



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

On the path of the Good Shepherd

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(by: www.osservatoreromano.va)

Pope Francis drew five verbs from the Gospel of Luke 13: 10 – 17, illustrating the “closeness” of Jesus to His people: *see, call, talk, touch and heal*. The Pontiff also warned that not only the shepherds of the Church (who he said are the first to run the risk of hypocrisy) but also the rest of mankind will be judged by such criteria. Marvellous deeds and good manners are insufficient in themselves, for Christ calls us to touch the flesh of the other by hand, particularly the suffering and the needy. This, the Pope insisted, is “the path of the good shepherd”.

“In this passage, we do not find Jesus on the road as was his habit, but rather in the synagogue” he noted, where “there was a woman completely bent over” from “an illness of the spinal column”. Francis asked the faithful, “what does Jesus do?”. Speaking of Jesus' reaction to the woman's suffering, the Pope admitted, “I am moved by the verbs used by the Evangelist here: “‘he saw’, he sees her; ‘he called’, he calls her; ‘he said to her’; ‘he laid his hands upon her and he healed her’”.

These are the “verbs of closeness” depicting “the attitude of the good shepherd” he continued, because “a good shepherd is always nearby”, and Jesus, the Pope affirmed, “cannot be far from his people.” Whereas those such as “the ruler of the synagogue” as was the case in the Gospel reading, and some of the “scholars, lawyers, Pharisees, Sadducees and the illustrious, lived separately from the people, continually reproaching them”, and consequently, Francis explained, “they were not good shepherds, they were closed; they were not near to the people”.

On the contrary, “Jesus always presents himself nearby”, said the Pontiff, and “many times it happens in the Gospel that such nearness comes from what He felt in His heart”. For this reason, “He stayed with the rejected people: the poor, sick, sinners and lepers”. He walked among those in need “because Jesus had such a capacity to be moved in the face of sickness”.

Francis proceeded to emphasise that a “good shepherd is not to be ashamed of the flesh, to touch the wounded flesh, like Jesus did with this woman; ‘he touched’, ‘he laid his hands’, he touched the lepers, he touched the sinners”. Indeed, “a good pastor does not say: ‘but, yes, I am near to you in spirit’”. Such sentiments reveal nothing more than a mere “distancing” the Pope affirmed, whereas the good shepherd, should do “what God the Father has done: drawn near through compassion, through mercy, in the flesh”.

Moreover, “the great pastor, the Father, taught us how to do it” Francis continued. “He abased Himself, He emptied Himself, He emptied of Himself, He humiliated Himself, He took on the condition of a servant”. Subsequently the Pope asked the faithful, “but those others, who follow the path of clericalism, to whom do they draw near?”. Such “hypocrites”, Francis replied, “always draw nearer to the powers that be or to money and are wicked shepherds” who “do not care about the people,” and “they were offended” when called ‘hypocrites’ by Jesus.

Thus, the Pope finished his homily by inviting us to ponder “the Good Shepherd, Jesus, who sees, calls, talks, touches and heals” and “the Father, who in His Son became flesh, through compassion”. Meditating on the Father and the Son in such a way, helps us to comprehend “the path of the good shepherd” and “it is a grace for the people of God to have good shepherds” Francis affirmed, “shepherds like Jesus, who are not ashamed to touch wounded flesh, who know that not only they, themselves, but all of us, will be judged by this: I was hungry, I was in jail, I was sick...”

Such are “the criteria of the final protocol” concluded the Pope, which “are the criteria of this total closeness”, that is, “to touch, to share the situation of the people of God”.