



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"Let us not forget the gratuitousness of revelation"

Friday, 13 March 2020

[Multimedia]

Introduction

These days we are united with the sick, the families, who are suffering as a result of this pandemic. I would also like to pray today for pastors who need to accompany the people of God during this crisis. May the Lord grant them the strength and the ability to choose the best ways to help. Drastic measures are not always good. Therefore, we pray that the Holy Spirit might grant pastoral discernment to pastors so that they perceive measures that might not leave the holy, faithful people of God alone, and so that people of God might feel accompanied by their pastors, and by the comfort of the Word of God, the Sacraments and prayer.

Homily

Both of the readings are a prophecy of the Passion of the Lord. Joseph is sold as a slave for twenty silver pieces, and delivered to the Gentiles (cf. *Gen* 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28). And Jesus's parable which clearly speaks in symbols of the killing of the Son (cfr *Mt* 21:33-43.45). This story tells of a landowner "who planted a vineyard" - the care with which he did so - "he fenced it round, dug a winepress in it and built a tower" - he did it well. "Then he leased it to tenants and went abroad" (v. 33). This is God's people. The Lord chose those people; there is an election of the people. They are the chosen people. There is also a promise: "Go forth. You are my people" - a

promise made to Abraham. And there is also the covenant made with the people at Sinai. The people must always keep that election in their memory - that they are a chosen people; the promise - so they always look ahead in hope; and the covenant in order to live daily in fidelity.

But what happens in this parable is that when the time came to reap the fruits, these people had forgotten that they were not the masters: "The tenants seized his servants, thrashed one, killed another, and stoned a third. Next he sent more servants to them, this time a larger number, and they dealt with them in the same way" (vv. 35-36). Jesus clearly shows here - He is speaking to the doctors of the law - how the doctors of the law treated the prophets. "Finally, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come on, let's kill him and take over his inheritance'" (vv. 37-38). They stole the inheritance, which belonged to another. A story of infidelity, of infidelity to their election, of infidelity to the promise, of infidelity to the covenant, which is a gift. The election, the promise and the covenant are a gift from God. Disloyalty to God's gift. Not understanding that it was a gift and taking it as though it were their possession. These people appropriated the gift. They took away the aspect as gift to turn it into their property. And the gift that is wealth, openness, blessing, was closed up, caged in a doctrine of laws, many of them. It was "ideologised". And so the gift lost its nature as a gift, and ended up as part of an ideology. In particular, as part of a moralistic ideology full of precepts, and indeed ridiculous as it lowers itself to sophisticated arguments for everything. They appropriated the gift.

This is the great sin. It is the sin of forgetting that God made a gift of Himself to us, that God gave us this as a gift and, forgetting this, becoming owners. And the promise is no longer a promise, the election is no longer election, and the covenant comes to be interpreted according to "my" opinion, becoming an ideology.

Here, in this attitude, I see in the Gospel perhaps the beginning, of clericalism, which is a perversion, which always denies God's gratuitous election, God's gratuitous covenant, God's gratuitous promise. It forgets the gratuitous nature of revelation; it forgets that God manifested Himself as a gift, He made Himself a gift for us and we must give this, make others see this as a gift, not as our possession. Clericalism is not something that belongs only to these times. Rigidity is not something of these days. It already existed at Jesus's time. And then, Jesus goes ahead in explaining the parable - this is chapter 21 - He goes ahead up to chapter 23 with the condemnation, where we see God's wrath against those who take the gift as if it were a possession and reduce its richness to the ideological whims of their own mind.

Let us ask the Lord today for the grace to receive the gift as a gift, and of transmitting the gift as a gift, not as a possession, not in a sectarian way, in a rigid way, or in a clericalist way.
