



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

If pastoral care lacks courage

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(by: www.osservatoreromano.va)

Do Christians “truly believe” in the power of the Holy Spirit that is inside them, the Holy Father asked during his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday, 31 October. And do they have the courage to “sow the seed” and to become involved, or do they hide behind a “pastoral of preservation” which does not allow the Kingdom of God to flourish? Pope Francis took his cue from the day's Gospel reading (Luke 13: 18-21) in which Jesus uses “two simple examples from daily life” to explain the Kingdom of God: the mustard seed and leaven. Though they appear insignificant and innocuous, he pointed out, when they begin to germinate, “they have a strength that grows within them” and that “goes beyond what we can imagine”. This, he continued is the “mystery of the Kingdom”. Pope Francis described the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God as the horizon of hope for all mankind and for the Church as a community, identifying as its two pillars: the explosive power of the Holy Spirit and the courage to allow this power to be unleashed. Both the seed and the yeast have power within them, the Holy Father said, just as “the power of the Kingdom of God comes from within”.

Drawing a modern day analogy, Pope Francis offered the following comparison: “a growth, for example, as occurs with a football team when its fan base increases and makes the team greater”. It is a strength which “comes from within”, he added, a concept, which was also addressed by Paul in his Letter to the Romans (Rom 8: 18-25): “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”. However, this waiting period is not a relaxed

one as Paul talks about waiting “with eager longing”. Creation also experiences this time of waiting as it “reaches out towards the revelation of the Children of God”. In fact, “like us, creation too was subjected to transience”, he said. It proceeds “in the hope of being set free from the bondage of corruption”. Returning to the concept of hope, the Holy Father stressed that mankind and all of creation possess the first fruits of the Spirit: “the inner strength which moves forward and gives hope: for the “fulfilment of the Kingdom of God”.

This then, is the reality suggested by the parable: “Within us and in all creation, there is a strength which unleashes: there is the Holy Spirit which gives us hope”, Pope Francis said, adding that “living in hope means allowing the Holy Spirit's power to go forth and help us to grow towards this fullness”.

The Pope's reflection then examined another aspect. In the parable, the mustard seed is taken and sown and the leaven is taken and mixed with meal. It is understood that “if the seed is not taken and sown, if the leaven is not taken by the woman and mixed, they will remain there and that inner strength which they have will [also] remain there”, Pope Francis explained. In the same way, he continued, “if we want to store the seed for ourselves, it will only be a seed. If we do not mix the yeast with life, with the flour of life, it will just remain yeast”. It is therefore necessary to “sow, mix, that courage of hope”. Hope, he explained, “grows because the Kingdom of God grows from within [us] not from proselytism” but rather “with the strength of the Holy Spirit”.

“The Church has always had the courage to reap and sow, to reap and mix”, the Pope said. “Many times we see preference for a pastoral of preservation”, rather than one which “allows the Kingdom to flourish”. “If I toss a seed, I lose it”, the Pope continued, but “there is always some loss in sowing the Kingdom of God. If I mix the yeast, I will dirty my hands!”, he said. “Woe to those who preach the Kingdom with the illusion of not soiling their hands. They are custodians of museums: they prefer beautiful things to the gesture of 'tossing' so that the strength may be unleashed, of 'mixing' so that the strength may grow”.