



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

How to rout the demon's strategy

Friday, 11 October 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 42, 18 October 2013)

On Friday morning, 11 October, Pope Francis commented on St Luke's account of Jesus' casting out demons (Lk 11:15-26).

He noted that Jesus offers us several guides or criteria for helping us to perceive the devil's presence and respond to it. The first is that it is Jesus who battles the devil. The second is that “we cannot obtain the victory of Jesus over evil and the devil by halves” for “he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters”.

“On this point,” Pope Francis said, “there is no shadow of a doubt. A battle exists, a battle in which the eternal salvation of us all is at stake”. There are no alternatives, he said, even if at times we hear about “pastoral proposals” that seem more accommodating. “No! Either you are with Jesus or you are against him”.

The final guide is watchfulness. “We must always be vigilant against the deception and seduction of the evil one”. Again citing the Gospel, he said: “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace”.

“We can ask ourselves: Do I keep watch over myself? Do I guard my heart? My feelings? My thoughts? Do I guard the treasure of grace? Do I protect the Holy Spirit's presence within me? If we do not protect this presence”, he continued again to the Gospel, “one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil”.

Pope Francis also stressed that we mustn't be naive: “the demon is shrewd: he is never cast out forever, this will only happen on the last day”. “No,” he continued returning to the Gospel, “when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says: ‘I will return to my house from which I came’. And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first”.

“This is the devil's strategy”, Pope Francis warned: “you become a Christian, go forward in your faith, and I will leave you alone; I will leave you in peace. But then, once you have grown accustomed to it, are no longer watchful and feel secure I will return”. However, he continued, “today's Gospel begins with the demon being cast out and concludes with the demon coming back. St Peter said he is like a roaring lion prowling around us”. This is no mere fable, he said: “it is the Word of the Lord”.

“Please, let's not do business with the devil,” he said. “The devil is on the first page of the Bible and he is still there on the last, when God has his final victory”.

Pope Francis concluded: “Let us ask the Lord for the grace to take these things seriously. He came to battle for our salvation, and he has conquered the devil”.