



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

We do not negotiate our fidelity to God

Monday, 18 November 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 47, 22 November 2013)

In his homily at Holy Mass, Pope Francis warned that an insidious snare is running through the world: the snare of the “globalization of hegemonic uniformity”. It is marked by a “uniformity of thought” which leads people to deny their own traditions and even their very identity.

The Pope commented on the first Reading of the day taken from the Book of Maccabees (1:10-15; 41-43; 54-57; 62-64), which portrays Antiochus Epiphanes’ suppression of the observance of Jewish laws and his desecration the temple of God after many among the Jewish people were misled into abandoning their traditions. Pope Francis called it “one of the saddest pages in the Bible” in which we see “a great part of the people of God withdraw from the Lord in favour of worldly proposals”.

This worldliness comes out of a sinful root, the Pope said, “out of wicked men capable of intelligent persuasion”. Citing the Old Testament passage, he continued: “‘Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us’; we cannot become isolated or remain stuck in our old traditions. ‘Let us go and make a covenant with them, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us’. The proposal so pleased them”, the Pope said, “that some of the people eagerly went to see the king, to bargain with the king, to negotiate”.

Pope Francis continued: “they were enthusiasts, they believed that the nation, the people of Israel, would become a great people as a result”. Of course they did not ask themselves whether or not it was just to adopt this progressive attitude, this attitude of moving forward at all costs. The Bishop of Rome likened their attitude to what he called the modern “spirit of adolescent progressivism” which seductively suggests that it is always right, when faced with any decision, to move on rather than remaining faithful to one’s own traditions. “The people”, he said, “bargained with the king, they negotiated with the king. But they didn’t negotiate habits ... they negotiated fidelity to God, who is always faithful. And this is what we call apostasy; the prophets called it adultery. They were an adulterous people” who “negotiated something essential to their very being, i.e., their faithfulness to the Lord”.

Many people accepted the king’s orders “which prescribed that all the people in his kingdom should be one: and every one should leave his own law”. He observed, however, that it was not the “beautiful globalization” which is expressed in “the unity of all nations” who each preserve their own identity and traditions. No, he said, the passage describes the “globalization of hegemonic uniformity”, a uniformity of thought born of worldliness.

“Still today, the spirit of worldliness leads us to progressivism, to this uniformity of thought”. Indeed, he added, just as when the book of the covenant was found in anyone’s possession they were condemned to death, so it is today in many parts of the world “as we have read in the news in recent months”.

Negotiating one’s fidelity to God is like negotiating one’s identity, Pope Francis said. He then made reference to the 20th century novel *Lord of the World* by Robert Hugh Benson, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury Edward White Benson, in which the author speaks of the spirit of the world that leads to apostasy “almost as though it were a prophecy, as though he envisioned what would happen”. Benson converted to Catholicism and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1904, before the novel was published.

“We would do well to think about what happened in the Book of Maccabees”, he continued, “about what happened step by step, before we decide to follow an ‘adolescent progressivism’ and go along with what everyone is doing. We would also do well”, he said, “to ponder the consequences of their infidelity, to think about the ‘death sentences, the human sacrifices’ which followed thereafter”. He then asked those present: “Do you think there are no human sacrifices today? There are many, many of them. And there are laws that protect them”.

The Pope concluded: what should console us is the truth that “the Lord always remains the faithful One who cannot deny himself”. “He always waits for us, he loves us so much, and he is always ready to forgive us, even if we have taken a few steps down this path, and he is always ready to take us by the hand, just as he did with his chosen people when he led them out of the desert”.

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