

**HOMILY H. MASS OF  
THANKSGIVING FOR  
THE BEATIFICATION OF  
P. FRANCIS MARY  
OF THE CROSS JORDAN**

**Basilica of St. Peter**

**16 May 2021**

Eminences, Excellencies),  
Reverend Father Milton Zonta, Superior General, and Reverend Fathers  
of the Society of the Divine Saviour,  
Reverend Salvatorian Sisters,  
Brothers and sisters of the Salvatorian Family scattered all over the  
world,  
Brothers and sisters all,

We gather in St. Peter's Basilica, the day after the beatification of Fr. Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan, to give thanks to the Lord for this great gift that He has given to the Salvatorian Family and to the whole Church. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by the invitation of Psalm 102 - which we proclaimed as the Responsorial Psalm - "*Bless the Lord, my soul, all that is in me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord my soul, do not forget all his benefits*".

I am happy to join my voice and my heart to your voices and your hearts in this hymn of praise and exultation, recalling also my contacts with the Salvatorian Fathers of Venezuela: today's joy increases the joy they recently experienced, together with all the Venezuelan people, at the beatification of the "doctor of the poor" José Gregorio Hernández. To them, as to all those who follow us through the means of social communication, go my fraternal and cordial greetings! Let us give thanks to God who, in his immense goodness, never deprives us of the presence of the Saints!

Today, in the Vatican, we celebrate the Seventh Sunday of Easter (the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord was last Thursday) and - by happy coincidence - the liturgy makes us listen to a Gospel passage taken from the seventeenth chapter of John, a chapter that was particularly dear to the new Blessed.

Through constant and loving meditation on the Word of God, he inwardly felt a strong call, which later turned out to be the specific mission of the Salvatorians, namely to deepen and propagate the knowledge of Jesus as the true and only Saviour of the world. Now, the idea of founding an apostolic work, animated by this vocation, became clear in him, when, being in the Holy Land, he felt in his heart with particular intensity some initial words of the Lord's priestly prayer (found, precisely, in chapter 17 of John's Gospel). Inspiring his life and missionary work, verse 3 in particular impressed itself on Blessed Jordan's heart: "*This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent*".

Even if this concept is not explicitly taken up in the Gospel passage of this seventh Sunday of Easter, it nevertheless resonates in some way within it. For although Jesus' priestly prayer has a complex form, it is nonetheless marked by a unified breath in which all the various themes present in it come together and link up, illuminating each other.

I would therefore like to draw attention to two points in today's Gospel which help us to deepen our knowledge of Jesus: I am referring to the theme of the "word" and that of "unity". We could say that the first term ("word") indicates the source that feeds the knowledge of Jesus; while the second ("unity") indicates its fruit.

"Word". The Lord Jesus, addressing the Father, says: "*I have given them your word*" (v. 14); and again: "*Consecrate them in truth. Your word is truth*" (v. 17). The knowledge of Jesus is born and deepened by listening to the Word of God, which is in the Scriptures. One cannot become a disciple of Christ without loving and continuous contact with the Bible. A contact - of course - not dictated by a sort of "official duty", but by a familiarity that feels the need to renew itself every day, restoring itself to the warmth of a beloved presence. For this reason the disciple of Christ, even before announcing it to others, is one who lives by the Word, who with the passing of the years feels a growing need for it, who finds his greatest comfort in the pages of the Bible, as well as all that gives meaning to life.

As Blessed Francis Mary of the Cross wrote in his Spiritual Diary: "*Read Sacred Scriptures often, even better, never let the sacred reading leave your hand...*" (SD I/145).

The Fathers of the Church, who lived in uninterrupted meditation on Scripture, come to mind. For example, St John Chrysostom who

said: "*Even though the whole world is in turmoil, I have its Scripture in my hands, I read its Word. It is my security and my defence*". Beyond the inevitable turmoil of life and history, he felt that he was not alone: "*I read his Word. It is my security and my defence*". When he opened the code of the Bible, he felt he was embarking not only on a cognitive experience, but on a vital encounter with the Lord. And it is this experience that makes Jesus' disciples, in every age, spread the knowledge. Even before they do so with words, they do so through their daily lives, which are carried out to the rhythm of the Word.

