



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Times change

Friday, 23 October 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 44, 30 October 2015)

“Times change and we Christians must constantly change”. Pope Francis repeated this message throughout the Mass he celebrated on Friday morning in the Chapel of Santa Marta. It is a call to act “without fear”, to act “with freedom”, to avoid tranquillizing conformism, to be “steadfast in the faith in Jesus, steadfast in the truth of the Gospel”, but to “constantly move according to the signs of the times”.

Pope Francis started his reflection by referring to the day’s Readings, from the last part of the liturgical year, and particularly to the Letter to the Romans. “We have pointed out”, he recalled, “how Paul preached with such great intensity the freedom that we have in Christ”. This, he said, “is a gift, the gift of freedom, the freedom that has saved us from sin, that made us free”, that made us “children of God like Jesus; that freedom which brings us to call God ‘Father’”. The Pope added that “to attain this freedom we must open ourselves up to the power of the Spirit and really understand what is happening within us and around us”. And while in “recent days, last week”, we focused “on how to distinguish what happens within us: what comes from the good Spirit and what does not come from him”, in other words, the discernment of what “happens within us”, in the day’s Liturgy the Gospel passage from Luke (12:54-59) urges us instead “to look outside”. It impels us to “reflect on how we evaluate the things that happen around us”.

We need to ask ourselves “how do we judge: are we able to judge?”. Pope Francis said that “we have the capacity” and that Paul himself “tells us that we will judge the world: we Christians will judge the world”. The Apostle Peter says something similar when “he calls us the chosen people, the holy priesthood, the nation chosen for holiness”.

In short, the Pope explained, we Christians “have the freedom to judge what happens around us”. He warned, however, that “in order to judge we must really know what is happening around us”. The Pope then posed a question: “how can one do this, what the Church calls ‘knowing the signs of the times’?”.

In this regard, the Pope noted that “times change. It is truly Christian wisdom to recognize these changes, to be familiar with the different times, to know the signs of the times”, to distinguish between “the meaning of one thing and another”. Naturally, the Pope said, this “is not easy, because we hear so many comments: ‘I heard that this happened here, or that happened there; I read this, they told me that...’”. However, he quickly added, “I am free, I must make my own judgement and understand what all this means”. He said that “this is a task we usually don’t do. Instead, “we conform, we become tranquilized with ‘they told me; I heard; people say; I read...’, and we remain comfortable”. Instead we should ask ourselves: “What is the truth? What is the message that the Lord wants to give me with that sign of the times?”.

As customary, the Pope also proposed some practical suggestions “for understanding the signs of the times”. First and foremost, he said, “silence is necessary: to be quiet, to watch and observe. And afterwards to think within ourselves. For example: why are there so many wars now? Why did this thing happen? And to pray”. Therefore: “silence, reflection and prayer. Only then can we understand the signs of the times and what Jesus wants to tell us”.

In this sense there are no excuses. Though each of us may be tempted to say: “But, I have not studied much... I did not go to university nor even to secondary school...”, Jesus’ words leave no room for doubt. He does not say: “Watch how the academics act, how the doctors and intellectuals act”. On the contrary, he says: “Look to the farmers, to the humble: in their simplicity they understand that when the rain comes, the grass grows; they are able to distinguish wheat from weeds”. As a result “that simplicity — if accompanied by silence, reflection and prayer — will enable us to understand the signs of the times”. Because, he reiterated, “times change and we Christians must continually change. We must change, steadfast in the faith in Jesus Christ, steadfast in the truth of the Gospel, but our approach must constantly move according to the signs of the times”.

To conclude, the Pope returned to his initial thought. “We are free”, he said, “through the gift of freedom that Jesus Christ gave us. But our task is to examine what is happening within us, to discern our feelings and our thoughts, and to analyze what is happening around us, to discern the signs of the times”. How can we do this? “With silence, reflection and prayer”.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana