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Holy Mass for the Vatican Gendarme Corps in the Grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens

This morning, at 9.30 am, at the Grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens, the Holy Father Francis presided at the Eucharistic celebration for the Vatican Gendarme Corps, on the occasion of the feast of the patron, Saint Michael the Archangel, which falls on September 29th.

Here is the text of the off-the-cuff homily that the Pope pronounced during the Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

In the first Reading, the prophet Isaiah urges us to seek the Lord, to convert: “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts” (55: 6-7). There is conversion. It tells us that this is the road: seeking the Lord. Changing life, converting. And this is true. But Jesus changes the logic and goes beyond this, with a logic that no-one was able to understand: it is the logic of God’s love. It is true, you must seek the Lord and do everything to find Him; but the important thing is that *it is He Who is searching for you*. He is seeking you. More important than seeking the Lord is realising that *He is looking for me*.

This Gospel passage, this parable, makes us understand this: *God comes out looking for us*. Five times this passage speaks to us of going out: God, the master of the house, goes out, to find day labourers for His vineyard. And the day is the life of a person, and God goes out in the morning, mid morning, midday, the afternoon, until the evening, at five. He never tires of going out. Our God never tires of searching for us, of showing us that He loves us. “But, Father, I am a sinner...”. And how many times do we find ourselves in the square, like these people [in the parable], who are there all day; and staying in the square means staying in the world, staying in sins, staying... “Come!” – “But it is late...” – “Come!”. For God it is never late. Never, never! This is His logic of conversion. He comes out of Himself to look for us, and He sent His Son to search for us. Our God always keeps an eye on us. Let us think of the prodigal son; the Gospel says that he saw him arrive from far away (cf. *Lk 15: 20*). But why does he see him? Because every day, and perhaps several times a day, he went up to the terrace to see if his son was coming, if his son was returning. This is the heart of our God: He always

awaits us. And when someone says, "I have found God", he is mistaken. God, in the end, has found you and left with you. It is He Who takes the first step. He never tires of going out, going out... He respects the freedom of every man but He is there, waiting for us to open the door a little.

And this is the great thing about the Lord: He is humble. Our God is humble. He makes Himself humble by waiting for us. He is always there, waiting.

We are all sinners and we are all in need of the encounter with the Lord; of an encounter that gives us the strength to go ahead, to be better, simply. But let us be careful. Because He passes, He comes, and it would be a sad thing for the Lord to pass and for us not to realise that He is passing. And let us ask today for the grace: "Lord, met me be sure that You are waiting. Yes, waiting for me, with my sins, with my faults, with my problems". We all have them, all of us. But He is there: He is there, always. The worst of the sins that exist, I think, is not to understand the He is always there waiting for me, not having confidence in that love; distrust in God's love.

May the Lord, on this day that is joyful for you, grant you this grace. And to me, to all of us. The grace of being sure that He is always at the door, waiting for it to open a little, to enter. And not being afraid: when the prodigal son encounter his father, the father comes down from the terrace and goes towards his son. That elderly man went in haste, and the Gospel tells us that when the son starts to speak: "Father, I have sinned...", he does not let him speak; he embraces him, he kisses him (cf. *Lk 15: 20-21*). This is what awaits us if we do open the door a little: the Father's embrace.
