



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The martyrs of our sins

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In his homily at Holy Mass Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel from St Mark (4:26-34), which he said "speaks to us about the kingdom of God" and how it grows. In fact, he began, we read in the Gospel that "not even the sower knows" how this growth occurs. Elsewhere however, he explained, Jesus says that it is God himself who makes his kingdom grow in us. "And this growth is a gift we must ask for," he said. And we ask God every day for this gift when we recite "the Our Father: thy kingdom come!". For this invocation means: "May your kingdom grow in us, in society. May God's kingdom increase".

However, Pope Francis warned, "just as it grows, so too can it also be diminished". "That is what the first Reading from the Second Book of Samuel speaks to us" (11:1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17), he said, which recounts the temptation of David. The Pope referred back to yesterday's reading in order to explain today's Reading, and particularly to "David's beautiful prayer to the Lord: his prayer for the people". He is "the king who prays for his people, his is the prayer of a saint". Yet "the following year ... what we just heard about occurs". "David is serene ... he is leading a normal life" but one day "after lunch he takes a rest; then he arises from his couch, takes a walk, and temptation befalls him, and David falls into temptation" when he sees Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah.

"This can happen to any of us" because "we are all sinners and we are all tempted," the Pope said. "Temptation is our daily bread". So much so, he said, that "were one of us to say: I have

never been tempted” the right response would be, “either you’re a cherub, or you’re a little stupid”. In fact, he said, “struggle and battle are normal in life: the devil doesn’t stay still and he wants his victory”.

“The most serious problem in this passage is not the temptation or sin against the ninth commandment but rather the way David acts”. For he loses his awareness of sin and speaks simply about “a problem” that needs to be resolved. His attitude is “a sign”; “when the kingdom of God is diminishing, one of the signs is the loss of the sense of sin”. David, the Pope explained, commits “a grave sin”, and yet “he doesn’t feel it” to be so. For him, it is only “a problem”. Therefore, “it doesn’t occur to him to ask for forgiveness”. He is concerned only with solving the problem — after having relations with Bathsheba she conceives — and David asks himself; “How can I cover up the act of adultery?”.

He therefore devises a strategy and carries it out, to make Uriah believe that the child Bathsheba is carrying is actually his. Uriah, the Pontiff explained, “was a good Israelite, he was thinking of his companions and didn’t want to celebrate while Israel’s army was in battle”. But David, after having tried to persuade him “with a banquet and with wine,” as “a decisive man, a man of government, takes the decision” and writes a letter to Joab, the captain of the army, ordering him to send Uriah in the forefront of the hardest battle so that he might be struck down. “And so it happened”, the Pontiff said. “Uriah falls, and he falls because he was put there to fall”. It was “murder”.

And yet, “when King David learned of it, he remained calm and continued on with his life”. Why? Because David “had lost the sense of sin, and from that moment on the kingdom of God began to fall” from his horizon. David “did not turn to God; he did not say: ‘Lord, look what I have done: what do we do?’”. Instead, he assumed a “worldly” attitude, an “omnipotent outlook that says: I can do anything!”.

The same thing “can happen to us when we lose the sense of the kingdom of God and as a consequence also lose the sense of sin,” the Pope said. Here Pope Francis recalled the words of Pius XII, who identified “the evil of this civilization” with “the loss of the sense of sin: we can do anything, we will resolve everything! The power of man substituted for the glory of God!”

This way of thinking “is our daily bread,” the Pope said. That is why “we pray to God daily: Thy kingdom come! May thy kingdom grow!” For, he continued, “salvation will not come from our cleverness, from our astuteness, from our intelligence in taking care of our affairs”. No, he said, “salvation will come through the grace of God and from the daily training we receive through cooperating with this grace”, that is, through “the Christian life”.

Pope Francis then named the many people spoken of in the Scripture passage: David, Bathsheba, Joab, but also the “courtiers” who surrounded David and “who knew everything: it was a true scandal but they were not scandalized, because they too had lost the sense of sin”. And then

there was “poor Uriah, who paid the bill for the banquet”.

Pope Francis then reflected on the figure of Uriah and he said to those present: “I confess that when I see this injustice, this human pride” or “when I become aware of the danger, that I myself” risk “of losing the sense of sin, I think that it is good to think about the many Uriah’s that history has known, of the many Uriahs who also today suffer because of our mediocrity as Christians”. This mediocrity prevails “when we lose the sense of sin and allow the kingdom of God to diminish and fall”.

People like Uriah, Pope Francis said, “are the unsung martyrs of our sins”. Therefore, he said, “it will do us well today to pray for ourselves, that the Lord might always grant us the grace not to lose the sense of sin, and that the kingdom of God might never be diminished in us”. Pope Francis concluded his homily by inviting those present “to carry a spiritual bouquet to the tombs of the modern day Uriahs, who pay the bill for the banquet of Christians who are too self-assured, and who willingly or not, murder their neighbour”.