

Hedonisme bedreigt moraal

Homilie tijdens het pastorale bezoek aan het bisdom San Marino-Montefeltro



19 Juni 2011

Paus Benedictus XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Great is my joy at being able to break with you the bread of the Word of God and of the Eucharist and to address to you, dear people of San Marino, my most cordial greeting. My special thoughts go to the Captains Regent and to the other political and civil authorities present at this Eucharistic celebration. I greet with affection your pastor, Bishop Luigi Negri, whom I thank for his courteous words and, with him, I greet all the priests and faithful of the Diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro; I greet each one of you and express my heartfelt gratitude for the cordiality and affection with which you have welcomed me. I have come to share with you the joys and hopes, efforts and duties, ideals and aspirations of this diocesan community. I know that you are not without difficulties, problems and concerns here. I want to assure you all that I am close to you and remember you in prayer, and I encourage you to persevere in bearing witness to the human and Christian values that are so deeply rooted in the faith and history of this territory and its people, with its granitic faith of which the Bishop spoke.

Today we are celebrating the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, the Feast of God, of the centre of our faith: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When one thinks of the Trinity, one usually thinks of the aspect of the mystery: they are Three and they are One, one God in three Persons. Actually God in his greatness cannot be anything but a mystery for us, yet he revealed himself. We can know him in his Son and thus also know the Father and the Holy Spirit. Instead today's Liturgy draws our attention not so much to this mystery as to the reality of love that is contained in this first and supreme mystery of our faith. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one because God is love and love is an absolute life-giving force; the unity created by love is a unity greater than a purely physical unity. The Father gives everything to the Son; the Son receives everything from the Father with gratitude; and the Holy Spirit is the fruit of this mutual love of the Father and the Son. The texts of today's Mass speak of God and thus speak of love; they do not dwell so much on the three Persons, but rather on love which is the substance and, at the same time, the unity and trinity.

The first passage that we heard, taken from the Book of Exodus and which I dwelt on at a recent Wednesday catechesis, is surprising because the revelation of God's love comes after a very serious sin of the people. They had hardly concluded the oath of the Covenant which they took at Mount Sinai, and already the people were disloyal. In Moses' prolonged absence, the people said: "but where has this Moses gone, where is his God?" and they asked Aaron to create a god who would be visible, accessible and controllable, within the reach of man instead of this mysterious, invisible and distant God. Aaron complied and made a golden calf. Coming down from Sinai, Moses saw what had happened and broke the tablets of the Covenant which were already broken, shattered, two stones on which were written the "Ten Words", the concrete contents of the agreement with God. It looked as if all was lost, the friendship, immediately and from the outset, was broken. Yet, despite this most grievous sin of the people, through Moses' intercession God chose to forgive them and invited Moses to

climb the mountain once again to receive anew his law, the Ten Commandments, and to renew the pact. Moses then asked God to reveal himself, to allow him to see his face. However, God did not show his face, but rather revealed his being, full of goodness, with these words: “The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex 34:6). This is the Face of God. This self-definition of God expresses his merciful love: a love that triumphs over sin, covers it, eliminates it. We can always be sure of this goodness which does not abandon us. There can be no clearer revelation. We have a God who refuses to destroy sinners and wants to show his love in an even more profound and surprising way to sinners themselves, in order to always offer them the possibility of conversion and forgiveness.

The Gospel completes this revelation, we heard in the First Reading, because it indicates the point to which God has shown his mercy. John the Evangelist refers to these words of Jesus: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (3:16). In the world there is evil, there is selfishness, there is wickedness, and God could come to judge this world, to destroy evil, to punish those who work in darkness. Instead, he shows his love for the world and for men and women, despite their sin, and sends what is most precious to him: his Only-Begotten Son. Not only does God send him, but he gives him as a gift to the world. Jesus is the Son of God who was born for us, who lived for us, who healed the sick, forgave sins and welcomed everyone. Responding to the love that comes from the Father, the Son gave his own life for us: on the cross God’s merciful love reaches its highest expression. And it is on the cross that the Son of God obtains for us participation in eternal life that is communicated to us with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the mystery of the cross, the three divine Persons are present: the Father, who gives his Only-Begotten Son for the salvation of the world; the Son, who totally fulfils the Father’s plan; the Holy Spirit — poured out by Jesus at the moment of his death — who comes to make us participants in divine life, to transform our existence so that it may be enlivened by divine love.

