



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The disgrace of war

Tuesday, 20 September 2016

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 39, 30 September 2016)

“Today, as men and women of all religions, we will go to Assisi, not to put on a show: but simply to pray, to pray for peace”. Before leaving for the city of St Francis, the Pope wished to reaffirm the significance of the pilgrimage, while celebrating Mass on Tuesday morning, 20 September, in the Chapel of Santa Marta. “I wrote a letter to all the bishops of the world”, he said, asking “that in their dioceses they hold prayer meetings today, inviting Catholics, Christians, believers and all men and women of good will, of every religion, to pray for peace”.

Therefore, “today the world will have its centre in Assisi, and the whole world will pray for peace”, said the Pontiff, who did not hesitate to suggest that everyone dedicate “a bit of time, in your home”, to take up “the Bible or a rosary”, to pray “for peace, because the world is at war, the world is suffering”. This war, Francis explained, is one which “we do not see: it approaches us as some act of terrorism, we are frightened”, and “it is horrible, this is really horrible”. However “this has nothing to do with what is happening in those countries, in those lands where bombs are falling day and night”, they “fall and fall, they fall and kill children, elderly people, men, women: everyone!”.

“God, the Father of everyone, of Christians and non-Christians — the Father of everyone —

desires peace”, the Pope affirmed, adding: “It is we, mankind, under the temptation of evil, who create war in order to make money, in order to gain more territory”. Today, he continued, people “suffer greatly in the world due to war, and many others might say: ‘Thanks be to God, it does not touch us!’”. And it is good that “we thank God”, Francis added, “but let us also think of others”, of all those people who are affected by war.

Referring to the First Reading from the liturgy of the day — from the Book of Proverbs (21:1-6,10-13) — Francis repeated the concluding phrase in particular: “He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself cry out and not be heard”. And in this way, he explained, “if today we close our ears to the cries of these people who are suffering under bombs, who suffer the exploitation of arms traffickers, it could happen that when it’s our turn we may not receive a response”.

In this context, the Pope re-launched his appeal: “We cannot close our ears to the cry of pain of our brothers and sisters who are suffering from war”. He also warned against thinking that the issue does not concern us: “Is the war far away? No, it is very close!”, he said. This is because “war touches everyone”, beginning “with the heart: for this reason we must pray today for peace”, he said, asking “that the Lord give us peace in our hearts, and take away all desires of greed, covetousness and struggle”.

“Peace, peace!” was the exclamation the Pope asked everyone to repeat. With the hope “that our heart may be the heart of a man or woman of peace”, ready to look “beyond religious differences — everyone, everyone, everyone! — Because we are all children of God”. Indeed, “God is the God of peace, there is no god of war: what creates war is evil, it is the devil, who wants to kill everyone”.

The Pontiff explicitly invited everyone to think “today, not only of the bombs, the deaths, and those who are injured, but also of the people — the children and the elderly — of those who cannot be reached by humanitarian aid, to eat; they cannot get medicine”. And “they are hungry and sick because bombs prevent them” from receiving food and necessary treatment. “While we pray today, it would be good if each one of us should feel ashamed that humans, our brothers, are capable of doing this”.

Therefore, Francis said, today must be a “day of prayer, penance, and tears for peace; a day to hear the cry of the poor”, the cry that “opens the heart to mercy, to love, and saves us from selfishness”. In conclusion, the Pope thanked all those who responded to his invitation, “for everything that you will do for this day of prayer and penance for peace”.

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