



The Holy See

*Venerable Cardinal Fathers,
Dear brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear brothers and sisters,*

The Liturgy of the Word of this last of the Novendiali in memory of Pope Francis is that of the day, the third Sunday of Easter, and the page of the Gospel of John just proclaimed presents to us the encounter of the risen Christ with some of the Apostles and disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, which ends with the Mission entrusted to Peter by the Lord and Jesus' command, "Follow me!".

The episode is reminiscent that of the first miraculous catch of fish, narrated by Luke, when Jesus had called Simon, James and John, announcing that the Lord would have become a fisher of men. From that moment, Peter followed him, at times in incomprehension and even betrayal, but in today's encounter, the last before Christ's return to the Father, Peter receives from him the task of shepherding his flock.

Love is the key word of this page of the Gospel. The first to recognize Jesus is the "disciple whom Jesus loved", John, who exclaims, "It is the Lord!", and Peter immediately throws himself into the sea to reach the Master. After they have shared the food, which will have kindled in the Apostles' hearts the memory of the Last Supper, the dialogue between Jesus and Peter begins, the Lord's threefold question and Peter's threefold answer.

The first two times, Jesus adopts the verb to love, a strong word, whereas Peter, mindful of the betrayal, responds [in some translations] with the less demanding expression "to care," and the third time Jesus stresses the expression to care, adjusting to the Apostle's weakness. Pope Benedict XVI noted in commenting on this dialogue: "Simon understands that Jesus is satisfied with his poor love, the only one of which he is capable. ... It is precisely this divine adjustment that gives hope to the disciple, who has recognized the suffering of infidelity. ... From that day on, Peter 'followed' the Master with a precise awareness of his own fragility; but this awareness did not discourage him. For he knew that he could count on the presence of the Risen One beside him ... and so he shows us the way as well".¹

In his homily at the Mass for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pontificate, Saint John Paul II

confirmed: "Today, dear brothers and sisters, I am pleased to share with you an experience that has now lasted for a quarter of a century. Every day that same dialogue between Jesus and Peter takes place in my heart. In spirit, I focus on the benevolent gaze of the risen Christ. Although he knows of my human frailty, he encourages me to answer confidently, like Peter: "*Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you*" (Jn 21: 17). And then he invites me to take on the responsibilities that he himself has entrusted to me."2

This mission is love itself, which becomes service to the Church and to all humanity. Peter and the Apostles assumed it immediately, by the power of the Spirit they had received at Pentecost, as we heard in the first reading: "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God raised him to his right hand, as head and Saviour".

We have all admired how much Pope Francis, animated by the Lord's love and carried by his grace, was faithful to his mission to the utmost consumption of his strength. He reminded the powerful that we must obey God rather than men and proclaimed to all humanity the joy of the Gospel, the merciful Father, Christ the Saviour. He did this in his magisterium, in his travels, in his gestures, in his lifestyle. I was close to him on Easter Day, at the Loggia of Blessings in this Basilica, witnessing his suffering but above all his courage and determination to serve the people of God to the end.

In the second reading, taken from the Book of Revelation, we heard the praise that the whole universe gives to the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb: "Praise, honour, glory and power, throughout the ages. And the four living creatures said, 'Amen.' And the elders prostrated themselves in worship".

Adoration is an essential dimension of the Church's mission and the lives of the faithful. Pope Francis often recalled this, as for example in his homily for the Feast of the Epiphany last year: "The Magi have *hearts bowed in adoration*. ... They came to Bethlehem, and when they saw the child, 'they knelt down and paid him homage (Mt 2:11). ... A King who came to serve us, a God who became man. Before this mystery, we are called to bow our heart and bend our knee in worship: to worship the God who comes in littleness, who dwells in our homes, who dies for love. ... Brothers and sisters, we have lost the habit of adoration, we have lost the ability that gives us adoration. Let us rediscover our taste for the prayer of adoration. ... Nowadays there is a lack of adoration among us".3

This capacity that gives adoration was not difficult to recognize in Pope Francis. His intense pastoral life, his countless meetings, were grounded in the long moments of prayer that the Ignatian discipline had imprinted in him. Many times he reminded us that contemplation is "a dynamism of love" that "raises us up to God, not to separate us from the world but to ground us more deeply in it" (*Audience with Superiors and Delegates of the Discalced Carmelites*, 18 April

2024). And everything he did, he did under the gaze of Mary. There will remain in our memory and in our hearts his 126 stops before the “Salus Populi Romani.” And now that he rests at the beloved image, we entrust him with gratitude and confidence to the intercession of the mother of the Lord and our mother.

[1] [General Audience](#), 24 May 2006).

[2] [Homily](#), 16 October 2003

[3] [Homily](#), 6 January 2024

[4] [Audience with Superiors and Delegates of the Discalced Carmelites](#), 18 April 2024

[Holy See Press Office Bulletin](#), 4 May 2025
