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“Mass for Peace” for the Korean Peninsula celebrated by the Cardinal Secretary of State in the Vatican Basilica

At 18.00 today in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin presided over the “Mass for Peace” for the Korean Peninsula, was also attended by the President of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Mr. Moon Jae-in.

The following is the homily given by His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin during the Eucharistic celebration:

Homily of the Cardinal Secretary of State

Mister President,
Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Presbyterate,
Distinguished Authorities and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Evangelist John tells us that the Lord Jesus, appearing to the disciples for the first time since the Resurrection, addressed them with the greeting: “Peace be with you!” (Jn 20: 19). The disciples had already heard similar words resounding on the evening of the last supper, before the Lord delivered Himself into the hands of His persecutors, accepting to the end the sacrifice of the Cross for the salvation of the world. In fact, taking leave of his Jesus, he had said: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*”.

The peace that the Lord offers to the human heart in search of true life and full joy is that spiritual mystery that unites the sacrifice of the Cross to the renewing power of the Resurrection: “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you*”.

Tonight, we humbly desire to raise our gaze to God, to the One who holds up history and the destiny of humanity, and to implore once again, for the whole world, the gift of peace. We do so by praying in particular that

in the Korean Peninsula too, after so many years of tensions and division, the word peace can finally resound fully.

In the first reading of this celebration we heard the author of Deuteronomy recall the dual experience of the people of Israel, that of “blessing” and that of the “curse”: *“When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations ... then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where He scattered you”*.

The wisdom of the Scripture enables us to understand that only those who have experienced the inscrutable mystery of the apparent absence of God in the face of suffering, oppression and hatred can fully understand what it means to hear the word peace resound again.

Of course, as people of good will, we all know that peace is built with everyday choices, with a serious commitment to the service of justice and solidarity, with the promotion of the rights and dignity of the human person, and especially through care for the weakest. But, for those who believe, peace is first of all a gift that comes from above, from God Himself. Or rather, it is the full manifestation of the presence of God, of the One Whom the Prophets announced as the Prince of Peace.

We also know well that the peace that comes from God is not an abstract and distant idea, but an experience lived concretely in the daily journey of life. It is, as Pope Francis has repeatedly pointed out, *“peace in the midst of tribulations”*. Therefore, when Jesus promises peace to the disciples, He adds: *“I do not give to you as the world gives”*.

In fact, as the Pope also emphasizes, the world often *“anaesthetizes us so as not to let us see another reality of life: the cross”*. This is why the peace that God offers us goes beyond mere earthly expectations; it is not the result of a simple compromise, but a new reality, which involves all dimensions of life, even the mysterious ones of the cross and the inevitable sufferings of our earthly pilgrimage. For this reason, the Christian faith teaches us that *“a peace without the cross is not the peace of Jesus”*.

Pope Paul VI, whom we had the joy of seeing canonized last Sunday on a radiant day of celebration, when convoking for the first time the “World Day of Peace”, on 1 January 1968, and reiterating some expressions already dear to Saint John XXIII, thus addressed the Catholic faithful and all men of good will: *“Men must always speak of peace. The world must be educated to love peace, to build it up and defend it against the resurgent preludes to war ... We must arouse in the men of our time and of future generations the sense and love of peace founded upon truth, justice, freedom and love”* [1].

Dear brothers and sisters,

Let us ask of the Lord the grace to make peace a genuine mission in today’s world, trusting in the mysterious power of Christ’s cross and of His resurrection. With God’s grace, the way of forgiveness becomes possible, the choice of brotherhood among peoples a concrete fact, peace a shared objective even in the diversity of subjects that give life to the international Community.

“Thus our prayers for peace and reconciliation will rise to God from ever more pure hearts and, by his gracious gift, obtain that precious good for which we all long” [2]. Amen.

[1] Paul VI, Message for the First World Day of Peace, 8 December 1967

[2] Francis, *Homily in the Cathedral of Myeong-dong, Seoul*, 18 August 2014

