



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO TRIESTE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th SOCIAL WEEK OF ITALIAN CATHOLICS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

'Unità d'Italia' Square (Trieste)

Sunday, 7 July 2024

[Multimedia]

To rekindle hope in broken hearts and support the burdens of the journey, God has always raised up prophets among his people. Yet, as today's First Reading recounts in the story of Ezekiel, they often encountered a rebellious people, obstinate children with hardened hearts (cf. *Ez* 2:4), and were rejected.

Jesus, too, experienced the same thing as the prophets. He returned to Nazareth, his homeland, among the people he grew up with, but he was not recognized and was even rejected: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (*Jn* 1:11). The Gospel tells us that Jesus was a cause of scandal to them (cf. *Mk* 6:3), but the word "scandal" does not refer to something obscene or indecent as we use it today; scandal means "a stumbling block," that is, an obstacle, a hindrance, something that impedes you and prevents you from going further. Let us ask ourselves: What is the obstacle that prevents believing in Jesus?

Listening to the discussions of his fellow townspeople, we see that they stop only at his earthly history, at his family origin, and so they cannot understand how such wisdom, and even the ability to perform miracles, could come from the son of Joseph the carpenter; that is, from an ordinary person. The scandal, then, is Jesus' humanity. The obstacle preventing these people from recognizing God's presence in Jesus is the fact that he is human, simply Joseph the carpenter's son: how can God, the Almighty, reveal himself in the fragility of human flesh? How can an

omnipotent and strong God, who created the earth and freed his people from slavery, become weak enough to come in the flesh and lower himself to wash the disciples' feet? This is the scandal.

Brothers and sisters: a faith founded on a human God, who lowers himself towards humanity, who cares for it, who is moved by our wounds, who takes on our weariness, who for us is broken like bread. A strong and powerful God, who is on my side and satisfies me in everything, is attractive; a weak God, a God who dies on the cross out of love and who asks me to overcome all selfishness and offer my life for the salvation of the world; and this, brothers and sisters, is a scandal.

Yet, as we stand before the Lord Jesus and gaze upon the challenges that confront us, upon the many social and political issues discussed even in this Social Week, upon the concrete lives of our people and their struggles, we can say that what we need today is precisely this: scandal. *We need the scandal of faith.* We do not need a religiosity closed in on itself, that looks up to heaven without caring about what happens on earth and celebrates liturgies in the temple but forgets the dust blowing in our streets. Instead, we need *the scandal of faith*. We need *the scandal of faith*, a faith rooted in the God who became man and, therefore, a human faith, a faith of flesh, that enters history, that touches people's lives, that heals broken hearts, that becomes a leaven of hope and a seed of a new world. It is a faith that awakens consciences from lethargy, that puts its finger in wounds, in the wounds of society — there are many of them — a faith that raises questions about the future of humanity and history; it is a restless faith, and we need to live a restless life, a faith that moves from heart to heart, a faith that receives from outside society's problems, a restless faith that helps us overcome mediocrity and lethargy of the heart, that becomes a thorn in the flesh of a society often anaesthetized and dazed by consumerism. And I will focus on this for a moment... It is said that our society is somewhat anaesthetized and dazed by consumerism. Have you wondered if consumerism has entered your hearts? That anxiety to have, to have things, to have more, that anxiety about wasting money. Consumerism is a wound, it is a cancer: it makes your heart sick, it makes you selfish, it makes you look only at yourself. Brothers and sisters, we need, above all, a faith that disrupts the calculations of human selfishness, that denounces evil, that points a finger at injustices, that disturbs the schemes of those who, in the shadow of power, puts those who are weak at risk. And how many, how many — we know it — use faith to take advantage of people. That is not faith.

A poet from this city, describing in a poem his usual return home in the evening, says he crosses a somewhat dark street, a place of decay where the people and the goods of the port are "debris", that is, scraps of humanity; yet precisely here, he writes — I quote: "I discover, passing by, the infinite in humility", because the prostitute and the sailor, the quarrelsome woman and the soldier, "are all creatures of life and of sufferance; He stirs up within them, same as in me, our Lord" (U. Saba, "*Città vecchia*", in *Il canzoniere (1900-1954) Edizione definitiva*, Torino, Einaudi, 1961). Let us not forget this: God is hidden in the dark corners of the life of our city — have you thought

about this? — in the dark corners of the life of our city. His presence reveals itself precisely in the faces hollowed out by suffering and where degradation seems to triumph. God's infinity is concealed in human misery, the Lord stirs and makes himself present, and he becomes a friendly presence precisely in the wounded flesh of the least, the forgotten and the discarded. The Lord manifests himself there. And we, who are sometimes scandalized unnecessarily by so many little things, would do well instead to ask ourselves: Why are we not scandalized in the face of rampant evil, life being humiliated, labour issues, the sufferings of migrants? Why do we remain apathetic and indifferent to the injustices of the world? Why do we not take to heart the situation of prisoners, which even from this city of Trieste rises as a cry of anguish? Why do we not contemplate misery, pain, the rejection of so many people in the city? We are afraid, we are afraid of finding Christ there.

Dear friends, Jesus lived in his flesh the prophecy of everyday life, entering into the daily lives and stories of the people, manifesting compassion within events, and he manifested his being God, who is compassionate. And because of this, some people were scandalized by him. He became an obstacle, he was rejected even to the point of being tried and condemned; yet, he remained faithful to his mission. He did not hide behind ambiguity, did not compromise with the logic of political and religious power. He made his life an offering of love to the Father. So, too, we Christians are called to be prophets and witnesses of the Kingdom of God, in all the situations we live in, in every place we inhabit.

Brothers and sisters, from this city of Trieste, overlooking Europe, a crossroads of peoples and cultures, a borderland, let us nurture the dream of a new civilization founded on peace and fraternity; let us not be scandalized by Jesus but, on the contrary, let us be indignant at all those situations where life is degraded, wounded and killed; let us bear the prophecy of the Gospel in our flesh, with our choices even before our words. That coherence between choices and words. And to this Church of Trieste, I would like to say: Go forward! Onward! Continue to be on the front line to spread the Gospel of hope, especially towards those arriving from the Balkan route and towards all those who, in body or spirit, need to be encouraged and comforted. Let us commit ourselves together: because by discovering that we are loved by the Father, we can all live as brothers and sisters. All brothers and sisters, with that smile of welcoming and of peace in the soul. Thank you.

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