



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The grace of penitence

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(by: www.osservatoreromano.va)

Our “first name is ‘sinner’” affirmed Pope Francis, and for this reason, “we ask the Lord for the grace to be ashamed” before God who “embraces us” with all of His mercy. “Today Baruch indicates the right path in order to ask for forgiveness”, he continued, describing the first reading Baruch 1:15-22 as “an act of penitence”.

“The people were sorry before the Lord and begged forgiveness for their sins” and therefore “they feel they are lacking honour and ask for forgiveness” the Pontiff explained. Such an act of penitence reveals more than a simple case of admitting “we have done this or that”, but rather of admitting them “in *relationship* with the Lord”, because it is through such a relationship that one “demonstrates remorse”. Indeed, we can see that in the reading of Baruch, “all the people were sorry in that moment, and asked for forgiveness for all ‘the inhabitants of Jerusalem’”.

This “means that we are all sinners” Francis asserted; so much so, that “no one can say ‘I am righteous’ or ‘I am not like that one’; above all I must recognise about myself that ‘I am a sinner’”. Indeed, “it is almost the first name that we all bear: sinner” clarified the Pope, because “we have disobeyed the Lord; He said one thing and we have done another, we have not listened to the voice of the Lord. He has spoken to us many times”. Rather, “in life each one of us can think: ‘How many times has the Lord spoken to me? How many times I have not listened!’”. For example, he continued, “he has spoken with parents, with the family, with the catechist, in church, in homilies,

he has even spoken in our hearts; we hear the voice of the Lord” but “we have not listened to that voice”.

“I think that the prophet teaches us how to be penitent” the Pontiff articulated, namely, “which path to take in order to ask for forgiveness”. Baruch writes that “with sin there have befallen many evils” and this is “because sin ruins the heart, life and soul; it weakens, it sickens”. In essence, “the Lord has spoken to us” but “each one of us has done the contrary; has fallen into idolatry, the little idolatries of every day, and has followed ‘his own wicked heart’”.

“We know that in our heart there are many inclinations towards sin” Francis continued, “towards greed, jealousy, hate and gossip”. He focussed for a moment on the notion of gossip. We despair when we hear news of wars, but to gossip is a form of war; it is a war of the heart to destroy the other” he asserted, and when “the Lord tells us: ‘no, do not gossip, keep quiet’”, in many cases we do not listen and simply do as we please.

Thus here Pope Francis suggests to the faithful a personal reflection of “looking always at the sin in one’s relationship with the Lord, who loves us, who has given us everything”, even if often “we do what we want”. For this reason, Francis advised that “when we make an examination of conscience or as we prepare for confession, we should not just make a mere list of sins”, but rather, we must “*recognise*” the sins that we have committed.