



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The time of re-creation

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In order to truly be “mother”, the Church must “let herself be startled by the newness of God”, who through the Holy Spirit is able to “make all things new”. Otherwise she risks becoming barren, afflicted by Pelagianism, selfishness, power, by the desire to “take over consciences” or becoming an “entrepreneur”. Pope Francis pointed out this temptation during the Mass at Santa Marta celebrated on Friday.

Francis’ reflection was inspired by the day’s Readings: the births of Samson and John the Baptist announced by angels, as told in the Book of Judges (13:2-7, 24-25a) and the Gospel according to Luke (1:5-25). “Today, the word that the Church makes us reflect on, prior to Christmas, the most important word today, is ‘barren’”, the Pontiff explained. The liturgy, in fact, “presents to us these two barren women who had no children, they weren’t able to have any”. The Pope recalled that “in the people of Israel, barrenness was borne with difficulty: one could probably say that the inability to give life was considered almost a curse, because not having children prevented the fulfillment of the Lord’s commandment to fill the earth with new lives”.

Yet, he noted, “there are many barren women in the Bible, and always for important reasons”. Starting with “Sarah, our mother: barren” but “the Lord performs a miracle”. And “the mother of

Samuel was barren too”: and in this situation as well, “the Lord performs a miracle”. And again, “the daughter of Jephthah went to the mountain bewailing her virginity, because she was not able to have children before she died”.

Thus, Francis explained, “barrenness was a bad, bad thing”. And today, the Church “shows us this symbol of barrenness, just before the birth of Jesus, through a woman unable to have a child”. This “is the sign of a humanity unable to take one more step: so many barren women were old, their wombs were no longer fertile”. And “the Church wants us to reflect on this barren humanity”, on the humanity that “had reached the point where it could no longer go on”. Recalling that “the law of Moses provided for the offspring of a dead man, because it was so important to have descendants, to give life”, the Pope remarked that “these barren women receive a miracle, they receive the grace of the Lord and they are able to conceive”.

“From barrenness”, the Pontiff continued, “the Lord is capable of reopening a new lineage, a new life: this is today’s message”. Therefore, “when humanity is exhausted, it can no longer go onward, grace comes and the Son comes, and salvation comes”. And in this way, “that exhausted creation makes way for the new creation, and thus we can call it a ‘re-creation’”.

Therefore, the truly “marvelous miracle of creation leaves room for an even more marvelous miracle: re-creation, as the prayer says today: ‘You, Lord, who marvelously created the world, and more marvelously recreated it’”.

Thus, it is precisely “this ‘second’ creation when the earth is exhausted, and today’s message: we await the ‘master’, capable of recreating all things, of making things new”. And hence “we await the newness of God”. This, after all, is Christmas: “the newness of God who remakes creation, all things, in a more marvelous way”.

The Pontiff then emphasized that “it’s curious” that “in both texts, both that of Manoah’s wife and that of Elizabeth, in order to explain how He will do this, how this will come about, the Holy Spirit is spoken of: ‘the Spirit of the Lord stirred him’, it says”. And “this ‘re-creation’ is possible only with the Spirit of God”. What then is the message? “Let us open ourselves to the Spirit of God. We can’t do it alone. It is He who is able to do things”.

The issue of barrenness, the Pope said, “also makes me think of our Mother Church, of the many kinds of barrenness that afflict our Mother Church when, due to the importance of hope in the Commandments, that Pelagianism that we all carry in our bones, she becomes barren: she believes she is able to give birth”, but can’t. Instead, “the Church is a mother and becomes a mother only when she opens herself to the newness of God, to the power of the Spirit”. It is “when she says to herself: ‘I do everything, but I’m done, I can’t give any more’” and then the Spirit comes.

Francis then asked to pray “for our Mother Church, for so much barrenness in the People of God: the barrenness of selfishness, of power”. For “the Church is barren when she believes she can do it all, that she can take over the consciences of the people, going the way of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, on the path of hypocrisy”. This is why we need to pray. And to do so in a way that this Christmas also renders “our Church open to the gift of God”, able to let herself be “startled by the Holy Spirit”: a Church “which has children, a Mother Church”.

However, the Pope indicated, “I have thought so many times that the Church, in some places, is more an entrepreneur than a mother”. Therefore, he concluded, “looking at this history of the barrenness of the People of God, and the many stories in the history of the Church that have made the Church barren, let us ask the Lord, today, looking at the Nativity scene, for the grace of fruitfulness for the Church”. The grace that “the Church may be a mother, first of all, like Mary: a mother!