



HOMILY AT THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION ON TUESDAY, JULY 17¹ DAY 2: “LIBERTY”

Mons. Ricardo Cardenal Blázquez Pérez

Archbishop of Valladolid, President of the Spanish Episcopal Conference

I cordially greet the spiritual counsellors and the teams couples. I would like to add to this greeting my gratitude for the testimony of your faith and for your pastoral activity.

The prophet Isaiah, sent by God, goes to meet King Ahaz, who is at a dangerous crossroads. He has refused to join the kings of Damascus and Ephraim to go against Assyria, who are now heading to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, to retaliate. Ahaz trembles like a reed agitated by the wind and the turmoil spreads like a storm among the people. In addition to fear of the threat, the king is stalked by the temptation to ally with Assyria to be more certain. What message does the prophet transmit to the king and to all the people so that they do not lose heart in the face of imminent danger? How to keep serene in that situation? On whom can they rely?

This is the word that the prophet transmits on behalf of the Lord:

"Have firm faith or you will fail to stand firm!" (Isaiah: 7 verse 9). In other situations Israel will hear the same exhortation. "I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious cornerstone well founded; he who has faith will not waver" (Isaiah: 28 verse 16). "By In calm detachment lies your safety, your strength in quiet trust" (Isaiah: 30 verse 15). God's faithfulness to His covenant with his people remains forever.

The Lord can also raise His people from situations of prostration and can open the door to a new beginning through the "remnant" of His people rescued in fulfilment of His promise. God remembers His Covenant in the luminous and dark events of His people's history.

The Lord has also established a covenant of love with His Church and with each one of us. Even if we go through dark stretches on the road where the foundations of personal and family life, of the Church and of society seem to be shaken, let us not lose our calm. Let us listen again to the Word of God: "If you do not believe, you will not have stability." "Have firm faith or you will fail to stand firm!" "If you do not affirm in Me, you will not be firm." They are diverse variants to express the intimate connection of faith in God with the security that man receives by relying on Him. The expression ""Have firm faith or you will fail to stand firm!", combines some words in Hebrew that are two forms of the same verb *amán*: "believe" (ta 'aminu) and "be firm, be established" (te' amenu). The underlying metaphor means both the solidity of faith in God as well as the serenity that it transmits to us. God is reliable and therefore we can build our existence on His Word. The word "amen" has the same root as the word

¹ The readings, which have been proclaimed in the Eucharist, Isaiah 7, 1-9 and Matt 11, 20-24, correspond to 17th July.



“faith”. Amen is a divine name that emphasizes the faithfulness of God (cf Isaiah 65 verse 16), and it will be applied to Jesus Christ: "Here is the message of the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev 3, verse 14). Amen, which means firm, solid and trustworthy, is a name of our Lord; supported by His fidelity we can also say "Amen". " However many the promises of God made, the Yes to them all is in Him; that is why it is through Him that we answer Amen to the praise of God" (2 Cor 1 verse 20).

Dear brothers and sisters, God has assumed your marriage in Jesus Christ through His covenant of fidelity with His people that is the Church. The Lord who gave Himself in an irrevocable pact of love will also sustain you in crises (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 48). Faith in God is an inexhaustible source of fidelity. Relying on our strength we hesitate, but grounded in the Word of God, our house, our home, our family stand firm. "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like the wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew, and buffeted house. But it did not fall; it was founded on rock "(Matt 7, 24-25). Faith in God is the root and the foundation of our serenity; God's faithfulness guarantees our fragile perseverance. We live in a culture marked by the provisional. We retreat before the final commitment. Perhaps this fear of the future is also due to the dislike and reluctance to seal the love of many young people institutionally. We have a tendency to think that freedom loses authenticity if we link ourselves by the sacrament of marriage or another commitment to life, as if to link or break the bond contracted, moved by the feeling of the moment would characterize true freedom. Why not recognize that the institutional dimension of love strengthens our fragile personal freedom? Since the future is unpredictable and we are oblivious to what awaits us, we prefer "liquid" and unstable commitments to solid and permanent ones.

