



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Not talk but action

Tuesday, 23 February 2016

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It is of no use calling ourselves Christians, because “God is practical”. What is important is not talk but action. The Pope proposed a return to the basics of Christian life, and invited an examination of conscience on the Beatitudes and, in particular, on one’s witness in the family. This was the subject of his homily on Tuesday, 23 February, during morning Mass at Santa Marta.

“The Liturgy of the Word today introduces us to the Gospel dialectic between doing and talking”, Francis began, referring to the day’s reading from the Prophet Isaiah (1:10, 16-20). “The Lord calls his people to act: “Come now, let us reason together”. Let us reason and “cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow”. In other words, “act, do things”, he said, because “God is practical”.

After all, Jesus himself said: “those who call me ‘Lord, Lord’ will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven”, but rather, those “who have done the will of the Father”. Thus the Pope recalled that “the Lord teaches us the path of action”. And, he added, “how often we find people — ourselves included — so often in the Church” who proclaim: “I am a real Catholic!”. They should be asked, “what do you do?”. For example, Francis noted, “how many parents say they are Catholic, but never take the time to speak to their children, to play with their children, to listen to their children?”. Perhaps, he continued, “they have their parents in a rest home, but they are always busy and cannot go to visit them, leaving them abandoned there”. Yet they repeat: “I am a real Catholic. I belong to that

association...".

This attitude, the Pope stated, is typical of this "religion of talk: I say that I am like this, but I do worldly things. Like those clerics that Jesus spoke about". They "liked being seen, they preferred their vanity, not justice; they liked being called 'master'; they liked to talk, not to do".

This situation is also recalled in the day's Gospel passage, taken from Matthew, Chapter 25 (1-12). "Let's think about those 10 maidens who were happy", the Pope said, "because that evening they were supposed to go and meet the bridegroom. They were happy! But five did what they were supposed to do in order to meet the bridegroom; the other five had their heads in the clouds". Thus, he continued, when "the bridegroom arrived they had no oil: they were foolish".

"To talk and not do is deceit", the Pontiff warned. And "it is deceit that really leads to hypocrisy". It is exactly "as Jesus says to these clerics". But "the Lord goes even further: what does the Lord say to those who draw near to him by doing?". His words are: "Come now, let us reason together! Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool".

Thus, Francis explained, "the Lord's mercy is in doing". Such that to "those who knock at the door and say: 'But Lord, remember that I said...'", he responds: "I do not know you!". Instead, to those "who do", he says: your sins are "like scarlet, you shall be white as snow". This is how "the Lord's mercy goes to meet those who have the courage to face him, but to face him on the truth, on the things that I do and those I do not do, in order to correct me". And "this is the great love of the Lord, in this dialectic between talk and action".

Therefore, the Pope continued, "being Christian means acting: doing the will of God". And on "the last day — because we will all have one — what will the Lord ask us? Will he ask us: 'What have you said about me?'. No! He will ask about the things we have done". He will ask us about "practical things: 'I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me'". Because "this is Christian life". On the other hand, "talk by itself leads us to vanity, to the pretence of being Christian. No, one is not Christian like this!".

As Easter approaches, "on this Lenten path of conversion", Francis proposed an examination of conscience, suggesting several questions to ask ourselves: "Am I one of those who talk a lot but do nothing, or do I do things? Do I try to do more?". The goal, he said, is "to do the Lord's will so as to do good for my brothers, for those who are close to me".

In conclusion, before returning to the Eucharistic celebration, the Pope prayed that "the Lord grant us this wisdom to properly understand the difference between talk and action, and teach us the path of doing and help us to take that path, because the path of talking leads to the place where

these doctors of the law were, the clerics who liked to dress and live as if they were kings". But "this is not the reality of the Gospel!". Thus he prayed that "the Lord teach us this path".