The Word of God thus becomes a lamp for our steps: the first reading offers us an example of how it helps us to interpret events, giving concrete direction to our lives. Using two verses from the Psalms, which he meditated on for a long time, the Apostle Peter rereads the painful event of Judas' betrayal within a clear vision, without acrimony or pretence. The wound also finds a place. He says: "*It was necessary that what was foretold in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit should be fulfilled...*" (Acts 1:16): this is not fatalism; enlightened by two biblical verses, Peter has grasped the inner logic of those events. One might say that his re-reading of what had happened had the same warmth, the same serenity of gaze as the mysterious Wayfarer, who on the road to Emmaus, speaking in the light of the Scriptures, had set fire to the hearts of two disciples scandalised by the Cross (cf. Lk 24:13-35). Like the Master, Peter also rekindles hope: he brings a clear word to the Christian community. His speech does not bury an unresolved past, it does not leave a burden to be dragged behind. Man's sin is no longer a scandal, and human imperfection is no longer a problem, because God's plan does not ignore the limitations of our communities.

But thanks to a vision that knows how to reread the facts with a biblical eye, we become constructive. Peter then tells the believing community that it is necessary to restore the fullness: man's sin must not stop definitively, it is not something to be accepted supinely. And here is the election of Matthias. The community prays and shows great freedom. In this case "pulling the strings" means a cordial availability: the community places itself completely in the Lord's hands. After the confrontation of different opinions which led to the presentation of two candidates, the election is reserved to the Lord alone.

A community that advances in the knowledge of Jesus always gives Him primacy in the most important and delicate decisions.

Personalism is put aside, factions lose their strength, and different opinions gradually move towards a common goal.

This is how we reach the second point of our reflection, the theme of "unity" (being one) which flows naturally from the knowledge of Jesus: it is, as we said, the fruit. We are not, therefore, in the sphere of an extrinsic morality of "things to be done", but of the morality of fruits, to which - for example - Psalm 1 refers: "[The righteous] *is like a tree planted by the streams of water, bearing fruit in its season*" (v. 3).

Raising his eyes to heaven, Jesus prayed thus: "*Holy Father, keep them in your name, that which you have given me, that they may be one, as we are*". (Jn 17:11). The unity for which Jesus prays is that of the disciples among themselves; but the soul and foundation of this unity is to be sought above, that is, in unity with the Father and the Son. As the Father and the Son are one because the Father is reflected in the Son, so the disciples find in the reflection of this mirror in them, the true and ultimate foundation of their unity.

St John - as we heard in the second reading - also writes these words: "*If we love one another, God remains in us and his love is perfect in us*". (1 Jn 4:12). In our human and Christian love, in our love for one another, a great event takes place: the love that descends from God reaches its perfection, making itself visible once again (as in Christ), capable of creating among men that open fraternity, "which makes it possible to recognise, appreciate and love every person" (Fratelli tutti, n. 1).

The seed of Blessed Francis Jordan's apostolic vocation germinated from the study and assiduous meditation on the Word of God. The knowledge of Jesus that enables us to bear witness to him everywhere always begins and deepens in the wake of prayerful listening to the Word of God; if this does not happen, we may be able to communicate interesting and brilliant ideas to others, but certainly not the good fragrance of Christ.

In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, the Holy Father wrote: "*The best motivation to decide to communicate the Gospel is to contemplate it with love, to pause over its pages and read it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty amazes us, it fascinates us again and again*". (n. 264).

The knowledge of Christ, as the true and only saviour of the world, to be passed on to others demands a genuine biblical spirituality at all times. It is in this way that the spiritual man is formed, who is not the

one who aspires abstractly to "higher goods", but the one who sees and treats visible goods according to God, fostering around him a climate of true fraternity.

Those who tread the paths of holiness leave a lasting imprint on earth, always for the benefit of mankind. This was also the case for Blessed Francis Jordan, and today the presence of your Salvatorian Family bears witness to this, called, in turn, to make a beneficial impact wherever it is called to carry out its mission.

On this happy and solemn occasion, may our gathering here to pray together in Saint Peter's Basilica be a sign that confirms and encourages you in your generous service, carried out in close relationship with the universal Church, as Blessed Francis Jordan wished, leaving it written in his spiritual testament: "*Always be true and faithful children of Holy Mother Roman Church, teach what she teaches, believe what she believes, and detest what she detests*".

We also ask this of Mary, whom Francis Mary of the Cross Jordan loved and venerated with extraordinary piety as Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Saviour.

And so be it.