



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Our wage from Jesus

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(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 29 May 2015)

A Christian's wage is bearing a "likeness to Jesus": there is no reward in cash or in power for one who truly follows the Lord, because the path is only that of service and giving freely. If we seek instead a "good deal" in worldly terms of "wealth, vanity and pride", our "head swells" and we bear "counter-testimony" in the Church. This is the temptation that Pope Francis cautioned against on Tuesday during Mass at Santa Marta.

The Pontiff's meditation was inspired by the day's Reading, taken from the Gospel according to Mark (10:28-31). It recounts the "dialogue between Peter and Jesus", which the Pope explained, takes place just after the encounter with "that young man who wanted to follow Jesus: he was good, Jesus loved him". However, the Lord "told him that he lacked one thing: that he should sell all he had" in order to give it "to the poor: 'you will have treasure in heaven'". But hearing those words, "that young man's countenance fell and he went away sorrowful".

Thus, the Pope continued, "Jesus resumes the discourse and says to his disciples: 'How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God'". And "the disciples were amazed at his words". But "Jesus resumes and says to them: 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

kingdom of God”.

Here we arrive at the passage from Tuesday’s liturgy, with Peter assuring Jesus: “Lo, we have left everything and followed you”. It is as if to say: “What about us? What will our wage be? We have left everything”. In other words, “the rich who have left nothing — that young man who did not want to leave his possessions — will not enter the kingdom of God”, but what about us? “What will our wage be?”.

The issue, Francis pointed out, is that “the disciples half-understood Jesus, because knowing Jesus fully happened when the Holy Spirit came”. In fact, Jesus responds to them: “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time”, but these along “with persecutions”. In other words, “Jesus responds by pointing in another direction” and not promising “the same riches that that young man had”. Precisely in “having many brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, possessions is inheriting the kingdom, but with persecution, with the cross. And this changes”.

Here is why, the Pope explained, “when a Christian is attached to possessions, he gives the bad impression of a Christian who wants to have two things: heaven and earth”. And “the touchstone is exactly what Jesus says: the cross, persecutions, imply self-denial, enduring the cross every day”.

For their part, “the disciples had this temptation: to follow Jesus, but then how will this good deal turn out?”. And, Francis added, “let’s think about James and John’s mother, when she asked Jesus for a position for her sons: ‘Ah, make this one prime minister for me, that one the minister of finance’”. There was “worldly interest in following Jesus”: but then “the heart of these disciples was purified, purified, purified until Pentecost, when they understood everything”.

“Gratuitousness in following Jesus is the response to the gratuitous love and the salvation that Jesus gives us”, the Pontiff continued. “When one wants to follow both Jesus and the world, both poverty and wealth”, the outcome is “halfway Christianity, which seeks material gain: it is the spirit of worldliness”. And “that Christian, the Prophet Elijah said, ‘limps on two legs’ because ‘he doesn’t know what he wants’”.

Thus, Pope Francis indicated, “the key to understanding this discourse of Jesus — yes, a hundredfold more, but with the cross — is the last phrase: ‘many that are first will be last, and the last first’”. In other words, “the one that speaks of service: ‘One who believes himself to be, or who is the greatest among you, makes himself the servant: the smallest’”. By no coincidence, the Pope recalled, Jesus speaking these words “picked up that child and showed him”.

“Following Jesus from a human point of view is not a good deal: it means service”, the Pontiff continued. After all, that is exactly what “He did: and if the Lord gives you the chance to be first,

you must behave as the last, that is, by serving. And if the Lord gives you the chance to have possessions, you must place them in service, that is, for others”.

“There are three things, three steps that separate us from Jesus: wealth, vanity and pride”, the Pope stated. This is why, he explained, “possessions are so dangerous: they lead you immediately to vanity, and you believe you are important”; but “when you believe you are important, your head swells and you become lost”. This is the reason that Jesus reminds us of the path: “many that are first will be last, and he who is first among you will make himself the servant of all”. It is “a path of divesting”, the same path that “He took”.

“For Jesus, this work of catecheses to the disciples cost a really great deal of time, because they didn’t understand well”. Thus today, Francis recommended, “we too must ask Him: teach us this path, this science of service, this science of humility, this science of being last in order to serve the brothers and sisters of the Church”.

The Pontiff described it as “unseemly to see a Christian — whether lay, consecrated, priest or bishop — who wants both things: to follow Jesus and possessions, to follow Jesus and worldliness”. It is “counter-testimony” which “separates people from Jesus”. Before continuing with the Eucharistic celebration, the Pope suggested more reflection on Peter’s question: “We have left everything: how are You going to pay us?”. Francis also reminded us remember Jesus’ response, because the pay “He will give us is the likeness to Him: this will be our ‘wage’”. And “likeness to Jesus”, he concluded, is a “great wage”.