



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Where Heaven begins

Friday, 17 October 2014

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A Christian cannot allow himself “to be lukewarm”: he has a specific identity which was given by the seal of the Holy Spirit. During Mass at Santa Marta on Friday, Pope Francis turned his reflection to the beginning of the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians and on Christians “chosen by the Lord before the creation of the world”. Among those present in the chapel was Shoah survivor Enzo Camerino, who had previously met the Pontiff on 16 October 2013, on the 70th anniversary of the raid on the ghetto of Rome.

The Lord, the Pontiff said, recalling the words of St Paul, “not only chose us” but also “gave us an identity”. And, Francis explained, we did not inherit merely a name, “but an identity, a way of life, which is not only a list of customs, it’s more: it’s an actual identity”. And how have we been “marked” so deeply? The Apostle writes: you have been “sealed with the Holy Spirit”. Our identity, the Bishop of Rome stated, “is this very seal, this power of the Holy Spirit, which we have all received in Baptism”.

And since the Holy Spirit had been promised to us by Jesus, “He sealed our heart” and, what’s more, He “walks with us”. He not only gives us an identity, but it is also the “guarantee of our inheritance. Heaven begins there”. A Christian thus acts in earthly life but is already living from the

perspective of eternity". Pope Francis further emphasized: "With this seal we have Heaven in our grasp".

Everyday life is sprinkled with temptations, first of all, with that of "not realizing this beauty that we've received". When this happens, the Spirit, to use an expression of Paul's, "grieves": this happens, the Holy Father underlined, not when we want "to erase the identity, but to render it opaque". This is the case of the "lukewarm Christian", the one who "goes to Mass on Sunday, yes, but the identity isn't seen in his life"; the one who, despite being a Christian, "lives like a pagan". Then there is another risk, the other sin "which Jesus speaks to the disciples about" when he tells them: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy". It happens, the Pope recalled, that some "pretend to be Christians", those who lack "transparency" in their actions, who profess one thing in words but act differently in fact. "And this", he added, "is what the doctors of the law did"; it is the leaven of "hypocrisy" which risks growing inside us.

Rendering our identity opaque and betraying it in our actions are "two sins against this seal" which "is a beautiful gift of God, the Spirit" and is the "guarantee of what awaits us", of what "we have been promised". This is why we are able to say that "we have Heaven in our grasp".

What, then, the Pontiff asked, is "the true conduct of a Christian?". We learn it from Paul himself: "The fruit of the Spirit, which comes from our identity, is love, joy, peace, magnanimity, good will, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control". And this, Pope Francis concluded, is "our road toward Heaven".