



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The courage of definitive choices

Monday, 25 November 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 48, 29 November 2013)

In his homily at Holy Mass, the Pope commented on the first Reading of the day, taken from the Book of the Prophet Daniel (1:1-6; 8-20), which recounts the story of the young Jewish men who found the courage to refuse the unlawful food imposed by King Nebuchadnezzar, and whom the Lord rewarded by making them physically and mentally more agile than the rest. The Pope began by noting that the young men “were in an extreme situation since they were slaves; in those days when someone fell into slavery, nothing was secure anymore, not even life”.

The Pope then turned to the Gospel passage from St Luke (21:1-4) which describes the poor widow who put two small coins in the offering box, thus giving to God all she had to live on. “Jesus tells us that she was poor. At that time women didn’t have their husbands’ pensions to live on, they were poor. They were in an extreme situation”.

Both the young men and the elderly widow were in an extreme situation then, when they had to make a crucial decision.

“The widow went up to the temple to adore God, to tell him that he was above all things and that she loved him, and she gave all she had to live on. Hers was more than generosity, it was

something else”, the Pope said. “She had no thought for herself. She could have said: ‘Lord, you know I need this to eat today’. However, she chose to adore God to the very end”.

The young men in the Old Testament also had the possibility of finding “an emergency exit from their situation. They could have said: ‘We are slaves, we cannot fulfil the law here. We need to preserve our lives, not get too thin, not fall ill ... let’s eat!’” Instead, the Pope added, “they said no. They made their choice: the Lord. And they found a way to remain faithful, even under very difficult circumstances”.

The young men and the widow “took a risk”, the Pope continued, “and in their risk they chose the Lord”. They acted from the heart, with no personal interest and not so as to attract attention to themselves, but rather “because they knew that the Lord is faithful. They entrusted themselves to his eternal faithfulness. The Lord is always faithful, for he cannot deny himself”.

Entrusting oneself to the Lord’s faithfulness is a choice “that we too have the opportunity to make in our Christian lives”, the Pope said. At times this involves “a great and difficult decision”. Throughout the history of the Church, and even in our own times, there are men and women, young and old who make this decision. We realize it, the Pope continued, “when we read the lives of the martyrs, when we read in the news about the persecution of Christians today. Let us think about our brothers and sisters who find themselves in extreme situations and who make this decision. They live in our own day and are examples for us. They encourage us to offer the Church our whole livelihood”.

The Pope then returned to the Book of the Prophet Daniel, noting how the Lord “helped them and brought them out of difficulty; they were victorious and came to a good end”. The Lord also helped the widow in the Gospel, for “in Jesus’ praise of her, we find God’s praise ... and this is a victory”. Pope Francis added: “It will do us good to think about our brothers and sisters throughout history and even today who have had to make critical choices”.

The Pope invited those present to think about “the many mothers and fathers who make critical choices each day in order to continue on with their families, with their children. They are an example for us”. He then concluded: “Let us ask for the grace of courage, for the courage to continue on in our Christian lives, amid the day to day, and also in extreme situations”.