



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Handcrafted peace

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We are experiencing war, but the peace that everyone seeks today won't come from "great protests" or "international meetings" with "splendid words" or a "successful conference". Therefore, Pope Francis prayed for "the wisdom to make peace in the little everyday things, while aiming for the horizon of all humanity". In the manner of craftsmen, he suggested, we must begin with ourselves, with our family, in the neighbourhood and in the workplace. This is the essence of true peace as described by the Pontiff during the Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"In the oration of the collect at the beginning of Mass", the Pontiff began, we "prayed to the Lord for the gift to grow in unity and in peace". The word "peace", therefore, is decisive. It is a matter of "growing in peace". Thus, the Pope said: "today let us pray that all of us can grow in peace, in unity, because peace creates unity".

In the day's liturgy, the word "peace" appears straight away "in the oration at the beginning of Mass". It is also repeated in the first reading taken from the Book of the Prophet Micah (5:1-4):

“When he announces the coming of the Lord, he ends in this way: ‘And this shall be peace’”. The word returns again in the Gospel of Matthew (1:1-16, 18-23): “After the genealogy of Jesus, comes Joseph’s dream, and the angel says: ‘and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us)” — and “God with us is peace”.

Thus, “three times today peace is mentioned” in the liturgy, the Pope continued. “Let us ask this: to grow in peace. Today’s liturgy is completely involved with this path, and all of us — and also the entire world — we need peace”.

“If we ask for peace”, the Pontiff explained, “it is because peace is a gift: a gift that the Lord gives us. But let us also ask to grow in peace: it is a gift, but also a gift that has its path in life, its path in history; a gift that each one of us must take up and form in order to help it grow”. Indeed, “in salvation history, from the Lord’s first promise in the earthly paradise until the coming of Jesus, there is a long road that we have heard about in the Gospel: this man begot that one, that man begot another”.

Precisely “this path of saints and sinners”, the Pope stated, “tells us that we too must take up this gift of peace and make it the way of our life, make it enter us, make it enter the world”. After all, “peace is not made from one day to the next: peace is a gift, but a gift that must be taken up and formed every day”. For this reason, Francis continued, “we can say that peace is a gift that is crafted in the hands of mankind: we men and women, each day, take a step toward peace, it is our work. It is our work with the gift received: to make peace”.

For this to happen, it is important to understand how to perform this “handcrafted work” for peace. To help us, the Pope explained, “there is another word in today’s liturgy that can make us reflect, a word that speaks to us of smallness”. Also “the oration of the collect”, speaks of the “birth, the nativity of Our Lady: there is a little girl, whose feast is today”. Smallness is also emphasized in the prophecy of Micah: “you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah”. The words clearly indicate that Bethlehem is “so small” that it is not even shown on the map.

Again in reference to the liturgy of the day, the Pontiff also stated that “in the Gospel, after the long history of people, we find smallness, the smallness of a decision taken by Joseph, the smallness of a promise”. All this, Francis affirmed, helps us to understand that “peace is a gift, it is a handcrafted gift that we must form, every day”, but we must do so “in the small things, in the little everyday things”.

Of course “great protests for peace, large international meetings are not enough, if afterwards peace is not made in little ways”. Indeed, the Pope continued, “you can speak of peace with splendid words, have a successful conference”, but if in little ways, if “in your heart, there isn’t peace, in your family there isn’t peace, in your neighbourhood there isn’t peace, in your workplace there isn’t peace, neither will there be in the world”.

“Today, we all know, we are experiencing war and everyone asks for peace”, the Pontiff said. In facing this reality, he added, “I only ask this question, first to myself and then to you and to everyone: how is your heart today, is it at peace? If it is not at peace, before speaking of peace, set your heart at peace. How is your family today: is it at peace? If you are not able to bring forward your family, your presbyterate, your congregation, to bring them forward in peace; peaceful words are not enough for the world”.

Here then, Francis continued, is “the question that I would like to ask today: how is each of our hearts: are they at peace?”. Indeed, we must begin with the small things in order to achieve a peaceful world.

“We ask the Lord, today, the day of the Nativity of Our Lady”, the Pope recalled, that we may “grow in peace and in unity, because, naturally, where there is peace there is unity”. Indeed, “we have seen that peace is a gift: a gift that is worked every day like a handicraft and also, like all handcrafted things, it is made in small ways so as to reach greatness”.

In conclusion, before resuming the celebration, the Pope asked the Lord in prayer to “grant us the wisdom to make peace in the little everyday things, while aiming for the horizon of all humanity”.