



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

First Sunday of Advent, 1 December 2013

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In the First Reading we heard the Prophet Isaiah speak to us about a journey, and he says that in the latter days, at the end of the journey, the mountain of the Lord's Temple shall be established as the highest mountain. He says this to tell us that our life is a journey: we must go on this journey to arrive at the mountain of the Lord, to encounter Jesus. The most important thing that can happen to a person is to meet Jesus: this encounter with Jesus who loves us, who has saved us, who has given his life for us. Encounter Jesus. And we are journeying in order to meet Jesus.

We could ask ourselves this question: But when do I meet Jesus? Only at the end? No, no! We meet him every day. How? In prayer, when you pray, you meet Jesus. When you receive Communion, you meet Jesus in the Sacraments. When you bring your child to be baptized, you meet Jesus, you find Jesus. And today, you who are receiving Confirmation, you too will encounter Jesus; then you will meet him in Communion. "And then, Father, after Confirmation, goodbye?", because they say that Confirmation is called "the sacrament of goodbye". Is this true or not? After Confirmation you never go back to Church: true or false? ... so, so! However, after Confirmation even, our whole life is an encounter with Jesus: in prayer, when we go to Mass, and when we do good works, when we visit the sick, when we help the poor, when we think of others, when we are not selfish, when we are loving... in these things we always meet Jesus. And the journey of life is precisely this: journeying in order to meet Jesus.

And today, it is also a joy for me to come and visit you, because today in the Mass we shall all meet Jesus, and we will walk a portion of the journey together.

Always remember this: life is a journey. It is a path, a journey to meet Jesus. At the end, and forever. A journey in which we do not encounter Jesus is not a Christian journey. It is for the Christian to continually encounter Jesus, to watch him, to let himself be watched over by Jesus, because Jesus watches us with love; he loves us so much, he loves us so much and he is always watching over us. To encounter Jesus also means allowing oneself to be gazed upon by him. "But, Father, you know," one of you might say to me, "you know that this journey is horrible for me, I am such a sinner, I have committed many sins... how can I encounter Jesus?". And you know that the people whom Jesus most sought out were the greatest sinners; and they reproached him for this, and the people — those who believed themselves righteous — would say: this is no true prophet, look what lovely company he keeps! He was with sinners... And he said: I came for those in need of salvation, in need of healing. Jesus heals our sins. And along the way Jesus comes and forgives us — all of us sinners, we are all sinners — even when we make a mistake, when we commit a sin, when we sin. And this forgiveness that we receive in Confession is an encounter with Jesus. We always encounter Jesus.

So let us go forward in life like this, as the Prophet says, to the mountain, until the day when we shall attain the final encounter, when we will be able to look upon the beautiful gaze of Jesus, it is so beautiful. This is the Christian life: to walk, to go forward, united as brothers and sisters, loving one another. Encounter Jesus. Do you agree, the nine of you? Do you want to meet Jesus in your lives? Yes? This is important in the Christian life. Today, with the seal of the Holy Spirit, you will have greater strength for the journey, for the encounter with Jesus. Take courage, do not be afraid! Life is this journey. And the most beautiful gift is to meet Jesus. Go forward, be brave!

And now, let us proceed with the Sacrament of Confirmation.