



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

“The grace of shame”

Monday, 9 March 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

In these days, I will offer the Mass for those who are sick as a result of this coronavirus epidemic, for the doctors, the nurses, the volunteers who help so much, the relatives, the elderly in rest homes, detainees who are locked up. Let us pray together, this week, this powerful prayer to the Lord: “Redeem me, O Lord, and have mercy on me. My foot stands on level ground” [Entrance Antiphon, *Ps 25*].

Homily

The first Reading, from the Prophet Daniel (9:4-10), is a confession of sins. The people recognise that they have sinned. They acknowledge that the Lord has been faithful with us, but that “we have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly, and have betrayed your commandments and your ordinances. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, our ancestors, and to all the people of the land” (vv. 5-6). There is a *confession* of sins, a recognition that we have sinned.

And when we prepare to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation, we must do what is called an

“examination of conscience” and see what I have done before God: I have sinned. Recognise the sin. But this acknowledgment of sin cannot merely be an intellectual list of sins, saying “I have sinned”, then I will say it to the priest and the priest will forgive me. This is not necessary, it is not the right thing to do. This would be like making a list of the things I need to do, or need to have, or that I have done badly, but which stays in the head. A *true* confession of sins must remain in the heart. To go to confession is not just saying this list to the priest, “I did this, this, this and this...”, and then I go away, I am forgiven. No, it is not this. It takes a step, a further step, which is the confession of our miseries, but from the heart; that is, that the list I have made of bad things comes down to the heart.

And this is what Daniel, the Prophet, does. “Justice, Lord, is yours; ours the look of shame” (cf. v. 7). When I recognise that I have sinned, that I have not prayed well, and I feel this in my heart, a sense of shame comes to us: “I am ashamed of having done this. I ask your pardon with shame”. And shame for our sins is a grace; we must ask for it: “Lord, may I be ashamed”. A person who has lost his shame loses his moral judgment, and loses respect for others. He is shameless. The same happens with God: “Shame belongs to us, righteousness belongs to you”. Shame belongs to us. “Ours the look of shame we wear today”, he. [Daniel] continues, “to our kings, our princes, our ancestors,, because we have sinned against you” (v. 8). “To the Lord our God” first he had said “justice”, now he says mercy” (v. 9). When we have not only the recollection, the memory of the sins we have committed, but also the sense of shame, this touches God’s heart and He responds with mercy. The journey that leads towards God’s mercy consists of shame for the bad, for the evil things we have done. In this way, when I go to confession, I will say not only the list of sins, but also the feelings of confusion, of shame for having done this to a God so good, so merciful, so just.

Let us ask today for the grace of shame: to be ashamed of our sins. May the Lord grant this grace to all of us.