



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

When silence is music

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Pope Francis commented on the first Reading from Isaiah (41:13-20). He wished to reflect “not so much on what the Lord says” but rather “on how the Lord says it” as one looks “more at the music than at the letter”.

How does the Lord speak to us, the Pontiff asked. Perhaps, he said, it might seem strange to hear the great God say: “I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you’ (v. 13). He is just like a father who runs to his child’s side at night when he has had a bad dream and says to him: “Don’t be afraid! I’m here right beside you”.

Jesus speaks to us in the same way, the Pontiff continued. He “draws near” to us. “When we look at a father or mother draw close to their children, we see that they make themselves small, they speak with a child’s voice and communicate with a child’s gestures”. Whoever sees them from the outside might think they look ridiculous. However, the Pope added, “the love of a father and mother needs to draw close, to bend down to the child’s world”. And even if they father or mother were to speak to their child in the normal way, the child would understand, “but they want to take on the child’s way of speaking; they draw near. They make themselves children, as it were. And so it is with the Lord”.

“The Greek philosophers, in speaking about this, used a very difficult word: ‘sincatabasis’, the divine condescension whereby God accepts becoming one of us”. The Lord speaks to us in this way, Pope Francis said. He acts as parents do with their children. In fact, he continued, the Lord says: “worm of Jacob, you are like a little worm to me, you are little... but I love you very much”. This, he said, “is the language of the Lord: a language of love, of a father, of a mother”.

Of course, the Holy Father continued, we must listen to the Lord’s word, what he tells us; but we must also listen to “how he tells us”. And we must do as he does, i.e. “doing what he says, but doing it in the way he says it: with love, with tenderness, with condescension toward our brothers and sisters”.

The Pope continued: “I have always been struck by the Lord’s encounter with Elijah, when the Lord speaks with Elijah”. He was on the mountain when he saw the Lord pass by, “not in the hail, in the rain, in the storm, in the wind... The Lord was in the still soft breeze” (cf. 1 Kings 19:11-13).

“In the original text, a most beautiful word is used which cannot be precisely translated: he was in a sonorous thread of silence. A sonorous thread of silence: this is how the Lord draws near, with that sound of silence that belongs to love”. And to every man he says: “You are small and a weak sinner; ‘but I will make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp, and having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff; you shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them’” (Is 41:15-16). Thus, Pope Francis said, “he makes himself small to make me strong. He goes to death, as a sign of that ‘condescension’ that I may live”.

“This is the music of the Lord’s language,” Pope Francis said. “As we prepare for Christmas, we should listen to it. It will do us great, great good. Normally Christmas is a loud feast, so it will do us good to be silent a little, in order to listen to these words of love, of great closeness, these words of tenderness”. The Pope concluded: “We need to be silent during this season so that, as the preface says, we might vigilantly keep watch”.