



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Never speak poorly of others

Wednesday, 27 March 2013

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Speaking poorly of someone else is equivalent to selling them. Like Judas, who sold Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. And it was precisely by drawing inspiration from the Gospel passage from Matthew which foretells the betrayal of Judas Iscariot that Pope Francis — in his brief Homily at the Mass he celebrated on Wednesday morning, 27 March, in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* — put people on guard against gossip with an explicit invitation: “Never speak poorly of others”.

Present at the celebration, as has now become a tradition, were several Vatican employees including a group from the Office of Papal Charities and a group from the Vatican Telephone Service, accompanied respectively by Archbishop Guido Pozzo, Almoner of His Holiness, and Fr Fernando Vérguez Alzaga, Director of Telecommunications, both of whom concelebrated.

The Pope wanted to leave them a thought on the action of Judas, one of Jesus' friends, who did not hesitate to sell him to the chief priests. “Jesus was like a commodity; he was sold. He was sold at that moment”, the Pope emphasized, “and has also very frequently been sold in the market of history, in the market of life, in the market of our lives. When we opt for thirty pieces of silver, we set Jesus aside”.

When we visit an acquaintance and the conversation turns into gossip, into back-stabbing and the person at the centre of our babbling “becomes a commodity. I do not know why”, the Pope said further, “but there is some arcane pleasure in scandalmongering”. We begin with kind words, “but then comes the gossip. And we begin to tear the other person to pieces”. And it is then that we must remember that every time we behave like this, “we are doing what Judas did”; when he went to the chief priests to sell Jesus, his heart was closed, he had no understanding, no love and no friendship. Thus Pope Francis took up one of his favourite themes, forgiveness. “We think of and ask for forgiveness”, because what we do to the other, to our friend, “we do to Jesus. Because Jesus is in this friend”. And if we realize that our gossiping can hurt someone, “let us pray the Lord, let us speak to the Lord about this, for the good of the other: Lord, help him”. So it must not be me, he therefore concluded, “who does justice with my own tongue. Let us ask the Lord for this grace”.

At the end of the celebration the Holy Father lingered at the back of the chapel in prayer. He then waited at the door to greet one by one everyone who had come: for everyone he had a word, a smile, an encouragement and good wishes for Easter, now at hand.