



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHA HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS "The Holy Spirit
makes harmony in the Church,
the evil spirit destroys it"

Saturday, 9 May 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

Today we commemorate Saint Louise de Marillac [the liturgical memorial is held on 15 March, but since it fell within the Season of Lent, it has been moved to today]. Let us pray for the Vincentian sisters who have been managing this clinic, this hospital [the *Santa Marta Paediatric Dispensary* managed by the Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity] for almost 100 years and who work here at Santa Marta, for this hospital. May the Lord bless the sisters.

Homily

We have recited in the Psalm: Sing a new song to the Lord, for He has done marvellous deeds. His right hand and holy arm have won the victory. The Lord has made His victory known; has revealed His triumph in the sight of the nations (*Psalm 97:1-2*). This is true. The Lord has worked wonders. But how much effort! How much effort, for the Christian communities, to carry on these wonders of the Lord!

We heard joy in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles (see 13:44-52): the entire city of Antioch gathered to hear the word of the Lord, because Paul and the apostles preached with power, and the Spirit helped them. But "when... they saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said (v. 45). On the one hand, there is the Holy Spirit who makes the Church grow, and it grows ever more, this is true. But on the other hand

there is the evil spirit that seeks to destroy the Church. It is always like that, always like that. Things go ahead, but then comes the enemy, trying to destroy. The balance is always positive in the long run, but how much difficulty, how much pain, how much martyrdom!

This happened here, in Antioch, and it happens everywhere in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Let us think, for example, of Lystra, when they arrived and they healed [a paralytic], and everyone believed that they were gods and wanted to make sacrifices to them, and all the people were with them (see *Acts* 14:8-18). Then the others came and they convinced them that it was not thus. And what happened to Paul and his companion? They ended up being stoned (*Acts* 14:19). There is always this battle. Think of the sorcerer Elymas, and how he tried to prevent the Gospel from reaching the proconsul (*Acts* 13:6-12). Think of the masters of that girl who was a soothsayer: they exploited the girl, because she read palms and received money that went into the pockets of her masters. And when Paul and the apostles showed that this was a lie, that it wasn't right, immediately there was a revolution against them (see *Acts* 16:16-24). Think of the artisans of the goddess Artemis [in Ephesus], who were losing business because they couldn't sell statuettes to the people, because they were being converted. In this way, one after another. On the one hand, the Word of God that summons, that makes one grow and on the other, persecution, serious persecution, as they end up being driven out and beaten.

And what is the tool the devil uses to destroy the proclamation of the Gospel? *Envy*. The Book of Wisdom says clearly: But through the devil's envy death entered the world (*Wis* 2:24) - envy, jealousy, here. Always this bitter, bitter sentiment. These people saw how the Gospel was preached and they became angry, they were consumed by rage. And they were led on by this anger: it is the devil's anger, the anger that destroys, the anger of that *Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*, of that torture of Jesus. It wants to destroy. Always. Always.

Seeing this struggle, that beautiful saying is valid for us too: The Church has gone forward on pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God (see Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII, 51: 2). Something is missing from a Church that does not have any difficulties, temptation, struggles. The jealousy that destroys. The Holy Spirit makes the harmony of the Church, and the evil spirit destroys. Even up to the present day. Even up to today. Always this battle. A tool of this jealousy, of this envy, is temporal power. Here it tells us that the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing (*Acts* 13:50). They went to these women and they said: These are revolutionaries, drive them out. The women spoke with others and they banished them: it was the God-fearing women of the nobility and the leading men of the city (see v. 50). Those with temporal power, and temporal power can be good. People can be good, but power as such is always dangerous. The power of the world against the power of God moves all of this; and always, behind this, behind that power, there is money.

This is what happens in the early Church: the work of the Spirit to build up the Church, to harmonize the Church, and the work of the evil spirit to destroy it, and recourse to temporal

powers to stop the Church, to destroy the Church. It is none other than a development of what happens on the morning of the Resurrection. The soldiers, seeing that triumph, went to the priests, and the priests bought the truth. And the truth was silenced (see *Mt 28:11-15*). From the first morning of the Resurrection, the triumph of Christ, there is this betrayal, this silencing of the word of Christ, silencing the triumph of the Resurrection with temporal power: the chief priests and money.

Let us be careful, be careful with preaching the Gospel: never to give in to placing our trust in temporal powers and in money. Christians put their trust in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit whom He sent! It is precisely the Holy Spirit that is the leaven, the force that makes the Church grow. Yes, the Church moves resignedly and joyfully forward: between the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive Communion can now make a spiritual communion:

Those who cannot receive communion can now make spiritual communion: My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.