



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Sisters and priests free from idolatry

Monday, 3 March 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 10, 7 March 2014)

Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel from St Mark (10:17-27), in which the evangelist recounts Jesus' calling of the rich young man. "It is a story we have heard many times", Pope Francis said. The man ran up to Jesus "and knelt before him". And he does so "before a great crowd" because "he greatly desired to hear Jesus' words" and "something in his heart was prompting him". Thus, "kneeling before him", he asks him what he must do in order to inherit eternal life. "It was the Holy Spirit" who was moving the heart of this man, the Pope said. Indeed, he was "a good man, for he observed the commandments from his youth". However, "for him, being good did not suffice: he wanted more! The Holy Spirit was urging him on".

"Jesus fixed his gaze upon him, happy to hear these things", the Pope said. So much so that "the Gospel tells us that he loved him". Therefore, "Jesus also sensed his enthusiasm. And this is what he proposed: sell what you have and come with me to preach the Gospel!". However, the evangelist tells us that "at that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful".

This good man "had come with hope and with joy to see Jesus; he asked his question; he listened to Jesus' words; and he made his decision: to go away". Thus "the joy that moved him, the joy of the Holy Spirit, was turned into sadness". Indeed, Mark says that "he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions".

The problem was that “his restless heart”, which the Holy Spirit was prompting “to draw near to Jesus and to follow him, was a heart that was full”. Yet “he did not have the courage to empty it” and instead, “he chose money!”. He had “a heart filled with money”, the Pope said. He was not a thief or a criminal. He was a good man. He never stole or cheated. His was “honest money” but “his heart was imprisoned by it, he was attached to money and he didn’t have the freedom to choose”. Therefore, in the end, “money chose for him”.

The Pope then reflected on the question of vocation. And his thoughts turned to young people who “in their hearts feel this call to draw near to Jesus; who are enthusiastic, who are not afraid to go to Jesus, who are not embarrassed to kneel before him”. Those who like the rich young man, “give a sign of public witness to their faith in Jesus Christ”.

Pope Francis said that there are many young people today who feel this call. But “when their hearts are filled with something else, and because they are not courageous enough to empty them, they turn back”. And thus “their joy is turned to sadness”. How many young people there are, he said, who possess that joy of which St Peter speaks in his first Letter (1:3-9): “Rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy, as you obtain the goal of your faith”. Truly, he said, these young people are “many, but there is something standing in their way stopping them”.

“When we ask the Lord to send vocations to proclaim the Gospel, he sends them”. And yet some say: “Father, things in the world are going so badly: there are no vocations to be a sister, there are no priestly vocations, we are going to end in ruin!”.

“There are many vocations”, the Pope said. Yet, he asked, if they are so numerous “why do we need to ask the Lord to send them?”. He replied: “We need to pray that the hearts of these young people might be emptied: emptied of other interests, emptied of other loves, that their hearts might become free”. This, he said, is the true “prayer for vocations: Lord, send us sisters, send us priests; defend them from the idolatry of vanity, from the idolatry of pride, from the idolatry of power, from the idolatry of money”. And, he explained, “our prayer helps to prepare their hearts to closely follow the Lord”.

The Pope noted how many young people there are today like the rich young man. And he asked: “what do we do for them?”. The first thing to be done, he said, is to pray: “Lord, help these young people to be free and not to be slaves” so that “they might have a heart only for you”. In this way, he said, “the call of the Lord can come and bear fruit”.

Pope Francis concluded his homily by inviting those who were present to recite often “this prayer for vocations”, with the awareness that “there are vocations”. It falls to us, he said, to pray that “they might grow, that the Lord might enter into their hearts and give them this ‘unutterable and exalted joy’ which every person has who closely follows the Lord”.

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