



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Those who open the doors

Tuesday, 13 May 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 20, 16 May 2014)

Pope Francis commented on the day's Readings from the Acts of the Apostles (11:19-26) and the Gospel of John (10:22-30). The Pope introduced his remarks by noting that the Readings "reveal a diptych: two groups of people".

In the passage from Acts we first meet those "who were scattered because of the persecution that arose" after the martyrdom of Stephen. "They were scattered", but "they carried the seed of the Gospel everywhere", the Pope said. However, they only addressed the Jews. "Then, in a natural way", the Pontiff continued quoting Acts, "some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus". And thus slowly they opened the doors to the Greeks and to the pagans".

When news of this reached the Church in Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to Antioch "to make an onsite inspection" and to verify in person what was happening. The Acts of the Apostles states that he was glad and that "a large company was added to the Lord".

In short, the Pope explained, "these people did not say: let us go first to the Jews, then to the Greeks, then to the pagans, then to everyone"; rather, "they allowed themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit: they were docile to the Holy Spirit". In so doing, "one thing led to another" and then "to another and to another still", and "ultimately the doors were open to everyone". Even "to the

pagans who, according to their thinking, were unclean”.

“This is if the first group of people” portrayed in the diptych, the Pope said. The group is comprised of people who are “docile to the Holy Spirit”, who “go forward as Paul did” with “a certain naturalness”. For “sometimes the Holy Spirit moves us to do bold things, as he moved Phillip to baptize the Ethiopian”, and “as he moved Peter to go and baptize Cornelius”. At “other times the Holy Spirit leads us gently”. True virtue is therefore found in “letting oneself be led by the Holy Spirit: in not resisting the Holy Spirit, in being docile to the Holy Spirit”, confident that “the Holy Spirit is acting today in the Church, and is acting today in our lives”.

Perhaps, the Pope continued, “one of you will say to me: I have never seen it! Be attentive to what happens, to what comes to your mind, to what comes to your heart: good things? It is the Spirit inviting you to take that path”. Yet “it requires docility to the Holy Spirit”.

The second group of people presented in the Readings of the day is made up of “intellectuals who draw near to Jesus in the temple: the doctors of the Law”. They are men who “always have a problem because they never arrived at understanding: they always came back to the same point, because they believed that religion was a thing of the mind, of laws, of making commandments, of keeping commandments and nothing more. They could not even imagine that the Holy Spirit even existed”, the Pope said. Thus, as we read in the Gospel of John, “they gathered around Jesus and said to him, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? if you are the Christ, tell us plainly’. To which Jesus replied: “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness to me”; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. It is as though he had said: “Look at the great miracles, look at the things I do, the words I speak!”. Instead, these men were looking “only at what they had in their own heads”. For them, “everything was about the mind, everything was a matter of the intellect”.

The issue, the Pope said, was that “these people had no heart, no love for beauty, no harmony. They only wanted explanations”. Yet, he added, even if “you give them explanations, they are still not convinced and turn to another question”. Thus, “they go round and round, as they gathered around Jesus ... until they finally succeed in apprehending and killing him”. They “do not open their hearts to the Holy Spirit”, and “they think that the things of God can be understood only with the head, with ideas, with one’s own ideas: they are proud, they think they know everything and that what doesn’t enter into their minds is not true” - to such an extent that “you can bring a dead man to life in front of them, and still they do not believe!”.

In the Gospel we see “Jesus goes further and says something very strong: Why do you not believe? You do not believe because you do not belong to the people of Israel, you have left the people”. And he continues: “You consider yourselves pure, and thus you cannot believe!”; yet this attitude “closes the heart”. That is why they have “rejected their people”. Jesus says to them: “You are like your fathers who killed the prophets!”. For “when a prophet came who said something they

didn't like, they killed him!".

The true problem, the Pope noted, is that "these people had become detached from the people of God and therefore could not believe". For "faith is a gift from God! But faith comes if you are in His people. If you are in the Church, if you are aided by the sacraments, by brothers and sisters, by the assembly; if you believe that this Church is the People of God". Instead, "these people had distanced themselves, they did not believe in the People of God, they only believed in their own things, and thus they built a whole system of commandments that chased people away: they chased people away and would not let them enter the Church, the People. They could not believe! This is the sin of resisting the Holy Spirit".

"Two groups of people", the Pope repeated: "those who were gentle, humble, open and docile to the Holy Spirit"; and those who were "proud, smug ... who were detached from the people; the intellectual aristocracy that closed doors and resisted the Holy Spirit". And "this is not just stubbornness", the Pope remarked. "It is much more: it is having a hard heart", and this is "more dangerous".

"As we consider these two groups, let us ask the Lord for the grace of docility to the Holy Spirit in order to move forward in life, to be creative, to be joyous", the Pope concluded. "Let us ask for the grace of docility, and that the Holy Spirit may help and defend us from this other evil spirit of self-importance, pride, and closed heartedness to the Holy Spirit".