

OPENING MASS OF THE SEVENTH INTERNATIONAL  
POPULUS SUMMORUM PONTIFICUM PILGRIMAGE

*CHURCH OF SANTISSIMA TRINITÀ DEI PELLEGRINI, ROME*

**Homily by Fr. Charles Ike, FSSP**

He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Today is a ferial day in the Latin rite of the Church, so we are offering the Votive Mass of the Holy Cross to begin this year Populus Summorum Pontificum Pilgrimage.

When you think of the Holy Cross of Our Lord or cross in general, what impression does it create in your mind. Because in the olden days, the cross is something one may think of, when one think of an evil person, or something very evil. Why? Because it was used only to crucify the evil ones, those who committed grave crime in the society. That's why the Jews Crucified Christ on the tree of the cross. Because they thought that He blasphemed, by saying that he has the power to forgive sin. They claimed that He raised Himself above what He is, or equal to God.

But in the real sense of it, when a Christian think of cross, first, the mind will go straight to the means of human salvation. The devil defeated man on the tree of disobedience by tempting our first parents Adam and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree, but Christ, on the other hand defeated the devil on the tree of the cross, by being obedient to His Father, He accept the death on the cross, and by it we are redeemed. He took human nature, and died on the Cross, so that he who is defeated on the tree of disobedience, would also defeat the enemy back, but on the tree of obedience, the tree of the cross.

Christ has come to save us, and show us the way to salvation, then He says to us; "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me (Matthew 16:24)."

Since we are on a pilgrimage, how does it connect to these words of Christ, carry your cross and follow me? In this case it is necessarily involved the cross of patient, which is actually not possible to achieve without the love of charity. You can reflect on the people of Israel in exile, from the land of Egypt going to the promise land. What happened to them, when they start to complain and murmur? The journey itself is prolonged beyond limit. The same also should apply to our journey of faith, the journey to heaven, it requires

necessarily and primarily that virtue of charity which would enable us to practice patient and other virtues. Why? Because, without the virtue of charity, all your penance, in these three days of pilgrimage and reparation, may not be offered for a rightful purpose, thereby, may not be fruitful, and that will make our situation and the situation of things in the Church even more difficult.

The people of Israel in exile going to the promise land, can be taken as a symbol of the Christians struggling to defeat the difficulties of this life, to attain to that Eternal Happiness, which is our ultimate goal. That struggle toward perfection can come in different ways, for different people, and it is nothing else than the cross which each one has to carry, and to defeat in order to go the heaven.

In our journey to heaven there will be many objects of distraction, just like in this pilgrimage; you are going to encounter so many things on the way, some that will help you to end up well, and some other things that would cut off your mind from what you are doing, but it is up to each person to choose where to focus one's attention? And whichever one you choose will then determine the end profit of your pilgrimage.

St. Helena, the mother of emperor Constantine I, made her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, only to look for the Relic of the True Cross, and she found it. Today wherever you talk of the Holy Cross of Our Lord, her name is to be mentioned, why? Because she made use of the opportunity that she had, to look for that treasure by which she was redeemed. And by it and through patient endurance, she merited heaven.

Her son the emperor Constantine, adhered to the instruction of the vision which he saw about the Holy Cross, and he defeated in the battle at the Milvian Bridge in 312AD. Today is our own turn. We are called to pray for our own good and for the whole Church, for the salvation of souls, especially in this difficult situation of the Church. It is therefore, necessary for us to give our attention to God in this pilgrimage of reparation, like Constantine, so that we may defeat the spiritual battle that is right now before us, that we may win our own crown in heaven.

Remember the expression; no cross, no crown, and in support of that Christ says; "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, carry his cross and follow me. And it is only when we carried our cross, and patiently defeat all the trials on our way that we may be raised up like Christ on the Cross. So, let us then, forget everything that we left behind for this pilgrimage and focus our whole mind toward, that we may see the problem facing the whole Church today as our big cross to carry, that we may ask for God's mercy and help to defeat, so that in the end we may be raised up by the crown of Eternal Happiness.

May God bless you all.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.