



The Holy See

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

JUBILEE OF CRAFTSMEN

Sunday, 19 March 2000

1. God, “who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?” (*Rom 8:32*).

It is the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Romans who asks this question, in which the central theme of today's liturgy stands out clearly: *the mystery of God's fatherhood*. And in the Gospel passage it is the eternal Father who presents himself to us when he admonishes us from the luminous cloud that envelops Jesus and the Apostles on the mount of the Transfiguration: “*This is my beloved Son; listen to him*” (*Mk 9:7*). Peter, James and John realize — later they will understand better — that God has spoken to them, revealing himself and the mystery of his inmost reality.

After the Resurrection, they and the other Apostles will proclaim the astonishing message to the world: *in his incarnate Son, God has reached out to every man as the merciful Father*. In him every human being is held in the Father's strong yet tender embrace.

2. This message is also addressed to you, dear craftsmen, who have come to Rome from every part of the world to celebrate your Jubilee. In reflecting anew on this consoling reality — *God is Father* — you are supported by your heavenly patron, St Joseph, a craftsman like you, a just man and the faithful guardian of the Holy Family.

You look to him as an example of diligence and honesty in daily work. In him, especially, you seek a model of unreserved faith and constant obedience to the heavenly Father's will. Next to St

Joseph you find the Son of God himself who, under his guidance, learns the carpenter's trade and plies it until he is 30 years old, the very epitome of "the Gospel of work".

In his earthly life Joseph thus becomes a humble and diligent reflection of that divine fatherhood which would be revealed to the Apostles on the mount of the Transfiguration. The liturgy for this Second Sunday of Lent invites us to reflect on this mystery with greater attention. It is the heavenly Father himself who in a sense takes us by the hand to guide us in this meditation.

Christ is the beloved Son of the Father! It is especially this word "beloved" which, by answering our questions, lifts the veil to a certain extent from the mystery of the divine fatherhood. Indeed, it enables us to understand the Father's infinite love for the Son and, at the same time, reveals to us his "passion" for man, for whose salvation he does not hesitate to give this beloved Son. Henceforth, every human being knows that in Jesus, the incarnate Word, he is the object of the heavenly Father's boundless love.

3. The first reading from the Book of Genesis makes a further contribution to our knowledge of this mystery. *God asks Abraham for the sacrifice of his son:* "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (*Gn 22:2*). With a broken heart, Abraham prepares to carry out God's command. But as he raises the knife to sacrifice his son, the Lord stops him and through an angel tells him: "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (*Gn 22:12*).

Here, through the events of a human fatherhood put to a dramatic test, another fatherhood is revealed, the one based on faith. It is precisely through the extraordinary witness of faith offered on that occasion that Abraham receives the promise of numerous descendants: "By your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice" (*Gn 22:18*). Through his unconditional trust in God's Word, Abraham becomes the father of all believers.

4. God the Father "did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all" (*Rom 8:32*). By his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham foreshadows *Christ's sacrifice* for the world's salvation. The actual carrying out of the sacrifice, which Abraham is spared, will take place with Jesus Christ. It is he who tells the Apostles this: coming down from the mount of the Transfiguration, he orders them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. The Evangelist adds: "They kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant" (*Mk 9:10*).

The disciples realized that Jesus is the Messiah and that salvation is achieved in him. But they do not understand why he speaks of suffering and death: they do not accept that the love of God *can be hidden behind the Cross*. Yet, where men see only death, God will manifest his glory by raising

his Son; where men speak words of condemnation, God will work his mystery of salvation and love for the human race.

This is the lesson that every Christian generation must learn anew. Every generation: even our own! This is the reason for our journey of conversion in this special time of grace. The Jubilee enlightens all human life and experience. Even the efforts and the burden of daily work receive a new light of hope from faith in the dead and risen Christ. They are revealed as significant elements of the saving plan that the heavenly Father is accomplishing through the Cross of his Son.

5. Strong in this knowledge, dear craftsmen, you can give new strength and practical expression to those values which have always marked your activity: quality, a spirit of initiative, the promotion of artistic skills, freedom and cooperation, the correct relationship between technology and the environment, devotion to family, good neighbourly relations. In the past, the culture of crafts has created great occasions for bringing people together and has bequeathed wonderful syntheses of culture and faith to later generations.

The mystery of the life at Nazareth, of which St Joseph, patron of the Church and your protector, was the faithful guardian and wise witness, is the icon of this wonderful synthesis of faith life and human work, of personal growth and commitment to solidarity.

Dear craftsmen, you have come here today to celebrate your Jubilee. May the light of the Gospel shine ever more brightly on your daily work. The Jubilee gives you an opportunity to meet Jesus, Joseph and Mary, to enter their home and the humble workshop of Nazareth. At the extraordinary school of the Holy Family we learn the essential realities of life and acquire a deeper understanding of what it means to follow Christ. Nazareth teaches us to overcome the apparent tension between the active and contemplative life; it invites us to grow in love of the divine truth that radiates from Christ's humanity and to exercise courageously the demanding service of safeguarding Christ who is present in every human person (cf. *Redemptoris custos*, n. 27).

6. Let us make a spiritual pilgrimage, then, across the threshold of the house of Nazareth, the poor dwelling which I will have the joy of visiting, God willing, next week during my Jubilee pilgrimage in the Holy Land. Let us pause to contemplate Mary, who witnessed the fulfilment of the Lord's promise "to Abraham and to his posterity for ever" (Lk 1:54-55).

With Joseph, her chaste husband, may she help you, dear craftsmen, to listen constantly to God, combining prayer and work. May they support you in your jubilee resolutions of renewed Christian fidelity and ensure that God's creative and provident work is in some way continued through your hands.

May the Holy Family, a place of understanding and love, help you to make acts of solidarity, peace

and forgiveness. In this way you will be heralds of the infinite love of God the Father, who is rich in mercy and goodness to all. Amen.

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