

PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH
"SAN GIUSEPPE ALL'AURELIO"

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Third Sunday of Advent, 14 December 2014

[Multimedia]

On this Sunday, the Church, looks forward to the joy of Christmas, and that is why it is called "Gaudete Sunday". In this season, a time of preparation for Christmas, we wear dark vestments, but today they are pink for the blossoming of Christmas joy. And the joy of Christmas is a special joy; but it is a joy that isn't just for the day of Christmas, it is for the entire life of a Christian. It is a serene and tranquil joy, a joy that forever accompanies the Christian. Even in difficult moments, in moments of difficulty, this joy becomes peace. When he is a true Christian, the Christian never loses his peace, even in suffering. That peace is a gift from the Lord. Christian joy is a gift from the Lord. "Ah, Father, we'll have a nice big luncheon, everybody will be happy". This is lovely, a nice luncheon is good; but this isn't the Christian joy we are talking about today. Christian joy is something else. It brings us together to celebrate, it's true. Thus the Church wants you to understand what Christian joy is.

The Apostle St Paul says to the Thessalonians: "Brothers, rejoice always". And how can I rejoice? He says: "pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances". We find our Christian joy in prayer, it comes from prayer and from giving thanks to God: "Thank you, Lord, for so many beautiful things!". But there are those who don't know how to give thanks to God; they are always looking for something to lament about. I knew a sister — far from here! — this sister was a good woman, she worked... but her life was about lamenting, complaining about so many things that happened.... You see, in the convent they called her "Sr Lamenta". But a Christian cannot live like this, always looking for something to complain about: "That person has something I don't have.... Did you see what just happened?...". This is not Christian! And it is harmful to find Christians with embittered faces, with a face wry with bitterness, not in peace. Never, never was there a saint with a mournful face, never! Saints always have joy in their faces. Or at least, amid suffering, a face of peace. The greatest suffering, the martyrdom of Jesus: He always had peace in his face and was concerned about others: his mother, John, the thief... his concern was for others.

To have this Christian joy, first, is prayer; second, to give thanks. And what do I do to give thanks? Reflect on your life and think of the many good things that life has given you: so many. "But, Father, it's true, but I have also received so many bad things!" — "Yes, it's true, it happens to us all. But think of the good things" — "I have a Christian family, Christian parents, thank God I have a job, my family is not suffering of hunger, we are all healthy...". I don't know, so many things, and give thanks to the Lord for this. This accustoms us to joy. Pray, give thanks....

And then, the First Reading suggests another dimension that will help us to have joy. It is to bring others the Good News: We are Christians. "Christian" comes from "Christ", and "Christ" means "anointed". And we too are "anointed". The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord

consecrated me with unction. We are anointed: Christians mean "anointed ones". And why are we anointed? To do what? "He sent me to bring the good news" to whom? "To the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (cf. Is 61:1-2). This is the vocation of Christ and the vocation of Christians as well. To go to others, to those in need, whether their needs be material or spiritual.... Many people who suffer anxiety because of family problems.... To bring peace there, to bring the unction of Jesus, the oil of Jesus which does so much good and consoles souls.

Therefore, in order to have this joy in preparation for Christmas, first, pray: "Lord, let me live this Christmas with true joy". Not with the joy of consumerism that leads me to 24 December with anxiety, because "ah, I'm missing this, I'm missing that...". No, this is not the joy of God. Prayer. Second: give thanks to the Lord for the good things he has given us. Third, think of how we can go to others, to those in difficulty and with problems — let us think of the sick, of so many problems — to bring a little unction, peace, joy. This is the joy of the Christian. Agreed? We have 15 days left, a little less: 13 days. In these days, let us pray. But do not forget: let us pray, asking for the joy of Christmas. Let us give thanks to God for the good things that he has given us, above all the faith. This is a wonderful grace. Third, let us think where I can go to bring a little relief, a little peace, to those who suffer. Pray, give thanks and help others. And like this we will arrive at the Birth of the Anointed One, the Christ, as ones anointed in grace, prayer and acts of grace and help towards others.

May Our Lady accompany us on this path towards Christmas. And let there be joy, joy!