



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Without measure

Thursday, 28 January 2016

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 5, 5 February 2016)

Witness, as a fundamental element of Christian life, was the focus of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning. What are the features of witness? The Pontiff drew the answer to this question directly from the day's passage of the Gospel according to Mark (4:21-25), which immediately follows the "parable of the seed". After speaking "of the seed that manages to bear fruit" and of those seeds that after falling "on poor soil cannot bear fruit", Jesus "tells us of the lamp", which is not to be placed under a bushel but in a candlestick. This, the Pope explained, "is light, and the Gospel of John tells us that the mystery of God is light and that the light came into the world, but the darkness did not welcome it". It is a light, he added, that should not be hidden, but that serves "to illuminate".

Here then, is "one of the features of a Christian, who has received the light in Baptism and must give it". A Christian, the Pope said, "is a witness". Indeed, a Christian can't but show the light he bears within. If a Christian "prefers his own darkness to God's light", then "something is missing". Darkness "enters his heart, because he is afraid of the light". A Christian "is a witness", a witness "to Jesus Christ, the light of God. And he must place that light in the candlestick of his life".

The Gospel passage proposed for the day's liturgy also speaks of "measure". It reads: "the

measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you". This, Francis said, is "the other particularity, the other approach" typical of a Christian. It refers to magnanimity: "another Christian trait is magnanimity, because he is the child of a magnanimous father, with a great spirit".

So too when he says, "give and you shall be given", the measure that Jesus speaks of, the Pope explained, is "full, good, overflowing". Similarly, "the Christian heart is magnanimous. It is open, always". It is not, therefore, "a heart that withdraws into its own selfishness". Nor is it a heart that sets limits, that "counts: up to here, up to there". Francis explained further: "When you enter into this light of Jesus, when you enter into Jesus' friendship, when you let the Holy Spirit guide you, your heart becomes open, magnanimous". At that point a particular dynamic is triggered. A Christian "doesn't gain: he loses". But in reality, the Pontiff concluded, "he loses in order to gain something else, and with this 'defeat' of interests, he gains Jesus". A Christian's gain is in "becoming a witness to Jesus".

Applying his reflection to the here and now, Francis addressed a group of priests who were celebrating the golden jubilee of their ordination: "50 years on the path of light and witness", and "trying to be better, trying to carry the light on the candlestick". As everyone experiences, that light "sometimes falls", but it is always good to try and put it back in its place, "generously, that is, with a magnanimous heart". The Pope thanked the priests for all they have done "in the Church, for the Church and for Jesus", and he wished them the "great joy of having sown seeds well, of having illuminated well and of having opened their arms to welcome everyone with magnanimity". Lastly he said to them: "Only God and your memory know how many people you have welcomed with magnanimity, with fatherly and brotherly goodness" and "to how many people whose hearts were somewhat dark, you have given light, Jesus' light". Because, Pope Francis concluded, "in people's memory" what always remains is "the seed, the light of witness, and the magnanimity of a welcoming love".