



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Day after day

Tuesday, 24 May 2016

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“Today is the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, which is celebrated with special devotion in China. I offer this Mass for all Chinese people, for their great country, that the Lord may bless China”: with these words Pope Francis began the Eucharistic celebration in the Chapel of Santa Marta. In his homily the Holy Father expanded upon the theme of “simple holiness”, which all Christians are called to: a “way” to live “each day” with “courage, hope, grace and conversion”.

Pope Francis’ meditation was inspired by the passage from the Letter of Peter (1:10-16), taken from the liturgy of the day: “a small treatise on holiness, an exhortation, but also an indication of the path to holiness”. It consists of the “simple sanctity of all Christians, the sanctity of every day, our sanctity, what we must do every day”, the Pope explained. The last reference is clear and St Peter points it out, saying: “for it is written: ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’”, and God himself said to Abraham: “Walk in my presence and be blameless”. In other words, the Pope explained: “holiness is walking in God’s presence and in an irreproachable manner”. You “cannot buy or sell holiness”, the Pope said, “neither can you give it away”. In fact, it “is a journey that I must make into God’s presence: no one else can do it in my name”. Of course, “I can pray that someone else may become holy, but the path is one that he must walk, not I”.

To clarify further, according to Peter's text, the Pope indicated some useful "words" for teaching us "what everyday holiness is, the holiness that is — so to speak — even anonymous". There must first be "courage". Peter says this as well: "Therefore, gird up your mind, be sober, put forth everything, move forward, give it all you've got: have courage!". We always need "courage to move forward", therefore we can say that "Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven is for the brave".

The apostle continues, saying: "Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you". This brings us to the second useful word: "hope". You cannot, the Pope annotated, "head out on a path without desiring an arrival". We await "an encounter with God, an encounter with Jesus", and this hope "moves courage", the Pope said.

St Peter then speaks about "grace". This third word helps us to understand that "we cannot live holiness on our own", instead "it is a grace". Pope Francis explained further, saying: "Being good, being holy, each day going a bit further in the Christian life is a grace from God and we have to ask for it", and we have to be "available" to receive it.

On the theme of "the hope of the journey", the Pope also suggested rereading Chapter 11 from the Letter to the Hebrews: "it recounts the path of our fathers, the first ones to be called by God, how they moved forward, and also of our father Abraham, saying: 'he went out, not knowing where he was to go'". Each one of us, the Pope said, can "ask the Lord for this grace", and "with simplicity" can pray: "Lord, I am a poor man, but you can perform a miracle and make me a little better". In this way we can "open our hearts" so that the Spirit can work in us".

There is lastly another word that is always suggested by Peter, who writes: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves". Here we speak of "conversion". The Pope added: along the way "we should not look back: it is a way to move forward, toward the horizon, with hope and with courage, open to grace"; but it can happen that "one day I move forward, and another day I move backward, back and forth. This does not help", it keeps us "stuck in the same place". Therefore, "each day" we need conversion. Perhaps someone might say: "Father, in order to convert I have to do penance, so I need a beating!", while instead, Pope Francis explained, what we need are "small conversions". And so, "if you are capable of not speaking ill of another, you are on the right path to becoming holy". We are called to simple things: "Do I want to criticize my neighbor, or my coworker?" It will help to "bite your tongue a little", perhaps it "will swell", but "your spirit will be holier, on this path".

The important thing is to "move forward" on this path that is "simple" but that also calls for "strength" — a gift of the Holy Spirit — in order to "bear sufferings". Indeed, they will still happen in life: "be it an illness, the death of a loved one, a problem with ones children or siblings, or a big problem with business or at work". The reference is always Jesus, who "went forward and suffered". For us too "there are those small pieces of the cross", but there is also "the joy of this

journey”, during which we find Jesus in “every moment”.

Therefore, Pope Francis concluded: “Courage, hope, grace, conversion and strength”, so that “you can be holy every day, in the Church: a daily step forward on this journey toward an encounter with the Lord”.