



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE*

St Peter's Square

Wednesday, 4 April 2018

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning and happy Easter!

You see that today there are flowers: the flowers express joy, cheerfulness. In certain places Easter is also called “Easter in bloom”, because the Risen Christ flourishes: he is the burgeoning flower; our justification flourishes; the holiness of the Church flourishes. Therefore, many flowers: it is our joy. All week long we celebrate Easter, all week long. And thus let us say to one another, once again, all of us, the wish of “Happy Easter”. Let us say it together: “Happy Easter!” [*They respond: “Happy Easter!”*]. I would also like us to say Happy Easter — because he was the Bishop of Rome — to beloved Pope Benedict, who is following us on television. Let us all say “Happy Easter” to Pope Benedict: [*They say “Happy Easter!”*]. And a nice round of applause.

With this catechesis we conclude the cycle dedicated to the Mass, which is precisely the memorial, but not only as a remembrance, one relives the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Last time, we came to Communion and the Prayer after Communion; after this oration, Mass concludes with the *blessing* imparted by the priest and the *dismissal* of the people (cf. [*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 90*](#)). As it began with the sign of the Cross, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, it is again in the name of the Trinity that the Mass, that is the liturgical action, is sealed.

However, we are well aware that although the Mass comes to an end, *the task of Christian witness begins*. Christians do not go to Mass to fulfil a weekly duty and then it is forgotten, no. Christians go to Mass in order to participate in the Lord’s Passion and Resurrection and then to live more as Christians: the task of Christian witness begins. We leave the Church by “going in peace” to carry God’s blessing in our daily activities, in our homes, in our workplaces, among the occupations of the earthly city, “glorifying the Lord with our life”. But if we exit the Church gossiping and saying

“look at this one, look at that one...”, with ‘tongues wagging’, the Mass has not entered my heart. Why? Because I am not capable of living the Christian witness. Every time I leave Mass, I must exit better than how I entered, with more life, with more strength, with more willingness to bear Christian witness. Through the Eucharist the Lord Jesus enters us, into our heart and our flesh, so that we may “hold fast in our lives to the Sacrament we have received in faith” (cf. *Roman Missal*, Collect for Monday in the Octave of Easter”).

Therefore, from the celebration of life, aware that the Mass is fulfilled in the concrete choices of those who personally engage in the mysteries of Christ. We must not forget that we celebrate the Eucharist in order to become *Eucharistic men and women*. What does this mean? It means allowing Christ to act within our deeds: that his thoughts may be our thoughts, his feelings our own, his choices our choices too. And this is holiness: doing as Christ did is Christian holiness. Saint Paul expresses it clearly, in speaking of his own assimilation to Jesus, and he says this: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). This is Christian witness. May Paul’s experience illuminate us too: to the measure in which we quash our selfishness — that is, kill that which is opposed to the Gospel and to Jesus’ love — a greater space is created within us for the power of his Spirit. Christians are men and women who, after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, allow their soul to expand with the power of the Holy Spirit. Allow your souls to expand! Not these souls so narrow and closed, small, selfish, no! Expansive souls, broad souls, with vast horizons.... after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, allow your souls to expand with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Since the real presence of Christ in the consecrated Bread does not end with the Mass (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1374), the Eucharist is *safeguarded in the tabernacle* for Communion to the sick and for silent adoration of the Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament; Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, be it in private or community form, indeed helps us to remain in Christ (cf. *ibid.*, 1378-1380). Therefore, the fruits of the Mass are intended to mature in everyday life. Thus, we can say, stretching the image somewhat: the Mass is like the grain, the grain of wheat which then grows in ordinary life; it grows and matures in good deeds, in the attitudes that assimilate us to Jesus. The fruits of the Mass, therefore, are intended to mature in everyday life. In truth, *augmenting our union with Christ*, the Eucharist renews the grace that the Spirit gave us in Baptism and in Confirmation, so that our Christian witness may be credible (cf. *ibid.*, 1391-1392).

Yet, by igniting divine charity in our hearts, what does the Eucharist do? *It separates us from sin*: “the more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin” (*ibid.*, 1395). Regularly approaching the Eucharistic Banquet renews, strengthens, and deepens the bond with the Christian community to which we belong, according to the principle that *the Eucharist makes the Church* (cf. *ibid.*, 1396); it unites us all.

Lastly, partaking in the Eucharist *commits us to others, especially the poor*, teaching us to pass

from the flesh of Christ to the flesh of our brothers and sisters, in whom he waits to be recognized, served, honoured and loved by us (cf. *ibid.*, 1397).

Carrying in earthen vessels the treasure of the union with Christ (cf. 2 Cor 4:7), we constantly need to return to the holy altar, until in heaven, we will fully taste the beatitude of the marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. Rev 19:9).

Let us thank the Lord for the journey of rediscovery of the Holy Mass which he has given to us to carry out together, and let us allow ourselves to be drawn with renewed faith to this real encounter with Jesus, our contemporary, dead and Risen for us. And may our life always be thus “in bloom”, as Easter, with the flowers of hope, faith and good works. May we always find the strength for this in the Eucharist, in union with Jesus. Happy Easter to all!

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, Croatia, Sweden, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore and the United States of America. I offer a warm welcome to the newly ordained deacons from the Pontifical Irish College, together with their families and friends. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Christ conquered death and helps us to accept suffering as a privileged occasion of redemption and salvation. May you seek to experience the Easter message, witnessing in life’s places to peace and joy, gifts of the Risen One.