



The logic of profit cannot prevail over solidarity

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Homily that Benedict XVI gave in the cathedral of the Italian town of Velletri, when he made a pastoral visit to that diocese.

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I have come back to you to preside over this solemn Eucharistic celebration, thus responding to your repeated invitation. I have come back with joy to meet your diocesan community, which for several years was, in a singular way, also mine; and is always very dear.

I salute you all with affection. First of all, I greet Cardinal Francis Arinze, who has succeeded me as the titular cardinal of this diocese. I greet your pastor, dear Monsignor Vincenzo Apicella, whom I thank for the beautiful words of welcome with which he wanted to welcome me in your name. I greet the other bishops, the priests, the religious, the religious, the pastoral agents, the young people and all those who are actively engaged in the parishes, in the movements, in the associations, and the various diocesan activities. I also greet the commissioner of the prefecture of Velletri, the mayors of the town councils of the diocese of Velletri-Segni, and the other civil and military authorities who honor us with their presence.

I greet those who have come from elsewhere and, in particular, from Germany, from Bavaria! to, to join us on this holiday. My homeland is attached to yours by bonds of friendship: the witness of this friendship is the bronze column that I was given at Markt am Inn, in September last year, on the occasion of the apostolic journey to Germany. Recently, as has already been said, one hundred Bavarian city councils, gave me an almost twin column of that, which will be placed here, in Velletri, as a sign of my affection and benevolence. It will be a sign of my spiritual presence among you. In this regard, I wish to thank those who gave it to me, the sculptor and the mayors, who I see here with many friends. Thank you all very much.

Dear brothers and sisters, I know that you have prepared for my visit with an intense spiritual path, adopting as a motto a very significant verse from the first

letter of St. John: "I have known the love that God has for us, and we have believed in him" (1 Jn 4, 16). Deus Caritas est, God is love: with these words begins my first encyclical, which concerns the center of our faith: the Christian image of God and the consequent image of a man and his way.

I am glad that, as a guide to the diocese's spiritual and pastoral itinerary, you have chosen precisely this expression: "We have known the love that God has for us, and we have believed in him." We have believed in love: this is the essence of Christianity. Therefore, our liturgical assembly today cannot but focus on this essential truth, in the love of God, capable of giving human existence a new orientation and value.

Love is the essence of Christianity; it makes the believer and the Christian community the ferment of hope! And peace everywhere, paying particular attention to the needs of the poor and the homeless. This is our common mission: to be a ferment of hope and peace because we believe in love. Love makes the Church live, and since it is eternal, it makes it live forever, until the end of time. In the past Sunday, St. Luke, the most anxious evangelist to show the love that Jesus feels for the poor, has offered us several points of reflection on the dangers of excessive attachment to money, material goods, and everything that hinders living in fullness our vocation and love God and the brothers.

Also today, with a parable that raises in us a certain surprise because there is the talk of an unjust administrator, who is praised (cf. Lc 16, 1-13), analyzing thoroughly, the Lord gives us serious and very healthy teaching. As always, the Lord takes as a starting point the events of the daily chronicle: talk about an administrator who is about to be fired for fraudulent management of his master's business and, to secure his future, cunningly tries to negotiate with the debtors. It is certainly unfair, but cunning: the Gospel does not present it to us as a model to follow in its injustice, but as an example to imitate by its previewing cunning. Indeed, the brief parable concludes with these words: "The master congratulated the Administrator unjustly for the cunning with which he had proceeded" (Lk 16, 8).

But what does Jesus want to tell us with this parable, with this surprising conclusion? Immediately after this parable of the unjust administrator, the Evangelist presents us with a series of sayings and warnings about the relationship we must have with money and with the goods of this land. They are small phrases that invite an option that is a radical decision, a constant inner tension.

In truth, life is always an option: between honesty and injustice, between fidelity and infidelity, between selfishness and altruism, between right and wrong. It is incisive and peremptory the conclusion of the Gospel passage: "No servant can serve two masters: for, either he will abhor one and love the other, or he shall devote himself to the first and shall not heed the second." In short, Jesus says, one must decide: "You cannot serve God and money" (Lk 16, 13). The word he uses to say money — "mammona" — is of Phoenician origin and evokes economic security and business success. We could say that wealth is presented as the idol to which everything is sacrificed to achieve material success; thus, this economic success becomes the true god of a person.

Therefore, it is necessary a fundamental decision to choose between God and "mammona"; It is necessary to choose between the logic of profit as the ultimate criterion of our activity and the logic of sharing and solidarity. When the logic of profit prevails, it increases the disproportion between the poor and the rich, as well as a damaging exploitation of the planet. On the contrary, when the logic of sharing and solidarity prevails, the route can be corrected and directed towards equitable development, for the common good of all.

In the end, it is the decision between selfishness and love, between justice and injustice; in short, between God and Satan. If loving Christ and the brethren is not considered something to be accessed and superficial, but rather the true and ultimate purpose of our whole life, it is necessary to know how to make fundamental choices, to be willing to radical renunciations, if necessary until martyrdom. Today, like yesterday, the life of the Christian demands courage to go against the current, to love like Jesus, who even came to sacrifice himself on the cross.

Thus, paraphrasing a reflection of St. Augustine, we could say that through the earthly riches we must achieve the true and eternal. Indeed, if there are people who are willing to have all kinds of injustices to obtain material welfare always random, how much more we Christians should worry about providing our eternal happiness with the goods of this land! (cf. speeches 359, 10).

Now, the only way to make fruitful for the eternity our personal qualities and capacities, as well as the riches we possess, is to share them with our brothers, being thus good stewards of what God entrusts to us. Jesus says, "Who is faithful in the little is also in much; and the one who is unjust in the little, is also in much "(Lk 16, 10).

From this fundamental option, which needs to be done every day, the Prophet Amos also speaks today at the first reading. With strong words criticizes a typical lifestyle of those who are absorbed by a selfish search for profit in every way possible and that translates into a desire for profit, in contempt of the poor and the exploitation of their situation for their benefit (cf. Am 4, 5).

The Christian must reject all this with energy, opening the heart, on the contrary, to feelings of true generosity. A generosity which, as the Apostle Saint Paul exhorts in the second reading, manifests in his sincere love for all and prayer.

Praying for others is a great gesture of charity. The Apostle invites, first, to pray for those who hold positions of responsibility in the civil community, because — he explains — of his decisions, if they are to do good, they derive positive consequences, assuring peace and "a quiet and peaceful life, with all piety and dignity "for all (1 Tm 2, 2). Therefore, we must never miss our prayer, which is our spiritual contribution to the building of an ecclesial community faithful to Christ

and the construction of a more just and solidarity society.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us pray, in particular, that your diocesan community, which is suffering series of changes, because of the transfer of many young families from Rome, to the development of the "tertiary" sector and to the establishment of many immigrants in the historical centres, to carry out an increasingly organic and shared pastoral action, following The indications that your bishop is giving with high pastoral sensitivity.

In this regard, his pastoral letter of December last year was very timely with the invitation to listen attentively and perseveringly to the Word of God, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and the Magisterium of the Church.

Let us put in the hands of the Virgin of Graces, whose image is preserved and venerated in this beautiful cathedral, all your purposes, and pastoral projects. May the maternal protection of Mary accompany the path of all present and those who have not been able to participate in this eucharistic celebration. May the Blessed Virgin protect in an especially way the sick, the elderly, the children, those who feel lonely and abandoned, and those who have particular needs.

May Mary free us from the greed of riches, and make that, elevating to the sky hands-free and pure, we give glory to God with all our life (cf. collection). Amen.