



VATICAN RADIO'S ENGLISH SERVICE FOR SOUTH ASIA

# Weekday Homilies of Pope Francis

December 1 to 15,  
2013

....at the Chapel of Casa di Santa  
Martha  
at 7 a.m.



## Christmas is an encounter, not just a memory

“Preparing for Christmas through prayer, charity and exhaltation”. *With this hope, Pope Francis called on the faithful Monday, December 2, to open their hearts and allow themselves to encounter the Lord who renews all. In his homily, Pope Francis recalled that as “we proceed towards Christmas, we embark on a journey of faith and prayer in preparation for our encounter with the Lord, because, Christmas isn’t just a temporal celebration or the memory of a beautiful (event).”*

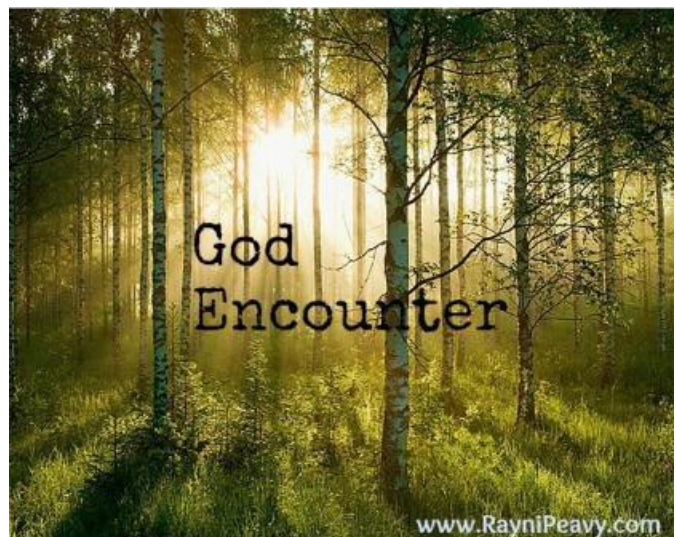


"Christmas is an encounter! It's a journey to encounter Him, to find Him through our hearts and our lives, to find the living God and to find Him through faith. It's not easy to live with faith. In today's Gospel, the Lord marvelled at the centurion. He marvelled at his faith. The centurion made a journey to meet the Lord, but he made it in faith. **He not only encountered the Lord, but he came to know the joy of being encountered by him.** And

this is precisely the sort of encounter we desire, the encounter of faith. To encounter the Lord, but also to allow ourselves to be encountered by him. This is very important”.

And to actually have an encounter with Jesus, one must pray more, increase charity and treat others with love and joy. “Christmas is something more, Christmas is an encounter with the Lord. And as we make our way towards Him, we must go with open heart and faith, even though this is not always easy. When we go out to meet the Lord, we in some sense are ‘masters of the moment’. However, when we allow ourselves to be encountered by him, he enters into us and renews us from within. This is what it means for Christ to come: to renew all things, to renew hearts, souls, lives, hope and the journey.

...Advent is a time truly to open our minds and hearts to him, because when he comes to me, he may tell me what he wants me to do, which is not always what I want him to tell me. It is important, therefore, that we never forget that “he is the Lord and he will tell me what he intends for me. **The Lord, does not look upon us all at once, as a mass of people: no, no! He looks at us one by one, in the face, in the eyes, for true love is not something abstract but rather something very concrete. Person to person.** The Lord, who is a Person, looking at me, a person. That is why allowing the Lord to come and meet me also means allowing him to love me.



*Pope Francis concluded:* “in the prayer at the beginning of Mass we asked for the grace to make this journey with several dispositions that will aid us. Perseverance in prayer: to pray more. Diligence in fraternal charity: to draw closer to those in need. And joy in praising the Lord. Let us begin this journey in prayer, charity and praise, so that the Lord might come to meet us, but let us allow him to meet us with our defences down, in openness!” [\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)



## A Church without joy is unthinkable

**The Church must always be joyful like Christ.** That was the message of Pope Francis at Mass **Tuesday, December 3**, morning at the Casa Santa Marta. The Pope emphasized that the Church is called to transmit the joy of the Lord to her children—a joy that gives true peace.



**Peace and joy.** *Pope Francis' homily dwelt on these two themes.* “In the reading from the book of Isaiah, we see the desire for peace that we all have. It is the peace, says Isaiah, that the Messiah brings to us. In the Gospel, on the other hand, we are able to see a little into the soul of Jesus, the heart of Jesus: a joyful heart.”

