



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

For nobles causes

Tuesday, 10 May 2016

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May life be lived for noble causes. Pope Francis recommended this to today's youth who, immersed in a "culture of consumerism" and of "narcissism" are often dissatisfied and rarely happy. In the Mass celebrated at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, the Pope focused his reflection on the witness of missionaries — "the glory of our Church" — which he proposed as a model for young people.

The Pontiff's homily was inspired by the first reading of the day, taken from The Acts of the Apostles (20:17-27), in which we read what "we might call 'an Apostle's farewell'", the Pope said. It is the passage in which "Paul calls the priests of Ephesus to Miletus and tells them that he will not see them again, because he must leave, because the Spirit has bound him to go to Jerusalem".

Analyzing this text, we see that, first of all, the Apostle performs "an examination of conscience: 'You know how I lived among you all this time'". It is a close examination in which Paul "recounts how he has behaved" and, at first, he also seems "to boast a little". In reality "it is not so", and he adds that it was simply "the Spirit who led me to this". Paul then continues: "I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit. The Spirit sent me here to proclaim Jesus and the Spirit now calls me to go to Jerusalem". After the examination of conscience another element emerges: "docility"

to the Holy Spirit. It is a farewell in which Paul expresses both “nostalgia in looking back at what the Lord had done with him”, and “a feeling of gratitude to the Lord”.

This passage of Scripture, Francis noted, brings to mind “the beautiful literary passage of the Spaniard Pemán” in which we read “the description of St Francis Saverio’s farewell” on the shores of China. He too made an examination of conscience: alone, before God”.

The next part of the reading is also meaningful, because we might ask ourselves: “What awaits Paul?”. Indeed, the Apostle writes that “I am going to Jerusalem ‘not knowing what shall befall me there’”. Likewise, a missionary departs “not knowing what awaits him”. Only one thing is certain: “I know only that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me”. Missionaries too, the Pontiff commented, “know that life will not be easy, but they carry on”.

In the end Paul adds “another truth, which causes the priests of Ephesus to weep: ‘I know that you will no longer see my face. We will never see each other here’”. He then “gives some advice. They accompany him to the ship and on the shore they embrace him, weeping.... And thus, he bids farewell” to the community of Ephesus, in the city of Miletus.

The Apostle’s aim is the aim of missionaries”, the Pope said. “This passage”, he explained, evokes “the life of our missionaries: the many young people, young women and men, who have left their homelands, their families and have gone afar, to other continents, to proclaim Jesus Christ”. They too “went, ‘bound’ in the Holy Spirit”. It was their “vocation”. Today, in those places, when “we go to the cemeteries” and “we see their stones”, we realize that “so many died young, under age 40”, often because they were not prepared to withstand the local diseases. We understand that these young people “gave their lives”, their “lives were snuffed out”. Francis reflected: “I think that they, in that final moment, far from their homelands, from their families, from their loved ones, said: ‘It was worth it, to do what I have done!’”.

Remembering these young people, the “heroes of the evangelization of our day”, recalling how Europe filled other continents with missionaries who departed, never to return — and who probably, in their “final moment”, their moment of “farewell”, would have said as Saverio did: “I left everything, but it was worth it!” — the Pope affirmed: “I think it is right that we thank the Lord for their witness”. Some died “anonymously”, others as “martyrs, that is, offering their lives for the Gospel”. These missionaries, Francis said, are “our glory!” They are “the glory of our Church!”.

With regard to those examples, the Pontiff turned his thought “to the young men and women of today”, often ill at ease in the “culture of consumerism, of narcissism”. He said to them: “Look to the horizon! Look there, look to these missionaries of ours!”. It is important, he added, “to pray to the Holy Spirit who binds them to go afar”, setting their life aflame. Francis used this powerful expression, then explained: “It is a rather harsh phrase, but life is worth living; but to live it well”, it must be consumed ardently in service, in proclaiming, and in going forth. This is the joy of

proclaiming the Gospel”.

Concluding the homily, the Pope exhorted everyone to thank the Lord “for Paul, for his capacity to go to a place and leave that place when the Holy Spirit called him”, but also “for the Church’s many missionaries” who, in the past as still today, have had the courage to go. The Pontiff also invited prayer that the Holy Spirit enter “the hearts of our young people”, where “there is something dissatisfying”, and “bind them to go further, to set their lives aflame for noble causes”. Perhaps only a stone will be left, “with a name, a birth date, a date of death; and after several years no one will remember them”, he said. But they will have “bid farewell to the world in service. And this is a beautiful thing!”. Then came the final invocation: “That the Holy Spirit, who comes now, may sow in the hearts of young people the desire to go and proclaim Jesus Christ, ‘setting their life aflame’”.