



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The Gospel in your pocket

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“Jesus is present in the Word of God and he speaks to us”. This is why “the Word of God is different even from the loftiest human words”. And we must draw near to it “with an open heart, with a humble heart, with the spirit of the Beatitudes”. This is the reason that Pope Francis has again suggested that one should always carry a small, pocket-sized Gospel, to read it when possible and thus “to find” Jesus. He repeated this during the Mass at Santa Marta.

Resuming the morning eucharistic celebrations open to groups of the faithful — after a period of suspension during July and August — the Pontiff reflected on the Word of God based on the two readings from the day’s liturgy, taken from, respectively, the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (2:1-5) and from the Gospel according to Luke (4:16-30).

Pope Francis underscored that, in the first reading, St Paul “reminds the Corinthians what his message was like, how he had proclaimed the Gospel”, and he explained: “I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom”. Paul continues, the Pope added, by saying that he did not present himself in order to convince his interlocutors “with arguments, with words, even with images”. The Apostle chose instead “another mode, another style”, and that is a “demonstration of the Spirit and power, that” — these are Paul’s words — “your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God”.

In effect, the Pontiff continued, the Apostle recalled that “the Word of God is something different, something which is unequalled by a human word, a wise word, a scientific word, a philosophical word”. The Word of God, indeed, “is something else, it comes in another way”: it is “different” because “it is how God speaks”.

Luke confirms this in the Gospel passage which tells of Jesus in the Synagogue of Nazareth, “where he grew up” and where everyone “knew him as a child”. In that context, the Pope explained, he “began to speak and the people listened to him”, commenting: “Oh, how interesting!”. Then “they bore witness: they were amazed with the words he spoke”. And among them they observed: “Look at him, this one! How good, this boy whom we know, how good he has become! But where must he have studied?”.

However, the Pontiff pointed out, Jesus “stopped them” and said to them: “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country”. Thus, to those who listened to him in the Synagogue “at first” it seemed “a good thing and they accepted that manner of conversation and reception”. But “when Jesus began to give the Word of God they became furious and they wanted to kill him”. Thus “they passed from one side to the other, because the Word of God is different from the word of man, even from the loftiest word of man, the most philosophical word of man”.

And so, Francis asked himself, “what is the Word of God like?”. The Letter to the Hebrews, he affirmed, “began by saying that, since ancient times, God had spoken, and he spoke to our fathers through the prophets. But in these times, at the end of that world, he spoke through the Son”. In other words, “the Word of God is Jesus, Jesus himself”. That is what Paul was preaching, when he said: “When I came to you, brethren, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Christ crucified”.

This is “the Word of God, the only Word of God”, the Pope explained. And “Jesus Christ is a reason for scandal: the Cross of Christ scandalizes. That is the strength of the Word of God: Jesus Christ, the Lord”.

It becomes so important, the Pontiff said, to ask ourselves: “How do we receive the Word of God?”. The response is clear: “As one receives Jesus Christ. The Church tells us that Jesus is present in the Scripture, in His Word”. This is why, he added, “I have advised you many times to always carry a small Gospel with you” — moreover, “it costs little” to buy it, he added, smiling — to keep it “in your purse, in your pocket, and read a passage from the Gospel during the day”. Some practical advice, he said, not so much “to learn” something, but mostly “to find Jesus, because Jesus actually is in His Word, in His Gospel”. Thus, he restated, “every time I read the Gospel, I find Jesus”.

And what is the right attitude to receive this Word? It must be received, the Bishop of Rome

affirmed, “as one receives Jesus, that is, with an open heart, with a humble heart, with the spirit of the Beatitudes. Because this is how Jesus came, in humility: he came in poverty, he came anointed by the Holy Spirit”. Such that “he himself began his discourse in the Synagogue of Nazareth” with these words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”.

Thus, “he is strength, he is the Word of God, because he was anointed by the Holy Spirit”. In this way, Francis recommended, “we too, if we want to hear and receive the Word of God, we must pray to the Holy Spirit and ask for this anointing of the heart, which is the unction of the Beatitudes”. Thus, to have “a heart like the heart of the Beatitudes”.

As “Jesus is present in the Word of God”, the Pope said, and “He speaks to us in the Word of God, it will do us good during the day today to ask ourselves: How do I receive the Word of God?”. An essential question, Pope Francis concluded, again renewing his counsel to always carry the Gospel with you so as to read a passage every day.