Does not the faithfulness of God and trust in His promises illuminate the darkness of the future? With the metaphors of the rock and the lit candle, it is expressed eloquently how the Christian faith gives support and guidance to our path through life. We recall, on the one hand, what we have said before (see Matt 16, 18, 21, 42, 18, Eph 2, 20, 1 Pet 2, 4-8), and on the other hand, we refer to the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, signed by Pope Francis and by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Verse 9 of Isaiah 7 was translated into Greek in the Septuagint, in this way: "Unless you believe, you will not understand" (*Lumen fidei* 23 ss.). "Faith knows because it is tied to love, because love itself brings enlightenment" (*Lumen fidei* 26. Cf. Rom 10, 10; John.11, 40; 19, 35; 20, 8; 18, 1; John 1, 1). The love of the spouse illuminates the heart to better understand one another.

It is good to avoid our imagination arousing in us shadows about the future that would depress our confidence. We cannot master the future simply as an extension of the present. We cannot decipher the future with our wisdom nor dominate it with our power; attempts to foresee the future are inconsistent. We must always be vigilant, looking for the signs of the future; and it is legitimate to project hypotheses. The relationship with the future is more of trust than anticipated knowledge, mastery or security. In this context we can increase fidelity through some words of scripture with which we ask for daily bread (cf Matt 6, 11). Since we simply ask for our daily bread and it is not wise to rely on accumulated riches (cf Lk12, 15-21), In the same way we ask with humility, for fidelity today; and tomorrow we will ask again for bread and fidelity.

We trust that the Lord sustains us every day and every day gives us the gift of fidelity. We live as paupers in the face of the future. With humility and trust we ask for what is necessary and we receive



it as a gift from the Father. God's providence takes care of us always (cf Matt 6, 25-34). Each day has enough trouble of its own. "So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows" and all are fed by the Father in heaven (Matt.10, 31). If fear shrinks the heart, love illuminates it, trust comforts it and forgiveness brings it peace.

He who says to a person "I believe you" manifests that the latter deserves trust and that his word is also valid to him. What can most damage the relationship between husband and wife is not believing one another. The content of a communication may be more or less accurate, but the communicator is personally offended if he is not trusted and if he is not seen as reliable.

Pope Francis went on pilgrimage to Fatima on 13th May 2017; he came to this place to celebrate the centenary of the beginning of the apparitions of the Virgin to three children from poor families, who grazed the few sheep of their parents. We can highlight the contrast between the disbelief of the inhabitants of the cities around the lake of Galilee, and the docility of the visionary children of Fatima. Jesus reproached the people, where He had particularly announced the Gospel and had performed many miracles, but they had resisted believing and converting. Unlike those whom the Gospel reminds us of, the visit of the Virgin was welcomed here and her message was believed by the three children. With the canonization of Francisco and Jacinta, the Pope ratified the faith and fidelity of those little shepherds. Mary, through those children, lit a spotlight to illuminate the darkness of humanity. From this previously unknown place, Mary, attentive to the needs of men (see John 2, 3) also issued a message of hope for the present period of our history, inviting us to redirect our path towards Salvation.

There is a gospel precept inspired by the conditions of Jesus' birth, life and death, according to which God chooses the weak of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor 1, 27).

Jesus blesses the Father because the mysteries of the Gospel are kept hidden from the wise and the learned, and He has revealed them to the small and simple, to the humble and to the poor (cf Matt 11, 25 ff.).

Here in Fatima we are strongly invited to learn this sublime lesson: The little ones understand, convert and believe in God; those full of themselves are enclosed in the pride that closes the way to the liberating Truth. Let us pray to the Mother of the Lord, who chose this place as a pulpit to make the Gospel resonate in the world, and in our time, with unusual strength and hope for the renewal of our life and our families, through faith and conversion, through penance and repentance. In this place we hear again the voice of the Lord who calls us to the renewal of love (see Rev. 2, 4), first to the faithful following the vocation received in the Church, to the intensification of prayer and to be missionaries to the whole world.

The Eucharist is the sacrament par excellence of Jesus' surrender to death for us. The victory of Jesus over sin and death is a source of hope in the midst of trials.

May the participation in the Eucharist strengthen your marriage in the Lord!

I would like to end with a prayer to Our Lady, the Virgin of Fatima: "Mother of all believers, you who were always faithful, give us your trust, give us your faith".