



# Weekday Homilies of Pope Francis



Vol.2, no. 6, April 1 – 11, 2014

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## 1. Spiritual sloth and Christian hypocrisy

In his remarks following the readings of the day, on **Tuesday April 1**, the Holy Father focused on the need for Christians to be really committed to discipleship, and prepared to take risks for the cause of the Gospel.



Concentrating on the passage proclaimed at the Gospel reading of the day, in which Jesus heals a paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda on a Sabbath day, Pope Francis addressed both the spiritual malaise of the sick man, whom he healed, and that of the Pharisees, who began to persecute and plot against Him because he healed the man on the Sabbath. [\(Video\)](#)

“I think of the many Christians, of many Catholics: yes, they are Catholics, but without enthusiasm, even embittered. ‘Yes, life is what it is, but the Church? – I go to Mass every Sunday, but better not get mixed up in things – I have faith for my health, I do not feel the need to give it to another...’. Each in his own house, the quiet life, (saying:) ‘but, if you do something ... then they will criticize you. No, leave it alone! (It is better that way), don’t take a risk’ **This is the disease of sloth, the acedia (apathy or indifference) of Christians.** This attitude that is crippling the apostolic zeal, which makes Christian people stand still and at ease, but not in the good sense of the word: they do not bother to go out to proclaim the Gospel! They are anesthetized.”

Anesthesia, is a negative experience. **It is that ‘not meddling’ that becomes ‘spiritual sloth,’** which, is a very sad thing, indeed. These Christians are sad, they are people without light – real downers (depressing persons), and this is a disease of us Christians. **We go to Mass every Sunday, but we say, ‘Please do not disturb.’ These**



**Christians without apostolic zeal, are not useful, they do not do any good to the Church.** And how many Christians are like this? ...selfish, out for themselves. This, he said, is the sin of sloth, which is a sin against apostolic zeal, against the desire to give the news of Jesus to others, that newness, which was given to me for free.



But in this passage of the Gospel there is also another sin when we see that Jesus is criticized because he healed the sick on the Sabbath: **the sin of formalism**. Christians, who do not leave space for the grace of God – and the Christian life, the life of these people, consists in having all the paperwork, all the certificates, in order. **Christian hypocrites, like these, only interested in their formalities.** It was a Sabbath? No, you cannot do miracles on the Sabbath; the grace of God cannot work on Sabbath days. **They close the door to the grace of God. We have**

**so many in the Church, we have many! It is another sin.** The first, those who have the sin of sloth, are not able to go forward with their apostolic zeal, because they have decided to stand firm in themselves, in their sadness, their resentments, in all of that. Such as these are not capable of bringing salvation because they close the door to salvation.

Only the formalities matter to them. **‘It is not possible’**: this is the phrase they always have with them. We meet these people, too. **We ourselves have often been taken by this acedia, or have been many times like the Pharisees: hypocrites,** because temptations to these sins will inevitably come. Faced with these two temptations ... in the field hospital, which is a symbol of the Church today, amid so many wounded people. Jesus approaches them and asks only one thing: “Do you want to be healed?” Then, to the man who replies ‘yes’, he gives grace and sends him on his way. And then, when he meets the paralytic again, he tells him, “Sin no more.”

**The two Christian words: ‘do you want to be healed?’ and ‘Sin no more’.** First He heals [the paralytic], then [He says], ‘sin no more.’ – words spoken with tenderness, with love – and this is the Christian way, the way of apostolic zeal: to get close to many people who are injured and in this field hospital, often people whose wounds were inflicted by men and women of the Church. It is a word of a brother and of a sister: do you want to be healed? Then, when He goes on, ‘Ah, do not sin any more, it is not good for you.’ Much better: Jesus’ two words are more beautiful than the attitude of sloth or the attitude of hypocrisy.”

