



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Key words

Thursday, 11 June 2015

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 25, 19 June 2015)

Walk toward God and toward others, in service and in poverty. Pope Francis' meditation, during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, can be summed up like this. In his remarks on the passage from Matthew (10:7-13) in which "Jesus sends his disciples to proclaim the Gospel, the good news, the Gospel of salvation", the Pontiff extrapolated "three key words for a clear understanding of what Jesus wanted from his disciples" and "from all of us who follow him". The three words are "walk", "service", and "gratuitous".

First of all, Jesus sends the disciples "to walk". It is a journey, not just a simple "stroll", Francis explained, but "a relay, with a message: to proclaim the Gospel, to go out to bring salvation, the Gospel of salvation". And this is "the task that Jesus gives to his disciples". For this reason, one who "stands still and doesn't go out, doesn't give to others what he received in Baptism, is not a true disciple of Jesus". Indeed, "he lacks the missionary spirit", and doesn't "go out of himself to bring something good to others".

Then there is another "path of the disciple of Jesus", the Pope continued, which is "the inner journey", that of the "disciple who seeks the Lord every day, in prayer, in meditation". And this is not secondary, the Pope emphasized: "a disciple must also take this journey because if he doesn't

always seek God, the Gospel he brings to others will be a weak Gospel, watered down, powerless”.

Thus it is a “twofold journey that Jesus wants from his disciples”. This sums up the “first word” highlighted by today’s Gospel: “to walk, journey”.

Then comes the second word: “service”, which is closely linked to the first. In fact, the Pope said, one has to “walk in order to serve others”. The Gospel reads: “preach as you go, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons”. Here we find again the “disciple’s duty: to serve”. The Pontiff was very clear about this: “a disciple who doesn’t serve others is not a Christian”.

Every disciple’s point of reference should be what “Jesus preached in those two columns of Christianity: the Beatitudes and the ‘protocol’ by which we will be judged”, namely that indicated by Matthew in Chapter 25. This is the “framework” of “evangelical service”. There are no loopholes: “If a disciple does not walk in order to serve, his walking is of no use. If his life is not in service, his life is of no use, as a Christian”.

In this very aspect the “temptation of selfishness” can be seen in many people. There are indeed those who say: “Yes, I’m a Christian, I’m at peace, I confess, I go to Mass, I follow the Commandments”. But where is the service to others? Where, the Pontiff asked, is “the service to Jesus in the sick, in the imprisoned, in the hungry, in the naked”? And this is precisely what “Jesus told us we must do because he is there”. Therefore, the second key is “service to Christ in others”.

There is also great meaning in the third word inferred from this passage, which is “gratuitous”. Walk, in service, without pay. Indeed, the passage reads: “You received without pay, give back without pay”. A detail so fundamental that the Lord stated it clearly, just in case “the disciples didn’t understand”. He explained to them: “Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics”. In other words, Francis explained, “the journey of service is gratuitous because we received salvation gratuitously”. None of us “bought salvation, none of us has earned it”: it is ours purely by the “grace of the Father in Jesus Christ, in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ”.

This is why, the Pope said, “it’s sad when we see Christians who forget these words of Jesus: ‘You received without pay, give back without pay’”. And it’s sad when those who forget this gratuitousness are Christian communities, parishes, religious congregations or dioceses. When this happens, the Pontiff warned, it is because in the background “there is the mistake” of assuming “that salvation comes from riches, from human power”.

Pope Francis then summarized his reflection: “Three words. Walk, but walk” in order “to proclaim. Service: the life of a Christian is not for himself; it is for others, as Jesus’ life was”. And third,

“gratuitous”. This, he said, is how we can place our hope back in Jesus, who “thus sends us a hope which never disappoints”. On the other hand, “when hope lies in being comfortable on the journey” or when “hope lies in selfishly seeking things for oneself” and not in serving others, or “when hope lies in riches or in small worldly assurances, all of this caves in. The Lord himself crushes it.

Then came the Pope’s final invitation before continuing the Eucharistic celebration: “Let us make this journey toward God with Jesus on the altar, in order to then walk toward others in service and in poverty, with only the riches of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus himself gave us”.