



The Holy See

PRAYER MEETING WITH ROMA AND SINTI PEOPLE

WORDS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Sala Regia

Thursday, 9 May 2019

[Multimedia]

Many of the things I have heard touched my heart, but let us take one of them to begin with, then we will come to the others.

This mother who spoke touched my heart when she said that she “read”, “saw” the hope in her children’s eyes. She has four, she told me, and this is good; here are two of them. Hope can disappoint if it is not true hope, but when hope is concrete, as in this case, in the eyes of children, it never disappoints. It never disappoints!

Hope is concrete, in the true God, it never disappoints. Mothers who see hope in their children’s eyes fight every day for concreteness, not for abstract things, no: raising children, feeding them, educating them, integrating them into society ... are concrete things. And these mothers — I dare say — are hopeful too. A woman who brings a child into the world is hope, sows hope, is able to lead the way, to create horizons, to give hope.

In both testimonies there was also the bitter pain of separation: something that one senses in the flesh, not with the ears. They set you aside; they tell you: “Yes, yes, you may pass, but stay there, do not touch me”. [*Addressing the young priest who gave testimony:*] In the seminary they used to ask you if you asked for alms, if you went to Termini [train station].... Society lives on fairy tales, on things.... “No, Father, those are sinful people!”. And you, are you not a sinner? We all are, everyone.

We all make mistakes in life, but I cannot wash my hands of them, while looking at the true or imagined sins of others. I must look at *my* sins, and if the other person is in sin, on the wrong path, I must approach and give him a hand to help him find a way out.

Something that angers me is that we are all used to speaking about people with *adjectives*. We do not say: "This is a person; this is a mother; this is a young priest", but rather: "This one is like this, that one is like that...". We apply adjectives. And this destroys, because it does not allow the person to emerge. This is a person; this is another person; this is another person. Children are people. Everyone. We cannot say: They are this way; they are ugly; they are good; they are bad. Adjectives are things that create distance between mind and heart, as the Cardinal [Bassetti] said. This is the problem today. If you tell me that it is a political problem, a social problem, that it is a cultural problem, a language problem: these are secondary matters. The issue is a problem of distance between mind and heart. This is a problem of distance. "Yes, yes, you are a person, but far from me, far from my heart". Social rights, health services: "Yes, yes, but stand in line.... No, first this one then that one". It is true. There are second-class citizens, it is true. But the real second-class citizens are those who discard people: these people are second-class, because they do not know how to embrace. They always toss out an adjective; they discard; and they live by discarding; they live with the broom in hand, pushing others out, either with gossip or other things. Instead, the true path is that of brotherhood: "Come, then we will talk, but come. The door is open". And we all must cooperate.

You can have a shortcoming — all of us are always at risk — have a weakness, as we say, the weakness perhaps of allowing *resentment* to grow. It is understandable, it is human. But I ask you, please, have more heart, more spacious: no resentment. And go forward with dignity: dignity of the family, dignity of work, the dignity of earning daily bread — this is what helps you go forward — and the dignity of prayer. Always looking forward. And when resentment comes, let it go, then history will do us justice. Because resentment sickens everything: it sickens the heart, the mind, everything. It sickens the family, and it is not good, because resentment leads you to revenge: "You do this...". But I believe that you did not invent the vendetta. In Italy there are organizations that are masters of vendetta. You understand me well, do you not? A group of people who are capable of creating vendetta, of living under a code of silence: this is a group of criminal people; not people who want to work.

Go forth with dignity, with work.... And when difficulties arise, look on high and you will find that there they are watching us. He watches you. There is One who looks at you first, who really loves you, One who had to live on the margins, as a child, to protect life, hidden, a refugee: One who suffered for you, who gave his life on the Cross. He is One, as we heard in the first Reading that you recited, who goes searching for you in order to comfort you and encourage you to go on. This is why I tell you: no distance; to you and to everyone: the mind with the heart. No adjectives, no: all persons, each one will deserve a proper adjective, but not general adjectives, according to the life you live. We have heard a lovely name, which includes mothers; this is a beautiful name:

“Mamma”. It is a beautiful thing.

I thank you very much. I pray for you; I am close to you. And when I read something awful in the newspaper, to tell the truth: I suffer. Today I read something awful and I am suffering, because this is not civility. It is not civility. Love is civility, thus, go forth with love.

May the Lord bless you. And pray for me!