



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Faith is never a private matter

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Prohibition against worshipping God is a sign of “general apostasy”. It tries to convince Christians to take “a more reasonable and peaceful road”, by obeying “the tenets of worldly powers” who try to reduce religion to “a private matter”. These forces especially do not want God to be worshipped “with trust and fidelity”. This was the message Pope Francis imparted in his homily at Mass.

Commenting on the Readings from the day taken from the the Book of the Prophet Daniel (6:12-28) and the Gospel of St Luke (21:20-28), Pope Francis began by noting that “they make us think of the final days, the end of time, the end of the world, of the time of the final coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ”. In fact, he explained, “in our lives, in the life of each one of us, we have many temptations. Many. The devil pushes us to be unfaithful to the Lord. Some times he pushes hard.” However, the Pope said, today’s liturgy “speaks to us about a universal temptation, about a universal trial, about the time when the whole creation, the whole of the Lord’s creation will be faced with this choice between God and evil, between God and the prince of this world”.

Explaining how even the Lord was tempted, Pope Francis said: “The devil began to test him at the beginning of his time in the desert. And he sought to convince him to take another, more reasonable, more serene and less dangerous path. At last, the devil revealed his intention: if you

worship me I will give you this! He sought to be his god". Jesus "was then tested during his public life: through insults, calumny," or when hypocrites confronted him "in order to put him to the test". Even "at the end of his life, on the Cross, he was put to the test by the prince of this world". Ultimately, however, Jesus' Resurrection occurred in the manner willed by the Father.

At this time of the liturgical year, the Pope continued, "the Church turns our thoughts to the end of this world, since it will come to and end, for the world as we know it is passing away". The Gospel tells us that "all these things will occur", but, he asked, how long must we wait? In St Luke (cf 21:20-28) we hear: "until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled". For, he said, "even the pagans have a fullness of time ... they have a *kairós*, the final triumph: the destruction of Jerusalem". In the Gospel of St Luke we read: "And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Lk 21:25-26).

"It is a calamity," the Pope said. "However, when Jesus speaks of this calamity in another passage, he tells us that it will be a profanation of the temple, a profanation of the faith, of the people. It will be an abomination. It will be the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27). What does this mean? It will appear to be the triumph of the prince of this world, the defeat of God. It will seem, in that final moment of calamity, as though he has taken over the world" and has become "master of the world".

Pope Francis then explained how "this battle between the living God and the prince of this world" can also be traced out in the first Reading from the Book of Daniel (6:12-28). Essentially, he said, "Daniel is condemned only for worshipping, for worshipping God. And the abomination of desolation is called prohibition against worship".

The Pope then explained, "in that time one could not speak about religion: it was a private matter". Religious symbols were removed and taken down, and the people had to obey the orders that came from "worldly powers". The worship of God was forbidden. This was "the *kairós* of this pagan attitude". But "when this time is fulfilled, then He will come", as we read in the Gospel, "then they will see the Son of man coming in the cloud with power and great glory".

The word of God reminds us, he said, how "Christians that suffer through times of persecution, through times when worship is prohibited, are a prophetic sign of what will happen to everyone". However, precisely in moments such as these, when the times of the pagans are being fulfilled, "raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near".

Yet we should not be afraid, he said. "God asks us for faithfulness and patience. Faithfulness like that of Daniel, who was faithful to his God and who worshipped him to the end. And patience, for every hair on your head is counted, as the Lord has promised".

Pope Francis concluded by inviting those present to reflect on “this general apostasy called the prohibition of worship”, and to ask themselves: “Do I worship God? Do I adore Jesus Christ the Lord? Or do I do so by halves and play games with the prince of this world? Worshipping to the very end with trust and fidelity is the grace we should ask”.