



Address at Yad Vashem

Pope Francis | 31.05.2014

Address of Pope Francis during his visit to the Yad Vashem Memorial, Jerusalem, Monday, 26 May 2014.

“Adam, where are you?” (cf. Gen 3:9). Where are you, o man? What have you come to? In this place, this memorial of the Shoah, we hear God’s question echo once more: “Adam, where are you?” This question is charged with all the sorrow of a Father who has lost his child. The Father knew the risk of freedom; he knew that his children could be lost... yet perhaps not even the Father could imagine so great a fall, so profound an abyss! Here, before the boundless tragedy of the Holocaust, That cry – “Where are you?” – echoes like a faint voice in an unfathomable abyss...

Adam, who are you? I no longer recognize you. Who are you, o man? What have you become? Of what horror have you been capable? What made you fall to such depths?

Certainly it is not the dust of the earth from which you were made. The dust of the earth is something good, the work of my hands. Certainly it is not the breath of life which I breathed into you. That breath comes from me, and it is something good (cf. Gen 2:7).

No, this abyss is not merely the work of your own hands, your own heart... Who corrupted you? Who disfigured you? Who led you to presume that you are the master of good and evil? Who convinced you that you were god? Not only did you torture and kill your brothers and sisters, but you sacrificed them to yourself, because you made yourself a god.

Today, in this place, we hear once more the voice of God: “Adam, where are you?”

From the ground there rises up a soft cry: “Have mercy on us, O Lord!” To you, O Lord our God, belongs righteousness; but to us confusion of face and shame (cf. Bar 1:15).

A great evil has befallen us, such as never happened under the heavens (cf. Bar 2:2). Now, Lord, hear our prayer, hear our plea, save us in your mercy. Save us from this horror.

Almighty Lord, a soul in anguish cries out to you. Hear, Lord, and have mercy! We have sinned against you. You reign for ever (cf. Bar 3:1-2). Remember us in your mercy. Grant us the grace to be ashamed of what we men have done, to be ashamed of this massive idolatry, of having despised and destroyed our own flesh which you formed from the earth, to which you gave life with your own breath of life. Never again, Lord, never again!

“Adam, where are you?” Here we are, Lord, shamed by what man, created in your own image and likeness, was capable of doing.

Remember us in your mercy.

Editorial remarks

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