

Homily of Don Marco Gnani at Santa Maria in Trastevere
Liturgy of the Assumption for Peace in Syria and Aleppo
August 15, 2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

we celebrate the feast of the assumption of Maria with restless and anxious hearts: to Her, whose body did not know the corruption of death and lived believing in the greatness of the mercy of God, we turn our gaze, imploring salvation and peace for the city of Aleppo and all of Syria. Together with us today in prayer are numerous of our Syrian friends: Christians from Aleppo, Homs, and Damascus who have come to Italy in these last two months through the Humanitarian Corridors. In their lives and the lives of all those of Aleppo, which has now been under hostage and a merciless war for five years, we seem to face the same cosmic battle that John sees in his vision. An enormous red dragon, with a horrific appearance with “seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on its heads; Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that it might devour her child the moment he was born.” Like a mad demon, Evil – which in conflicts seems omnipotent – puts itself in front of the newborn life as to kill, the child, the children, the innocent, and ultimately hope. At Aleppo – a city which is symbol of coexistence, the rare gem of a long history over the course of thousands of years, made of ancient relationships between Christians and Muslims, a city that has witnessed even a Jewish presence – today people die in the easy as in the west, for the bombs, missiles, hunger, thirst, and most of all the indifference of those, even if they could, chose to not listen to the cry of the innocent and the appeals that Aleppo be spared. The Armenian bishops, Catholics and orthodox, of this city are at Santa Maria in Trastevere and have made us aware of the drama and tragedy in their community. But the global public has seen with its own eyes the remains of buildings, the anguish of the sick without medicine, the horror of hospitals targets of hatred without restraint, hatred so cynical to hit the unborn and maternity wards.

How much pain ... and not even God resigns to the demands of Evils, but rather asks and implores that men and women do the same. Maria is in fact the symbol of the opposition of God to death. He prepared her so that she could welcome the Son, Jesus. A woman, a mother, who accepted an extraordinary life of love, full of pain and of hope. She intercedes for every; for the mothers who, like her, have seen their sons crucified by an unheard and unjustifiable violence. She intercedes for the workers of iniquity, so that they may convert. As the Apostle Paul affirms, the real enemy, “the last enemy that will be annihilated will be death.” Maria continued believing in the victory of good and has opened for us a path to heaven, loving until the end. In Her, recites the Liturgy of the Church, “the beginning and image of the Church, You have revealed the fulfillment of the mystery

of Salvation and have made shine for your people, pilgrims on earth, a sign of consolation and secure hope. You did not want that she know the corruption of the tomb, she who had generated the Lord of life.”

To Her today we turn, when our political agendas seem deaf to the cry of the weak, those weak who Maria considers to be her sons, brothers and sisters in the humanity of her Son Jesus, no matter their religion, age, or condition. Maria cannot help, but search for the embrace of he who carries within him another life, like Elizabeth whom she reaches by crossing a mountain alone. She cannot help, but to defend life.

We cannot resign in front of the suffering cry of Aleppo. We would like to today, thinking and praying for Aleppo and all of Syria, sing the Magnificat, with Maria “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant ...

And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm: he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts: he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

That the Lord shake and reawaken the consciences of the people, of leaders, of believe and that the siege of death that has killed Aleppo and all of her sons end. That their invocation rise to God and find our hearts, vulnerable to the pain and thirsty for peace. To God, for whom everything is possible and who made Mary his blessed mother, listen to our prayer. Amen