“We always think of Jesus when He preaches, when He heals, when He travels, walks along the street, even during the Last Supper... But we aren't used to thinking about Jesus smiling,

joyful. **Jesus was full of joy**, full of joy. In that intimacy with His Father: ‘I rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and I praised the Father.’ It is precisely the internal mystery of Jesus, that relationship with the Father in the Spirit. It is His internal joy, the interior joy that He gives to us.

And this joy, is true peace: not a static peace, quiet, tranquil... no, Christian peace is a joyful peace, because our Lord is joyful. And, moreover, He is joyful when He speaks about the Father: He loves the Father so much that He can't talk about Him without joy. Our God, is joyful. And Jesus has willed that His spouse, the Church, should also be joyful.



You can't imagine a Church without joy; and the joy of the Church lies precisely in this: to proclaim the name of Jesus. To say: ‘He is the Lord. My spouse is the Lord. He is God. He saves us, He walks with us.’ And that is the joy of the Church, that in this joy of being a bride becomes a mother. Paul VI said: the joy of the Church is precisely to evangelize, to go forth and to speak about her Spouse. And also to transmit that joy to the children that she bears, that she raises.

**And so, let us consider that the peace of which Isaiah speaks is a peace that is so moving, it is a peace of joy, a peace of praise, it is a peace that we could say is ‘noisy’, in praise**, a peace that bears fruit in becoming a mother of new children. It is a peace, that comes precisely in the joy of praise for the Trinity, and of evangelization, of going to the people to tell them who Jesus is. Peace and joy, a dogmatic declaration, when He affirms, “You decided to reveal Yourself not to the wise, but to the little ones”



Even in so many serious things, such as this, Jesus is joyful, the Church is joyful. She must be joyful. Even in her widowhood—because the Church has something of the widow who waits for her spouse to come back—even in her widowhood, the Church is joyful in hope. The Lord gives this joy to all of us, this joy of Jesus, praising the Father in the Spirit. This joy of our mother

Church in evangelizing, in announcing her Spouse. ([Watch VIDEO](#))

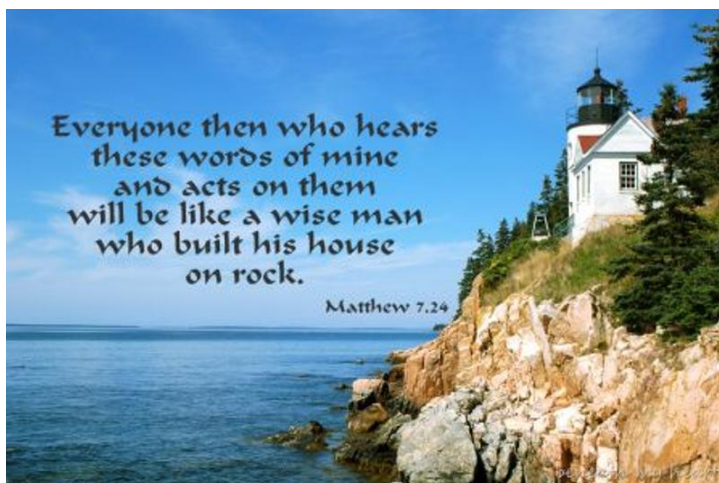
## Put Christian words in action

In his homily at Mass on **Thursday, December 5**, Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel from St Matthew, in which Jesus tells us: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven".

*Pope Francis noted that*, "elsewhere in the Gospel Jesus admonished the Pharisees for knowing everything but not putting what they know into practice. This is why the Lord said to the people: 'do what they tell you, but not what they do, because they don't do what they say!' It is a matter, of words detached from practice. And yet the Lord's words themselves are beautiful. The Commandments and the Beatitudes are among the good and beautiful words which the Lord has given us. However, we can say them repeatedly, but if we do not put them into practice in our lives, not only do they not help but they actually do us harm ... **for they make us believe that we have a beautiful home, when in fact it has no foundation.**



In the Gospel passage from St Matthew, the Lord says "every one then, who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice, will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock". Ultimately, it is a mathematical equation: I know the word, I put it into practice, I am established on rock. The core of the matter, is how I put them into practice. This is Jesus' message: putting them into practice is like building a house upon rock and this figure of the rock refers to the Lord. Prophet Isaiah, in the first Reading says: 'Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord is an everlasting rock'. The rock is Jesus Christ, the rock is the Lord. Our word is forceful, it bestows life, it continues on, it can tolerate any attack if this word is rooted in Jesus Christ. **However, a Christian word whose life-giving roots are not grounded in a person, in Jesus Christ, is a Christian word without Christ.** And Christian words without Christ deceive, they do harm".



