



The Holy See

POPE FRANCISMORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The Feast of the Word

Thursday, 3 October 2019

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Opening our hearts to the encounter with the Word of God fills us with joy, Pope Francis said on Thursday morning, 3 October, during his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta. We should listen to the Readings attentively, without letting them “go in one ear and out the other”, he urged.

The Pope began his homily by reflecting on the First Reading from the Book of Nehemiah, which is centred on the construction of the Temple and the return from exile. It “is the story of the encounter of the People of God with the Word of God”, a story of rebuilding, the Holy Father explained. In the Reading, the leaders, including the governor, Nehemiah, and Ezra, the scribe, “enthroned” the Word of God. After gathering the people in the square in front of the Water Gate, Ezra read from the scroll of the Law and the Levites explained the reading to the people. Pope Francis asked the faithful to consider that this had not happened for decades. “We are used to having this book which is the Word of God” but having been without it, the people in Ezra’s time “hungered for the Word, that is why they stood up when they saw the Book of the Word.

Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites said to all the people: “This day is consecrated to the Lord”, just like our Sunday is “the day of the encounter of the people with the Lord”. The Pope then asked the faithful to ask themselves some questions: “When we hear the Word of God, what happens in my heart? Do I pay attention to the Word of God? Do I let it touch my heart, or do I stand there staring at the ceiling thinking of other things”?

“When the Word reaches the heart there are tears of joy and celebration. The Feast of Sunday

cannot be understood without the Word of God”, the Pope explained. Returning then to the message of the liturgy, he reminded the faithful that sadness is not one of our strengths: “do not be saddened because the joy of the Lord is your strength”. Indeed, it is what makes us joyful; “the encounter with the Word of God fills us with joy and this joy is my strength, this joy is our strength”. The reason is because Christians “have accepted, have received the Word of God in their heart and they continually encounter the Word of God; they seek it”, he concluded. “May the Lord give us the grace to open our hearts to this encounter with his Word, and to be unafraid of joy, to be unafraid of making the feast of joy”, the Holy Father prayed at the end of his homily.