



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

A double life

Friday, 29 April 2016

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St John's advice to the "adolescent Church" of the first century applies perfectly to us today. Francis thus proposed the content of the Apostle's First Letter: that we not have a double life and not give in to lies, aware that even as sinners we have a Father who forgives us. This is the reflection the Pope proposed on Friday morning, during Mass at Santa Marta.

"Today's liturgy", he began, "speaks to us of meekness, of humility; it speaks to us of God's comfort when we are weary, oppressed; it speaks to us of kindness". This is precisely "what Jesus tells us in the Gospel, when he praises the Father: 'Lord, you have hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes'". Indeed, the Pope said, citing the day's passage from the Gospel of Matthew (11:25-30), the Lord "speaks to us of lowliness, of that lowliness that pleases God".

Also in the First Letter of the Apostle John (1:5-2:2), he explained, "what draws attention is the same manner: it makes us think of a grandfather who counsels his young grandchildren". In fact John "is addressing an 'adolescent Church' which, in order to remain in the faith, must remain small, childlike, open, humble".

The day's passage from the First Letter of John, the Pope suggested, begins with very meaningful words: "My little children". That expression contains "the wisdom of a grandfather who speaks and who has a legacy". So, "what is the advice that he gives? Do not be liars! Do not say or lead one to understand that God is a liar". And "how does he give this advice? With pairs of opposite words: light and darkness, sin and grace". It is obvious, the Pope affirmed, that "if we say we are in communion with God, that he is light, but we walk in darkness, we are liars". For this reason, John "simply says: abide in the light; be open with the truth of the Gospel; do not take dark paths, murky paths, because the truth is not there, something else is hidden there, do not be liars!".

In other words, "always light". This is why "if you say that you are in communion with the Lord, walk in the light: not a double life! Not that!". Give a decisive 'no' to "the lies that we are so used to seeing and to falling into: saying one thing and doing another". It is an ever-recurring temptation. "We know where lies come from: in the Bible, Jesus calls the devil the 'father of lies', a liar".

This is exactly why, "with such kindness, with such meekness, this grandfather says to the 'adolescent Church': do not be a liar! You are in communion with God, walk in the light; do works of light, do not say one thing and do another", do not have a "double life". John's advice is "simple", but it "helps us because it leads us to think about ourselves". In this regard, Francis suggested a few direct questions for a personal examination of conscience: "Do I always walk in the light, always in the light of God? Am I transparent or am I sometimes dark and sometimes luminous?".

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves", the Pope warned. Because "we are all sinners, we all have sins". Thus, "if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar", and thus, "his word is not in us, for we are all sinners". John's letter is clear. He explains: "Fear not, my children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if you have sinned, if any one does sin, do not be discouraged. We have a Paraclete, a word, an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He justifies us. He gives us grace".

Hearing John's counsel, Francis said, "you feel the desire to ask this grandfather: 'Is it not such a bad thing to have sins?'". No, the Pope continued, "sin is bad! But if you have sinned", know that "they are waiting to forgive you! Always! Because he, the Lord, is greater than our sins".

This, the Pope explained, "is Christian life, this is the advice that this grandfather gives to his grandchildren, to this Church of the first century which is already a beautiful experience of Jesus: always in the light, without lies, without hiding, without hypocrisy. It is the path of light".

With regard to sin, Francis reiterated that while it is true that "we are all weak and we have all sinned", we need not fear, because God "is greater than our sins". And "he awaits us with the attitude that we recited in the Psalm: 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he

remembers that we are dust” (Ps 103[102]).

It is, at heart, the “beautiful experience of seeking the Lord, meeting the Lord”. It is acknowledging that we have slipped, that we have sinned. It is hearing the Father say: “Don’t worry, I forgive you, I embrace you”. For “this is the mercy of God, it is the greatness of God: he is greater than our sins”, he is “kinder, because he knows that we are dust, we are nothing. Strength comes only from him”. Thus, “the Lord always awaits us”.

Concluding the homily, Francis recommended that we keep in mind the day’s reading from John, who like a grandfather counsels us and calls us “his children”. And, according to his advice, “let us walk in the light because God is light: do not go along with one foot in the light and the other in darkness; do not be a liar”. The important thing is to be aware that “we have all sinned” and “no one can say: this man is a sinner, this woman is a sinner”, while “I, thanks be to God, am just. No!”. Because, the Pope said, only “the One who paid for us” is just. And “if someone sins, he awaits us. He forgives us because he is merciful, and knows how we are formed, and remembers that we are dust”. May the very “joy that this reading gives us”, the Pope prayed, “lead us forward in the simplicity and transparency of Christian life, especially when we turn to the Lord. With the truth”.