptations of Christ... three temptations for the Christian, which seek to destroy what we have been called to be; three temptations which try to corrode us and tear us down.

First, wealth: seizing hold of goods destined for all, and using them only for "my own people". That is, taking "bread" based on the toil of others, or even at the expense of their very lives. That wealth which tastes of pain, bitterness and suffering. That is the bread that a corrupt family or society gives its own children.

The second temptation, vanity: the pursuit of prestige based on continuous, relentless exclusion of those who "are not like me". The futile chasing of those five minutes of fame which do not forgive the "reputation" of others. "Making firewood from a felled tree" gradually gives way to the third temptation, the worst. It is that of pride, or rather, putting oneself on a higher level than one truly is on, feeling that one does not share the life of "mere mortals", and yet being one who prays every day: "I thank you Lord that you have not made me like those others...".

The three temptations of Christ... Three temptations which the Christian is faced with daily. Three temptations which seek to corrode, destroy and extinguish the joy and freshness of the Gospel. Three temptations which lock us into a cycle of destruction and sin.

It is worth asking ourselves:

To what degree are we aware of these temptations in our lives, in our very selves?

How much have we become accustomed to a lifestyle where we think that our source and life force lies only in wealth?

To what point do we feel that caring about others, our concern and work for bread, for the good name and dignity of others, are wellsprings of happiness and hope?

We have chosen Jesus, not the evil one. If we remember what we heard in the Gospel, Jesus does not reply to the devil with any of his own words, but rather he the words of God, the words of

scripture. Because brothers and sisters, and let us be clear about this, we cannot dialogue with the devil, we cannot do this because he will always win. Only the power of God's word can overcome him. We have opted for Jesus and not for the devil; we want to follow in Jesus' footsteps, even though we know that this is not easy. We know what it means to be seduced by money, fame and power. For this reason, the Church gives us the gift of this Lenten season, invites us to conversion, offering but one certainty: *he* is waiting for us and wants to heal our hearts of all that tears us down. He is the God who has a name: Mercy. His name is our wealth, his name is what makes us famous, his name is our power and in his name we say once more with the Psalm: "You are my God and in you I trust". Will you repeat it together? Three times: "You are my God and in you I trust". "Your are my God and in you I trust".

In this Eucharist, may the Holy Spirit renew in us the certainty that his name is Mercy, and may he let us experience each day that "the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus...", knowing that "with Christ and in Christ joy is constantly born anew" (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).