



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Knowing the times

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(by <http://www.osservatoreromano.va>)

The grace of recognizing when Jesus passes by, when “he knocks at our door”, the grace “of recognizing the time in which we have been visited, we visited and we will be visited”. This is the prayer that Pope Francis addressed to the Lord for all Christians, at the end of his homily in the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 17 November. It was a prayer to help us avoid falling into the “drama” that has repeatedly taken place through history, from the beginning up to our present day: that of “not to recognizing the love of God”.

The Pope’s meditation was inspired by the Gospel passage in which Luke (19:41-44) describes Jesus crying over the city of Jerusalem. “What does Jesus feel, in his heart”, the Pope asked, “at this moment in which he cries? Why does Jesus weep over Jerusalem?”. Looking through the Bible, we see the answer: “Jesus remembers and recalls the entire history of the people, his people. And he remembers his people’s refusal of the Father’s love”.

Thus, “in Jesus’ heart, in Jesus’ memory, in that moment, three steps of the prophets came”. Like that of Hosea — “I will entice her, lead her out to the desert and speak to her heart; I will make her my bride” — in which you encounter “the enthusiasm and God’s desire for his people”, his “love”. Or the words in Jeremiah: “Of you I remember the days of your youth, the time of your engagement, of your young love, when you followed me in the desert. But you have gone away from me”. And again: “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me?”,

“Disgrace be upon you that your fathers have gone far from me...”.

The Pope sought to imagine the outflow of memories that Jesus experienced in that moment, and he again recalled the prophet Hosea: “When Israel was a child I loved him, but the more I called him, the further he walked away from me”. What emerged was the “drama of God’s love and the distancing, the infidelity of the people”. The Pope explained that this was what “Jesus had in his heart”: on the one hand the memory of a “love story”, that of “the ‘crazy’ love God has for his people, a love without measures”, and on the other hand the “selfish, hopeless, adulterous and idolatrous” answer of the people.

There is another aspect that also emerges from the Gospel passage of the day. Jesus indeed laments over Jerusalem, “because”, he says, “you do not recognize the time in which you were visited by God, by the patriarchs, by the prophets”. The Pontiff suggested that in the memory of Jesus there was “that divination parable, in which, when the boss sends his employee to ask for money: they beat him; and they kill the next. Eventually he sends his son and what do these people say? ‘This is the son! This is the legacy... Let’s kill him! Let us kill him and the legacy will be ours!’”. This is the explanation of what is meant by “the hour of the visit”, namely: “Jesus is the son who comes and is not recognized. He is refused!”. In fact, in John’s Gospel we read: “He came to them and they did not accept him”, “the light came and the people chose the darkness”. Francis explained that it is this, therefore, “that causes pain in Jesus Christ’s heart, this story of infidelity, this story of not recognizing God’s embraces, the love of God, of a God in love” who desires the happiness of mankind.

Jesus, the Pope said, “in that moment saw what was coming as the Son. And he wept “because these people did not recognize the time in which they were visited”. At this point the Pope turned the focus of his meditation to the daily life of every Christian, because, he said, “this is not a drama that only happened in history and ended with Jesus. It is the drama of every day”. Each of us can ask ourselves: “Do I know how to recognize the time in which I have been visited? When God visited me?”.

To clarify the concept further, Francis made reference to the liturgy from last Tuesday, in which he spoke of “three moments of God’s visit: that of correcting; entering into dialogue with us; and inviting himself to our house”. On that occasion, it appeared that “God, Jesus, stands before us, and when he wants to correct us he says: ‘Wake up! Change your life! This is not good!’. Then when he wants to speak to us he says: ‘I knock at the door and call. Open to me!’”. As when he said to Zaccheus: “Come down!” so as to “be invited to his house”.

And today we can ask ourselves: “How is my heart before the visit of Jesus?”. He called the faithful to “make an examination of conscience: ‘Am I aware of what passes through in my heart? Do I feel? Do I know how to listen to the words of Jesus, when he knocks on my door or when he tells me: Get up! Correct yourself!; or when he tells me: Come down, I want to dine with you?’”. It

is an important question because, the Pontiff said, “each one of us can fall into the same sin as the people of Israel, into the same sin as Jerusalem: not knowing of our visitation”.

Faced with our many certainties — “But I am secure in my things. I go to Mass, I am safe”— we need to remember that “every day the Lord visits us, every day he knocks at our door”. Therefore, “we must learn to recognize this, so that we do not end in that very painful situation” as recounted by the prophet Hosea: “The more I loved them, the more I called them, the more they distanced themselves from me”. The Pope therefore reiterated: “Do you do an examination of conscience every day about this? Has the Lord visited me today? Did I feel any invitation, any inspiration to follow him more closely, to do a work of charity, to pray a little more?”, in order to realize ultimately that the Lord invites us everyday to all these things in order to encounter us.

The lesson which emerges from this meditation is therefore that “Jesus wept not only for Jerusalem, but for all of us”, and that he “gives his life, in order that we might recognize his visitation”. In this respect, the Pontiff recalled “a very strong expression” by St Augustine: “I fear God, I fear Jesus when he passes!” — ‘But why are you afraid?’ — ‘I am afraid of not knowing him!’”. Therefore, the Pope concluded, “if you are not attentive to your heart, you will never know whether or not Jesus is visiting you”.