



The Holy See

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

"Knowing our idols"

Thursday, 26 March 2020

[Multimedia]

Introduction

In these days of great suffering, there is great fear. The fear of the elderly who are alone in nursing homes, or hospitals, or in their own homes, and do not know what will happen. The fear of those who do not have regular jobs and are thinking about how to feed their children. They foresee they may go hungry. The fear of many civil servants. At this moment they are working to keep society functioning and they might get sick. There is also the fear, there are the fears, of each one of us. Each one knows what their own fears are. We pray to the Lord that He might help us to trust, and to tolerate and conquer these fears.

Homily

In the first Reading there is the scene of the mutiny of the people. Moses went to the Mount to receive the Law: God gave it to him, in stone, written by His own hand. But the people were bored and flocked around Aaron, and said, "But this Moses, it's been some time that we don't know where he is, where he has gone, and we are without a leader. Give us a god who helps us to go forward". And Aaron, who later will be a priest of God – but there he was a priest of stupid things, of idols – said, "But yes, give me all the gold and silver you have". And they gave him everything, and he made that golden calf (see *Ex 32:1-7*).

In the Psalm, we heard God's lament: "They fashioned a calf at Horeb and worshipped an image

of metal, exchanging the God who was their glory for the image of a bull that eats grass” (*Psalms* 106:19-20). And here, in this moment, at the beginning of the Reading: “The Lord spoke to Moses, ‘Go down now, because your people, whom you brought out of Egypt have apostasised. They have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them; they have made themselves a calf of molten metal and have worshiped it and offered it sacrifice. ‘Here is your God, Israel,’ they have cried, ‘who brought you up from the land of Egypt!’” (*Exodus* 32:7-9). A true apostasy! From the Living God to idolatry. They did not have the patience to await Moses’ return: they wanted novelty, they wanted something, a liturgical show, something...

I would like to point out a few things about this. First of all, this idolatrous nostalgia of the people; in this case, they thought of the idols of Egypt, but the nostalgia to return to the idols, to return to the worst, not to know how to wait for the Living God. This nostalgia is an illness, and it is also ours. One begins to walk enthusiastically toward freedom, but then the complaints begin: “But yes, this is a difficult moment, the desert, I am thirsty, I want water, I want meat... but in Egypt we ate onions, good things, and here there aren’t any...”. Idolatry is always selective: it makes one think of the good things it gives, but it does not let you see the bad things. In this case, they thought about how they were at the table, with these meals that were so good, that they liked so much, but they forgot that it was the table of slavery. Idolatry is selective.

Then, another thing: idolatry makes you lose everything. Aaron, to make the calf, asked them to give him their gold and silver; but it was the gold and the silver that the Lord had given them, when He said to them, “Ask the Egyptians to lend you gold”, and then they went away with the gold. It is a gift from the Lord, and with the Lord’s gift they make an idol (*Exodus* 11:1-9). And this is very bad. But this mechanism also happens to us: when we do things that lead us to idolatry, we become attached to things that distance us from God. We make another god with the gifts that the Lord has given us — with our intelligence, with our will, with our love, with our heart... We use God’s very gifts to make idols.

Yes, some of you might say to me, “But I don’t have idols at home. I have the Crucifix, an image of Our Lady, which are not idols...” - No, no: in your heart. And the question that we must ask today is: what is the idol you have in your heart, in my heart? That hidden escape where I feel good, where I distance myself from the Living God. And we also have an attitude, with idolatry, that is very cunning: we know how to hide the idols, like Rachel did when she fled from her father and she hid them in the camel’s saddle and among the clothes. We too have concealed many idols among the clothing of our heart.

The question I would like to ask today is: what is my idol? That idol of mine, of worldliness... Idolatry also reaches piety because they wanted the golden calf not for a circus, no, for worship: “They bowed down before it” (see *Psalms* 106:19 and *Exodus* 32:8). Idolatry leads you to a mistaken religiosity, rather, very often worldliness, which is idolatry, makes you change the celebration of a Sacrament into a worldly party. For example, I don’t know, I think, let’s think, I don’t know, let us

imagine a wedding celebration. You don't know if it is a Sacrament in which the newlyweds truly give everything and love each other before God, and promise to be faithful before God and receive the grace of God, or if it is a fashion show, of how this, that and the other are dressed... worldliness. It is idolatry. This is an example. Because idolatry does not stop - it always increases.

The question I would like to ask us all today, all of us, is: what are my idols? Each one has his or her own. What are my idols? Where do I hide them? May the Lord not find us at the end of our lives, and say to us: "You apostasised. You deviated from the way that I marked out for you. You prostrated yourself before an idol".

Let us ask the Lord for the grace of recognising our own idols. And if we cannot banish them, at least to keep them in the corner...

Prayer for spiritual communion

Those who cannot receive Communion may make a 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.