

**CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY MASS FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE "FREE OF FEAR" MEETING**

**HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS**

Fraterna Domus - Sacrofano

Friday, 15 February 2019

[Link](#)

[...] Faced with the wickedness and ugliness of our time, we too, like the people of Israel, are tempted to abandon our dream of freedom. We feel legitimate fear in the face of situations that seem to us without a way out. And the human words of a condottiere or prophet are not enough to reassure us, when we fail to feel the presence of God and are not able to abandon ourselves to his providence. Thus, we close ourselves in ourselves, in our fragile human certainties, in the circle of loved ones, in our reassuring routine. And in the end we give up the journey to the promised land to return to the slavery of Egypt.

This turning in on oneself, a sign of defeat, increases our fear of the "others", the unknown, the marginalized, the foreigners - who are also the privileged of the Lord, as we read in Matthew 25. And this is particularly noticeable today, faced with the arrival of migrants and refugees who knock on our door in search of protection, security and a better future. True, fear is legitimate, also because preparation for this meeting is missing. I said it last year, on the occasion of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees: «It is not easy to enter the culture of others, put oneself in the shoes of people so different from us, understand their thoughts and experiences. And so, often, we renounce the encounter with the other and raise barriers to defend ourselves ». Giving up a meeting is not human.

We are called instead to overcome the fear to open ourselves to the meeting. And to do this, rational justifications and statistical calculations are not enough. Moses tells the people in front of the Red Sea, with a fierce enemy who presses him on his back: "Do not be afraid", because the Lord does not abandon his people, but acts mysteriously in history to realize his plan of salvation. Moses speaks so simply because he trusts God.

The encounter with the other, then, is also an encounter with Christ. He told us himself. He is the one who knocks on our door, hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, in prison, asking to be met and assisted. And if we still have some doubts, here is his clear word: "Truly I say to you, all you have done to one of these my little brothers, you did it to me" (Mt 25,40).

The encouragement of the Master to his disciples can also be understood in this sense: "Courage, it is I, do not be afraid" (Mt 14:27). It is really Him, even if our eyes find it hard to recognize Him: with broken clothes, with dirty feet, with a

deformed face, a wounded body, unable to speak our language ... We too, like Peter, might be tempted to put Jesus to the test and ask him for a sign. And maybe, after a few hesitant steps towards Him, to remain victims of our fears again. But the Lord does not abandon us! Even if we are men and women "of little faith", Christ continues to extend his hand to save us and allow the encounter with him, an encounter that saves us and gives us back the joy of being his disciples.

If this is a valid key to understanding our history today, then we should begin to thank those who give us the opportunity for this meeting, that is, the "others" who knock on our doors, offering us the opportunity to overcome our fears to meet , welcome and assist Jesus in person.

And those who have had the strength to let themselves be freed from fear, those who have experienced the joy of this meeting are called today to announce it on the roofs, openly, to help others do the same, preparing themselves for the encounter with Christ and his salvation.

Brothers and sisters, this is a grace that carries with it a mission, the fruit of complete entrustment to the Lord, which is for us the only true certainty. For this reason, as individuals and as a community, we are called to make our own the prayer of the redeemed people: "My strength and my song is the Lord, he was my salvation" (Exodus 15: 2).

[...]