



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

From sin into corruption

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May the Church never fall from sin into corruption. Pope Francis prayed for this during Mass on Friday morning in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta.

Referring to the first reading, taken from the Second Book of Samuel (11:1-4, 5-10, 13-17), Francis began saying: “We heard about David’s sin, the grave sin of the holy King David. Because David is holy, but a sinner too, he was a sinner”. In fact, “there is something that changes in this man’s story”. It so happens that “at the time of battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him to fight, while David remained in the palace”. Normally, “he would be at the front of the army”, but this time he did otherwise. The biblical account, the Pope explained, “shows us David somewhat comfortable, somewhat calm, but not in the good sense of the word”. Then, “late one afternoon, after siesta, while he was walking upon the roof of the palace, he saw a woman and felt passion, the temptation of lust, and he fell into sin”. The woman was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Thus, it amounted to “a sin”. And, Francis observed, “God really loved David”.

Thereafter, “things got complicated because, after some time, the woman told David that she was with child”. Her husband, the Pope recalled, “was fighting for the people of Israel, for the glory of the People of God”. Meanwhile, “David betrayed that soldier’s loyalty to his country, he betrayed

that woman's fidelity to her husband, and he hit bottom".

Then, "when he received the news that the woman was expecting, what did he do?", the Pope asked. "Did he go to pray, to ask forgiveness?". No, he stayed "calm" and said to himself: "I can do it". Thus, he summoned the woman's husband "and made him feel important". The passage reads that David "asked how Joab was doing, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered". In other words, it was "a brush stroke of vanity, to make him feel a little important". Then, to thank him, he gave him "a fine gift" by telling him to go home to rest. This is how David "tried to cover up the adultery: that child would be the child of Bathsheba's husband".

This man, however, "was a person of noble spirit, he had great love and did not go home. He thought about his companions, he thought of the ark of God under the tent, because they were carrying the ark, and he spent the night with his companions, with his servants, and did not go immediately to his wife". Thus, "they advised David" — because everyone knew the story, gossip was going around — just imagine!".

Therefore, "David invited him to eat and drink with him — and here the text is somewhat abridged — 'Why did you not go down to your house?'", David asked. And the noble man answered: "my companions are in tents, the ark of God is in a tent, battling the enemy"; so, he asked: "how could I allow myself to go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? No! I cannot do this". And thus, "David had him come back, invited him once again to eat and drink, and made him drunk". But again, "Uriah did not go back to his house, he spent the second night with his companions".

Troubled, David "wrote a letter, as we heard: 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die'". It was, the Pope said, "a death sentence: this loyal man — loyal to the law, loyal to his people, loyal to his king — was condemned to death".

Francis confided: "in reading this passage, I ask myself: where is David, that brave youth who confronted the Philistine with his sling and five stones and told him: 'The Lord is my strength'?" This, the Pope remarked, "is another David". Indeed, "where is that David who, knowing that Saul wanted to kill him and, twice having the opportunity to kill King Saul, said: 'No, I cannot touch the Lord's anointed one'?"

The reality is, Francis explained, that "this man changed, this man softened". And, he added, "it brings to mind a passage of the prophet Ezekiel (16:15) when God speaks to his people as a groom to his bride, saying: after I gave all of this to you, you besot with your beauty, took advantage with your renown, and played the harlot. You felt secure and you forgot me".

This is precisely "what happened with David at that moment", Francis said. "The great, noble

David felt sure of himself, because the kingdom was strong, and thus he sinned: he sinned in lust, he committed adultery, and he also unjustly killed a noble man, in order to cover up his sin”.

“This is a moment in the life of David”, the Pontiff noted, “that we can apply to our own: it is the passing from sin into corruption”. Here “David begins, he takes the first step toward corruption: he obtains power, strength”. For this reason “corruption is an easier sin for all of us who have certain power, be it ecclesiastical, religious, economic or political power”. And, Pope Francis said, “the devil makes us feel secure: ‘I can do it’”. But “the Lord really loved David, so much” that the Lord “sent the prophet Nathan to reflect his soul”, and David “repented and cried: ‘I have sinned’”.

“I would like to stress only this”, Francis stated: “there is a moment when the tendency to sin or a moment when our situation is really secure and we seem to be blessed; we have a lot of power, money, I don’t know, a lot of ‘things’”. It can happen even “to us priests: sin stops being sin and becomes corruption. The Lord always forgives. But one of the worst things about corruption is that a corrupt person doesn’t need to ask forgiveness, he doesn’t feel the need”.

The Pope then asked for prayer “for the Church, beginning with us, the Pope, bishops, priests, consecrated people, lay faithful: ‘Lord, save us, save us from corruption. Sinners yes, Lord, we all are, but never corrupt! Let us ask the Lord for this grace’”, Francis concluded.