



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The angel and the child

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So that we are never left alone, God has put at each person's side a guardian angel to support and protect us, to accompany us in life. It is up to us to perceive his presence, listening to his advice, with the docility of a child, in order to keep ourselves on the right path toward paradise. On Friday, 2 October, the Feast of the Guardian Angels, Francis dedicated his homily during Mass at Santa Marta to these "ambassadors of God".

The Pontiff drew inspiration for his reflection from the Eucharistic Prayer IV, because it contains "a phrase that makes us reflect". In it, "we say to the Lord: 'And when through disobedience [man] had lost your friendship, you did not abandon him". And still, Francis said, "let us consider when Adam was expelled from paradise: the Lord did not say 'make do as you can!'. He did not leave him to his own".

After all, said the Pope, referring to the First Reading from the Book of Exodus (23:20-23), God "has always sent us help: in this case we are talking about the help of the angels". Indeed, the Bible passage reads: "Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared". So, the Lord "did not abandon" but "walked with his people. He walked with the man who had lost his friendship with Him: God's heart is a father's

heart, and he never abandons his children”.

The Pontiff remarked that “today the Liturgy makes us reflect on this, and also on a particular manner of fellowship, of the help that the Lord has given to all of us: guardian angels”. Each of us has one, he explained, “who accompanies us”. And, he added, “in prayer, at the beginning of Mass, we asked for the grace that in life’s journey we may be supported by their help so as to bask, with them, in heaven”.

We are “actually supported by their help: the angels who walk with us”, the Pope reiterated, referring to the expression from Exodus: “Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared”.

Our guardian angel “is always with us and this is a reality: he is like an ambassador of God with us”. Again in the passage from the Book of Exodus, “the Lord counsels us: ‘Give heed to him’! Thus, “when we, for example, do something bad and think” we are alone, we have to remember that it isn’t so, because “he is there”. Here then, is the importance of “heeding his presence” and “hearkening to his voice, because he advises us”. This is why, “when we feel that inspiration, ‘Do this... this is better... you shouldn’t do this’”, the best thing to do is heed the advice and not rebel against your guardian angel.

“My name is in him”, Francis continued. And “he advises us, accompanies us, walks with us in the name of God”. The Book of Exodus also points out the best attitude: “if you hearken attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries”. But “what does this mean?”, the Pope asked. God’s response is clear: “I will be your protector, I will always defend you, guard you. ‘I!’, the Lord says, but because you have heeded the advice, the inspiration of the angel”.

Sometimes, the Pontiff stated, we might think we can “hide many things”: it’s true, “we can hide them”. Yet “the Lord tells us that we can hide many terrible things, but in the end all will be known”. And, according to “the wisdom of the people”, the Pope said, “*il diavolo fa le pentole, non i coperchi*”, meaning “the devil makes the pots but not the lids”. In the end, however, “everything is known”; and “this angel, whom we all have”, is here “to give us counsel, to go along the path”. Thus “he is a friend, a friend that we don’t see, but that we hear; he is a friend who will be with us in heaven, in eternal joy”.

“God sends us the angel”, Francis said, “to free us, to lead us away from fear, to lead us away from misfortune”. And “he asks only that we listen to him, respect him”. Thus, “only this: respect and listen”. And “this respecting and listening to this companion on the journey is called docility: a Christian must be docile to the Holy Spirit”, but “docility to the Holy Spirit begins with docility to the advice of this companion on the journey”.

It is the “icon of the child” that Jesus chooses “when he wants to say how a Christian should be”. The day’s passage from Matthew (18:1-5, 10) reminds us: “Whoever humbles himself like this child” shall be greater in heaven. “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven”.

These words of Jesus, the Pope explained, mean “that the docility of this companion on the journey makes us like children: not arrogant; it makes us humble; it makes us small; not condescending like that proud or arrogant man. No, like a child!”. This is precisely “the docility that makes us great and leads us to heaven”.

In closing his meditation, Francis asked the Lord for “the grace of this docility, of hearkening to the voice of this companion, of this ambassador of God who is beside us in his name”, so that we may be “supported by his help, always on the way”.

And “also in this Mass, with which we praise the Lord”, he concluded, “let us remember how good the Lord is: after we lost his friendship he did not leave us to our own, he did not abandon us”, but “walked with us, with his people, and even today he gives us this companion on the journey”. Thus, “let us give thanks and praise to the Lord for this grace, and let us be attentive to this friend the Lord has given us”.