



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

**MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ**

Moving and steady

Monday, 19 May 2014

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In his homily Pope Francis commented on the Readings of the day from the Acts of the Apostles (14:5-18) and the Gospel of John (14:21-26).

The first Reading from the Acts tells of the attempted stoning of Paul and Barnabas by the Gentiles and Jews in Iconium. The attempt fails and the two Apostles flee to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia. Paul, in particular “escapes and begins to evangelize”, thus showing “his ability always to begin and not to give into complaints”. He has his heart fixed on what he knows his mission is, to evangelize. And his is the right attitude of a Christian.

The Pope then recalled that the Collect prayed at the beginning of Mass was a request to the Lord for the grace that, “amid the vicissitudes of life, our hearts might be fixed there where true joy is found”. He then indicated two necessary requisites for the Christian life: “movement and steadiness. A heart fixed and firm, but in continual movement”. This, he said, is clearly seen in St Paul’s evangelization efforts.

Turning again to the Reading from Acts, the Pontiff recalled the episode of Paul’s encounter with the paralytic. “His firm heart enables him to understand the man, the paralytic, who had the faith to be healed. He was able to discern and to heal in the name of the Lord”. Paul, he added, was certainly not expecting the reaction of the people who witnessed the healing. Indeed, a small

“revolution” ensued, because everyone thought that “Barnabas was Zeus and Paul Hermes. Paul, in fact, struggled to convince them that they were men”.

Paul also struggles “to explain to them that there is only one God”, and “here he does not speak about Jesus explicitly”; rather, in their own language, he speaks to them about “God, the Creator”. Thus he shows his ability to discern the right way of speaking.

“These are the human events through which Paul lived. And we have so many of them, all of us. We find ourselves amid so many events that move us to and fro, but we have asked for the grace of having our hearts fixed [on God] as Paul did, and which enabled him not to complain amid persecution, to go and seek another city, to begin to preach there, to heal a man who is sick, to realize that the man had sufficient faith to be healed. And then to calm these enthusiastic people who wanted to offer sacrifice. Then to proclaim, in their own cultural language, that there is only one God”.

Paul does one thing after another, without stopping. “And this comes solely from a heart fixed” on the mission of evangelization, the Pope said. From a heart that is capable of “making many changes in a short time” by confronting situations “in a suitable way”.

“In the Gospel,” the Pope then said, “Jesus tells us something: ‘These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you’”. The heart must therefore be “fixed on the Holy Spirit”, a gift “which Jesus has sent us. Paul had his heart fixed on the Holy Spirit, and all of us, if we want to find steadiness in our live amid human events that we all have, we must go to him. He is in our heart, we have received him in baptism. The Holy Spirit gives us strength, he gives us this steadiness to move forward in life amid so many events”.

“Jesus tells us two things about the Holy Spirit: he will teach you all things, and he will bring all of this to your remembrance. We have seen how he teaches Paul what he has to do, through this ability to change the scenario”. He teaches and reminds.

But “what does the Holy Spirit bring to Paul’s remembrance?” the Pope asked. First, “he reminds him of the message of salvation: God desires to save us. Paul’s great reference point is this: God wills to save us in Jesus Christ. Thus it was the Holy Spirit who made Paul’s heart steady amid persecution, problems, discussions, envies, jealousies”. In fact, the Pope noted, there is a word that is repeated in this chapter from the Acts of the Apostles: “it is jealousy, the jealousy of the leaders of the Synagogue” who opposed Paul. Yet he succeeded nonetheless in going forward and overcoming “many problems, because he had his heart fixed on the Holy Spirit”.

According to the Pope, this episode should move a Christian to ask himself: “What is my heart like? Is it a heart that seems like a ballerina, going from one side to another, that seems like a

butterfly which today likes this, then goes to that, and is always moving about? Is it a heart that gets frightened by the events of life, that hides and is afraid to bear witness to Jesus Christ? Is it a courageous heart or is it a very fearful heart that is always seeking to hide?

“What does our heart need to be healed of? What is the treasure to which our heart is attached? Is it a heart fixed on creatures, on the problems that we all have? Is it a heart fixed on one of the gods of every day or is it a heart fixed on the Holy Spirit? Where is the firmness of our heart?”.

“It will do us good to ask ourselves this, and to remember the many daily events that we have: at home, at work, with the children, with people who live with us, with work colleagues, with everyone”. Do we allow ourselves to be seized by these events, or do we face them “with a steady heart that knows the only One who makes our hearts steady, the Holy Spirit?”.

Certainly, Pope Francis concluded, “it will benefit us to consider the beautiful gift which Jesus has left us: this spirit of fortitude and of counsel, which help us to go forward. Going forward amid everyday events. Let us perform this exercise today and ask ourselves what our heart is like. Is it firm or not? And if it is firm, where is it fixed, in things or in the Holy Spirit”.