## 2. Praying with insistence and negotiating with God

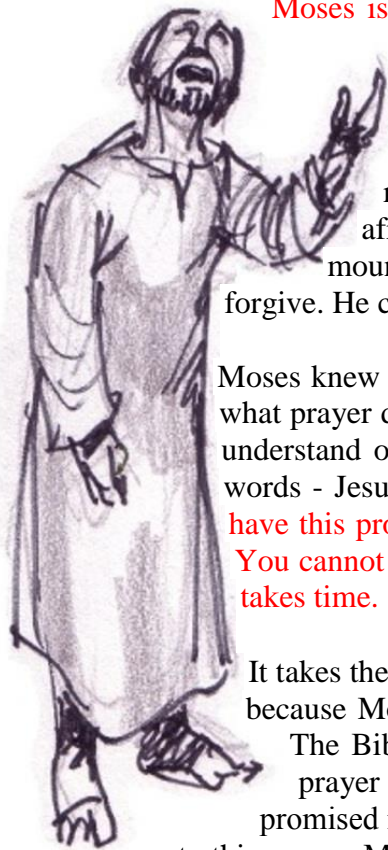


The dialogue between God and Moses on Mount Sinai contained in the first reading of the daily liturgy was the focus of Pope Francis’ homily at Mass, **Thursday, April 3**. God wants to punish His people because they have created an idol, the golden calf. [\(Video\)](#)

“Moses prays to the Lord to think again. **This prayer is a real struggle with God.** ...A struggle on the part of the leader of a people to save his people, who are the people of God. Moses speaks freely in front of the Lord and in doing so teaches us

how to pray without fear, freely, even with insistence. Moses insists. He is courageous. **Prayer must also be a**

'negotiation with God', to which we bring our 'arguments'. Moses eventually convinces God and the reading says that 'the Lord repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to His people.' **But who changed here? Has the Lord changed? I think not.**



**Moses is the one who has changed**, because Moses believed that the Lord would do this, he believed that the Lord would have destroyed the people and he searches, he tries to remember, how good the Lord has been to His people, how he led them from slavery in Egypt and guided them with a promise. With these arguments, he tries to convince God, but in doing so, he rediscovers the memory of his people, and God's mercy. This Moses, who was afraid, afraid that God would do this thing, in the end comes down from the mountain with something great in his heart: Our God is merciful. He knows how to forgive. He can go back on His decisions. He is a Father.

Moses knew all of this, but he vaguely knew it. Instead he rediscovers it in prayer. This is what prayer does to us: it changes our heart. Prayer changes us, our heart. It helps us better understand our God. This is why it is important to speak with the Lord, not with empty words - Jesus says: 'As pagans do'. **No, no, talk with [Him about] reality: 'Look, Lord, I have this problem, in my family, with my child, with this, with that ... What can you do? You cannot leave me like this!'. This is prayer! Does this prayer take a long time? Yes, it takes time.**

It takes the time we need to get to know God better,[the same time we take] with a friend, because Moses - the Bible says - prays to the Lord like one friend speaking to another.

The Bible says that Moses spoke to God face to face, as a friend. This is how our prayer must be: free, insistent, with arguments ... even rebuking the Lord a little. 'You promised me this but you didn't do it...' , just like talking with a friend. Open your heart to this prayer. Moses came down from the Mount invigorated: ' I have known more of the Lord ', and with that strength given him by prayer, he resumed the task of leading his people to the Promised Land. Because prayer invigorates: it is invigorating. May the Lord give us all this grace, because prayer is a grace.

The Holy Spirit is in every prayer. You cannot pray without the Holy Spirit. It is He who prays in us, He makes us change our heart; it is He who teaches us to call God 'Father'. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray, as Moses prayed, to negotiate with God, with freedom of spirit, with courage. And may the Holy Spirit, who is always present in our prayer, lead us on this path."

### 3. Christians even today, face persecution like the prophets of old



The prophets, those who proclaim the Gospel, have always been persecuted, even within the Church, and "perhaps there are as many or more martyrs now that in the early days". This was the focus of Pope Francis' homily at Mass celebrated **Friday April 4** morning at Casa Santa Marta, commenting on the passage in the Book of Wisdom, that says, "Let us beset the just one..." Noting that there are today more martyrs than there were in the early days of the Church, the Holy Father urged the faithful not to be afraid of misunderstanding and persecution. [\(Video\)](#)



Reflecting on the whole of salvation history, Pope Francis considered the many episodes of persecution experienced by the prophets, as Jesus himself reminds the Pharisees. "In the history of salvation, in the time of Israel, even in the Church, the prophets were persecuted. **The prophets were persecuted because they said, 'You have taken the wrong path! Return to God's way.'** This message is one that those who are in



power and have lost their way never find pleasing.

