



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The grace of joy

Friday, 6 September 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 37, 11 September 2013)

Being Christian means the joy of belonging completely to Christ, “the one spouse of the Church”, encountering him is like going to a wedding. Therefore, joy and the understanding of Christ’s centrality are the two attitudes that Christians should cultivate in their daily lives. Pope Francis spoke about this in his homily at morning Mass, Friday 6 September, in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

The Pope’s reflection came from the Gospel narrative of the day’s liturgy, in which the Evangelist Luke tells of the confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes over the fact that his disciples are eating and drinking while others are fasting (Lk 5:33-39). In his answer, Jesus conveys, the Holy Father explained, that he is the bridegroom: “The Church is the bride. In the Gospel he returns many times to the images of the wise virgins waiting for the bridegroom with burning lamps and the feast that the father throws for the wedding of his son”.

The Pope said, “when you are the spouse you cannot fast, you cannot be sad. The Lord shows us that the relationship between him and the Church is matrimonial”. He continued, “this is the deepest reason why the Church guards the Sacrament of Marriage. And it is called a great sacrament because it is precisely the image of the kind of union that Christ has with the Church”.

Thus, when we speak of a wedding, “we speak of a feast, we speak of joy; and this shows us Christians the approach”: when we find Jesus Christ and begins to live according to the Gospel, you do it with joy, “because it is a great feast”.

The Christian is fundamentally joyful. The Pope recalled the miracle at Cana. “If there is no wine, there is no feast. Can we imagine ending a wedding feast with tea or fruit juice? It doesn’t work. And so Our Lady asks for a miracle”. This is the life of the Christian, this “approach with joy, joyful with all your heart”.

Naturally, the Pontiff added, “there are moments of the cross, moments of sorrow, but there is always that deep sense of peace. Why? The Christian life is a feast, the wedding feast of Jesus and the Church”. And here the Holy Father remembered how the first Christian martyrs faced martyrdom as if they were going to a wedding; even at that moment their hearts were glad. Joy is the first attitude, then.

To explain the second attitude the Holy Father recalled the parable of the wedding of the king’s son (Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14: 16-24). “Some people were too busy with their lives to go to the feast. And the Lord, the king, said: go to the street corners and bring everyone, the travellers, the poor, the sick, the lepers, even the sinners, bring everyone. Good and bad. Everyone was invited to the feast. But then the king saw that one wasn’t dressed for the feast. Sure, the question comes to us, “But Father, they were taken from the street corners, how can you expect wedding attire? What does this mean?”. It’s simple: God asks only one thing in order to enter the feast, one’s whole self, one’s totality”. Pope Francis explained: And this takes us to the First Reading (Col 1:15-20) which speaks to us strongly about the totality of Jesus. The first born of all creation, in him all things were created and through him and in view of him; because he is the centre of all things. He is also the head of the body of the Church. He is the beginning. God gave to him the fullness, the wholeness that in him all things might be reconciled”.

The Holy Father proceeded, Jesus is “everything”, and he is “the only thing”: he is the “one spouse”. Therefore if the first attitude of the Christian is “the feast”, the second attitude is to recognize Jesus as the only one. And those who don’t recognize him as the groom are not dressed for the wedding, for the feast”. If Jesus asks us for this recognition it is because he is, as a bridegroom, “faithful, always faithful. And he asks fidelity of us”. Jesus asks us to be totally his; though we sometimes have bad habits or do things that don’t lead us to being totally his, “they mean little: let us repent, let us ask forgiveness and go forward”, without growing tired of “asking for the grace of joy”.
