



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

**MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ**

On a journey

Thursday, 11 May 2017

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All Christians are a “people on a journey”, moving forward in history towards the “fullness of time”, “amid grace and sin”. Every Christian makes his own personal journey toward the day when he or she will come “face to face” with God who “never leaves us all alone”. Speaking of this journey, Pope Francis retraced the history of salvation, during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 11 May.

The Holy Father’s meditation was inspired by the day’s reading from the Acts of the Apostles (13:13-25), which recalled the story of Saint Paul preaching in Antioch of Pisidia. This passage “draws attention”, he said, because when “Paul speaks about Jesus, he starts from the distant past: he begins from the time when the people came out of Egypt”. Stephen does the same thing, the Pope pointed out: “before his stoning, he announces Jesus Christ, but begins from Abraham, further back”. And this is also what Jesus does with the disciples of Emmaus when, “beginning with Moses, he spoke about the prophets”.

“Why did they not go straight to the heart of the sermon, which is Jesus Christ, as for example, Mark did at the start of the Gospel?”, Pope Francis asked. “Almost all of them began by preaching from the beginning, from history”, he said. This is because “God made himself known in history: God’s salvation, that marvel of his mercy which we mentioned in today’s prayer, has a great history, a long history, a story of grace and sin”, Pope Francis continued.

The Pope paused on this very aspect, and suggested reading the genealogy of Jesus written by Matthew and Luke. In those accounts there were “many good men and women, many saints and many sinners”, Francis explained. This is how “God’s promise journeyed forth and when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son”. This is the first thing to consider: “God’s salvation is on a journey towards the fullness of time”, a journey on which we encounter both “saints and sinners”. The Lord “leads his people through good times and bad times, with freedom and slavery; but he guides his people toward the fullness”, that is, “when Jesus appeared”, the Pope explained.

However, “things did not end there: Jesus went away, but he did not leave us all alone: he left us the Spirit; the Spirit who enables us to understand Jesus’ message”, the Pope pointed out. Thus begins a “second journey, that of God’s people after Jesus”, awaiting “another fullness of time: when Jesus will come for the second time”. This is the path of the Church that “moves forward” with “many saints and many sinners, amid grace and sin”, with the same hope that is found in Revelation: “Come Lord Jesus; come. We await you”.

This second path, the Pope explained, is useful in order “to understand, to fathom the person of Jesus, to deepen our faith”, thanks to “the Holy Spirit whom Jesus left us”. It is also useful “to understand the morals, the commandments”, the Pontiff added. “Something that at one time appeared normal, that wasn’t a sin”, today is considered a “mortal sin”, he explained. In truth “it was a sin, but the historical moment did not allow it to be perceived as such”.

To better illustrate this concept, the Holy Father gave a number of examples, beginning with slavery. “When we went to school”, he recalled, “they used to tell us what they did to slaves: they took them from one place; they sold them in another place. They were sold; they were bought in Latin America”, he said. Today, this is seen as a “mortal sin”. In the past, it was not so. “Actually, some used to say that this was permitted because these people had no soul!”. Evidently, the Pope observed, it was necessary “to journey onwards in order to better understand the faith, to better understand morality”. And it is not that slaves have disappeared from today’s world: “there are more of them but at least we know that it is a mortal sin”, the Pontiff explained.

He noted that something similar occurred with “the death penalty which, at one time, was seen as normal. And today we say that it is unacceptable”. And again with religious wars: “we know that this is not only a mortal sin but a sacrilege, actual idolatry”.

This path is dotted with many saints who help bring clarity to faith and morality; the saints “whom we all know, and the hidden saints!”. This very holiness, the Pope stressed, “is what brings us forward towards the second fullness of time, when the Lord will come in the end, to be everything in everyone”.

This is how the Lord “wished to be known by his people: journeying”, Pope Francis explained, adding that “the People of God are always journeying”. Indeed, “when the People of God stand

still, they become prisoners, like a donkey in a stable”, he added. “They do not understand, do not move forward, do not deepen faith, love; they do not purify the soul”.

The Holy Father continued his meditation by highlighting “another fullness of time: the third”, that is, “our own”. Indeed, “each of us is on a journey toward the fullness of our own time. Each of us will arrive at the moment of full time and life will end and we will have to meet the Lord. And this is our own personal moment”. Pope Francis explained that the Apostles and the early preachers “needed to make people understand that God loved, chose, loved his journeying people, always. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so that we can journey forth”. And still today, “it is the Spirit that moves us to journey”. This is “God’s great work of mercy. And each of us is journeying towards the fullness of personal time”.

Pope Francis ended his homily with an invitation to ask oneself the following questions: “Do I believe that God’s promise was [made] on the journey? Do I believe that God’s People, the Church, is on a journey? Do I believe I am journeying?”. And, the Pontiff added, “when I go to confession, do I say yes, I have done three or four things wrong”, or “do I think that this step I am taking is a step on my journey toward the fullness of time?”.

Many saints, both in the Old Testament, e.g. David, and even after the coming of the Holy Spirit, e.g. Saul, “asked for forgiveness”. But it is important to note that “asking for God’s forgiveness is not an automatic thing”, the Pope stressed. Rather, it is “understanding that I am on a journey, among a journeying people, and that one day — maybe today, maybe tomorrow or in 30 years — I will find myself face to face with that Lord who never leaves us all alone, but accompanies us on the journey”. Therefore, it is important to remember, Pope Francis said, that this journey “is God’s great work of mercy”.