

Pope warns of danger in online Masses

Excerpts from Pope Francis Homily on Friday April 17, 2020 in the Chapel of the Saint Martha House

Christians, in our journey of life, are in this state of walking, of progressing in *familiarity* with the Lord. (...) This familiarity with the Lord, of Christians, is always in *community*. Yes, it is intimate, it is personal, but within the community. A familiarity without community, a familiarity without bread, a familiarity without the Church, without the people, without the sacraments, is dangerous. It can become, let's say, a gnostic familiarity, a familiarity for me by myself, detached from the people of God. The apostle's familiarity with the Lord is always a community familiarity, it always takes place at the table, a sign of the community. It was always with the Sacrament, always with bread.

Even this Mass, we are all communicants, but not together, we are spiritually together. The people gathered are few. There is a large number of people: we are together, but not together. The Sacrament too: today you receive the Eucharist, but the people linked up (livestreamed Mass) with us, only spiritual communion. And this is not the Church: this is the Church in a difficult situation, which the Lord permits, but the ideal of the Church is always with the people and with the Sacraments. Always.

“Be careful not to make the Church virtual, viral; not to make the sacraments virtual, not to make the people of God virtual. The Church, the sacraments, the people of God are concrete. It is true that in this moment we must provide this familiarity with God in this way, but so as to come out of the tunnel, not to stay inside it. And this is the familiarity of the apostles: not gnostic, not virtual, not selfish, for each one of us, but a concrete familiarity, in the people. Familiarity with the Lord in everyday life, familiarity with the Lord in the sacraments, in the midst of the people of God. They went on a journey of maturation in their familiarity with the Lord. Let us learn how to do this as well. From the very first moment, they understood that familiarity was different to what they had imagined, and they arrived at this. They knew that there was the Lord, and they shared everything: the community, sacraments, the Lord, peace, feasting.

May the Lord teach us this intimacy with Him, this familiarity with Him but in the Church, with the sacraments, with the faithful holy people of God.