The inhabitants of the height. A Christian word without Christ leads to vanity, to self assuredness, to pride, and to power for power's sake. And the Lord brings these people low.

This reality "has been a constant throughout the history of salvation. Anna, the mother of Samuel, says it; Mary says it in the Magnificat: the Lord has humbled the vanity and the pride of those people who thought they were the rock". They pronounce Christian words, he said, "but without Christ: without a relationship with Jesus Christ; without prayer with Jesus Christ; without service to Jesus Christ; without love for Jesus Christ". What the Lord tells us today, is to build our lives on

An English author (*G. K. Chesterton*) when speaking about heresy once said that 'a heresy is a truth, a word, a truth gone mad.' **When Christian words lack Christ, they begin to head down the road of madness.** The prophet Isaiah, clearly describes the nature of this madness. He says: 'The Lord is an everlasting rock. For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height, the lofty

this rock. And he is the rock. St Paul says it explicitly when he refers to Moses striking the rock with his staff. He says: ‘the rock was Christ. Christ is the rock’. This reflection, leads us to examine our consciences by examining our words, by asking whether or not our words are spoken “with Jesus Christ”.

Let us pray that the Lord might help us truly to have the humility we ought to have: always to speak Christian words in Jesus Christ, not without Jesus Christ. Help us, in humility to be disciples, redeemed, to continue on not with words that end in the madness of vanity and pride. May the Lord grant us this grace of humility to speak words with Jesus Christ, which are firmly established on Jesus Christ.” [\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)

## Praying is a bit like “annoying” God

*Pope Francis spoke on the theme of prayer on **Friday, December 6**, saying “**when we pray it’s a bit like annoying God so that he listens to us.**”*

*The Pope commented on the day’s Gospel from St Matthew, which begins: ‘And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David’. The Gospel’s uses the phrase ‘to cry aloud’. Even the blind man who entered Jericho cried aloud, and the Lord’s friends wanted him to be silent. Yet the blind man asks the Lord for a grace, and he asks for it crying aloud, as though he were saying to Jesus: ‘But do it! It’s my right that you do this!’*



“Here crying aloud is a sign of prayer. Jesus himself, when he taught his disciples how to pray, told them to pray like the bothersome friend who went at midnight to ask for bread and a little pasta for his guests, or again, to do as the widow with the corrupt judge. To do so, I would say, by being bothersome, **I don’t know, perhaps this sounds rather bad, but praying is a little like bothering God so that he listens to us.** Prayer, is a matter of drawing God’s eyes and heart to us. This is precisely what the lepers in the Gospel did; who drew near to Jesus and said: ‘If you will it, you can heal us!’. And, they did so with a certain assuredness.



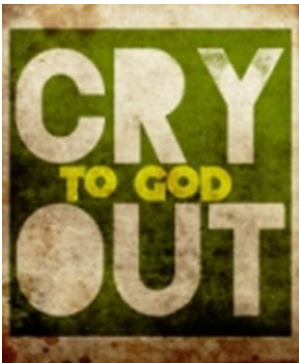
This is how Jesus teaches us to pray. We generally bring our requests to the Lord one, two or three times, but without great strength, and then I tire of asking and I forget to ask. Yet, the blind men whom Matthew describes cry aloud and do not cease crying out. In fact, Jesus tells us: ‘Ask!’ and he also says: ‘Knock at the door!’ and whoever knocks at the door makes noise, he disturbs, he bothers. These are the words Jesus uses to tell us how we should pray. This is also the way the needy pray in the Gospel ... the blind feel confident in asking the Lord to make them well. So much so that the Lord asks them: ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ to which they respond, ‘Yes, Lord. We believe! We are sure!’

