



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO TURIN

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Charles Square

Fifth Sunday of Easter, 2 May 2010

(Video)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to be with you on this festive day and to celebrate this solemn Eucharist for you. I greet everyone present and in particular the Pastor of your Archdiocese, Cardinal Severino Poletto, whom I thank for his warm words to me on behalf of all. I also greet the Archbishops and Bishops present, the priests, the men and women religious and the representatives of the Ecclesial Associations and Movements. I address a respectful thought to Hon. Mr Sergio Chiamparino, the Mayor, with gratitude for his kind greeting, to the representatives of the Government and to the civil and military Authorities, with special thanks to those who have generously offered their cooperation for this Pastoral Visit. I extend my thoughts to those who are unable to be present, especially the sick, the lonely and all those in difficulty. I entrust the City of Turin and all its inhabitants to the Lord in this Eucharistic celebration, which, as it does every Sunday, invites us to partake as a community in the twofold banquet of the Word of truth and the Bread of eternal life.

We are in the Easter Season which is the time of Jesus' glorification. The Gospel we have just heard reminds us that this glorification is brought about in the Passion. In the Paschal Mystery, passion and glorification are closely bound together and form an indissoluble unity. When Judas leaves the Upper Room to carry out his scheme of betrayal that will lead to the Master's death,

Jesus says: "now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified" (Jn 13: 31): the glorification of Jesus begins at that very moment. The Evangelist John makes it quite clear: he does not in fact say that Jesus was glorified only after his Passion, through his Resurrection; rather he shows that precisely with the Passion his glorification began. In it Jesus manifests his glory, which is the glory of love, which gives itself totally. He loved the Father, doing his will to the very end, with a perfect gift of self; he loved humanity, giving his life for us. Thus he was already glorified in his Passion and God was glorified in him. But the Passion as a very real and profound expression of his love is only a beginning. This is why Jesus says that his glorification is also to come (cf. *ibid.*, 13: 32). Then, when he announces his departure from this world (cf. *ibid.*, 13: 33), the Lord gives his disciples a new commandment, as it were a testament, so that they might continue his presence among them in a new way: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13: 34). If we love each other, Jesus will continue to be present in our midst, to be glorified in this world.

Jesus speaks of a "new commandment". But what is new about it? In the Old Testament, God had already given the commandment of love; but this commandment has become new now because Jesus makes a very important addition to it: "*As I have loved you, that you also love one another*". What is new is precisely this "loving as Jesus loved". All our loving is preceded by his love and refers to this love, it fits into this love and is achieved precisely through this love. The Old Testament did not present any model of love; it only formulated the precept of love. Instead, Jesus gave himself to us as a model and source of love a boundless, universal love that could transform all negative circumstances and all obstacles into opportunities to progress in love. And in this City's Saints we see the fulfilment of this love, always from the source of Jesus' love.

In past centuries, the Church in Turin had a rich tradition of holiness and generous service to the brethren as both the Cardinal Archbishop and Mr Mayor pointed out thanks to the work of zealous priests and men and women religious of both active and contemplative life and faithful laypeople. Jesus' words thus acquire a special resonance for this Church of Turin, a generous and active Church, beginning with her priests. In giving us the new commandment, Jesus asks us to live his own love and on his own love, which is the truly credible, eloquent and effective sign for proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God to the world. Clearly, with our own strength alone we are weak and limited. In us there is always a resistance to love and in our existence there are very many difficulties that cause division, resentment and ill will. However, the Lord promised us that he would be present in our lives, making us capable of this generous, total love that can overcome all obstacles, even those in our own hearts. If we are united to Christ, we can truly love in this way. Loving others as Jesus loved us is only possible with that power which is communicated to us in the relationship with him, especially in the Eucharist, in which his Sacrifice of love that generates love becomes really present: this is the true newness in the world and the power of a permanent glorification of God who is glorified in the continuity of the love of Jesus in our love.