Today's Gospel is clear, no? Jesus hid, in those last days, because His hour had yet to come - but He knew what end he would have, and how He would have it. Jesus is persecuted from the beginning. When we recall the beginning of his preaching, He returns to His country, goes to the synagogue and preaches. After great adulation, the voices begin almost right away to murmur: 'But, we know where He comes from... He is one of us... with what authority does he come to teach us? Where did He

study?' Thus they write Him off. Isn't it the same old thing? *'But we know where He is from! Christ, however, when He comes, no one will know where he is from. Write the Lord off, write off the prophet in order to take away his authority.'*

They disqualified him, because Jesus came out and brought others out of that closed religious environment, of that cage. **The prophet fights against the people who cage the Holy Spirit.** And that is why they are persecuted, always. The prophets are all persecuted or misunderstood, pushed aside. And not given a place! This situation has not ended by the death and resurrection of Jesus. It had continued in the Church! ...Harassed from outside and persecuted within. **When we read the lives of the saints, how many misunderstandings have there been, how many of the saints have suffered persecution... because they were prophets.**

**Many thinkers in the Church were persecuted,** as well. I think of one, now, at this moment, not so far from us: a man of good will, a prophet indeed, who, in his writings reproached the Church for having lost the way of the Lord. He was summoned in short order, his books were placed on the index [*the list of works that were banned or restricted to experts because of their problematic, erroneous and even heretical content*], they took away his teaching positions - and thus, this man's life ended - and it was not so long ago. Now time has passed, and today he is Blessed. **How is it, though, that he, who yesterday was a heretic, is today a Blessed of the Church? It is because yesterday, those who had power wanted to silence him because they did not like what he was saying.** Today the Church, who, thanks be to God knows, repents and says, 'No, this man is good!'. Moreover, he is on the way to sainthood: He is a Blessed.





All the people, whom the Holy Spirit chooses to tell the truth, to the People of God, suffer persecution, and Jesus is precisely the model, the icon. The Lord took upon Himself all the persecutions of His people. The Holy Father went on to note that Christians continue to suffer persecution even today. **I dare**

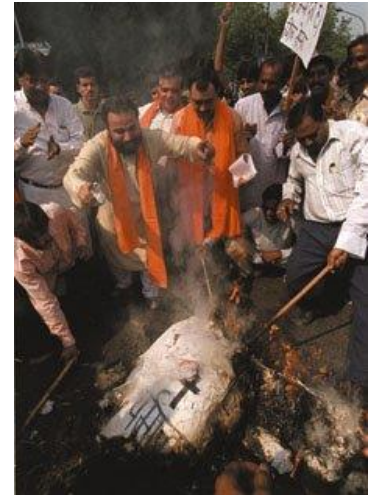


**say that perhaps there are as many or more martyrs now that in the early days,** because they tell the truth and proclaim Christ Jesus to a worldly society in love with ease and desirous of avoiding problems.

There is the death penalty or imprisonment for having the Gospel at home, for teaching Catechism, today, in some parts of the world. A Catholic from one of these countries told me that they cannot pray together. It is forbidden. People can only pray alone and in secret - but they want to celebrate the Eucharist and how do they do? They throw a birthday party, they

pretend to celebrate the birthday there and have Mass before the 'party'. It has happened. When they see the police arrive, they just hide everything and continue with the birthday party-cover. Then, when authorities leave, they finish the Mass. They have to do so, because it is forbidden to pray together: to this very day.

This history of persecution is the way of the Lord: it is the path of those who follow the Lord. This story ends as it does always, in Resurrection, though only by passing through the way of the Cross. Fr. Matteo Ricci, SJ, an evangelizer of China, was not understood, either. He obeyed as Jesus did, though. Always there will be persecutions, misunderstandings. Jesus is Lord, however, and that is the challenge and the Cross of our faith. Let us ask God to give us the grace to go on His way, and if it happens, even with the cross of persecution.