**These, then, are prayer’s two attitudes: prayer is ‘needy and confident’.** When we ask for something, our prayer is needy: ‘I need this, hear me Lord!’ And, when it is true, it is also



confident: listen to me, I believe you can do it, for you have promised it!. **In fact, true Christian prayer is founded on God's promise.**

The Reading from Isaiah contains God's promise of salvation to his people: 'that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see'. This passage is a promise. It is all a promise, the promise of salvation: 'I will be with you, I will give you salvation!' And it is with this assuredness that we tell the Lord what we need, confident that he can do it. When we pray, the Lord asks us, as he asked the blind men in the day's Gospel: 'Do you believe that I can do this?' This question is the source of the question we must all ask ourselves: 'Am I sure he can do it? Or do I pray a little but without really being sure if he can really do it?' He can do it, even if we do not know when or how he will do it. This is the confidence of prayer.



As concerns our need, it is best to present them truthfully to the Lord: 'I am blind, Lord, I am in need, I have this illness, I struggle with this sin, I am in pain'. In this way, he hears our needs, but he also hears our confident plea for help. [\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)

## **Pope celebrates Mass with Egyptian Patriarch**

*At his Mass on **Monday, December 9**, Pope Francis appealed for an end to division and hatred in the Holy Land and the Middle East. The Holy Father concelebrated the Mass with the **Coptic Catholic Patriarch of Alexandria (Egypt), Ibrahim Isaac Sidrak**, on the occasion of the public manifestation of "ecclesiastical communion" between the Patriarch and the Successor of Peter.*



"In the First Reading, the prophet Isaiah reawakened in our hearts the anticipation for the Lord's glorious return. The encouragement to those who are of a fearful heart we hear addressed to all those of your beloved land of Egypt who are experiencing insecurity and violence, sometimes on account of the Christian faith: Be strong, fear not!: these are the consoling words which are confirmed in fraternal solidarity. I am grateful to God for this meeting which gives me the opportunity to strengthen your hope and ours, because it is the same: '... the burning sand ... and the thirsty ground, in fact, shall become springs of water' and finally the 'Holy Way', the way of joy and happiness shall be opened and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This is our hope, the common hope of our two Churches.

**The Gospel presents Christ who triumphs over the paralysis of humanity.** It portrays the power of divine mercy which forgives and wipes away every sin when it encounters authentic faith. **The paralysis of conscience is contagious.** Through the complicity of the poverty of history and our sin, it can grow and enter into the social structures and communities to the point of obstructing entire peoples. However, Christ's command — 'Rise and walk!' can reverse the situation.

**Let us confidently pray that in the Holy Land and in the entire Middle East peace may rise again from the far too frequent and oftentimes dramatic interruptions of the peace process.**

May enmity and division cease. May peace negotiations which have often been paralyzed by conflicting and dark interests resume quickly. At long last may real guarantees of religious liberty be given for all people, together with the right for Christians to live peacefully where they were born, in the homeland which they have loved for 2,000 years, that they might contribute to the common good as they have always done. May the Lord Jesus, who with the Holy Family



experienced the flight into Egypt and was a guest in your generous land, watch over the Egyptians who are searching for dignity and security along the world's roads. And let us always go ahead, seeking the Lord, seeking new paths, new ways to draw close to the Lord. And were it necessary to open a hole in the roof to let everyone approach the Lord, may our charitable and creative imagination lead us to this: to find and create paths of encounter, paths of brotherhood, paths of peace.

For our part, we wish to glorify God, substituting fear with wonder: even today we can still see wondrous things. The wonder of the Incarnation of the Word and, therefore, of the absolute closeness of God to humanity, which places us within the mystery of Advent. May your great Father Athanasius, who is placed so close to the Chair of Peter in the Vatican Basilica, intercede for us, with St Mark and St Peter, and especially with the Immaculate and All Holy Mother of God. [\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)

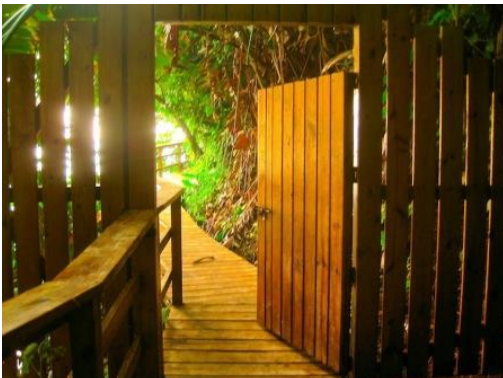
## The door of the Lord is always open

**'When Jesus approaches us, He always opens the doors and gives us hope.'** was the message of Pope Francis **Tuesday, December 10**. He said "we must never fear the consolation of the Lord, but rather must ask for and seek that consolation that makes us feel the tenderness of God."

