



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The good lawyer

Tuesday, 3 June 2014

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In his homily at Santa Marta Pope Francis reflected on the certainty that “Jesus prays for us”, considering the day’s readings from the Gospel of John (17:1-11) and the Acts of the Apostles (20:17-27). We have the best defense lawyer on our side, who “does not speak much but loves” and who “in this very moment” is praying for each of us, showing “his wounds to the Father” to remind him of “the price he paid to save us”.

“I pray for them, I do not pray for the world but for the ones you have given me, because they are yours” (Jn 17:1-11). But the liturgy, the Holy Father pointed out, also presents another “farewell discourse” to us in the first reading, wherein from Miletus, St Paul sends for the elders of the Church in Ephesus to bid them farewell (Acts 20:17-27).

St Paul tells them that he does not know his destiny: “except that in one city after another the Holy Spirit has been warning me that that imprisonment and hardships await me”. The story continues with the account [from the following day’s reading from Acts 20:37-38] that they “were all weeping loudly and they threw their arms around Paul and kissed him, for they were deeply distressed that he had said that they would never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship”. Paul, however, encouraged them to go forward, to preach the Gospel, and not to tire.

Even Jesus' talk — noted the Pope — is “a farewell discourse, before going to Gethsemane to begin the passion”. And “the disciples were saddened” because of this. But “a small phrase from Jesus’ words of farewell make us think”, he explained. Jesus, in fact, “talks to the Father, and in this conversation he says: ‘I pray for them’”. So “Jesus prays for us”. A fact that may seem “a bit strange”, because “we think it is right to pray to Jesus, and that Jesus gives us grace. But Jesus prays for us! Jesus who prays, Jesus the man-God who prays! And he prays for us: he prays for me, he prays for you, and for each one of us”.

In reality, the Bishop of Rome continued, Jesus already “clearly said this to Peter”, assuring him of his prayer “that your faith not diminish”. He also recalled how Jesus “prayed for Lazarus before the tomb”. And in this “same farewell discourse, he prays for all the disciples who will come and who will believe” in him. “He does not pray for the world, but for them”, telling the Father that his prayer is “for the ones you have given me, because they are yours”. Therefore, Jesus reminds us that “we all belong to the Father and he prays for us before the Father”.

In this regard, St Paul, the Pope explained, “in the eighth chapter of the Letter to the Romans, tells us that it is a prayer of intercession”. Thus “today, while we are praying here, Jesus is praying for us, he is praying for his Church”. And “the apostle John” reassures us that even when we sin we know that “we have a lawyer before the Father: one who prays for us and defends us before the Father, and he absolves us”.

It is important, the Pontiff remarked, “to carefully consider this truth, this reality: in this moment Jesus is praying for me. I can go forward in life because I have a lawyer who defends me. If I am guilty, I have many sins”, Jesus “is a good defense attorney and will speak about me to the Father”. And just “to highlight that he is the first lawyer, he tells us: I will send you another Paraclete, another lawyer. But he is the first. And he prays for me, and in the prayer of intercession that today, after his ascension into heaven, Jesus says for each of us”. In this way, “when — [whether] at church, at home with our families — we are in need or have problems, we say ‘pray for me’, we have to say the same to Jesus: ‘Lord, pray for me’”.

And today how does Jesus pray? “I believe that he does not talk too much with the Father — he loves” the Pope responded. He then added: “But there is one thing that Jesus does today, I am certain that he does: he shows his wounds to the Father. And Jesus, with his wounds, prays for us as if to say ‘Father, this is the price! Help them, protect them, they are your children whom I have saved’”.

Otherwise, advised Pope Francis, “one would not understand why Jesus, after the Resurrection, had this glorious, beautiful body: there were no bruises, there were no cuts from the scourging — all were healed, but the five wounds were there”. And “Jesus wanted to take them to heaven to pray for us, to show the Father the price”, as if to say: “This is the price, do not leave them alone now, help them!”.

"We — he continued — must have, this faith that Jesus, in this moment, intercedes before the Father for us, for each one of us. And when we pray, we are asking: "Jesus, help me, Jesus, give me strength, solve this problem, forgive me!". To pray in this way, the Pope explained, "is okay", but at the same time one must not forget to also say: "Jesus, pray for me, show the Father your wounds, which are also mine; they are the wounds of my sin, they are the wounds of my problem at this time". In this way Jesus is the "intercessor who only shows his wounds to the Father — this happens today, at this time".

In closing, the Holy Father returned to Jesus' words to Peter, his prayer "that your faith not diminish". With the certainty that he prays in the same way for "each one of us: 'I pray for you brother, sister, I pray for you, that your faith not weaken!'". For this we must have "faith in this prayer of Jesus, with his wounds, before the Father".