

HOLY MASS ON THE LITURGICAL MEMORIAL OF THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Church of the Gesù, Rome

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Video

St Paul tells us, as we heard: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:5-9). We, Jesuits, want to be designated by the name of Jesus, to serve under the banner of the Cross, and this means: having the same mind as Christ. It means thinking like him, loving like him, seeing like him, walking like him. It means doing what he did and with his same sentiments, with the sentiments of his Heart.

The heart of Christ is the heart of a God who, out of love, "emptied" himself. Each one of us, as Jesuits, who follow Jesus should be ready to empty himself. We are called to this humility: to be "emptied" beings. To be men who are not centred on themselves because the centre of the Society is Christ and his Church. And God is the *Deus semper maior*, the God who always surprises us. And if the God of surprises is not at the centre, the Society becomes disorientated. Because of this, to be a Jesuit means to be a person of incomplete thought, of open thought: because he thinks always looking to the horizon which is the ever greater glory of God, who ceaselessly surprises us. And this is the restlessness of our inner abyss. This holy and beautiful restlessness!

However, because we are sinners, we can ask ourselves if our heart has preserved the restlessness of the search or if instead it has atrophied; if our heart is always in tension: a heart that does not rest, that does not close in on itself but beats to the rhythm of a journey undertaken together with all the people faithful to God. We need to seek God in order to find him, and find him in order to seek him again and always. Only this restlessness gives peace to the heart of a Jesuit, a restlessness that is also apostolic, but which must not let us grow tired of proclaiming the *kerygma*, of evangelizing with courage. It is the restlessness that prepares us to receive the gift of apostolic fruitfulness. Without restlessness we are sterile.

It was this restlessness that Peter Faber had, a man of great aspirations, another Daniel. Faber was a “modest, sensitive man with a profound inner life. He was endowed with the gift of making friends with people from every walk of life” (Benedict XVI, Address to the Jesuits, 22 April 2006). Yet his was also a restless, unsettled, spirit that was never satisfied. Under the guidance of St Ignatius he learned to unite his restless but also sweet — I would say exquisite — sensibility, with the ability to make decisions. He was a man with great aspirations; he was aware of his desires, he acknowledged them. Indeed for Faber, it is precisely when difficult things are proposed that the true spirit is revealed which moves one to action (cf. *Memoriale*, 301). An authentic faith always involves a profound desire to change the world. Here is the question we must ask ourselves: do we also have great vision and impetus? Are we also daring? Do our dreams fly high? Does zeal consume us (cf. Ps 68:10)? Or are we mediocre and satisfied with our “made in the lab” apostolic programmes? Let us always remember: the Church’s strength does not reside in herself and in her organizational abilities, but it rests hidden in the deep waters of God. And these waters stir up our aspirations and desires expanding the heart. It is as St Augustine says: pray to desire and aspire to expand the heart. Faber could discern God’s voice in his desires. One goes nowhere without desire and that is why we need to offer our own desires to the Lord. The *Constitutions* say that: “we help our neighbour by the desires we present to the Lord our God” (*Constitutions*, 638).

Faber had the true and deep desire “to be expanded in God”: he was completely centred in God, and because of this he could go, in a spirit of obedience, often on foot, throughout Europe and with charm dialogue with everyone and proclaim the Gospel. The thought comes to mind of the temptation, which perhaps we might have and which so many have of condemnation, of connecting the proclamation of the Gospel with inquisitorial blows. No, the Gospel is proclaimed with gentleness, with fraternity, with love. His familiarity with God led him to understand that interior experience and apostolic life always go together. He writes in his *Memoriale* that the heart’s first movement should be that of “desiring what is essential and primordial, that is, the first place be left to the perfect intention of finding our Lord God” (*Memoriale*, 63). Faber experiences the desire to “allow Christ to occupy the centre of his heart” (*Memoriale*, 68). It is only possible to go to the limits of the world if we are centred in God! And Faber travelled without pause to the geographic frontiers, so much so that it was said of him: “it seems he was born not to stay put anywhere” (mi, *Epistolae* i, 362). Faber was consumed by the intense desire to communicate the Lord. If we do not have his same desire, then we need to pause in prayer, and, with silent fervour, ask the Lord, through the intercession of our brother Peter, to return and attract us: that fascination with the Lord that led Peter to such apostolic “folly”.

We are men in tension, we are also contradictory and inconsistent men, sinners, all of us. But we are men who want to journey under Jesus' gaze. We are small, we are sinners, but we want to fight under the banner of the Cross in the Society designated by the name of Jesus. We who are selfish want nonetheless to live life aspiring to great deeds. Let us renew then our oblation to the Eternal Lord of the universe so that by the help of his glorious Mother we may will, desire and live the mind of Christ who emptied himself. As St Peter Faber wrote, "let us never seek in this life to be tied to any name but that of Jesus" (*Memoriale*, 205). And let us pray to Our Lady that we may be emissaries with her Son.

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