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Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Francis to Thailand and Japan (19 to 26 November 2019) – Holy Mass in the Tokyo Dome

Holy Mass in the Tokyo Dome

This afternoon, at 15.20 local time (7.20 in Rome), the Holy Father Francis left the apostolic nunciature and transferred by car to the Tokyo Dome.

Upon arrival at the stadium, after changing vehicle, he toured several times among the faithful by popemobile.

At 16.00 local time (8.00 in Rome), the Holy Father celebrated Holy Mass for the Gift of Human Life in the presence of 50,000 faithful. After the proclamation of the Gospel, the Pope delivered his homily.

At the end of Holy Mass, Archbishop Tarcisius Isao Kikuchi, S.V.D., of Tokyo, addressed a greeting to Pope Francis. The Holy Father then transferred by car to Kantei for the meeting with the Prime Minister.

The following is the homily that the Holy Father gave during the Eucharistic Celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

The Gospel we have heard is part of Jesus' first great sermon. We know it as the Sermon on the Mount, and it describes for us the beauty of the path we are called to take. In the Bible, the mountain is the place where God reveals himself and makes himself known. "Come up to me", God says to Moses (cf. *Ex 24:1*). A mountain whose summit is not reached by willpower or social climbing, but only by attentive, patient and sensitive listening to the Master at every crossroads of life's journey. The summit presents us with an ever new perspective on all around us, centered on the compassion of the Father. In Jesus, we encounter the summit of what it means to be human; he shows us the way that leads to a fulfillment exceeding all our hopes and expectations. In him, we encounter a new life, where we come to know the freedom of knowing that we are God's beloved children.

Yet all of us know that along the way, the freedom of being God's children can be repressed and weakened if we are enclosed in a vicious circle of anxiety and competition. Or if we focus all our attention and energy on the frenetic pursuit of productivity and consumerism as the sole criterion for measuring and validating our choices, or defining who we are or what we are worth. This way of measuring things slowly makes us grow impervious or insensible to the really important things, making us instead pant after things that are superfluous or ephemeral. How greatly does the eagerness to believe that everything can be produced, acquired or controlled oppress and shackle the soul!

Here in Japan, in a society with a highly developed economy, the young people I met this morning spoke to me about the many people who are socially isolated. They remain on the margins, unable to grasp the meaning of life and their own existence. Increasingly, the home, school and community, which are meant to be places where we support and help one another, are being eroded by excessive competition in the pursuit of profit and efficiency. Many people feel confused and anxious; they are overwhelmed by so many demands and worries that take away their peace and stability.

The Lord's words act as a refreshing balm, when he tells us not to be troubled but to trust. Three times he insists: "Do not be anxious about your life... about tomorrow" (cf. *Mt 6:25.31.34*). This is not an encouragement to ignore what happens around us or to be irresponsible about our daily duties and responsibilities. Instead, it is an invitation to set our priorities against a broader horizon of meaning and thus find the freedom to see things his way: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (*Mt 6:33*).

The Lord is not telling us that basic necessities like food and clothing are unimportant. Rather, he invites us to re-evaluate our daily decisions and not to become trapped or isolated in the pursuit of success at any cost, including the cost of our very lives. Worldly attitudes that look only to one's own profit or gain in this world, and a selfishness that pursues only individual happiness, in reality leave us profoundly unhappy and enslaved, and hinder the authentic development of a truly harmonious and humane society.

The opposite of an isolated, enclosed and even asphyxiated "I" can only be a "we" that is shared, celebrated and communicated (cf. *General Audience*, 13 February 2019). The Lord's call reminds us that "we need to acknowledge jubilantly that our life is essentially a gift, and recognize that our freedom is a grace. This is not easy today, in a world that thinks it can keep something for itself, the fruits of its own creativity or freedom" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 55). In today's first reading, the Bible tells us how our world, teeming with life and beauty, is above all a precious gift of the Creator: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (*Gen 1:31*). God offers us this beauty and goodness so that we can share it and offer it to others, not as masters or owners, but as sharers in God's same creative dream. "Genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others" (*Laudato Si'*, 70).

Given this reality, we are invited as a Christian community to protect all life and testify with wisdom and courage to a way of living marked by gratitude and compassion, generosity and simple listening. One capable of embracing and accepting life as it is, "with all its fragility, its simplicity, and often enough too, with its conflicts and annoyances" (*Address at the Vigil of World Youth Day*, Panama, 26 January 2019). We are called to be a community that can learn and teach the importance of accepting "things that are not perfect, pure or 'distilled', yet no less worthy of love. Is a disabled or frail person not worthy of love? Someone who happens to be a foreigner, someone who made a mistake, someone ill or in prison: is that person not worthy of love? We know what Jesus did: he embraced the leper, the blind man, the paralytic, the Pharisee and the sinner. He embraced the thief on the cross and even embraced and forgave those who crucified him" (*ibid.*).

The proclamation of the Gospel of Life urgently requires that we as a community become a field hospital, ready to heal wounds and to offer always a path of reconciliation and forgiveness. For the Christian, the only possible measure by which we can judge each person and situation is that of the Father's compassion for all his children.

United to the Lord, in constant cooperation and dialogue with men and women of good will, including those of other religious convictions, we can become the prophetic leaven of a society that increasingly protects and cares for all life.