



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO MATERA

FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE 27th NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

EUCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

XXI Settembre Municipal Stadium (Matera)

Sunday, 25 September 2022

[Multimedia]

The Lord gathers us around his table, making himself bread for us. “The bread of the feast on the table of the sons [...] creates sharing, strengthens bonds, has the flavour of communion” (Hymn XVII, *National Eucharistic Congress*, Matera 2022). And yet, the Gospel we have just listened to tells us that bread is not always shared on the table of the world: this is true; the fragrance of communion does not always emanate; [bread] is not always broken in justice.

It is good for us to pause before the dramatic scene described by Jesus in this parable we have listened to: on one side a rich man dressed in purple and byssus, who flaunts his opulence and feasts lavishly; on the other, a poor man covered in sores, who lies at the door hoping that some crumbs will fall from the table to assuage his hunger. And faced with this contradiction — which we see every day — before this contradiction, we wonder: to what does the sacrament of the Eucharist, source and apex of Christian life, invite us?

Firstly, the Eucharist reminds us of *God’s primacy*. The rich man in the parable is not open to the relationship with God: he thinks only of his own well-being, of satisfying his needs, of enjoying life. And in so doing he has even lost his name. The Gospel does not say what he is called: he is named with the adjective “rich”, whereas it gives the poor man’s name: Lazarus. Riches bring you to this, they even strip you of your name. Self-satisfied, inebriated with money, dulled by the pride

of vanity, in his life there is no place for God because he worships only himself. It is not by chance that his name is not given: we call him “rich”, we define him only with an adjective because by now he has lost his name, he has lost his identity that is given to him only by the goods he possesses. How sad this reality is even today, when we confuse what we are with what we have, when we judge people by the wealth they have, the titles they exhibit, by the roles they hold, or by the brand of clothing they wear. It is the *religion of having and appearing*, which often dominates the scene in this world, but which in the end leaves us empty-handed, always. Indeed, this rich man in the Gospel is left even without a name. He is no longer anyone. The poor man, on the contrary, has a name, Lazarus, which means “God helps”. Despite his condition of poverty and marginalization, Lazarus is able to keep his dignity intact because he lives in relationship with God. In his very name there is something of God, and God is the unshakeable hope of his life.

Here then is the ongoing challenge that the Eucharist offers to our life: to worship God and not ourselves, not ourselves. To put him at the centre, and not the vanity of self. To remind ourselves that only the Lord is God and everything else is a gift of his love. Because if we worship ourselves, we die suffocated by our small selves; if we worship the riches of this world, they take possession of us and make us slaves; if we worship the god of appearance and inebriate ourselves in wastefulness, sooner or later life itself will ask us for the bill. Life always asks us for the bill. When, on the other hand, we adore the Lord Jesus present in the Eucharist, we also receive a new outlook on our lives: I am not the things I possess or the successes I manage to achieve; the value of my life does not depend on how much I can show off, nor does it diminish when I falter and fail. I am a beloved child, each one of us is a beloved child; I am blessed by God; He wanted to clothe me with beauty and he wants me free, he wants me free from all slavery. Let us remember this: he who worships God does not become a slave to anyone: he is free. Let us rediscover the prayer of adoration, a prayer that is often forgotten. Worship, the prayer of adoration, let us rediscover it: it frees us and restores us to our dignity as sons and daughters, not slaves.

Besides God’s primacy, the Eucharist calls us to *love our brothers and sisters*. This Bread is the Sacrament of love par excellence. It is Christ who offers himself and breaks himself for us, and asks us to do likewise, so that our life may be ground wheat and become bread that feeds our brothers and sisters. The rich man of the Gospel fails in this task: he lives in opulence and feasts abundantly without even noticing the silent cry of poor Lazarus, who lies exhausted at his door. Only at the end of life, when the Lord turns the tables, does he finally notice Lazarus, but Abraham tells him, “Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed” (*Lk 16:26*). But you fixed it: yourself. This is us, when in selfishness we create abysses. It was the rich man who dug an abyss between himself and Lazarus during earthly life, and now, in eternal life, that abyss remains. Because our eternal future depends on this present life: if we dig an abyss with our brothers and sisters now, we “dig our own grave” for later; if we raise walls against our brothers and sisters now, we remain imprisoned in loneliness and death afterwards too.

Dear brothers and sisters, it is painful to see that this parable is still the story of our times:

injustices, disparities, the earth's resources distributed unequally, the abuses perpetrated by the powerful against the weak, indifference to the cry of the poor, the abyss that we dig every day, generating marginalization — all these things cannot leave us indifferent. And so today, together, let us acknowledge that the Eucharist is the prophecy of a new world, it is the presence of Jesus who asks us to work to make an effective conversion take place: conversion from indifference to compassion, conversion from waste to sharing, conversion from selfishness to love, conversion from individualism to fraternity.

Brothers and sisters, let us dream. Let us dream of such a *Church*: a *Eucharistic Church*. Made up of women and men who break like bread for all those who chew on loneliness and poverty, for those who hunger for tenderness and compassion, for those whose lives are crumbling because the good leaven of hope is lacking. A Church that kneels before the Eucharist and worships with awe the Lord present in the bread; but that also knows how to bend with compassion and tenderness before the wounds of those who suffer, lifting up the poor, wiping away the tears of those who suffer, making herself the bread of hope and joy for all. Because there is no true Eucharistic worship without compassion for the many “Lazaruses” who even today walk beside us. There are so many of them!

Brothers, sisters, from this city of Matera, “city of bread”, I would like to say to you: let us return to Jesus, let us return to the Eucharist. Let us return to the taste of bread, because while we hunger for love and hope, or are broken by the hardships and sufferings of life, Jesus makes himself the nourishment that feeds and heals us. Let us return to the taste of bread, because while injustice and discrimination against the poor continue to take place in the world, Jesus gives us the Bread of sharing and sends us out daily as apostles of fraternity, apostles of justice, apostles of peace. Let us return to the taste of bread to be a Eucharistic Church, that puts Jesus at the centre and becomes the bread of tenderness, the bread of mercy for all. Let us return to the taste of bread to remember that, while this earthly existence of ours is being consumed, the Eucharist anticipates the promise of the resurrection and guides us towards the new life that conquers death.

Let us think seriously today about the rich man and Lazarus. This happens every day. And many times also — shame on us — it happens in us, this battle, between us, in the community. And when hope is extinguished and we feel within us the loneliness of the heart, inner weariness, the torment of sin, the fear of failure, let us again return to the taste of bread. We are all sinners: each one of us bears his or her own sins. But, sinners, let us return to the taste of the Eucharist, the taste of bread. Let us return to Jesus, let us worship Jesus, let us welcome Jesus. Because he is the only one who defeats death and always renews our life.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana