



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

People discarded

Tuesday, 13 December 2016

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

Clericalism in the Church is a terrible evil with ancient roots and always victimizes “poor and humble people”, and it is by no coincidence that even today the Lord repeats to “the intellectuals of religion” that sinners and prostitutes will precede them into the kingdom of heaven. Thus, Pope Francis called for a true examination of conscience during Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, 13 December.

Recalling the Day's reading from the Gospel of Matthew (21:28-32), the Pontiff highlighted that “Jesus addresses the chief priests and the elders of the people, namely those who had authority, juridical authority, moral authority, religious authority — authority of every kind”. He “speaks clearly” to those “who made all the decisions: let us consider Anna and Caiaphas, who had judged Jesus, or the words of Caiaphas: ‘it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish’”. In short, the Pope affirmed, “they decided everything; they even made the decision to kill Lazarus, because he was a witness who was not favourable to their interests”. They were “men of power” and “Judas went to them to negotiate: ‘How much will you give me if I bring him to you?’”. Indeed, “this is how Jesus was sold”. And these men “were priests, the chiefs”.

These people, Francis explained, “had reached this state of overbearing, even of tyranny over the people, exploiting the law”; it was “a law that they had amended so many times” that there were

“no less than 500 commandments: everything was regulated, everything!”. It was “a law scientifically constructed, because these were capable people, who understood well, who created many nuances”. However, the Pontiff noted, “it was a law without memory: they had forgotten the first commandment that God gave to our father Abraham: ‘walk before me, and be blameless’”. Instead, “they did not budge: they always stood firm in their convictions and were not blameless”.

Moreover, the Pope continued, they had no memory because “they had even forgotten the Ten Commandments of Moses”. He “gave the ten commandments, but with [their] construction of an intellectualized, sophisticated, case-based law; they forgot the Law of Moses”. Thus, “this law became as a golden calf – another golden calf – in place of the Law of Moses”. For example, Francis explained, “the fourth Commandment – one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful – and the only one which says that there will be a reward: honour, take care of your parents”. Yet one could find a way to say: “But if my parents have needs and I have made a vow, and I have given my money to the temple, I’m sorry, beloved parents but take care of yourselves as best you can”. And in this way “they cancel the Law made by the Lord with a law made by them: it lacks the memory which attaches the present day to the origin, with revelation”.

“Jesus was the victim of these men”, the Pontiff said, “but the everyday victims were the humble and poor people, of whom Zephaniah speaks today: ‘For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, those who are left in Israel’” (3:9-13). Thus, the Pope continued, “it is as if to say, with a bit more emphasis, those who are rejected by you, those who have faith in the Lord and live this faith”. Jesus “says to them: the issue isn’t fulfilling the law, the issue is having regret”.

Referring again to the Gospel of Matthew, the Pope explained that this was the case with the first of two sons who were sent by their father to work in the vineyard. Initially the son said ‘no’, “but then he regretted it and he went”. Indeed, Pope Francis continued, “they didn’t know what it was to regret, because they felt they were perfect: ‘I thank you Lord, because I am not like the others, not even like the one who is praying there’”. Indeed, “they were vain, proud, arrogant; meanwhile the people were the victims” who “suffered these injustices. They felt condemned by them, abused by them: the people, humble and poor, discarded”.

“This”, Francis stated, “is the promise. People who are able to regret, who know they are sinners, are like rubbish to these people”. He added: “I like thinking of Judas”. Without a doubt, “Judas was a traitor, he sinned badly; he sinned terribly”. But “then the Gospel says that, regretful, he went to them to return the money”. And they tried to calm him down by saying: “You were our associate, we have the power to pardon you for everything”. He refused and they told him to handle it himself, it was his problem. Thus, “they left him on his own, discarded. Poor Judas the regretful traitor was not welcomed by the pastors, because these men had forgotten what it meant to be a pastor”. They were “the intellectuals of religion, those men who had power, who led the catechesis of the people with a moral code dictated by their intelligence and not by the revelation of God”.

It is “awful” , Francis said, that “these humble and poor people” are “discarded” by those “who have distanced themselves from Him”, and “who lambaste them”. Certainly, the Pope added, “one of you might tell me: ‘Thank God these things were in the past’. No my friends”, Francis continued, “even today — even today! — they are in the Church. And this causes so much pain!”.

Indeed, he said, “there is that spirit of clericalism in the Church, that we feel: clerics feel superior; clerics distance themselves from the people. Clerics always say: ‘this should be done like this, like this, like this, and you – go away!’”. It happens “when the cleric doesn’t have time to listen to those who are suffering, the poor, the sick, the imprisoned: the evil of clericalism is a really awful thing; it is a new edition of this ancient evil”. But “the victim is the same: the poor and humble people, who await the Lord”.

“The Father”, the Pope concluded, “always sought to draw near to us; he sent his Son. We are waiting, waiting in joyful expectation, exultant. But the Son did not play these people’s game: the Son went with the sick, the poor, the discarded, the tax collectors, the sinners and — it’s scandalous — the prostitutes”. But “even today Jesus tells all of us and even to those who are seduced by clericalism: ‘Sinners and prostitutes will go before you into the Kingdom of Heaven’”.