



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The scandal of inconsistency

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In his homily at Holy Mass, Pope Francis commented on the Readings of the day taken from the Letter of James (5:1-6) and from the Gospel of Mark (9:41-50). The focus of the Pope's reflection was Christian consistency. "Being a Christian," he began, "means bearing witness to Jesus Christ". In fact, "the Christian is the person, a man or woman, who bears witness to Jesus Christ".

The Pope sketched the spiritual profile of the Christian and pointed to Christian consistency as its chief trait. In all the things of life, he said, we need "to think like a Christian; to feel like a Christian, and to act like a Christian". Consistency in the Christian life means that in one's acting, feeling and thinking, one acknowledges the presence of the Lord.

The Pope warned that "when one of these [characteristics] is missing ... one is not a Christian. One might say, 'I am a Christian!' but if you do not live like a Christian, if you do not act like a Christian, if you do not think like a Christian and feel like a Christian, something is amiss. There is a certain inconsistency!". All Christians, the Pope said, "are called to give testimony to Jesus Christ". And Christians who "ordinarily and commonly live inconsistently do great harm".

The Apostle James speaks expressly about this in the passage from his Letter proclaimed at today's liturgy. There he takes issue with "inconsistent persons who boast of being Christian, yet take advantage of their employees", the Pope said. James writes: "Behold, the wages of the

labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts” (v. 4).

“The Lord is great!”, the Pope said after having reread the passage from the St James. “One who hears” these words “might think: a communist said it! No, no”, the Pope said, “it is the Apostle James who said it: it is the word of the Lord!”. The problem, then, is “inconsistency” and “Christians who are inconsistent give scandal”.

Turning to the day’s Gospel passage from St Mark (9:41-50), Pope Francis said that the Lord speaks strongly against scandal. He says: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [whoever “scandalizes” them], it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea”. The “inconsistent Christian does great harm” and the Lord uses a very powerful image. “The life of a Christian is found on the way of consistency”; and yet we also need to keep before us “the temptation not to be consistent, and to cause great scandal. And scandal kills!”.

The consequences are there for all to see. Everyone has heard it said: “I believe in God but not in the Church, because you Christians say one thing and do another!”. These are words “we have all heard: I believe in God but not in you!”. And this occurs precisely because of “inconsistency”, the Pope explained.

He then affirmed that today’s two readings help us “to pray for Christian consistency, in order that we may act, feel and think as Christians”. He added that “we need to pray in order to live a consistent Christian life, for Christian consistency is a gift of God”. It is a gift we should strive to ask for, saying: “Lord, may I be consistent! Lord, may I never give scandal! May I be a person who thinks like a Christian, who feels like a Christian, who acts like a Christian!”. And “this is a prayer for all of us today, for we need to be consistent!”.

Pope Francis then proposed a very practical example: “If you happen to be with an atheist who tells you that he does not believe in God, you can read him the whole library, where it says that God exists, and where it is proven that God exists, and he will not believe”. However, he continued, “if in the presence of this same atheist you witness to a consistent, Christian life, something will begin to work in his heart”. And “it will be your witness that brings him the restlessness on which the Holy Spirit works”.

The Pope then reminded those present that “all of us, the whole Church” should ask the Lord for “the grace to be consistent”. Acknowledging ourselves as sinners, weak and inconsistent, but always ready to ask for the Lord’s forgiveness. All of us, in fact, “are able to ask for forgiveness, and God never tires of forgiving”. It is important, then, “to have the humility to ask for forgiveness” when we have not been consistent.

In the end, he said, it is a matter of “proceeding forward in life with Christian consistency” by testifying that we believe in Jesus Christ and by acknowledging that we are sinners. But with “the courage to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes” and “with great fear of giving scandal”. Pope Francis concluded by praying that “the Lord may give all of us this grace”.