



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Give joy to the people

Thursday, 18 May 2017

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 2 June 2017)

To “obey, and give joy to the people” is an essential part of “Christian mission”, which Pope Francis focused on during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 18 May.

During his homily, the Pope recounted the story of a priest who, when he was appointed bishop, “went to his elderly father to give him the news”. The father, a “humble man”, who had “worked his whole life” and was now retired, did not have a university education but the “wisdom of life”, and gave his son this advice: “obey, and give joy to the people”. Pope Francis noted that “this man had understood” the teaching of the day’s liturgy: “be obedient to the Father’s love, not to other loves; be obedient to this gift and then give joy to the people”. Thus, the Pontiff explained, we too, “Christians, lay people, priests, consecrated religious, bishops, must give joy to the people”.

Francis began the day’s reflection, with a particular passage from the Gospel of John (15:9-11). Describing the scene, he noted that “Jesus returns to reflect once again on the commandment of love”, and “says something very powerful: ‘As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you’”. Hence “the love with which Jesus loves us is the same as that with which the Father loved him: the same. We are loved with this great love. It is a great gift of love!”. For this very reason, Francis continued, Jesus “admonishes us: ‘Please, abide in my love because it is the love of the Father’. It

is a great love". Recognizing the likely objection: "But, Lord, how can we abide in your love?", the Lord himself offers a concrete response: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love". In substance, the Pope clarified, "Jesus abides in the Father's love and asks us to abide in the love he has for us".

But "how does one abide" in this love? The response is: "observe the commandments" — those 10 rules which form "the base", which are "the foundation". These are the precepts, Jesus clarifies, "that I have taught you", that is, the "commandments of daily life, the little commandments" which, "more than commandments, are a Christian way of life". The Pope thus advised that we abide "in this way of living the Christian life". How do we do so? Examples can be found "in the works of mercy or in the Beatitudes". In fact, the Pontiff observed, "although the list of Jesus' commandments may be very, very, very long", in reality, there is one core: "the Father's love for him and his love for us".

For this reason, the Lord "asks us to abide in his love", and also, Francis warned, because in life "there are other loves. The world too proposes other loves to us: love of money, for example, love of vanity, of showing off; love of pride; love of power, and of doing many unjust things in order to have even more power". However, such cases "are other loves"; they "are not of Jesus and are not of the Father. Christ asks us to abide in his love, which is the Father's love".

The Holy Father thus invited his listeners to think about "those other loves which distance us from Jesus' love", and also to reflect upon the existence of "other measures of loving": such as "half-hearted loving", which, however, "is not loving. It is one thing to wish someone well, and another thing entirely to love someone. Loving is more than wishing someone well". At this point we must ask ourselves what the measure of love is. Paradoxically, the response is that "the measure of love is to love without measure". Only thus, suggested the Pope, with "these commandments that Jesus has given us, will we abide in Jesus' love, which is the Father's love. Without measure". Thus, this love of Christ is not like every other type of love, which can often be "lukewarm or self-absorbed".

Continuing with the Gospel passage, Francis then asked why the Lord feels the need to remind us of these things. The response is found in the text: "that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full". In fact, "if the Father's love comes from Jesus, Jesus teaches us the way of love: an open heart, to love without measure, to love by leaving aside all other types of love. The great love for him is to abide in this love, and there one finds joy, great joy, which is a gift". Indeed, both "love and joy are a gift".

A reference to this sense can also be found "in the opening prayer of the Mass", the Pope reminded us, when "we asked: 'Lord, take care of this gift which you have given us', the gift of love, the gift of joy". It was in this regard that the Pope shared the advice of the father of the newly appointed bishop: "give joy to the people". Francis urged all Christians to do so "by way of love,

without ulterior motives, only by way of love. Our Christian mission is to give joy to the people". Thus, the Pope concluded his homily with a prayer that "the Lord protect this gift", that we may "abide in Jesus' love so as to give joy to the people".