#### 4. God's mercy lovingly heals the wounds of sin



Pope Francis drew inspiration for his homily on **Monday April 7** morning, from the Gospel reading that tells of the mercy of Jesus when he does not allow the execution of a woman who was caught in adultery. Speaking to those present for morning Mass the Pope explained the meaning of the words 'he who is without sin, cast the first stone.' The reading is well known. It narrates the episode in which the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the act of adultery. They point out that in the law, Moses commands us to stone such women because adultery is considered a very grave sin. [\(Video\)](#)



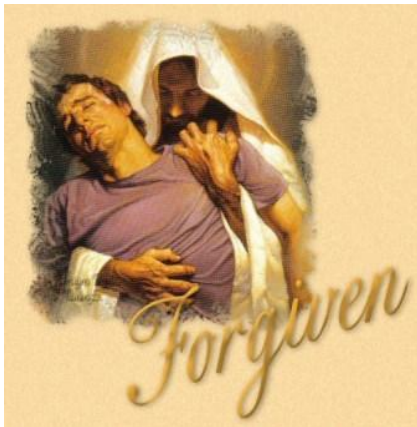
“Marriage is a human reality but it is also a symbol of a faithful relationship between God and his people. When the marriage is spoilt by adultery, he continued, it spoils the relationship with God. But when the scribes and the Pharisees ask Jesus *‘what do you say?’* they do so to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against Him. If Jesus had said: *‘Yes, go ahead and have her stoned’*, they would have told the people *‘this is your good and merciful master... just look at what he has done to this poor woman!’* And if Jesus had said: *‘Poor woman! Forgive her!’* they would have said: *‘He does not observe the Law!’...”*



They cared nothing about the woman; “they did not care about adultery, perhaps amongst them there were some adulterers. All they cared about was catching Jesus in a trap. And to this, Jesus answered: *‘Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to cast a stone at her’*. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So one can imagine that their own records were not that straight.

So Jesus was left alone with the woman before him and said to her: *‘woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’* It is just you and I, alone before God, without accusations, without gossip. You and God! No one has condemned you. She replied: *‘No one, sir’*. She does not say it was a false accusation! She does not say *‘I have not committed adultery’*. She recognizes her sin. Then Jesus said: *‘Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin anymore,’ do not offend God again; do not spoil the beautiful relationship between God and his people”*.

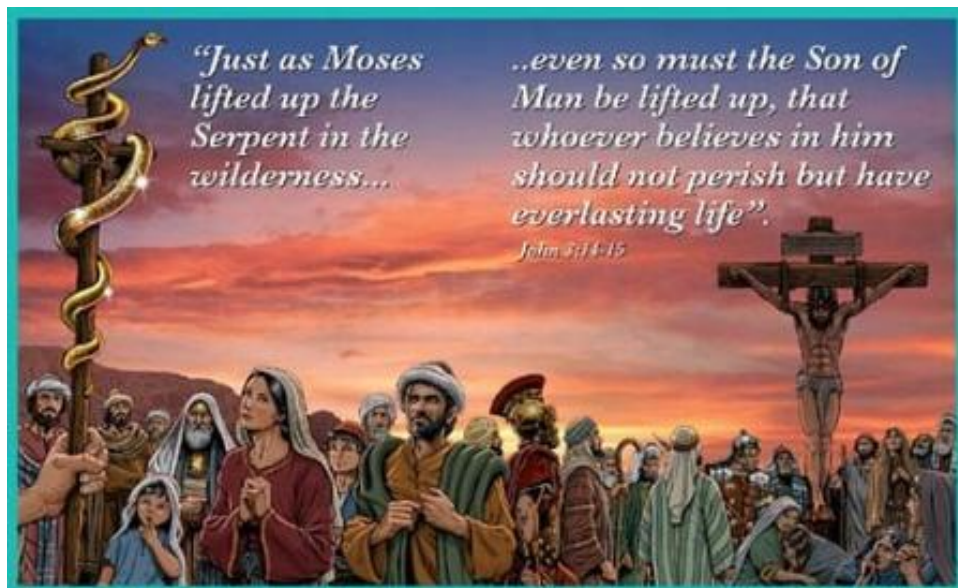
Jesus forgives, but here there is something that goes beyond forgiveness. Jesus goes beyond the law. He does not say: *‘adultery is not a sin!’* But he does not condemn it according to law. This is the mystery of mercy. It is the mystery of the mercy of Jesus. Mercy is difficult to understand. *‘But, Father, does compassion erase one’s sins?’* **No, what erases sins is the forgiveness of God.** ‘Mercy is the way that God forgives, this is why Jesus could say, *‘I forgive you. Go!’*, as he said to the paralytic, who was lowered through the roof. *‘your sins are forgiven. He says ‘Go in peace’*. Jesus goes further. He advises them not to sin again. Here we see the merciful attitude of Jesus. He defends the sinner from her enemies; he defends her against a just condemnation. **How many of us should perhaps go to hell? And the condemnation would be just... but He forgives and goes beyond. How? With this mercy!**



