



The Holy See

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

"The courage to keep silent"

Friday, 27 March 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

News has arrived in these days of how many people are beginning to worry in a more general way for others; they are thinking of the families who don't have enough to get by, of the elderly people who are alone, of the sick in hospital. And they are praying so that some type of help might arrive. This is a good sign. Let us thank the Lord for inspiring these sentiments in the hearts of the faithful.

Homily

The first Reading is almost like an anticipated news report about what happened to Jesus. It is a news report in advance. It is a prophecy. It seems to be an historical description of what happened later. What did the wicked say? "Let us lie in wait for the virtuous man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life, reproaches us for our breaches of the law and accuses us of playing false to our upbringing. Before us he stands, a reproof to our way of thinking, the very sight of him weighs our spirits down; his way of life is not like other men's. If the virtuous man is God's son, God will take his part and rescue him from the clutches of his enemies" (*Wis 2:12*). What comes to our mind is what they said to Jesus on the Cross: "If you are the Son of God, come down. Let Him come to save you" (cf *Mt 27:40*). And then their plan of action: let us put him to the test "with cruelty and torture, and thus explore this gentleness of his and put his endurance to the proof. Let us condemn him to a shameful death since He will be looked after – we have His word for it" (see

Wis 2:19). It is truly a prophecy of what happened. And the Jews sought to kill Him, the Gospel says. They even go to arrest Him, the Gospel tells us, “but because His time had not yet come no one laid a hand on Him” (*Jn 12:30*).

This prophecy is too detailed. This plan of action of these wicked people is truly one detail after another. It does not spare anything. Let us put Him to the test with violence and torments, and try His spirit of gentleness... Let us sneak up on Him... Let us lay a trap for Him [to see] if He falls... This is not simple hatred. This is not a plan of action that is bad – certainly – of one party against another. This is something else. This is called hounding: when the demon, who is always behind every type of hounding, seeks to destroy and does not spare any means. The beginning of the Book of Job comes to mind, which is prophetic regarding this. God is satisfied with the way Job lives. The devil says, “Yes, because he has everything. He has no trials! Put him to the test!” (*Job 1:1-12; 2:4-6*). So, first the devil takes away his goods, and then he takes away his health, and Job never, never distanced himself from God. But the devil, this is what he does: hounding. Always. Behind every form of hounding, the devil is there to destroy God’s work. Behind an argument or an enemy, the devil might be behind it from afar, with the normal temptations. But with this type of wanting to have it in for someone, there is no doubt. The devil is present there. This hounding is quite subtle. Let us think how the devil not only hounded Jesus, but also the persecution of Christians, how he tries most sophisticated means to lead them to apostasy, to distance themselves from God. This is, as we say in everyday conversation, this is diabolic. Yes, diabolic intelligence.

Some Bishops from one of the countries that endured an atheistic dictatorship told me about this, and, even going into the finest detail. For instance, the Monday after Easter teachers had to ask the children: “What did you eat yesterday?” And some of the children would reply, Eggs”. And those who said “eggs” were followed to see if they were Christians, because in those countries they would eat eggs on Easter Sunday. Even to this point, to see, to spy, to find out where there was a Christian, in order kill him or her. This is dogged persecution. And this is the devil.

And what should one do in the moment of being hounded? There are two things to be done: to dialogue with these people is not possible because they have their own ideas, fixed ideas, which the devil has sown in their hearts. We have heard what their plan of action is. What can one do? What Jesus did: remain silent. It is striking when we read in the Gospel that before all of these accusations, to all these things, Jesus was silent. In the face of the hounding spirit, only silence, never justification. Jesus spoke, He explained. When He understood that there were no words, silence. And in silence, Jesus lived His passion. It is the silence of the just one in the face of dogged fury. This is valid even for – we can say – the little, everyday types of hounding, when someone thinks someone might be talking behind his or her back, they say things and then nothing comes out in the open... stay silent. Silence. Endure and tolerate the hounding of gossip. Gossip is even a form of hounding, social hounding. It is a type of hounding that is not as strong as this, but it is hounding to destroy the other because the person is a disturbance, a nuisance.

Let us ask the Lord for the grace to fight against the evil spirit, to dialogue when we need to dialogue, but before the spirit of hounding, to have the courage to remain silent and allow the others to speak. The same goes when facing these small forms of daily hounding that is gossip: let them speak. In silence, before God.

Prayer for spiritual communion

Those who cannot receive Communion, can make a spiritual communion now:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.