



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAEHOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"Vanity distances us from Christ's Cross"

Wednesday, 11 March 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

Let us continue to pray for the sick because of this epidemic. And today, in a special way, I would like to pray for prisoners, for our brothers and our sisters who are detained in prisons. They suffer, and we must be near to them with our prayer, so that the Lord might help them, might console them in this difficult moment.

Homily

The First Reading, a passage from the prophet Jeremiah (18:18-20), is truly a prophecy of the Passion of the Lord. What do the enemies say? "Come, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word", "Let's contrive a plot against him". It does not say, "Let's conquer him, let's get rid of him", no. To make his life difficult, to torment him. It is the suffering of the prophet, but there is a prophecy of Jesus. In the Gospel (*Mt 20:17-28*), Jesus Himself talks to us about this: "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is about to be handed over to the chief priests and scribes. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the pagans to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (vv. 18-19). It is not only a death sentence: there is more than that. There is humiliation, hounding. When there is the dogged persecution of a Christian, of a person, the devil is there. The devil has two styles: seduction, with worldly promises, as he wanted to do with Jesus in the desert, to seduce him, and with seduction to make him change the plan of redemption; and, if this does not work, doggedness. The devil has no half measures. His

pride is so great that he tries to destroy. He destroys enjoying the destruction with dogged fury. Let us think of the persecution of so many saints, of so many Christians: their persecutors do not kill them at once, but make them suffer and try to humiliate them in all sorts of ways, to the end. We must not confuse a simple social, political and religious persecution with the dogged fury of the devil. The devil hounds in order to destroy. Let us think of Revelation: he wanted to devour the woman's child who is about to be born (cf. 12:4).

The two thieves who were crucified with Jesus were condemned, crucified and left to die in peace. Nobody insulted them: no one was interested. The insult was only for Jesus, against Jesus. Jesus tells the apostles that He will be condemned to death, but He will be "mocked and scourged and crucified"... They mock him.

And the way out of the devil's fury, out of this destruction, is the worldly spirit, what the mother asks for her children, the children of Zebedee (cf. *Mt* 20:20-21). Jesus speaks of humiliation, which is His own destiny, and right then and there they ask Him for visibility, for power. Vanity, the worldly spirit, is precisely the way the devil offers to distance oneself from Christ's Cross. One's own fulfilment, careerism, worldly success: they are all non-Christian roads, they are all roads for obscuring the Cross of Jesus.

May the Lord give us the grace to know how to discern when the spirit that wants to destroy us with doggedness is present, and when the same spirit wants to console us with the appearances of the world, with vanity. But let us not forget: when there is dogged fury, there is hatred, the vengeance of the defeated devil. This is how it is until today, in the Church. Think of so many Christians, how cruelly persecuted they are. In recent days the newspapers have been talking about Asia Bibi: nine years in prison, suffering. It is the devil's dogged fury.

May the Lord give us the grace to discern the Lord's way, which is the Cross, from the way of the world, which is vanity, appearance, *maquillage*.