Mercy goes beyond in such a way that sin is put to the side. It is like the heavens. We look at the sky, there are many, many stars; **but when the sun rises in the morning, the light is such that we can’t see the stars.** **God’s mercy is like that:** a great light of love and tenderness. God forgives us, not with a decree, but with his love, healing the wounds of sin. Because He is involved in forgiveness, He is involved in our salvation. So when Jesus acts as confessor to the woman he does not humiliate her, he does not say: *‘What have you done? When did you do it? How did you do it? With whom did you do it?’* No! He says: *‘Go and do not sin again!’*. God’s mercy is great, Jesus’ mercy is great. Forgive us and heal us!”

## 5. The Cross is not an ornament but the mystery of God's love

The relationship between Christianity and the Cross and our own sins was the focus of Pope Francis's reflections at his Mass on **Tuesday April 8**. In his homily, the Pope said Christianity does not exist without the Cross and stressed that we are unable to free ourselves from our sins on our own. The Cross, he said, is not an ornament to place on the altar but is the mystery of God's love who takes our sins upon himself. He then reflected on the meaning of Jesus' warning to the Pharisees "You will die in your sin." ([Video](#))



The Pope was commenting on the passage from the Book of Numbers, where "God speaks to the Jewish people who were complaining about God and at Moses in the desert. The Lord then commands Moses to take a serpent and put it on a staff and says that whoever is bitten by snake but looks upon it, shall live. But what is the snake? The serpent is the symbol of sin, as we see in the book of Genesis when the serpent seduced Eve, proposing sin to her. **However God then orders that sin be**

**raised like a victory flag. We don't really understand what this means unless we understand what Jesus tells us in the Gospel.** Jesus said to the Jews: "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM". In the desert sin was lifted up, but it is a sin that seeks salvation, so that it heals there. It is the Son of man, the true Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is lifted up.

In today's Gospel, Jesus warns the Pharisees when he says to them, "You will die in your sin" It is impossible for us to free ourselves from sin on our own. It's impossible. These doctors of the law, these people who taught the law, didn't have a clear idea on this. They believed, yes, in the forgiveness of God but considered themselves strong, self-sufficient and that they knew everything. And in the end they transformed religion, their adoration of God, into a culture with values, reflections, certain commandments of conduct to be polite and they believed, yes, that the Lord can pardon them, they knew this but they were far removed from all this.



**Christianity is not a philosophical doctrine, it's not a programme for life survival or education, or for peacemaking.** These are consequences. Christianity is a person, a person raised on the Cross, a person who annihilated himself to save us, who became sin. Just as sin was raised up in the desert, here God who was made man and made sin for us was raised up. All our sins were there. **You cannot understand Christianity without understanding this profound humiliation of the Son of God** who humbled himself and became a servant unto death, even death on a cross, in order to serve us.



