During his homily on Tuesday at Casa Santa Marta, **Pope Francis invites us to look at a Crucifix when we are depressed and tired out with life's journey.**

Pope Francis' reflection was inspired by the first reading from the book of Numbers 21,4-9. The people were exasperated because of the long journey and were tired of eating the same food. They complained about the food saying they would die in the desert because of God and Moses.

**We forget the Lord's strength**

As they drew closer to the promised land, some of the Israelites became skeptical because the scouts sent by Moses reported a land rich in produce but inhabited by a people who would be impossible to defeat. "By looking only at their own strength, they forgot the Lord's strength which had liberated them from 400 years of slavery," Pope Francis notes.

**A sick memory**

Pope Francis then compares these Israelites who complain about the journey with those people who begin to follow the Lord but then abandon the journey when it gets too tough. It is at these moments that one says, "I've had enough! I quit. I'm going back." Then one begins to reminisce about the past—about the meat, the onions, and other wonderful things…. Such are the illusions the devil proposes. Once we begin to feel the heat of the day on the journey of conversion, the devil makes us see everything we left behind in a beautiful light. The Pope invites us to understand how partial such a "sick memory" is. It is a distorted nostalgia because the Israelites had been eating from **the table of slavery because they had been slaves in Egypt.**

**Poisoned hearts**

The serpents who bit the people and poisoned them are an external symbol of poisoned hearts. And so the Lord tells Moses to make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole.

This serpent healed anyone who looked at it. “It was prophetic: it was the figure of Christ on the cross,” Pope Francis says.

**By his wounds our wounds are healed**

Pope Francis continues, “And here is the key to our salvation, the key for having patience on the journey of life, the key to overcome our deserts: looking at the Crucifix.” All we need to do is look at Jesus and his wounds, “for by those wounds we have been healed.” Many crucifixes are beautiful because they also want to express the glory of the cross and the glory of the resurrection Pope Francis explains

Pope Francis concluded his homily with a memory of his own childhood. One Good Friday he was with his grandmother at a candlelight procession in the parish. When the life-size marble statue of the dead Christ came by, his grandmother made him kneel down. “Look at that,” she said, “but tomorrow he will rise!” And so, “my grandmother, when she heard the church bells pealing announcing the Resurrection, had tears in her eyes because she was then beholding Christ’s glory.”