



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAEHOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

"The process of temptation"

Saturday, 4 April 2020

[\[Multimedia\]](#)

Introduction

In these turbulent, difficult and painful times, people often have the possibility of doing one thing or another, many of them good. But there is also the possibility some might get the idea of doing something not so good, to take advantage of the situation, to profit personally from it. We pray today that the Lord might grant an upright and transparent conscience to everyone, that they might allow God to look on them without shame.

Homily

The doctors of the law, even the high priests, had been restless for a while because strange things were happening in the Land. First there was this John, but in the end they left him alone because he was a prophet, he baptised there and the people went there, but there were no other consequences. Then came this Jesus, whom John had pointed out. He began to perform signs and miracles, but above all to speak to the people and they understood, and followed Him, but Jesus did not always observe the law and this is what made them very restless. "This is a revolutionary, a peaceful revolutionary... He attracts people to himself, the people follow him..." (see *Jn* 11:47-48). And these ideas made them talk to each other: "But look, I don't like this... or that...", and this was the topic of their conversations and also of their concern. Then some of them went to Him in order to test Him, and the Lord always had a clear response which had not come to the minds of the doctors of the law. Let us think of that woman who had been married seven times,

she had been widowed seven times: “But in heaven which of the seven of her husbands will be her husband?” (see *Lk* 20:33) He responded clearly and they went away a little embarrassed because of Jesus’ wisdom, and other times they went away humiliated, as in the case of the woman caught in adultery who they wanted to stone and Jesus said in the end: “The one among you who has not sinned let him cast the first stone” (see *Jn* 8:7) and the Gospel says that they went away, beginning with the elders, humiliated in that moment. This prompted these conversations among them: “We have to do something, this is not right...”. Then they sent soldiers to arrest Him and they returned saying: “We could not bring Him in because no one ever spoke like this man” ... “You too have let yourselves be deceived” (see *Jn* 7:45-49): angry because not even the soldiers could arrest Him. And then, after the resurrection of Lazarus - the piece that we have heard today - many Jews went there to see the sisters and Lazarus, but some to see what had happened in order to report, and some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done (see *Jn* 11:45). Others believed in Him. And those people who went there, the usual gossips, who spend their lives spreading gossip... they went to tell them. At this moment, this group that had formed among the doctors of the law had a formal meeting: “He is so dangerous, we have to make a decision. What should we do? This man performs many signs” – they recognise the miracles – “If we let Him continue, everyone will believe in Him. It is dangerous. They will follow Him and they will separate themselves from us” – the people were not attached to them – “The Romans will come and destroy our temple and our nation” (see *Jn* 11:48). There is some truth here, but not the whole truth. It was a justification. Because that they had found equilibrium with their occupiers, but they hated the Roman occupiers, but politically they had found an equilibrium. Thus they spoke among themselves. One of them, Caiaphas - the most radical - the high priest said: “You fail to see that it is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole nation to be destroyed” (*Jn* 11:50). This was the high priest and he made the proposal: “Let us get rid of Him”.

And John says: “He did not speak in his own person, it was as high priest that he made this prophecy that Jesus was to die for the nation... From that day they were determined to kill him.” (cf. *Jn* 11:51-53) It was a process, a process that began with minor restlessness during John the Baptist’s days and finished here with the doctors of the law and the high priests. A process that continually got stronger, a process in which the decisions that had to be made became increasingly sure, but no one said clearly: “This man needs to be gotten rid of.” The way that the doctors of the law proceed is precisely a model of how temptation works in us, because it was truly the devil who was behind this, who wanted to destroy Jesus, and temptation in us truly works like this: it begins with something small, a desire, an idea, it grows, it infects others and in the end it justifies itself. These are the three steps of the temptation of the devil in us and the three steps of the temptation that the devil worked in the person of the doctor of the law. It began with something small, but it grew and grew until it began to infect others, it became real, and in the end it justified itself: “it is necessary that one die for the people” (see *Jn* 11:50), the total justification. And everyone went home calmly. They said: “This is the decision we had to make”. And all of us, when we are conquered by temptation, we end up feeling calm, because we have found a justification

for this sin, for this sinful attitude, for this life which is against God's law. We should have the custom of identifying this process within us. That process that changes our hearts from good to bad, that leads us to a downward slope. A thing that grows, grows, grows slowly, then it infects others, in the end it justifies itself. It is rare that temptations come all at once, the devil is astute. And he knows how to take this path, the same one he took to arrive at Jesus' condemnation. When we recognise that we are in sin or that we have fallen, yes, we must go and ask the Lord for forgiveness, this is the first step that we must take. But then we must say: "How did I fall into this? How did this process begin in my soul? How did it grow? Whom have I infected? And in the end how did I justify myself in order to fall?" The life of Jesus is always an example for us. The things that happened to Jesus are things that also will happen to us: the temptations, the justifications, good people around us — and perhaps we do not listen to them — and bad people in the moment of temptation. We surround ourselves with them in order to allow the temptation to get stronger. But let us never forget: always, behind a sin, behind a fall, there is a temptation that began small, that grew, that infected us, and in the end we find a justification to fall. May the Holy Spirit enlighten us in this interior awareness.

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive communion can now make a spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.