



**Homily offered by H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata,  
President of COMECE, during the Holy Mass celebrated by H.E.  
Mgr. Philippe Jourdan in the St. Peter and St. Paul's Cathedral  
(Tallin, Estonia) on Sunday 18 June 2023**

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”.

It is from this statement in the Gospel that we need to start in order to grasp the message of the Word of God of this Sunday. Jesus is the revelation of God's care toward his people, toward us, a visceral solicitude that involves God intimately with unconditional love. The first reading reiterates this by reporting the words spoken by God, "I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

Even today we can say that we are like sheep without a shepherd; we feel lost; circumstances inside and outside our communities often leave us dazed and frightened. Our Lord, however, never forgets us, indeed never loses sight of us. Therefore, he chooses persons who can help us in our life. Such are the apostles, and those who are appointed to pastoral ministry to serve God's people.

The Lord wants to invite us, then, to never lose faith, never to abandon ourselves to discouragement, for He cares for us and will always continue to do so. This trust is the most important gift we have to face the fears and difficulties

that are present in our lives. Indeed, no one can take away from us the certainty of the Lord's nearness; only we ourselves have the power of letting ourselves go into discouragement and to no longer rely on the Lord, to no longer trust and believe in Him. In this sense, only our faith can save us, that is the certainty that the Lord is faithful, that His promises are worth trusting. And even St. Paul, in the passage of the Epistle to the Romans we just heard, reiterates this with great emphasis by declaring that Jesus was willing to die for people that were far from God: "But God proves his love for u in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us".

Two things we are asked to do, without which the Lord, so to speak, can do nothing (not because someone can stop Him from acting, rather because He does not intend to force anyone's will, nor freedom). The first thing, according the first reading, is to "hearken to my voice and keep my covenant". The Lord is full of compassion and mercy; we cannot remain indifferent, but we have to welcome Him, get in tune with Him and ask for the gift of a meek, open, and welcoming heart, open to Him.

The second thing that He asks us to do is to keep our responsibilities towards others. The first reading says: "You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation". Each of us has a task, a responsibility, before God and in relations to others, those with who we live and those we encounter in our lives. The Gospel reads again: "Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give". Which means that it is no longer time to think only about oneself; we need to start to take care of the others around us.

The conclusion is simple: precisely because we face difficulties but know and trust the Lord's compassion and his care for us, we have to be concerned not only about ourselves but also about the others, about those who suffer as we do or even more than us. The Lord will take care of us and deliver us, but only if our heart is open to Him. Today we ask this of the Lord for us and for the Christians of other Churches who are holding their ecumenical assembly here in Tallinn.