

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 191201a

Sunday 01.12.2019

Eucharistic celebration for the Congolese Catholic community of Rome

At 9.50 this morning, First Sunday of Advent, the Holy Father Francis presided at the Altar of the Cathedra in the Vatican Basilica at the Eucharistic celebration for the Congolese Catholic community of Rome, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Congolese Catholic chaplaincy in Rome.

The following is the homily delivered by the Pope after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

Pope Francis: *Boboto* [peace]

Assembly: *Bondeko* [fraternity]

Pope Francis: *Bondeko* [fraternity]

Assembly: *Esengo* [joy]

In today's readings there often appears a verb, come, present three times in the first Reading, while the Gospel concludes by saying that "the Son of Man is coming" (Mt 24: 44). Jesus is coming: Advent reminds us of this certainty already from its name, since the word *Advent* means *coming*. The Lord is coming: this is the root of our hope, the certainty that among the tribulations of the world, God's consolation comes to us; a consolation that is made not of words, but of presence, of His presence that comes among us.

The Lord is coming; today, the first day of the liturgical year, this announcement marks our starting point: we know that, despite any favourable or contrary event, the Lord will not leave us alone. He came two thousand years ago and will come again at the end of time, but He comes also today in my life, in your life. Yes, this life of ours, with all its problems, anxieties and uncertainties, is visited by the Lord. Here is the source of our joy: the Lord has not grown tired and will never tire of us, He wishes to come, to visit us.

Today the verb "to come" is conjugated not only for God, but also for us. Indeed, in the first reading Isaiah prophesied: "Many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord'" (2: e). While

the evil on earth comes from the fact that each one follows his own path without the others, the prophet offers a wonderful vision: all come together on the mountain of the Lord. On the mountain was the temple, the house of God. Isaiah therefore sends us an invitation from God to His home. We are God's guests, and whoever is invited is expected, desired. "Come", God says, "because there is room in my house for everyone. Come, because in my heart there is not only one people, but every people".

Dear brothers and sisters, you have come from afar. You have left your homes, you have left affections and that which is dear to you. When you arrived here, you found welcome together with difficulties and unforeseen events. But with God you are always welcome guests. For Him we are never strangers, but anticipated children. And the Church is the house of God: here, therefore, always feel at home. Here we come *to walk together* towards the Lord and realize the words with which the prophecy of Isaiah ends: "*Come, let us walk* in the light of the Lord" (v. 5).

But the darkness of the world may be preferred to the light of the Lord. To the Lord who comes, and to His invitation to go to Him, one may answer "no, I am not going". Often it is not a direct "no", brazen, but an insidious one. It is the "no" about which Jesus warns us in the Gospel, exhorting us not to do as in the "days of Noah" (*Mt* 24: 37). What happened in Noah's days? It occurred that, while something new and upsetting was about to arrive, no-one cared, because everyone thought only of eating and drinking (cf. v. 38). In other words, they all reduced their lives to their own needs; they were content with a flat, horizontal life, without momentum. There was no waiting for anyone, only the claim of having something for oneself, to consume. *Waiting* for the Lord to come, not *claiming* to have something we can consume. This is consumerism.

Consumerism is a virus that afflicts faith at its root, because it makes you believe that life depends only on what you have, and so you forget about God Who comes to meet you and those around you. The Lord comes, but instead you follow the appetites that come to you; the brother knocks on your door, but he bothers you because he disturbs your plans – and this is the selfish attitude of consumerism. In the Gospel, when Jesus points out the dangers to the faith, He does not worry about powerful enemies, hostilities and persecutions. All this has been, is and will be, but it does not weaken the faith. The real danger, on the other hand, is what anaesthetises the heart: it is depending on consumption, letting oneself be weighed down and dispelling the heart from needs (cf. *Lk* 21: 34).

One lives for things, no longer knowing what for; one has many goods but no longer does good; houses are filled with things but emptied of children. This is the drama of today: houses full of things but empty of children, the demographic winter that we are suffering. Time is thrown away for pastimes, but there is no time for God or for others. And when you live for things, things are never enough, greed grows and others become obstacles in the race and so you end up feeling threatened and, always dissatisfied and angry, you raise the level of hatred. "I want more, I want more, I want more...". We see it today where consumerism reigns: how much violence, even verbal violence, how much anger and desire to seek an enemy at all costs! So, while the world is full of weapons that cause deaths, we do not realize that we continue to arm our hearts with anger.

Jesus wants to awaken us from all this. He does so with a verb: "Stay awake" (*Mt* 24: 42). "Be careful, watch out". Watching was the work of the sentinel, who watched while remaining awake while everyone else slept. To keep watch is not to give in to the sleep that envelops everyone. To be able to keep watch we need to have a certain hope: that the night will not always last, that dawn will soon come. It is the same for us: God is coming and His light will illuminate even the densest darkness. But it is up to us today to keep watch, to be vigilant: to overcome the temptation that the meaning of life is to accumulate – this is a temptation, the meaning of life is not to accumulate – it is up to us to unmask the deception that one is happy if one has so many things, to resist the dazzling lights of consumption, which will shine everywhere in this month, and to believe that prayer and charity are not lost time, but the greatest treasures.

When we open our hearts to the Lord and to our brothers and sisters, there comes the precious good that things can never give us and that Isaiah announces in the first Reading: *peace*. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (*Is* 2: 4). These are words that also make us think of your country. Today we pray for peace,

seriously threatened in the East of the country, especially in the territories of Beni and Minembwe, where conflicts are raging, fuelled even from outside, in the complicit silence of many. Conflicts fuelled by those who get rich by selling arms.

Today you remember a beautiful figure, Blessed Marie-Clémentine Anuarite Nengapeta, who was violently killed not before saying to her executioner, like Jesus: "I forgive you, because you do not know what you do!" Let us ask by her intercession that, in the name of God-Love and with the help of neighbouring populations, we renounce weapons, for a future in which we are no longer against each other, but with each other, and convert from an economy that uses war to an economy that serves peace.

Pope Francis: Who has ears for understanding

Assembly: Understands

Pope Francis: Who has the heart to consent

Assembly: Consents.
