



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO POMPEII AND NAPLES

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples

Saturday, 21 March 2015

[Multimedia]

The passage of the Gospel which we have heard presents to us a scene set in the Temple of Jerusalem, at the culmination of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, after which Jesus proclaimed a great prophecy revealing himself as the source of “living water”, that is, the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 7:37-39). Then the people, deeply impressed, begin to talk about him. Today people are still talking about him. Some are excited and say: “This is really the prophet” (v. 40). Someone even says: “This is the Christ” (v. 41). But others reject that by saying that the Messiah does not come from Galilee, but from the line of David, from Bethlehem; and thus, without knowing it, they confirm the very identity of Jesus.

The chief priests send guards to arrest him, as do dictators, but they return empty-handed, saying: “No man ever spoke like this man!” (v. 46). There, that is the voice of truth, which resounds in the simple people.

The Word of the Lord, yesterday as today, *always provokes division: the word of God divides, always! It makes a distinction between those who accept it and those who refuse.* Sometimes an interior contrast sparks in our heart; this happens when we experience the charm, the beauty and the truth of the words of Jesus, but at the same time we reject them because they call us into question, they put us in difficulty and they cost us too much to observe them.

Today I have come to Naples in order to proclaim together with you: *Jesus is Lord!* But I don't want to say it alone: I want to hear it from you, from everyone, now, all together: "Jesus is Lord!", one more time: "Jesus is Lord!". *No one speaks like He does!* He alone has words of mercy that can heal the wounds of our heart. He alone has words of eternal life (cf. Jn 6:68).

Christ's word is powerful: it doesn't have the world's power, but God's, which is strong in humility, and in weakness. His power is that of love: this is the power of the word of God! A love that knows no boundaries, a love that lets us love others before ourselves. The word of Jesus, the holy Gospel, teaches that the truly blessed are poor in spirit, non-violent, meek, workers of peace and justice. This is the force that changes the world! This is the word that gives strength and is capable of changing the world. There is no other way to change the world.

The word of Christ *wants to reach all people*, in particular those who live in the peripheries of existence, so that they may find in Him the centre of their life and the source of hope. And we, who have had the grace to receive this Word of Life — it is a grace to receive the word of God! — we are called to go, to come out from behind our fences and, with zealous hearts, to bring to all the mercy, the tenderness, the friendship of God: this is a job that pertains to everyone, but in a special way it pertains to you priests. To bring mercy, to bring pardon, to bring peace, to bring joy through the Sacraments and through listening. That the people of God may find in you men who are merciful like Jesus. At the same time that every parish and every ecclesial reality may become a sanctuary for the one who seeks God and a welcoming home for the poor, the elderly and those who find themselves in need. *To go and to welcome*: so that the heart of Mother Church, and of all her children, will beat. Go, welcome! Go, seek! Go, bring love, mercy and tenderness.

When hearts are open to the Gospel, the world begins to change and humanity is *resurrected!* If we welcome and live the word of Jesus every day, we are *resurrected* with Him.

The Lent we are living makes this message echo in the Church, as we journey towards Easter: the hope of resurrecting with Christ, our Saviour, is rekindled in the people of God. May the grace of this Easter not be in vain for the people of God, of this city! May *the grace of Resurrection be accepted by each one of you, so that Naples may be filled with the hope of Christ the Lord!* Hope: "Make way for hope", this is the motto of my visit. I say it to you all, in a special way to young people: open yourselves to the power of the Risen Jesus, and you will bear the fruits of new life in this city: the fruits of sharing, reconciliation, service and brotherhood. Allow yourselves to be enveloped and embraced by his mercy, by the mercy of Jesus, by that mercy which only Jesus gives us.

Dear Neapolitans, make room for hope and *do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!* Do not give in to the lure of easy money or a dishonest income: it's bread today but hunger tomorrow. It can bring you nothing! React with steadfastness to organizations that exploit and corrupt the young, the poor and the weak, through the cynical business of drugs and other crimes. Don't let

yourselves be robbed of hope! Don't let your youth be exploited by these people! Corruption and crime must not disfigure the face of this beautiful city! And more: it must not disfigure the joy of your Neapolitan hearts! To criminals and to all their accomplices today I repeat humbly, as a brother: convert to love and to justice! Let yourselves be found by the mercy of God! Know that Jesus is trying to hug you, kiss you, love you even more. By the grace of God, who forgives everything and forgives always, it's possible to return to an honest life. This is asked of you also by the tears of the mothers of Naples, mixed with the tears of Mary, the Heavenly Mother invoked in Piedigrotta and in so many Churches of Naples. May these tears melt the hardness of hearts and lead all back to the way of good.

Today spring begins, and spring brings hope: a season of hope. And today is a season of redemption for Naples: this is my wish and my prayer for a city that has in itself the spiritual, cultural and human potential and indeed great capacity for love. Authorities, institutions, various social groups and citizens, all together and in harmony, can build a better future. And the future of Naples is not resigned to folding in on itself: this is not your future! Rather, the future of Naples is to open itself with trust to the world, to make way for hope. This city can find in the mercy of Jesus, who makes all things new, the strength to go forward with hope, strength for many lives, many families and communities. To hope is to resist evil. To hope is to see the world with the eyes and the heart of God. To hope is to bet on the mercy of God who is Father and forgives always and forgives all.

God, the font of our joy and the cause of our hope, lives in our cities. God lives in Naples. May his grace and his blessing sustain you on your journey in faith, charity and hope, your good intentions and your projects of moral and social redemption. We all together proclaimed Jesus as Lord: let us say it again in closing: "Jesus is Lord!", all of us, three times: "Jesus is Lord!". *E ca 'a Maronna v'accumpagne!*