



The Holy See

Dear brothers and sisters,

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples while they are in the Upper Room where they have fearfully shut themselves in, with the doors locked (*Jn 20:19*). Their state of mind is disturbed and their hearts are full of sadness, because the Master and Shepherd they had followed, leaving everything behind, has been nailed to the cross. They experienced terrible things and feel orphaned, alone, lost, threatened and helpless.

The opening image that the Gospel offers us on this Sunday can also well represent the state of mind of all of us, of the Church, and of the entire world. The shepherd whom the Lord gave to his people, Pope Francis, has ended his earthly life and has left us. The grief at his departure, the sense of sadness that assails us, the turmoil we feel in our hearts, the sense of bewilderment: we are experiencing all of this, like the apostles grieving over the death of Jesus.

Yet, the Gospel tells us that it is precisely in these moments of darkness that the Lord comes to us with the light of the resurrection, to illuminate our hearts. Pope Francis reminded us of this since his election and often repeated it to us, placing at the centre of his pontificate that joy of the Gospel which, as he wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew” ([n. 1](#)).

The joy of Easter, which sustains us in this time of trial and sadness, is something that can almost be touched in this square today; you can see it etched above all in your faces, dear children and young people who have come from all over the world to celebrate the Jubilee. You come from so many places: from all of the dioceses of Italy, from Europe, from the United States to Latin America, from Africa to Asia, from the United Arab Emirates... with you here, the whole world is truly present!

I address a special greeting to you, with the desire to make you feel the embrace of the Church and the affection of Pope Francis, who would have liked to meet you, to look into your eyes, and to pass among you to greet you.

In light of the many challenges you are called to confront - I think, for example, of the technology and artificial intelligence that characterise our age in a particular way - never forget to nourish your lives with the true hope that has the face of Jesus Christ. Nothing will be too great or too challenging with him! With him you will never be alone or abandoned, not even in the worst of times! He comes to meet you where you are, to give you the courage to live, to share your experiences, your thoughts, your gifts, and your dreams. He comes to you in the face of those near or far, a brother and sister to love, to whom you have so much to give and from whom so much to receive, to help you to be generous, faithful and responsible as you move forward in life. He wants to help you to understand what is most valuable in life: the love that encompasses all things and hopes all things (cf. *1 Cor* 13:7).

Today, on the Second Sunday of Easter, *Dominica in Albis*, we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy.

It is precisely the Father's mercy, which is greater than our limitations and calculations, that characterised the Magisterium of Pope Francis and his intense apostolic activity. Likewise the eagerness to proclaim and share God's mercy with all - the proclamation of the Good News, evangelisation - was the principal theme of his pontificate. He reminded us that "mercy" is the very name of God, and, therefore, no one can put a limit on his merciful love with which he wants to raise us up and make us new people.

It is important to welcome as a precious treasure this principle on which Pope Francis insisted so much. And - allow me to say - our affection for him, which is being manifested in this time, must not remain a mere emotion of the moment; we must welcome his legacy and make it part of our lives, opening ourselves to God's mercy and also being merciful to one another.

Mercy takes us back to the heart of faith. It reminds us that we do not have to interpret our relationship with God and our being Church according to human or worldly categories. The good news of the Gospel is first and foremost the discovery of being loved by a God who has compassionate and tender feelings for each one of us, regardless of our merits. It also reminds us that our life is woven with mercy: we can only get back up after our falls and look to the future if we have someone who loves us without limits and forgives us. Therefore, we are called to the commitment of living our relationships no longer according to the criteria of calculation or blinded by selfishness, but by opening ourselves to dialogue with others, welcoming those we meet along the way and forgiving their weaknesses and mistakes. Only mercy heals and creates a new world, putting out the fires of distrust, hatred and violence: this is the great teaching of Pope Francis.

Jesus shows us this merciful face of God in his preaching and in the deeds he performs. Furthermore, as we have heard, when he presents himself in the Upper Room after the resurrection, he offers the gift of peace and says: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (*Jn* 20:23). Thus, the risen Lord directs his

disciples, his Church, to be instruments of mercy for humanity for those willing to accept God's love and forgiveness. Pope Francis was a shining witness of a Church that bends down with tenderness towards those who are wounded and heals with the balm of mercy. He reminded us that there can be no peace without the recognition of the other, without attention to those who are weaker and, above all, there can never be peace if we do not learn to forgive one another, showing each another the same mercy that God shows us.

Brothers and sisters, precisely on Divine Mercy Sunday we remember our beloved Pope Francis with affection. Indeed, such memories are particularly vivid among the employees and faithful of Vatican City, many of whom are present here, and whom I would like to thank for the service they perform every day. To you, to all of us, to the whole world, Pope Francis extends his embrace from Heaven.

We entrust ourselves to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he was so devoted that he chose to be buried in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. May she protect us, intercede for us, watch over the Church, and support the journey of humanity in peace and fraternity. Amen.