'Comfort, give comfort to my people,' says, Isaiah, a book of the consolation of Israel. The Lord approaches His people to comfort them, ..to give them peace. And this work of consolation is so strong that it draws all things to Himself. The Lord accomplishes a true re-creation.

He re-creates things. And the Church never tires of saying that this re-creation is more wonderful than the creation. The Lord re-creates more wonderfully. And so He visits His people: re-creating, with that power.

And the people of God always had this idea, this thought, that the Lord will come to visit them. We remember the last word of Joseph to his brothers: 'When the Lord will visit you, you must take my bones with you.' The Lord will visit His people. It is the hope of Israel. But He will visit them with this consolation.



And the consolation is this drawing all things to Himself, not once, but many times, with the universe and also with us. This 'drawing of the Lord,' has two dimensions that are important to emphasize. When the Lord approaches, He gives us hope; **the Lord draws us to Himself with hope. He always opens a door. Always! When the Lord**



**approaches, he doesn't close doors, He opens [them].** The Lord in His nearness gives us hope, this hope that is a true strength in the Christian life. It is a grace, it is a gift!

**When a Christian forgets hope, or worse, loses hope, his life is senseless.** It's as if his life hits a wall: there's nothing. But the Lord comforts us and draws us forward with hope. And He does it with a special closeness to each one, because the Lord comforts His people and comforts each one of us. It's beautiful how today's reading ends: 'Like a shepherd He feeds His flock; in His arms He gathers the lambs, carrying them in His bosom, and leading the ewes with care.' That image of carrying the lambs in His bosom, and leading the ewes with care: that is tenderness. **The Lord comforts us with tenderness.**

**God who is powerful is not afraid of tenderness. He becomes tender, becomes a child,**



**...becomes small.** In the Gospel, Jesus says the same: 'In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.' In the eyes of the Lord, each one of us is very, very important. And He gives with tenderness. And so He makes us go forward, giving us hope. This was the principle work of Jesus in the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension: to comfort the disciples, to be close to them and give them consolation.

He came close to them and gave them hope. He approached them with tenderness. But we think of the tenderness He had with the Apostles, with Mary Magdalene, with those of Emmaus. He approached with tenderness: 'Give me something to eat.' With Thomas: 'Put your finger here.' The Lord is always this way. This is the consolation of the Lord. May the Lord give to all of us the grace to not be afraid of the consolation of the Lord, to be open: ask for it, seek it, because it is a consolation that will give us hope, and make us feel the tenderness of God the Father."

[\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)

## Be silent, so we can hear the tenderness of God

"Preparing for Christmas, we would do well to take a moment of silence to listen to God who speaks to us with the tenderness of a father and of a mother." *That was the message of Pope Francis at the **Thursday December 12.***



*Beginning with the reading from the Prophet Isaiah, the Pope emphasized not only "what the Lord says, but how He says it. God speaks to us as a father or a mother speaks to their children:"*

**"When the child has a bad dream, he wakes up, cries . . . the father goes and says, 'Don't be afraid, don't be afraid, I'm here.' That's how the Lord speaks to us.** 'Do not fear, you worm Jacob, you maggot Israel' (Is 41,13). The Lord has this way of speaking to us: He is near . . . When we look at a father

or a mother who speaks to their little child, we see that they become little and speak with a voice of



a child and with the manners of children. Someone looking in from the outside think, ‘This is ridiculous!’ They become smaller, right there, no? Because the love of a father and a mother needs to be close. I say this word: to lower themselves to the world of the child. . . . If the father and mother spoke to them normally, the child would still understand; but they want to take up the manner of speaking of the child. They come close, they become children. And so it is with the Lord.

The Greek theologians, explained this attitude of God with a somewhat difficult word: ‘synkatábasi’ or ‘the humble and accommodating disposition [condiscendenza] of **God who lowers Himself to make Himself one of us. And so, the father and the mother also say ridiculous things to the child: ‘Ah, my love, my toy . . .’** and all these things. And the Lord says this too, ‘you worm Jacob, you are like a worm to me, a tiny little thing, but I love you so much.’ **This is the language of the Lord, the language of the love of a father, of a mother.** The word of the Lord? Yes, we understand what He tells us. But we also see how He says it. And we must do what the Lord does, do what He says and do it as He says it: with love, with tenderness, with that condescension towards the brethren.



