



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Cemetery of Verano

Saturday, 1st November 2014

[Multimedia]

When in the First Reading we heard this voice of the Angel crying a loud to the four Angels who were given power to damage the earth and the sea, “Do not harm earth or sea or the trees” (Rev 7:3), this brought to mind a phrase that is not here but in everyone’s heart: “men are far more capable of doing this better than you”. We are capable of destroying the earth far better than the Angels. And this is exactly what we are doing, this is what we do: destroy creation, destroy lives, destroy cultures, destroy values, destroy hope. How greatly we need the Lord’s strength to seal us with his love and his power to stop this mad race of destruction! Destroying what He has given us, the most beautiful things that He has done for us, so that we may carry them forward, nurture them to bear fruit. When I looked at the pictures in the sacristy from 71 years ago [of the bombing of the Verano on 19 July 1943], I thought, “This was so grave, so painful. That is nothing in comparison to what is happening today”. Man takes control of everything, he believes he is God, he believes he is king. And wars, the wars that continue, they do not exactly help to sow the seed of life but to destroy. It is an industry of destruction. It is also a system, also of life, that when things cannot be fixed they are discarded: we discard children, we discard the old, we discard unemployed youth. This devastation has created the culture of waste. We discard people.... This is the first image that came to my mind as I listened to this Reading.

The second image, from the same Reading: “A great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues (7:9) The nations, the tribes.... Now it’s starting to get cold: those poor people, who have to flee for their lives, from their homes, from their people, from their villages, in the desert ... and they live in tents, they feel the cold, without medicine, hungry ... because the “man-god” has taken control of Creation, of all that good that God has done for us. But who pays for this feast? They do! The young, the poor, those people

who are discarded. And this is not ancient history: it is happening today. “But Father, it is far away ...”. It is here too, everywhere. It is happening today. I will continue: it seems that these people, these children who are hungry, sick, do not seem to count, it’s as if they were of a different species, as if they were not even human. And this multitude is before God and asks, “Salvation, please! Peace, please! Bread, please! Work, please! Children and grandparents, please! Young people with the dignity of being able to work, please!”. Among these are also those who are persecuted for their faith; there “then one of the elders addressed me, saying, ‘who are these, clothed in white, and when have they come?’ ... ‘These are they who have come out of great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb’” (7:13-14). And today, without exaggeration, today on the Feast of All Saints I would like us to think of all these, the unknown saints. Sinners like us, worse off than us, destroyed. Of this multitude of people who are in great distress: most of the world is in tribulation. Most of the world is in tribulation. And the Lord sanctifies this people, sinners like us, but He sanctifies these people in tribulation.

Finally, there is a third image: God. First was the devastation; second was the victims; the third is God. In the Second Reading we heard: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what shall be” (1 Jn 3:2), that is, hope. And this is the Lord’s blessing that we still have: hope. Hope that He will have mercy on His people, pity on those who are in great tribulation and compassion for the destroyers so that they will convert. And so, the holiness of the Church goes on: with these people, with us, that we will see God as He is. What should our attitude be if we want to be part of this multitude journeying to the Father, in this world of devastation, in this world of war, in this world of tribulation? Our attitude, as we heard in the Gospel, is the attitude of the Beatitudes. That path alone will lead us to the encounter with God. That path alone will save us from destruction, from destroying the earth, Creation, morality, history, family, everything. That path alone. But it too will bring us through bad things! It will bring us problems, persecution. But that path alone will take us forward. And so, these people who are suffering so much today because of the selfishness of destroyers, of our brothers destroyers, these people struggle onwards with the Beatitudes, with the hope of finding God, of coming face-to-face with the Lord in the hope of becoming saints, at the moment of our final encounter with Him.

May the Lord help us and give us the grace of this hope, but also the grace of courage to emerge from all this destruction, devastation, the relativism of life, the exclusion of others, exclusion of values, exclusion of all that the Lord has given us: the exclusion of peace. May he deliver us from this, and give us the grace to walk in the hope of finding ourselves one day face-to-face with Him. And this hope, brothers and sisters, does not disappoint!

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