



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Topography of the Spirit

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There are three “places of reference” in the life of every Christian: “Galilee”, “heaven” and “the world”. To these three places correspond certain “words” — “memory, prayer and mission” — which represent each person’s journey. This is the “topography of the Spirit” outlined by Pope Francis during Mass at Santa Marta on Friday, 26 May.

Drawing inspiration from the day’s readings, the Holy Father stressed that Jesus, in the 40 days that passed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, “remained with the disciples: teaching them, accompanying them, preparing them to receive the Holy Spirit ... giving them strength”. And Scripture, Pope Francis said, points to “three places of reference in our Christian journey, three words which point to how our journey must be”.

The Pope explained that the first place to consider is “Galilee”. “The first Apostle, Mary Magdalene” was told: “Tell the disciples that they are to go into Galilee”. Clarifying the point, Pope Francis described the place as one of “reference”, full of significance for the disciples. It was in Galilee, in fact, that the Apostles “had their first encounter with Jesus; it was the place where Jesus encountered them, chose them, taught them from the beginning, invited them to follow him”. A “place” that has meaning in the life of every Christian: “each one of us has his or her own

Galilee”, the Pope stressed. It is “the moment in which we encountered Jesus, he showed himself to us, we came to know him, and we had this joy, this enthusiasm to follow him”. Each one of us, therefore, has his or her own unique Galilee different from that of everyone else: “‘I encountered the Lord in this way: in this family with my mum, grandmother, catechist...’ whereas another person might recount: ‘I, instead, encountered the Lord in this way...’”.

In sum, Galilee represents for each one of us “the grace of memory”, because “to be a good Christian it is always necessary to remember our first meeting with Jesus or our successive encounters” with him. This is what will give us “certainty”, the Pope indicated, “in the moment of trial”.

The second place in this ideal “topography of the Spirit” is “heaven”. We see this, for example, in the passage which “recounts the Lord’s Ascension”: the Apostles, in fact, “had their eyes fixed upon heaven to such an extent that several angels came to them to say: ‘But, why do you stand looking to heaven? He has gone. He is there. He will return, but he is there’”.

Heaven, the Holy Father explained, is “where Jesus is now, but he is not separated from us; physically yes, but he is always joined to us to intercede for us”. There, Jesus shows the Father “the wounds, the price he has paid for us, for our salvation”. Therefore, Pope Francis added, “just as it was necessary to remember the first encounter with the grace of memory, we should also ask for the grace to contemplate heaven, the grace of prayer, the union with Jesus in prayer who, at this moment, is listening to us; he is with us”. And just as he said to Paul, Jesus tells us: “Do not be afraid because I am with you”. And so, heaven is “the second reference point in life”.

Finally, the third point of reference, Francis observed, is the “world”. Again, in the Gospel of the Ascension we read that Jesus says to his disciples: “‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’”. From this we understand, said Pope Francis, that “a Christian’s place is the world, in order to announce the word of Jesus, to say that we are saved, that he has come to give us grace, to bring all with him before the Father”.

This is how the Pontiff illustrated the “topography of the Christian Spirit”. He reiterated “three reference places of our life: memory (Galilee); prayer, intercession (heaven); and mission, going into the world”. And he added: “a Christian must move in these three dimensions and ask for the grace of memory” with a prayer “that I will not forget that moment when you chose me, that I will not forget those moments when we encountered each other”. It is also necessary “to pray, to lift our gaze to heaven because he is there to intercede” for us. And, finally, “to go on mission”. Which is not to say, the Holy Father made clear, “that everyone must go abroad; going on mission is living and giving testimony to the Gospel; it is making Jesus known to people”. This, Pope Francis explained, we do “with witness and with the word, because if I say who Jesus is, how Christian life is, but I live as a pagan, that does not work. The mission is not effective”.

Therefore, to summarize: the “Galilee of memory; the heaven of intercession and of prayer; and mission to the world”. And, the Pope concluded, “if we live Christian life in this way, our life will be beautiful; it will also be joyful”. One consequence that comes from the last phrase pronounced by Jesus in the day’s Gospel (Jn 16:20-23): “That day, the day in which you will live Christian life thus, you will know all and ‘no one can take away your joy’”. These words are applicable to every Christian: “because I remember the encounter with Jesus; I have the certainty that Jesus is in heaven at this moment and intercedes for me, that he is with me; and I pray and I have the courage to speak, to go out from myself and tell others and bear witness through my life that the Lord is Risen, he is alive”. Thus: “memory, prayer, mission”.