I would therefore like to say a word of encouragement especially to the Priests and Deacons of this Church, who dedicate themselves generously to pastoral work, as well as to the men and women Religious. Being a labourer in the Lord's vineyard can sometimes be tiring, duties increase, there are so many demands and problems are not lacking: may you be able to draw daily from this relationship of love with God in prayer the strength to transmit the prophetic announcement of salvation; refocus your existence on what is essential in the Gospel; cultivate a real dimension of communion and brotherhood in the presbyterate, in your communities, in your relations with the People of God; bear witness in your ministry to the power of love that comes from on high, that comes from the Lord present in our midst.

The First Reading we have heard presents to us precisely a special way of glorifying Jesus: the apostolate and its fruits. Paul and Barnabas, at the end of their first apostolic voyage, return to the cities they have already visited and give fresh courage to the disciples, exhorting them to remain firm in the faith for, as they say, "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14: 22). Christian life, dear brothers and sisters, is not easy; I know that difficulties, problems and anxieties abound in Turin: I am thinking in particular of those who currently live in precarious conditions, because of the scarcity of work, uncertainty about the future, physical and moral suffering. I am thinking of families, of young people, of elderly people who often live alone, of the marginalized and of immigrants. Yes, life leads to confrontation with many difficulties, many problems, but it is precisely the certainty that comes from faith, the certainty that we are not alone, that God loves each one without distinction and is close to everyone with his love, that makes it possible to face, live through and surmount the effort of dealing with daily problems. It was the universal love of the Risen Christ that motivated the Apostles to come out of themselves, to disseminate the word of God, to spend themselves without reserve for others, with courage, joy and serenity. The Risen One has a power of love that overcomes every limit, that does not stop in front of any obstacle. And the Christian community, especially in the most pastorally demanding situations, must be a concrete instrument of this love of God.

I urge families to live the Christian dimension of love in simple everyday actions in family relationships, overcoming divisions and misunderstandings; in cultivating the faith, which makes communion even stronger. Nor, in the rich and diverse world of the university and of culture, should there be a lack of the witness to love of which today's Gospel speaks in the capacity for attentive listening and humble dialogue in the search for Truth, in the certainty that Truth itself will come to us and catch hold of us. I would also like to encourage the frequently difficult endeavours of those called to administer public affairs: collaboration in order to achieve the common good and to make the City ever more human and liveable is a sign that Christian thought on man is never contrary to his freedom but favours a greater fullness that can only find its fulfilment in a "civilization of love".

I wish to say to all, and especially to the young: never lose hope, the hope that comes from the Risen Christ, from God's victory over sin, hatred and death.

Today's Second Reading shows us precisely the final outcome of Jesus' Resurrection: it is the new Jerusalem, the Holy City that comes down from Heaven, from God, adorned as a bride for her husband (cf. Rev 21: 2). The One who was crucified, who shared our suffering as the sacred Shroud also eloquently reminds us is the One who is Risen and who wants to reunite us all in his love. It is a marvellous, "strong" and solid hope, because, as Revelation says: "[God] will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (21: 4). Does not the Holy Shroud communicate the same message? In it we see, as in a mirror, our suffering in the suffering of Christ: *Passio Christi. Passio hominis*. For this very reason the Shroud is a sign of hope: Christ faced the Cross to stem evil; to make us see, in his Pasch, the anticipation of that moment when, even for us, every tear will be wiped away, when there will no longer be death, mourning or lamentation.

The passage from Revelation ends with this assertion: "And he who sat upon the throne said: "Behold, I make all things new"" (21: 5). The first absolutely new thing made by God was Jesus' Resurrection, his heavenly glorification. This is the beginning of a whole series of "new things" in which we also have a share. "New things" are a world full of joy, in which there is no more suffering and oppression, there is no more rancour or hate, but only the love that comes from God and transforms all things.

Dear Church in Turin, I have come to you to strengthen you in the faith. I would like to urge you, forcefully and with affection, to remain steadfast in that faith which you have received, that gives meaning to life and that gives the strength to love; never to lose the light of hope in the Risen Christ, who can transform reality and make all things new; to live out God's love in a simple, practical way in the City, in its districts, in communities, in families: "As I have loved you, that you also love one another".

Amen.

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