The Holy See

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

## JUBILEE FOR SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PEOPLE

## *HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS*

*Vatican Basilica*
*Sunday, 13 November 2016*

[Multimedia]

"For you… the sun of justice shall rise, with healing in its wings" (*Mal* 4:2). The words of the Prophet Malachi, which we heard in the first reading, shed light on today's Jubilee. They come to us from the last page of the last Old Testament prophet. They are words directed to those who trust in the Lord, who place their hope in him, who see in him life's greatest good and refuse to live only for themselves and their own interests. For those who are materially poor but rich in God, the sun of justice will rise. These are the poor in spirit, to whom Jesus promised the kingdom of heaven (cf. *Mt* 5:3) and whom God, through the words of the Prophet Malachi, calls "my special possession" (*Mal* 3:17). The prophet contrasts them with the proud, those who seek a secure life in their self-sufficiency and their earthly possessions. This last page of the Old Testament raises challenging questions about the ultimate meaning of life: where do I look for security? In the Lord or in other forms of security not pleasing to God? Where is my life headed, what does my heart long for? The Lord of life or ephemeral things that cannot satisfy?

Similar questions appear in today's Gospel. Jesus is in Jerusalem for the last and most important page of his earthly life: his death and resurrection. He is in the precincts of the Temple, "adorned with noble stones and offerings" (*Lk* 21:5). People were speaking of the beautiful exterior of the temple, when Jesus says: "The days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another" (v. 6). He adds that there will be no lack of conflicts, famine, convulsions on earth and in the heavens. Jesus does not want to frighten us, but to tell us that everything we now see will inevitably pass away. Even the strongest kingdoms, the most sacred buildings and the surest

realities of this world do not last for ever; sooner or later they fall.

In response, people immediately put two questions to the Master: “When will this be, and what will be the sign?” (v. 7). When and what… We are constantly driven by curiosity: we want to know *when* and we want to see *signs*. Yet Jesus does not care for such curiosity. On the contrary, he exhorts us not to be taken in by apocalyptic preachers. Those who follow Jesus pay no heed to prophets of doom, the nonsense of horoscopes, or terrifying sermons and predictions that distract from the truly important things. Amid the din of so many voices, the Lord asks us to distinguish between what is from him and what is from the false spirit. This is important: to distinguish the word of wisdom that the God speaks to us each day from the shouting of those who seek in God’s name to frighten, to nourish division and fear.

Jesus firmly tells us not to be afraid of the upheavals in every period of history, not even in the face of the most serious trials and injustices that may befall his disciples. He asks us to persevere in the good and to place all our trust in God, who does not disappoint: “Not a hair of your head will perish” (v. 18). God does not forget his faithful ones, his precious possession. He does not forget us.

Today, however, he questions us about the meaning of our lives. Using an image, we could say that these readings serve as a “strainer” through which our life can be poured: they remind us that almost everything in this world is passing away, like running water. But there are treasured realities that remain, like a precious stone in a strainer. What endures, what has value in life, what riches do not disappear? Surely these two: *the Lord and our neighbour*. These two riches do no disappear! These are the greatest goods; these are to be loved. Everything else – the heavens, the earth, all that is most beautiful, even this Basilica – will pass away; but we must never exclude *God or others* from our lives.

Today, though, when we speak of exclusion, we immediately think of concrete people, not useless objects but precious persons. The human person, set by God at the pinnacle of creation, is often discarded, set aside in favour of ephemeral things. This is unacceptable, because in God’s eyes man is the most precious good. It is ominous that we are growing used to this rejection. We should be worried when our consciences are anaesthetized and we no longer see the brother or sister suffering at our side, or notice the grave problems in our world, which become a mere refrain familiar from the headlines on the evening news.

Dear brothers and sisters, today is your Jubilee. Your presence here helps us to be attuned to God’s wavelength, to see what he sees. He sees not only appearances (cf. *1 Sam* 16:7), but turns his gaze to the “humble and contrite in spirit” (*Is* 66:2), to the many poor Lazaruses of our day. What harm we do to ourselves when we fail to notice Lazarus, excluded and cast out (cf. *Lk* 16:19-21)! It is turning away from God himself. It is the symptom of a spiritual sclerosis when we are only interested in objects to be produced rather than on persons to be loved. This is the origin of the

tragic contradiction of our age: as progress and new possibilities increase, which is a good thing, less and less people are able to benefit from them. This is a great injustice that should concern us much more than knowing when or how the world will end. Because we cannot go about our business quietly at home while Lazarus lies at the door. There is no peace in the homes of the prosperous as long as justice is lacking in the home of everyone.

Today, in the cathedrals and sanctuaries throughout the world, the Doors of Mercy are being closed. Let us ask for the grace not to close our eyes to God who sees us and to our neighbour who asks something of us. Let us open our eyes to God, purifying the eye of our hearts of deceitful and fearful images, from the god of power and retribution, the projection of human pride and fear. Let us look with trust to the God of mercy, with the certainty that "*love* never ends" (*1 Cor* 13:8). Let us renew our hope in the true life to which we are called, the life that will not pass away and that awaits us in communion with the Lord and with others, in a joy that will last forever, without end.

And let us open our eyes to our neighbour, especially to our brothers and sisters who are forgotten and excluded, to the "Lazarus" at our door. That is where the Church's magnifying glass is pointed. May the Lord free us from turning it towards ourselves. May he turn us away from the trappings that distract us, from interests and privileges, from attachment to power and glory, from being seduced by the spirit of the world. Our Mother the Church looks "in particular to that portion of humanity that is suffering and crying out, because she knows that these people belong to her by evangelical right" (PAUL VI, *Address at the beginning of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Council*, 29 September 1963). By right but also by evangelical duty, for it is our responsibility to care for the true riches which are the poor. In the light of these reflections, I would like today to be the "day of the poor". We are reminded of this by an ancient tradition according to which the Roman martyr Lawrence, before suffering a cruel martyrdom for the love of the Lord, distributed the goods of the community to the poor, whom he described as *the true treasure of the Church*. May the Lord grant that we may look without fear to what truly matters, and turn our hearts to our true treasure.

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