



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Lest we forget

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What is prayer? It means “remembering our history, before God. Because our history” is “the history of his love for us”. During the Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis chose “remembering” as the guiding principle of his homily.

To introduce his reflection, the Holy Father first explained that the Bible recalls so many times “that the Lord chose his people and accompanied them during the walk in the desert, throughout life”. In essence, “He was close to them”, having chosen them and having promised “to lead them to a land of joy, of happiness”; He walked with this people and forged a covenant with them.

Moreover, just as “God did with his people”, the Pontiff added, bringing the discussion up to date, “He has done and does with each one of us”. Indeed, Francis continued, “we have been chosen”. And it is “a grace” so obvious that it would suffice to ask: “Why am I a Christian and not that one there, far away, who has never even heard Jesus spoken of?”. It is “a loving grace”, Francis highlighted, recalling that the Lord “walks with us, on the path of life”, he is “beside us”, having promised us “joy and having made a covenant with us”.

Then came an invitation to “remember this reality” in daily prayer, not with abstract but specific

recollection as St Paul does in the day's First Reading (Gal 1:13-24). St Paul says, brethren, "you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the Church of God violently and tried to destroy it".

The Pope noted, in this regard, that the Apostle "begins his presentation" not by saying, "I'm good, I'm this one's son, I have a certain nobility...". On the contrary, he shows himself for what he is: "I was a persecutor, I was bad". And in this way, "Paul remembers his journey, and thus he begins to remember from the beginning", as his words testify, God, "who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace...". The same is true for us, the Bishop of Rome clarified, who "are Christians", for "each of us, because He has chosen us and the choice is his. It's not ours. It is by grace, it is a gift".

The call to "remember" arises from the realization that this approach is "not a very common tendency among us. We forget things, we live in the moment, and then we forget the history". However, the Pope pointed out, "each of us has a history: a history of grace, a history of sin, a history of the journey". This is why "it's good to pray with our history". Exactly like "Paul, who recounts a piece of his history", saying: "He chose me. He called me. He saved me. He has been my companion along the way". To the point that even the people who knew about his life also repeated the same words: "He who once persecuted us, now goes and proclaims the faith which he at one time wanted to destroy".

Therefore, "remembering one's own life is giving glory to God". And also, "remembering our sins, from which the Lord saved us, is giving glory to God". After all, even Paul "says that he boasts of only two things: of his own sins and of the grace of God Crucified, of his grace". In other words, the Apostle "remembered his sins", boasting of having been a sinner, because Christ Crucified saved him. "This", the Pope emphasized, "was Paul's recollection". And "this is what Jesus himself asks us to remember".

It is enough to consider what the Lord says to Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things" but only "one thing is needful", while "Mary has chosen the good portion". Which? "Hearing the Lord and remembering". This is because "one cannot pray every day as if we had no history. Each of us has his or her own. And with this history at heart" we pray. In this case our model is Mary; yet we are more similar to Martha, because like her "many times we are distracted by work, by the day, by doing those things we have to do", and we wind up forgetting our history.

The history of "our relationship with God", Pope Francis recalled, is a history that "doesn't begin on the day of Baptism: it is sealed there". In reality, it begins "when God, throughout eternity, watched us and chose us". In other words it is a history which "begins in the heart of God". And thus, to pray means "to remember the choice that God made about us; to remember our covenant journey". This means asking oneself whether "this covenant has been respected" or not. And because fundamentally "we are sinners", to pray means first of all "to remember the promise that

God” makes to us and that “he never betrays” this promise “that is our hope”.

Leading up to his conclusion, Pope Francis underlined that “this is the true prayer”, recommending that our prayer begin with the beautiful Psalm 139[138], which was proclaimed during the day’s Liturgy of the Word: “O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up; thou discernest my thoughts from afar. Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.... For thou didst form my inward parts, thou didst knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works!”. Because, he said, “this is to pray”.