



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Three women and three judges

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“Where there is no mercy, there is no justice”. Paying the price for this lack of mercy, when faced with “profiteering, depraved and rigid judges” are the People of God and the Church that is “holy, sinful, needy”. These were the words of Pope Francis on Monday during Mass at Santa Marta.

Francis immediately pointed out that the day’s Readings — taken from the Book of Daniel (13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62) and from the Gospel according to John (8:1-11) — “show us two judges of two women”. He also mentioned another judgement concerning a woman: “which Jesus recounts in Chapter 18 of St Luke”. Thus, “there are three women, and there are three judges: one innocent woman: Susanna; another, a sinner, the adulteress; and a third, the one from the Gospel of Luke, a poor widow”. And “all three, according to some fathers of the Church, are allegorical figures of the Church: the holy Church, the sinful Church, and the needy Church, for the widow, the orphans were the most needy in that time”. This is precisely the reason, the Pope explained, that “the fathers thought they were allegorical figures of the Church”.

However, “the three judges are bad, all three”. And, he continued, “I am compelled to emphasize this: in that time a judge was not only a civil judge: he was civil and religious, he was both things

together, judging religious and also civil matters”. Thus, “all three were corrupt: those who brought the adulteress to Jesus, the scribes, the Pharisees, those who made the law and also passed judgements, they had the corruption of rigidity in their heart”. To them, “everything was the letter of the law, what the law said, they felt was pure: the law says this and you must do this...”. But, Francis remarked, “these were not saints; they were corrupt, corrupt because rigidity of this sort can only go on in a double life”. Perhaps they “who condemned these women later went to find them from behind, hidden, to have a good time”. And the Pope also emphasized that “the rigid ones were — to use the adjective that Jesus gave them — hypocrites: they lived a double life”. Such that “those who judge, we think in the Church — all three women are allegorical figures of the Church — those who judge the Church with rigidity have a double life. With rigidity you can’t even breathe”.

Referring in particular to the passage from the Book of Daniel, the Pope re-emphasized that certainly the two men who unjustly accused Susanna “were not saints either”. And Daniel himself, “whom the Holy Spirit moved to prophesy, called them ‘old relics of wicked days’”. To one of them he even says: “beauty has deceived you and lust has perverted your heart. This is how you both have been dealing with the daughters of Israel, and they were intimate with you through fear”. In other words, those two “were depraved judges, they had the corruption of vice, in this case luxury”. And “it is said that when there is this vice of luxury, with years it becomes more savage, more cruel”. Thus those two judges “were corrupted by vices”.

And “regarding the third judge — the one from the Gospel of St Luke who I recalled moments ago — Jesus says that he did not fear God and did not take care of anyone: he didn’t care, he only cared about himself”, Francis said. He was, in short, “a businessman, a judge who in his task of judging did business”. And he was thus “corrupt, corrupted by money, by prestige”.

The underlying problem, the Pope explained, is that these three people — the businessman, the depraved and rigid men — “did not know one word: they did not know what mercy was”. Because “corruption took them far from understanding mercy”, from “being merciful”. However, “the Bible tells us that righteous judgement lies precisely in mercy”. And thus “the three women — the saint, the sinner and the woman in need — suffer from this lack of mercy”.

This holds true “even today”. And it touches “the People of God” who, “when before these judges, suffer merciless judgement, whether in civil or ecclesiastical” circumstances. After all, the Pope clarified, “where there is no mercy, there is no justice”. And thus, “when the People of God willingly approach to ask forgiveness, to be judged, how often, how often, they find one of these” judges. They find the “depraved” judges, for example, “who are there, capable of even trying to exploit them”, and this “is one of the most serious sins”. But unfortunately they also find “the profiteers”, to whom “nothing matters and who do not give oxygen to that soul, who do not give hope: it doesn’t matter to them”. And the people find “the rigid ones, who punish the penitent for what they hide in their own souls”. Thus, here are “the holy, sinful and needy Church, and the corrupt judges: be

they profiteers, depraved, rigid”. “This is called a lack of mercy”.

In conclusion, Francis recalled “one of the most beautiful words of the Gospel, taken right from the day’s passage from John, which really moves me: Has no one condemned you? — No one, Lord — Neither do I condemn you”. And this expression of Jesus — “Neither do I condemn you” — is “one of the most beautiful words because it is filled with mercy”.