Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis gives his homily during Mass April 29, 2020, in the chapel of his Vatican residence, the Domus Sanctae Marthae. The pope prayed "for the unity of Europe, for the European Union so that together we may go forward as brothers and sisters," confronting the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Like children who usually speak without sugarcoating their words, Christians must be simple yet concrete when acknowledging their sins, Pope Francis said.

In his homily during his morning Mass April 29, the pope said that Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving to God for revealing himself "to the childlike" reminded him of the concreteness of children, especially during confession.

"I always remember a boy who came to me one time and told me he was sad because he argued with his aunt," he recalled.

"'What did you do?' I asked him. 'I was at home. I wanted to go play soccer, but my aunt — because my mother wasn't there — told me, "No, you can't go out. You have to do your homework first." Words were said, and in the end, I told her to go to you-know-where,'" the pope recounted.

"And that little boy had such a good grasp of geography, he even told me where it was that he told her to go!" the pope added jokingly. "That's how they are: simple, concrete. We must also be simple and concrete," he added.

At the start of the Mass, the pope commemorated the feast of St. Catherine of Siena, patroness of Italy and of Europe, and prayed "for the unity of Europe, for the European Union so that together we may go forward as brothers and sisters," confronting the coronavirus pandemic and its aftermath.

The pope began his homily by reflecting on the day's first reading from the First Letter of St. John, in which the apostle calls on Christians to live in truth and acknowledge their sins.

"If we say, 'We are without sin,' we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing," the reading stated.

The pope said St. John's words are a reminder that "truth is concrete," not like people who use the phrase "we are all sinners" in a general way while not acknowledging their own sins.

"Truth is always concrete; lies are ethereal, they are like air, you can't take hold of it," he said. "You can't go and confess your sins in an abstract way."

Recalling the day's Gospel reading, the pope said that Jesus' prayer of thanksgiving to God for having "hidden these things from the wise and the learned" and instead "revealed them to the childlike" is also a call for Christians to embrace concreteness and simplicity.

The pope said he recently received a letter from a young boy, Andrea, who lives in the northern Italian town of Caravaggio. Andrea said that, after watching the pope's Mass on television, he had to "correct" him because the pope said, "Peace be with you."

"'You can't say this because with the pandemic we can't touch each other,'" the boy said, according to the pope.

Francis said that although Andrea didn't see that those at the Mass bowed to each other at the sign of peace and did not shake hands, he appreciated that the boy had "the freedom to say things as they are."

"We too, with the Lord, must have the freedom to say things as they are," the pope said.

"Let us ask the Lord for the grace of simplicity and may he give us this grace that he gives to simple people, to children, to young people who say what they feel, who do not hide what they feel. Even if it is a wrong thing, they say it," Francis said.

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