



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Holy patience

Monday, 17 February 2014

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There are people who know how to suffer with a smile and keep “the joy of faith” despite trials and illnesses. These are the people who “carry the Church forward with their every day sanctity”, becoming true reference points “in our parishes and in our institutions”. Pope Francis reflected on the exemplary patience of the people of God at Mass in the Chapel of Santa Marta on Monday morning, 17 February. His words echoed Sunday afternoon’s encounter with the parish community of Infernetto on the outskirts of Rome.

“When we go to the parishes”, the Pope said, “we find people who are suffering, who have problems, who have disabled children, or have diseases, but carry on in life with patience”. They are people who do not ask for “a miracle” but live with “God’s patience”, reading “the signs of the times”. The “world is unworthy” of these holy people, the Pope said, citing Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews and affirming that “these are the ones — the ones who are suffering, greatly suffering many things but do not lose the smile of faith, who have the joy of faith — we can say that the world is not worthy of them! The spirit of the world is not worthy of these people”.

The Pope’s reflection on the value of patience was inspired by the Readings of the day’s Liturgy: a passage from the Letter of James (1:1-11), and the Gospel of Mark (8:11-13).

“Consider pure joy, my brothers, when you face trials of all kinds”, he said, commenting on the

words from the First Reading, the Pope noted that “what James the Apostle tells us seems a bit strange”. It almost seems to be “an invitation to become a fakir”. The Pope posed the question: “Can undergoing a trial bring us joy?”. He referred to the letter from St James: “Know that your faith, with many trials, produces patience. And patience will have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing”.

The suggestion, he explained, is “to bring life into this rhythm of patience”. But “patience”, he warned, “is not resignation, it is something quite different”. Patience means bearing the things of life, the things that are not good, the bad things, the things that we do not want. This patience will cause our lives to mature”. Those who have no patience instead “want everything at once, all in a hurry”. Those “who do not know the wisdom of this patience are whimsical people”, who end up behaving “like naughty children” who say: “I want this, I want that, I do not like this”, and are never satisfied with anything.

In responding to the Pharisees in the Gospel of Mark, the Lord asks: “Why does this generation seek a sign?”. As if to say that “this generation is like children that do not dance when they hear joyful music and do not cry when they hear a dirge. Nothing is right!” the Pope said. In fact, he continued, “the person who has no patience is a person who will not grow, who remains with the whims of children, not knowing how to take life as it comes”, and can only say “either this or nothing!”.

When there is no patience, “there is the temptation to become capricious” like children. Another temptation, of those “who have no patience, is omnipotence” which causes one to say: “I want things right away!”. The Lord is referring precisely to this when the Pharisees ask him for “a sign from heaven”. The Pope asked, “what did they want? They wanted a show, a miracle”. Ultimately it is the same temptation that the devil offers Jesus in the desert, asking him to do something — or to show his power by throwing himself from the temple.

In asking Jesus for a sign, however, the Pharisees confuse God’s way of acting with the way of a sorcerer”. The Holy Father explained that “God does not act as a sorcerer. God has his way of going forward: his patience”. “Every time we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation we sing a hymn to God’s patience. The Lord carries us on his shoulders, with great patience”.

“The Christian life”, the Pope said, “has to be carried out with this music of patience, because it was the music of our fathers: the people of God”. The music of “those who believed in the Word of God, who followed the commandment which the Lord had given to our father Abraham: Walk before me and be blameless”.

Again referring to Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews, the Pope said that the People of God “suffered greatly: they were persecuted, murdered, and had to hide in caverns, in caves. They had joy, the happiness — as St James says — to welcome the promises from afar”. It is precisely this

“patience that we must have amid trials”. The “patience of an adult, and the patience of God that leads us, that carries us on his shoulders; and the patience of our people”, the Holy Father noted, exclaiming: “How patient our people are even now!”.

The Pope said that there are many suffering people who are able to “bring life forward with patience. They do not ask for a sign”, as the Pharisees did, “but they instead know how to read the signs of the times”. “They know that when figs grow on a tree it is springtime”. Instead “impatient” people presented in the Gospel, “wanted a sign” but “did not know how to read the signs of the times. For this reason they did not recognize Jesus”.

The Holy Father pointed out that in the Letter to the Hebrews it says clearly that “the world was unworthy of God’s people”. But today “we can say the same about those of our people who suffer, who suffer many, many things, but do not lose the smile of faith, which has the joy of faith”. Yes, “the world is not worthy” of any of them. These are the “people, our people, in our parishes, in our institutions”, who carry “the Church forward with their every day sanctity”.

In conclusion, the Pope again read the passage from St James that he had repeated at the beginning of his homily. He asked that the Lord may give “each of us patience: joyful patience, the patience of labour, of peace”; “the patience of God” and “the patience of our faithful people who are so exemplary”.