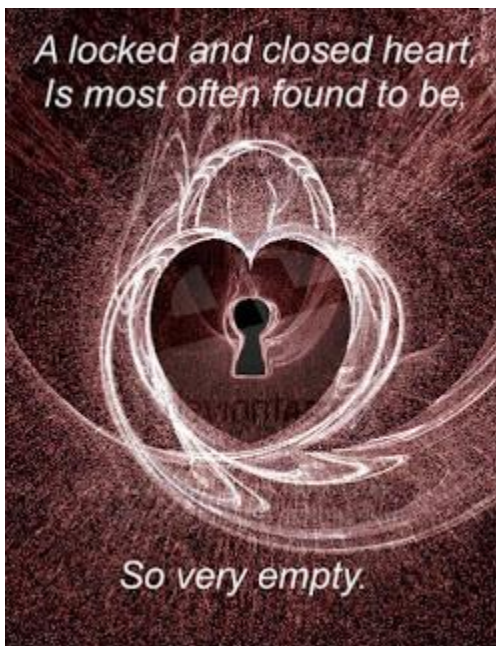
*This is why, the apostle Paul said we do not have other things to boast about, apart from our sins, and this is our misery. But through the mercy of God, we rejoice in the crucified Christ. It's for this reason that 'there is no Christianity without the Cross and there's no Cross without Jesus Christ. The heart of God's salvation is his Son, who took all of our sins, our arrogance, our security, our vanity, our desires to become like God upon Himself. For this reason a Christian who does not know glory in Christ crucified, does not understand what it means to be a Christian. Our wounds, those that leave behind sins in us, can only be healed by the wounds of the Lord.*



This is the mystery of the Cross. **The Cross is not an ornament that we must always put in the churches, there on the altar.** It is not a symbol that distinguishes us from others. **The Cross is mystery, the mystery of God who humbles himself,** he becomes 'nothing.' He becomes sin. Where is your sin? 'I don't know, I have so many here.'

No, your sin is there, in the Cross. Go and find it there, in the wounds of the Lord and your sins will be healed, your wounds will be healed, your sins will be forgiven. The forgiveness that God gives us is not the same as cancelling a debt that we have with Him, the forgiveness that God gives us are the wounds of his Son on the Cross, raised up on the Cross. May he draw us towards Him and may we allow ourselves to be healed by him."

## 6. Be vigilant of dictatorship of thought



"Even today there is a dictatorship of a narrow line of thought that kills people's freedom, their freedom of conscience. We must be vigilant and pray," said Pope Francis at Mass on **Thursday April 10**. "God promised Abraham that he would become the father of many nations, but he and his descendants will have to observe the Covenant with the Lord." Pope Francis' homily takes its cue from the first reading of the day to explain the end of Christ's message to the Pharisees. ([Video](#))

"Their mistake was to detach the commandments from the heart of God. They thought it enough to merely keep the commandments, but these are not just a cold law, because they are born from a relationship of love and are 'indications' that help us avoid mistakes in our journey to meet Jesus. So, the Pharisees who close their hearts and minds to all things 'new' do not understand the path of hope. **This is the drama of the closed heart, the drama of the closed mind and when the heart is closed, this heart closes the mind, and when the heart and mind are closed there is no place for God, but only for**

**what we believe should be done.**

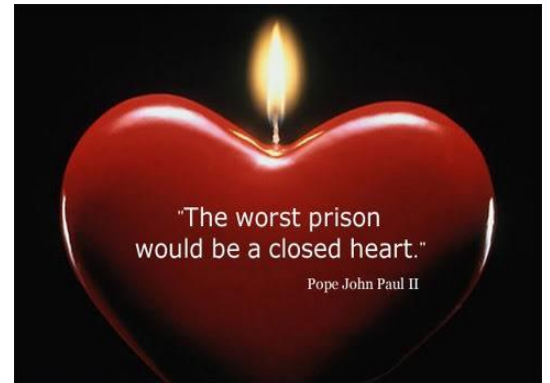
Instead, the commandments carry a promise and the prophets wake this promise up. How many have a closed heart and mind, how many cannot accept the 'new message' brought by Jesus, which is what was promised by the faithfulness of God and the prophets. But they do not understand. It is a closed way of thinking that is not open to dialogue, to the possibility that there is something else, the possibility that God speaks to us, tells us about His journey, as he did to the prophets. These people did not listen to the prophets and did not listen





to Jesus. It is something greater than a mere stubbornness. No, **it is more: it is the idolatry of their own way of thinking.** *'I think this, it has to be this way, and nothing more'*. These people had a narrow line of thought and wanted to impose this way of thinking on the people of God, Jesus rebukes them for this: *'You burden the people with many commandments and you do not touch them with your finger'*.

