



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO LITHUANIA, LATVIA AND ESTONIA
[22-25 SEPTEMBER 2018]

HOLY MASS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS

Freedom Square, Tallin (Estonia)
Tuesday, 25 September 2018

[Multimedia]

In listening to the first reading, the account of the coming of the Jewish people – now freed from slavery in Egypt – to Mount Sinai (*Ex 19:1*), it is impossible not to think of you as a people. It is impossible not to think about the entire nation of Estonia and all the Baltic States! How can we not think of your part in the Singing Revolution, or in the human chain of two million people extending from here to Vilnius? You know what it is to struggle for freedom; you can identify with that people. We would do well, then, to listen to what God says to Moses, in order to discern what he is saying to us as a people.

The people who came to Mount Sinai had already seen the love of their God expressed in miracles and powerful signs. They were a people who had entered into a covenant of love, because God loved them first and made his love known to them. They did not have to do so; God wants our love to be free. When we say that we are Christians, when we embrace a way of life, we do so without pressure, without it being a kind of trade-off, in which we remain faithful if God keeps his promise. First, we know that God's promise does not take anything away from us; rather, it leads to the fulfilment of all our human aspirations. Some people think they are free when they live without God or keep him at arm's length. They do not realize that, in doing so, they pass through this life as orphans, without a home to return to. "They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere" (*[Evangelii Gaudium](#), 170*).

Like the people who came forth from Egypt, we have to *listen and seek*. These days, we may think that the strength of a people is measured by other means. Some people speak in a loud voice, full of self-assurance – with no doubts or hesitation. Others shout and hurl threats about using weapons, deploying troops and implementing strategies... That way they appear to be stronger. But this is not about “seeking” the will of God, but about gaining power so as to prevail over others. Underlying this attitude is a rejection of ethics and, as such, a rejection of God. For ethics leads us to a God who calls for a free and committed response to others and to the world around us, a response outside the categories of the marketplace (cf. [ibid., 57](#)). You did not gain your freedom in order to end up as slaves of consumerism, individualism or the thirst for power or domination.

God knows our needs, those we often hide behind our desire for possessions. He also knows the insecurities we try to overcome through power. Jesus, in the Gospel we just heard, encourages us to overcome that thirst within our hearts by coming to him. He is the one who can give us fulfilment by the abundance of his living water, his purity, his irresistible power. Faith means realizing that he is alive and that he loves us; he does not abandon us and, as a result, he is capable of intervening mysteriously in our history. He brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity ([ibid., 278](#)).

In the desert, the people of Israel were tempted to seek other gods, to worship the golden calf, to trust in their own strength. But God always called them back to him, and they remembered what they heard and saw on the mountain. Like that people, we know we are a *chosen* people, a *priestly* people, a *holy* people (cf. *Ex* 19:6; *1 Pet* 2:9). It is the Spirit who reminds us of all these things (cf. *Jn* 14:26).

Being *chosen* does not mean being exclusive or sectarian. We are the small portion of yeast that must make the dough rise; we do not hide or withdraw, or consider ourselves better or purer. The eagle shelters her fledglings, carries them to the heights until they can fend for themselves. Then she has to force them to leave those comfort zones. She shakes their nest, pushes them into the open air where they have to spread their wings, and she flies beneath them to protect them, to keep them from hurting themselves. This is how God is with his chosen people; he wants them to “go forth” and fly boldly, knowing that they are always protected by him alone. We have to leave our fears behind and go forth from our safe places, because today most Estonians do not identify themselves as believers.

So go out as *priests*, for that is what we are by baptism. Go out to build relationships with God, to facilitate them, to encourage a loving encounter with the one who cries out: “Come to me!” (*Mt* 11:28). We need to be seen as close to others, capable of contemplation, compassion and willingness to spend time with others, as often as necessary. This is the “art of accompaniment”. It is carried out with the healing rhythm of “closeness”, with a respectful and compassionate gaze capable of healing, liberating and encouraging growth in the Christian life ([Evangelii Gaudium](#),

169).

Bear witness as a *holy* people. We may be tempted to think that holiness is only for a few. However, “we are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 14). But, just as the water in the desert was not a personal but a common good, just as the manna could not be stored because it spoiled, so a lived holiness expands, overflows and makes fruitful all that it touches. Today we choose to be saints by shoring up the outskirts and fringes of our society, wherever our brothers and sisters lie prostrate and experience rejection. We can’t think somebody else will be the one to stop and help, nor that these are problems to be resolved by institutions. It is up to us to fix our gaze on those brother and sister and to offer a helping hand, because they bear the image of God, they are our brothers and sisters, redeemed by Jesus Christ. This is what it is to be a Christian; this is holiness lived on a day-to-day basis (cf. *ibid.*, 98).

In your history you have shown your pride in being Estonians. You sing it saying: “I am Estonian, I will always be Estonian, it is good to be Estonian, we are Estonians”. How good it is to feel part of a people; how good it is to be independent and free. May we go to the holy mountain, to the mountain of Moses, to the mountain of Jesus. May we ask him - as the motto of this Visit says - to awaken our hearts and to grant us the gift of the Spirit. In this way, at every moment of history, may we discern how to be free, how to embrace goodness and feel chosen, and how to let God increase, here in Estonia and in the whole world, his holy nation, his priestly people.

End of Mass Greeting of His Holiness Pope Francis

Dear brothers and sisters,

Before the final blessing, and the conclusion of this *Apostolic Journey in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia*, I wish to extend my gratitude to all of you, starting with the Apostolic Administrator of Estonia. Thank you for your welcome, expressed by a small flock with a large heart! I renew my appreciation to Her Excellency the President of the Republic and to all the other authorities of the country. A special thought goes to all our Christian brothers and sisters, particularly the Lutherans, who here in Estonia and in Latvia have offered hospitality at the ecumenical meetings. May the Lord continue to guide us along the path of communion. I thank you all!

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