



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Making our way

Tuesday, 3 May 2016

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 19, 13 May 2016)

For Christians Jesus is the way, and the journey of life is part cross and part resurrection. But on the way there are those who freeze like “spiritual mummies”, who are stubborn and go astray, who spend their life spinning their wheels, mesmerized by worldly beauty. During Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday, the Pope warned against these attitudes and expressly invited an examination of conscience in order to verify our personal experience of faith.

The day’s passage from the Gospel of John (14:5-14), Francis explained, “is part of Jesus’ lengthy discourse at the Last Supper, his farewell speech: he is bidding farewell before going to his passion”. He tells the Apostles: “I will not leave you orphans; I will not leave you alone; I will go to prepare a place for you”. Moreover, the Pope pointed out, in the “two verses before this passage that we have listened to”, we read: “you know the way where I am going”, and Thomas responds: “Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?”. This is where the day’s passage begins, with Jesus saying to Thomas: “I am the way”. This is “the response to the anguish, the sorrow, the sadness of the disciples over Jesus’ farewell: they do not understand very well, and thus they are sad”. This is why Jesus says to Thomas: “I am the way”.

Jesus’ expression, Francis stated, “makes us think about Christian life”, which “is a journey: with Baptism we begin to walk, and walk and walk”. One might say that Christian life “is a journey, and the correct way is Jesus”. Thus he said precisely, “I am the way”. Therefore, “in order to walk

correctly in Christian life, Jesus is the way”.

But, the Pope warned, “there are many ways to journey”. There is “first of all that of not walking. A Christian who doesn’t walk, who doesn’t make his way, is an ‘unChristian’ Christian, so to speak: he is a somewhat pagan Christian, standing there, standing still, immobile, he does not go forward in Christian life. He does not bring the Beatitudes to fruition in his life. He does not do works of mercy. He stands still”. Moreover, Francis added, “pardon the word, but it is as if he were a ‘mummy’, there, a ‘spiritual mummy’”. Indeed, “there are Christians who are ‘spiritual mummies’”, standing still, “they don’t do anything bad, but they don’t do anything good”. However, this way of being “does not bear fruit: they are not fruitful Christians because they do not walk”.

Then, the Pope continued, there are some who “walk and go astray”, as “we too, often go astray”. It is “the Lord himself who comes and helps us. It is not a tragedy to go astray”. In fact, “the tragedy is being stubborn and saying: ‘this is the way’, and not letting the Lord’s voice tell us: ‘This is not the way, turn around and go the right way’”. It is important to go back to the right path “when we realize our errors, the mistakes we make” and “not to be stubborn and always go astray, because this distances us from Jesus, because he is the way”, but “not the path astray”.

Yet, Francis explained, “there are others who walk but don’t know where they are going: they are misguided in Christian life, wanderers”. Their life amounts to “roaming, here and there, thus losing the beauty of drawing near to Jesus in life”. In short, “they lose their way because they roam and so often this roaming”, this “misguided wandering, leads them to a life with no way out: too much wandering transforms life into a labyrinth and then they don’t know how to get out”. Thus, in the end, “they have missed Jesus’ call, they have no compass to find the way out and they wander, they roam, they search”.

Then, the Pope continued, “there are others on the journey who are seduced by beauty, by something, and they stop midway, mesmerized by what they see, by that idea, by that proposal, by that landscape, and they stop”. But “Christian life is not charm, it is truth. It is Jesus Christ”. And “St Teresa of Avila said, speaking about this journey: ‘We are walking in order to arrive at the encounter with Jesus’”. In other words, just “as a person walking to get somewhere doesn’t stop because he likes a hotel, because he likes the landscape, but he goes onward, onward, onward”. However, “in Christian life” it is okay “to pause, to look at the things I like, things of beauty — there are beautiful things and we must look at them, because God made them — but without stopping”. Indeed, “Christian life must continue”. It is important to ensure “that something beautiful, something peaceful, a peaceful life does not mesmerize me so as to stop me”. Thus, the Pope affirmed, there are “many ways not to take the right path”, because “the righteous journey, the right way is Jesus”.

In this regard, the Pontiff recommended an examination of conscience through a series of direct questions: “We can ask ourselves today, each one of us: how is my Christian journey, which I

began in Baptism? Am I standing still? Have I gone astray? Am I constantly wandering, not knowing where to go spiritually? Do I stop at things that I like: worldliness, vanity — so many things, no? — or do I always go forward, making the Beatitudes and the works of mercy tangible?”. And, he added, “it is good to ask ourselves this: it is a true examination of conscience!”. Essentially, “How am I walking? Am I following Jesus?”.

Paul told us, the Pope explained, “how to follow Jesus” in the First Reading: “I delivered to you what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve”. But “this is life” and “when Jesus tells Thomas: ‘I am the way’, he is telling him this”. Therefore, the Pontiff continued, “this is the journey, and it is the Christian path: the way of Jesus is so full of comfort, of glory, also of the cross, but always with peace in the heart”.

Drawing his reflection to a close, the Pope reaffirmed that “by not completely following Jesus, that Christian is standing still. One who has gone astray, one who is mesmerized and seduced by beauty or by things that interest him, stops there to look and delays the journey”.

Before returning to the celebration, Francis again called for an examination of conscience — at least “five short minutes” to ask ourselves: “How am I doing on this Christian journey? Standing still, gone astray, wandering around, stopping at the things I like?”. Or do I correspond to what Jesus says: “I am the way”? And, Pope Francis said, “let us ask the Holy Spirit to teach us to walk correctly, always, and when we get tired” let us take a short rest and go on. “Let us ask the Lord for this grace”.