Jesus' rebukes their incoherence. **The theology of these people becomes a slave to this pattern, this pattern of thought: a narrow line of thought. There is no possibility of dialogue;** there is no possibility to open up to new things which God brings with the prophets. They killed the prophets, these people; they close the door to the promise of God. When this phenomenon of narrow thinking enters human history, how many misfortunes occur! We all saw in the last century, the dictatorships



of narrow thought, which ended up killing a lot of people, but when they believed they were the overlords, no other form of thought was allowed. This is the way they think.



**Even today there is the idolatry of a narrow line of thought. Today we have to think in this way and if you do not think in this way, you are not modern, you're not open or worse.** Often rulers say: *'I have asked for aid, financial support for this', 'But if you want this help, you have to think in this way and you have to pass this law, and this other law and this other law...'* Even today there is a dictatorship of a narrow line of thought and this dictatorship is the same as these people: **it takes up stones to**

**stone the freedom of the people, the freedom of the people, their freedom of conscience,** the relationship of the people with God. **Today Jesus is crucified once again.**

The Lord's exhortation faced with this dictatorship is always the same: **be vigilant and pray;** do not be silly, do not buy things you do not need, be humble and pray, **that the Lord always gives us the freedom of an open heart,** to receive his Word which is joy and promise and covenant! And with this covenant move forward!"

## 7. Satan exists in the 21st century and how we can fight him

Pope Francis said Satan exists in our present century and we must learn from the Gospel how to fight against his temptations. This was the core message of his homily at the Mass celebrated on **Friday April 11.** Pope Francis said the life of every Christian is a constant battle against evil just as Jesus during his life had to struggle against the devil and his many temptations. And he warned that whoever wants to follow Jesus must be aware of this reality. [\(Video\)](#)



"We too are tempted, we too are the target of attacks by the devil because the spirit of Evil does not want our holiness, he does not want our Christian witness, he does not want us to be disciples of Christ. And what does the Spirit of Evil do,



through his temptations, to distance us from the path of Jesus? **The temptation of the devil has three characteristics and we need to learn about them in order not to fall into the trap.** What does Satan do to distance us from the path of Jesus? **Firstly, his temptation begins gradually but grows and is always growing. Secondly, it grows and infects another person, it spreads to another and seeks to be part of the community. And in the end, in order to calm the soul, it justifies itself. It grows, it spreads and it justifies itself.**

Jesus' first temptation by Satan was almost 'like a seduction.' Satan told Jesus to throw himself down from the Temple so that all the people will see that he is the Messiah! When the devil is rejected, he grows and comes back stronger than before. Jesus himself noted this in the gospel when the devil went around looking for companions and with them returned to Jesus. Satan got involved with Jesus' enemies and what seemed at first like a calm trickle of water turned into a flood of water. In this way, the temptation grows, infects others and justifies itself. For example, when Jesus preached in the synagogue, his enemies belittled him by saying "but isn't this the son of Joseph, the carpenter, the son of Mary. He never studied so with what authority can he speak?"



We have a temptation that grows: it grows and infects others. For example, let's look at gossip: *I'm a bit envious of this or that person and at first I'm just envious inside and I need to share it and go to another person and say: "But have you seen that person?" ...and this gossip tries to grow and it infects another and another... This is the way gossip works and all of us have been tempted to gossip! Maybe not one of you, if you're a saint, but I too have been tempted to gossip!* It's a daily temptation. And it begins in this way,

discreetly, like a trickle of water. It grows by infecting others and in the end it justifies itself.

Be vigilant and not to give in to that initial temptation and thus allow it to spread to others and justify itself. We are all tempted because the law of our spiritual life, our Christian life is a struggle: a struggle. That's because the Prince of this world, Satan, doesn't want our holiness, he doesn't want us to follow Christ. Maybe some of you might say: *'But Father, how old fashioned you are to speak about the devil in the 21st century!'* But look out because the devil is present! The devil is here... even in the 21st century! And we mustn't be naïve, right? We must learn from the Gospel how to fight against Satan.