



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

How harmony is created

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In order to live in harmony and in mutual support, the Christian community must be reborn in the Holy Spirit. There are two signs to help us understand whether we are on the right path: disinterest in money and the courage to bear witness to the Risen Christ. Pope Francis made this point during Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning. He accompanied that suggestion with a warning not to confuse true harmony with a negotiated or hypocritical tranquillity.

“Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be reborn, but reborn by the Spirit: it is the Spirit who gives us a new identity, gives us strength, a new way of acting”. The Pontiff offered this key to understanding the day’s passage from the Gospel of John (3:7-15). This line, he pointed out, is seen “in the first reading, one of three or four summaries contained in the Acts of the Apostles” (4:32-37), a passage which recounts “how the first community lived, those who were ‘reborn’ by the Spirit”.

Francis indicated that they “lived in harmony”, but that it was “the harmony which only the Holy Spirit can give”. Indeed, “we can make agreements, a certain peace, but harmony is an interior grace which can only be made by the Holy Spirit”. Thus, these first “communities lived in harmony”. This can be understood from two distinct signs of harmony, the Pope explained.

The first sign is that “no one lives in need, that is, everything is held in common”. The authentic meaning is explained by the very passage taken from the Acts of the Apostles: they were “of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common.... There was not a needy person among them”.

Indeed, Francis affirmed, “the true harmony of the Holy Spirit has a very strong relationship to money: money is the enemy of harmony, money is selfish”. And “this is why the sign he gives is that everyone gave what was theirs, so that no one would be in need”.

In particular the Acts give “the example of ‘Joseph, who was surnamed by the apostles Barnabas (which means, Son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus’, a field owner”. Joseph sold his field “and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet”. This, in a word, is the true “harmony” which then “is related to the spirit of poverty, the first of the Beatitudes”.

On the contrary, however, there is “the case of the couple, Ananias and Sapphira. They sold their field and gave everything, they said they gave everything to the Apostles, but they secretly stole so as to make an account on the side, for themselves”. This story is also narrated in the Acts of the Apostles (5:1-11). However, Francis recalled, “the Lord punishes these two with death, because Jesus clearly said that one cannot serve both God and money: they are two masters whose service is irreconcilable”.

However, the Pontiff pointed out, “harmony, which only the Holy Spirit can create, should not be confused with tranquillity”. Because “a community can be quite tranquil and get along well” yet not be in harmony. Once, the Pope shared, “I heard a bishop say something wise: ‘There is tranquillity in the diocese. But if you touch upon this problem or that problem, a war breaks out immediately’”.

However, this is “a negotiated harmony”, he explained, “and not that of the Holy Spirit: it is a hypocritical harmony, so to speak, like that of Ananias and Sapphira after what they had done”. Instead, “the harmony of the Holy Spirit gives us the generosity of having nothing of our own, as long as there is someone in need”.

Then there is a second attitude that arises from the harmony of the Holy Spirit, which Francis presented by repeating the words from the Acts: “with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all”.

In short, the second sign of true harmony is “courage”. Therefore, “when there is harmony in the Church, in the community, there is courage: the courage to witness to the Risen Lord”.

From this perspective the Pontiff recommended that we “read and reread this passage from the Acts of the Apostles: chapter 4, from verse 32 onward”. The reason is, he said, “because it is what

Jesus asked of the Father at the Last Supper: that they be 'one', that there be harmony among them". This is why, the Pope concluded, "it will do us good to read this passage today, and see the things that it says and how each of us can help our family, our neighbourhood, our city, coworkers, classmates, all those who are nearby, in order to create this harmony that is made in the name of the Risen Lord Jesus and which is a grace of the Holy Spirit".