Dear brothers and sisters, faith in the Trinitarian God has characterized this Church of San Marino-Montefeltro, too, throughout the course of its ancient and glorious history. The evangelization of this land is attributed to the holy stonemasons Marinus and Leo who are said to have come to Rimini from Dalmatia in the middle of the third century. Because of the holiness of their lives they were ordained, respectively a priest and a deacon, by Bishop Gaudentius who sent them inland, one to Monte Feretro, later known as San Leo, and the other to Monte Titano, later known as San Marino. Over and above the historical issues — which it is not our task to examine — it is interesting to state that Marinus and Leo brought into the context of this local reality, with the faith in God revealed in Jesus Christ, new perspectives and values, determining the birth of a culture and a civilization centred on the human person, the image of God and therefore the bearer of rights that precede all human legislation. The variety of ethnic groups — Romans, Goths and later Lombards — who came into contact with each other, sometimes in very conflictual situations, found in their common reference to faith a powerful factor for ethical, cultural, social and, in a certain way, political, edification. It was obvious to them that they could not consider a project of civilization complete until all the members of the people had become a living and well-structured Christian community built on faith in the Trinitarian God. Therefore one can rightly say that the wealth of this people, your wealth, dear Sammarinesi, has been and still is faith, and that this faith has created a truly unique civilization. Alongside your faith, we must also recall your absolute fidelity to the Bishop of Rome, whom this Church has always viewed with devotion and affection; likewise the attention shown to the great tradition of the Eastern Church and a deep devotion to the Virgin Mary.

You are justly proud of and grateful for all that the Holy Spirit has done in your Church throughout the centuries. However, you also know that the best way to appreciate an inheritance is to cultivate and enrich it. You are called, in fact, to develop this precious deposit in one of the most crucial moments in history. Today your mission is facing profound and rapid cultural, social, economic and political transformations that have

determined new directions and changed mentalities, customs and sensitivities. Here too, as elsewhere, there is no lack of difficulties and obstacles, due above all to hedonistic models that obscure minds and risk uprooting all morality. The temptation has crept in to believe that man's true wealth is not faith, but personal and social power, his intellect, his culture and his capacity to manipulate scientific, technological and social reality. Thus, in these lands too, people have begun to replace faith and Christian values with presumed riches which ultimately prove to be inconsistent and unable to sustain the great promise of the true, the good, the beautiful and the just that for centuries your ancestors have identified with the experience of faith. Nor should we forget the crisis into which many families have been plunged, aggravated by the widespread psychological and spiritual fragility of couples, as well as the struggle experienced by many educators in offering formative continuity to young people, who are conditioned by various types of instability, and in the first place that of their social role and work opportunities.

Dear friends, I am well acquainted with the committed involvement of every member of this particular Church in fostering the various aspects of Christian life. I urge all the faithful to be like leaven in the world, showing that in both Montefeltro and San Marino there are enterprising and consistent Christians present. May priests and religious live in an ever more cordial and active ecclesial communion, helping and listening to the diocesan pastor. May you too feel the urgent need for a resurgence in priestly vocations and to those of special consecration: I appeal to families and to young people to open their hearts to a prompt response to the Lord's call. No one ever regrets being generous to God! I urge you lay people to be actively involved in the community so that, in addition to your specific civic, political, social and cultural tasks, you may find the time and inclination for a life of faith, for pastoral life. Dear people of San Marino, stay firmly faithful to the heritage built over the centuries under the inspiration of your great patrons, Marinus and Leo. I invoke God's blessing on your journey, today and in the future, and I commend you all to "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14). Amen!