



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The Christian way

Tuesday, 6 March 2014

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In his homily at Holy Mass, Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel from the evangelist Luke (9:22-25), in which Jesus foretells the sufferings he would undergo in his sacred Passion. The Pope began by noting that, at the beginning of Lent, the Church "has us read and listen to a message" that "we might call *the Christian way*: 'If any man would come after me — i.e., be a Christian, be my disciple — let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'. For the Lord himself was the first to make this journey".

The Pope continued reading from the sacred text: "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised". He then remarked that we "cannot think about the Christian life apart from this path, from this journey that he first made". It is "the journey of humility, and of humiliation, of self-emptying". For "the Christian way of life without the cross is not in fact Christian" and "if the cross is a cross without Jesus, it is not Christian".

Taking on a Christian way of life therefore means "taking up one's cross with Jesus and going forward". Christ himself has shown us this way by emptying himself. Although he was in the form of God, the Pope said, he did not boast, he did not consider himself "a good that could not be renounced, but rather he emptied himself" and became "a servant to us all".

This is the way of life that “will save us, give us joy and make us fruitful. For this journey of self-denial is undertaken in order to give life: it is the opposite of the journey of egoism ... which leads to one becoming attached to goods for one’s own sake”. The Christian way is “open to others, for it is the same journey that Jesus has made”. It is a journey “of self-emptying for the sake of giving life”.

“The Christian way is precisely this way of humility, of meekness, of gentleness. Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it. Jesus repeats this idea elsewhere in the Gospel. Remember when he speaks about the the grain of wheat: unless the grain dies, it does bear much fruit (cf Jn 12:24)”.

Pope Francis noted that this journey is to be made “with joy, for it is Jesus himself who gives us this joy. Following Jesus is a joy”. He warned, however, that one needs to follow along his way “and not according to the way of the world”. The important thing, he said, is that the journey be made “so as to give life to others and not to give life to oneself. It must be carried out in a spirit of generosity”.

This is the path to follow: “humility, service, not a shred of selfishness, not feeling self-important or making oneself out to be important before others, saying: I am a Christian...!”. Here the Pope quoted the Imitation of Christ which, he said, “gives us this most beautiful counsel: *ama, nesceri, et pro nihilo reputari*, i.e., ‘love being unknown and unregarded’. This is Christian humility, it is what Jesus did first”.

“Let us think about Jesus who goes before us, who guides us along the way. This is our joy and this is our fruitfulness: to travel with Jesus. Other joys are not fruitful; as the Lord says, they look to gaining the whole world, but lead to ruin and to losing and forfeiting oneself”.

Pope Francis concluded: “At the beginning of Lent, let us ask the Lord to teach us a little of this Christian way of service, joy, self-emptying and fruitfulness with him, as he wills”.