



# The Holy See

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MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE  
*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA* HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"The people of God follow Jesus and do not tire"

*Saturday, 28 March 2020*

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

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## Introduction

In these days, in some parts of the world, we are beginning to see consequences - some consequences - of the pandemic; one is hunger. We are beginning to see people who are hungry because they cannot work; because they did not have a regular job, or due to many other circumstances. We are beginning to see the “aftermath” that will come later, but it is beginning now. We pray for the families who are beginning to find themselves in need because of the pandemic.

## Homily

“Then each went to his own house” (*Jn 7:53*). After debating everyone returned to their own convictions. There is a division within the people: the people who follow Jesus and who listen to Him - they are not aware of the time spent listening to Him, for the Word of Jesus enters the heart - and the group of the Doctors of the Law who reject Jesus *a priori* because, in their opinion, He was not observing the Law. The people were divided in two camps: The people who loved Jesus and followed Him, and the group of the intellectuals of the Law, the leaders of Israel, the leaders of the people. This is clear when the guards went to the chief priests who asked them: “Why haven’t you brought him?” And the guards answered: “There has never been anybody who has spoken like him.” But the Pharisees answered them: “So, you have been led astray as well? Have any of the authorities believed in him? Any of the Pharisees? This rabble knows nothing about the Law –

they are damned (*Jn 7:45-49*). And this small group of the elite, the Doctors of the Law, despise Jesus. And they also despise the people, “that crowd” which is ignorant and does not know anything. The holy, faithful People of God believe in Jesus, they follow him. And this small group of the *elite*, the doctors of the law, they separate themselves from the people and do not welcome Jesus. But why? They were illustrious, intelligent, they had studied. But they had a great defect: they had forgotten their own belonging to the people.

The people of God follow Jesus... They cannot explain why, but they follow Him. He enters their hearts and they do not get tired. Let us think of the day of the multiplication of the loaves. They were with Jesus the entire day, to the point that the Apostles say to Jesus, ‘Send them away so that they can go buy something to eat’ (cf. *Mk 6:36*). Even the Apostles distanced themselves, they did not despise the People of God, but they did not take them into consideration either. “Send them to eat”. Jesus’ response: “You give them something to eat” (see *Mk 6:37*). He brings them back to the people.

This division between the *elite* of the religious leaders and the people is a problem that emerged a long time ago. Let us also think of the behaviour of the sons of Eli in the temple, in the Old Testament: they used the people of God. And if any of them that was a bit atheistic comes to fulfil the Law, they said: “They are superstitious”. Contempt for the people, Contempt for people “who are not as educated as we who have studied, who know...” Instead, the People of God have a huge grace: the sense of knowing where the Spirit was, even though they were sinners like us, that sense of knowing the path to salvation.

The problem of the *elite*, of the *elite* clerics like these, is that they had lost the memory of their own belonging to the People of God. They had become sophisticated. They had risen to another social class. They felt authoritative. This is clericalism that we see here. “But how come - I have heard in these days - these nuns and priests who are healthy, they go to the poor to give them something to eat and they can get the coronavirus? Why don’t you say to the Mother Superior not to allow the sisters to leave the house, say to the bishop not to let the priests go out! They are for the Sacraments! It is the government who needs to provide food”. This is what people are saying in these days: the same theme. “These are second class people. We are the upper class and should not get our hands dirty with the poor”.

So many times I think: they are good people - priests, sisters - who do not have the courage to go and serve the poor. Something is missing. It is the same thing that the Doctors of the Law were lacking. They lost their memory, they lost what Jesus felt in His heart – that He was a part of His own people. They have lost the memory of what God said to David, “I took you from the flock”. They forgot the memory of their own belonging to the flock.

And so each one goes back to their own home (see *Jn 7:35*). A division. Nicodemus, he saw something and it made him restless. Maybe he was not that courageous, too diplomatic; but he

was restless. He went to Jesus, he was faithful to what he could be faithful to. He tried to mediate and quoted the Law, "But surely the Law does not allow us to pass judgement on a man without giving him a hearing and discovering what he is about?" (*Jn 7:51*) They responded, but not with anything from the Law: "Are you a Galilean too? Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not come out of Galilee" (*Jn 7:52*). And so the story ended this way.

We might think even today of so many qualified men and women in God's service who are good and who go to serve the people, of many priests who do not separate themselves from the people. The other day, I saw a photograph of a priest of a mountain area, of many villages, where it snows. He brought the ostensorium in the snow to the small villages in order to give benediction. It did not matter that it was snowing or that the cold metal of the ostensorium was burning his hands. The only thing that mattered was bringing Jesus to the people.

Let us think, each one of us, what side we are on, if we are in the middle, a little indecisive, if we have the same feelings as the People of God, of the faithful People of God who can never fail: it is this *infallibilitas in credendo*. Let us think of the *elite* that detaches itself from the people of God, of that clericalism. Perhaps the advice that Paul gave to his disciple, the bishop, the young bishop, Timothy would do all of us good: "Remember your mother and your grandmother" (see *2 Tm 1:5*). If Paul advised this it was because he knew well the danger of where this sense of *elitism* leads.

### **Prayer for spiritual communion**

Those who cannot receive Communion due to distance can now make a spiritual communion.

At Your feet, O my Jesus, I prostrate myself and I offer You repentance of my contrite heart, which is humbled in its nothingness and in Your holy presence. I adore You in the Sacrament of Your love, the ineffable Eucharist. I desire to receive You into the poor dwelling that my heart offers You. While waiting for the happiness of sacramental communion, I wish to possess You in spirit. Come to me, O my Jesus, since I, for my part, am coming to You! May Your love embrace my whole being in life and in death. I believe in You, I hope in You, I love You. Amen.