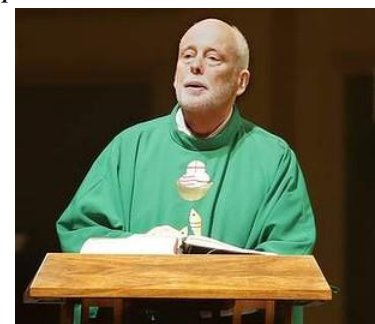
Elijah encountered God, when the Lord came to him as ‘a gentle breeze’(1 Kgs 19,11ff) or as it says in the original text, ‘a sound of silence’. That is how the **Lord draws near, with that resonance of silence that is proper to love. ...Without making a spectacle. And He becomes small in order to make me strong;** He goes to death, with that condescension, so that I might live.

This is the music of the language of the Lord, and we, in the preparation for Christmas, ought to hear it: it would do us so much good. Normally, Christmas seems to be a very noisy holiday: it would do us good to have a little silence and to hear these words of love, these words of such nearness, these words of tenderness . . . ‘You are a worm, but I love you so much.’ [Let us pray] for this, and to be silent in this time in which, as it says in the preface, we are watchful in waiting. ([Watch VIDEO](#))

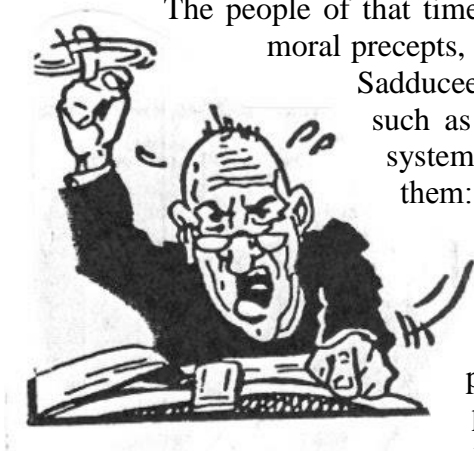
## The scandal of preaching

*Pope Francis celebrated Mass **Friday December 13**, focusing his remarks on the **attitude of some Christians who seem to be ‘allergic’ to preachers and overly critical of those who proclaim the Gospel**, suggesting that they are often afraid of letting the Holy Spirit into their lives and are therefore prone to profound sadness.*

*In his remarks to the faithful following the readings of the day, Pope Francis focused on the day's Gospel, drawn from St Matthew. “There, Jesus compares the generation of his time to always unhappy children, explaining that they were, ‘not open to the Word of God.’ Their refusal was not of the message, but of the messenger. They reject John the Baptist, who came, neither eating nor drinking,*



saying of him that he was a man possessed. They reject Jesus because they say, 'He is a glutton, a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners.' They always have a reason to criticize the preacher.



The people of that time preferred to take refuge in a more elaborate religion: in the moral precepts, such as the group of Pharisees; in political compromise, as the Sadducees; in social revolution, as the zealots; in gnostic spirituality, such as Essenes. They were [happy] with their clean, well-polished system. The preacher, however, was not [so pleased]. Jesus reminded them: 'Your fathers did the same with the prophets.' The people of God have a certain allergy to the preachers of the Word: they persecuted the prophets, [even] killed them.

These people claimed to accept the truth of revelation, but the preacher, preaching, no. They prefer a life caged in their precepts, in their compromises, in their revolutionary plans or in their [disembodied] spirituality." They are those Christians, who are always discontented with what preachers say.

**These Christians are closed, they are trapped, sad ... these Christians are not free.** Why? Because they are afraid of the freedom of the Holy Spirit, which comes through preaching. This, then, is the scandal of preaching, of which **St. Paul spoke: the scandal of preaching that ends in the scandal of the Cross.** That God should speak to us through men with limits, sinful men, scandalizes: and what scandalizes even more is that that God should speak to us and save us by way of a man who says he is the Son of God but ends [his life] as a criminal. That scandalizes.

These sad Christians do not believe in the Holy Spirit, do not believe in the freedom that comes from preaching, which admonishes you, teaches you – slaps you, as well – **but it is the very freedom that makes the Church grow.**

Seeing these children who are afraid to dance, to cry, [who are] afraid of everything, who ask for certainty in all things, I think of these sad Christians, who always criticize the preachers of the Truth, because they are afraid to open the door to the Holy Spirit. Let us pray for them, and pray also for ourselves, that we do not become sad Christians, cutting off the freedom of the Holy Spirit to come to us through the scandal of preaching. [\(Watch VIDEO\)](#)

