

Mass at Santa Marta - Mass without a Watch Pope Francis, 2/10/14 L'Osservatore Romano



You do not attend Mass looking at your watch, as if you were attending a performance and counting the minutes. You go to participate in the mystery of God. This was the theme of Pope Francis' homily during the Mass he celebrated on Monday morning, 10 February 2014, in the Chapel of Santa Marta. This "is not a tourist excursion. No! You came here, we are gathered here, to enter into the mystery. And this is the liturgy".

To explain the meaning of this encounter with the mystery, Pope Francis said that the Lord has spoken to his people not only with words. "The prophets", he said "recounted the Lord's words. The prophets proclaimed them. The great prophet Moses gave the commandments, which is the Word of God. Many other prophets too have told the people what the Lord wanted". However, "the Lord", he added, "also spoke in another way and in another form to his people: with theophanies. That is, when he comes close to his people and makes them feel, makes them feel his presence among them". The Holy Father referred to the First Reading (1 Kgs 8:1-7, 9-13) which refers to other prophets.

"The same thing happens in the Church", the Pope said. He does this through his Word which is recounted in the Gospels and in the Bible; he speaks through the catechesis, through homilies. He not only speaks to us but "He makes himself present", the Pope said, "in the midst of his people, in the midst of his Church. The Lord's presence is there. The Lord draws close to his people; he is present with his people and shares his time with them". This is what is taking place during this liturgical celebration, which is certainly "not a social affair", he said, "nor a gathering for the faithful to pray together. It is something else", because "in the Eucharistic liturgy God is present" and, if possible, he makes himself present in "the closest way". His presence, the Pope said, "is a real presence". "When I speak of liturgy", the Pope explained, "I am mainly referring to the Holy Mass. When we celebrate the Mass, we are not representing the Last Supper". The Mass "is not a representation; it is something else. It truly is the Last

Supper; is truly living again the redemptive passion and death of Our Lord. It is a visible manifestation: the Lord makes himself present on the altar to be offered to the Father for the salvation of the world".

Pope Francis then proposed, as he usually does, actions that are common among the faithful: "We hear and we say, 'I cannot now, I have to go to Mass, I have to go to listen to Mass'. But you do not listen to Mass, you participate in it. And you are participating in a visible manifestation, in the mystery of the Lord's presence among us". It is something that is different from all other forms of our devotion, he pointed out, using the example of the living nativity scenes "that are organized by parishes at Christmas time, or the Way of the Cross that we do during Holy Week". These, he explained, are representations; the Eucharist is "a real commemoration, a theophany. God draws near and is with us as we participate in the mystery of redemption".

The Pope then referred to another very common behavior among Christians: "How many times", he noted "do we count the minutes... 'I only have a half an hour, I have to go to Mass...". This "is not the right attitude that the liturgy asks of us: the liturgy is God's time and space, and we must put ourselves there in God's time, in God's space, without looking at our watches. The liturgy is precisely entering into the mystery of God; bringing ourselves to the mystery and being present in the mystery".

The Holy Father continued, looking at the faithful who were gathered there for the celebration, saying: "For example, I am sure that all of you here have come to enter into the mystery. But perhaps someone has said 'I have to go to Mass at Santa Marta, because it is one of Rome's touristic excursions, to go and visit the Pope at Santa Marta every morning... No! You came here, we are gathered here, to enter into the mystery. And this is the liturgy, God's time, God's space, the cloud of God that surrounds all of us".

Pope Francis went on to share some childhood memories: "I remember as a child, when we were preparing for our First Holy Communion, they made us sing 'O holy altar guarded by angels', and this made us realize that the altar is guarded by angels, and it gave us a sense of God's glory, of God's space, and of his time. Then, when we were practicing for our First Communion, we brought forward the hosts and said 'these are not the hosts which you will receive; they are not worth anything, because the consecration comes later'. It was good for us to distinguish one from the other: it is a memory of the commemoration". Therefore to celebrate the liturgy means "to be willing to enter into the mystery of God", in his space and his time.

Concluding his homily, the Pope invited those present to "ask the Lord today to give us all this sense of what is sacred, to understand that it is one thing to pray at home, to pray in Church, to pray the rosary, to pray many beautiful prayers, to do the Way of the Cross, and to read the Bible; but it is quite another to celebrate the Eucharist. In this celebration we enter into the mystery of God, on that path which we cannot control: he is the only one, he is the glory, he is in power. We ask for this grace, that the Lord may teach us to enter into the mystery of God".