



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

No replay

Thursday, 12 January 2017

(by <http://www.osservatoreromano.va>)

“Today” and “heart” are two words that Pope Francis indicated as key to a personal examination of conscience on the state of health of our relationship with God and our brothers and sisters. Francis began his meditation for Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 12 January, from the First Reading, taken from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews (3:7-14).

“The Holy Spirit speaks to us”, the Pope noted, repeating the first words of the liturgical passage: “Brethren, as the Holy Spirit Says”. And “in this passage from the Letter to the Hebrews”, he explained, “there are two words that the Holy Spirit repeats: ‘today’ and ‘heart’”. Paul writes, in fact: “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts”. Then, citing Psalm 94, Francis noted: “we have requested this grace: that our heart not harden, that it not be hard”.

Hence, “today” is the first word. But “the ‘today’ that the Holy Spirit is speaking about”, the Pontiff explained, “is our life, it is ‘a today’, as the same Spirit says, ‘full of days’, but it is a today”. It is a “today after which there will be no replay”, in other words, no “tomorrow”, only “today”. And “the sunset may be closer or farther off, but it is today, a today chosen by God, a today in which we have received God’s love, God’s promise that we can find him, be with him”. It is “a today in which, in every day of this today, we can renew our covenant by faithfulness to God”. But it is a “today”,

because “there is only one today in our life”.

Of course, Francis recognized, there is always the temptation to say “I’ll do it tomorrow”. It is “the temptation of the tomorrow that will not be, as Jesus himself explains to us in the parable of the 10 virgins: five foolish [maidens] went to buy oil, which they didn’t have”, the Pope said. “Yes, later, tomorrow”. But in the end, “when they arrived, the door was shut”.

Thus, the Pope continued, life “is today”. It is “a today that begins and a today that ends; a today full of days, but it is today”. In this regard the Pontiff offered the parable of the man “who went to the Lord and knocked at the door: ‘Lord, open up, it’s me, don’t you remember? I ate with you, I was with you’”. But the Lord answers him: “I don’t know you, you arrived late”.

“I say this not to scare you”, Francis said, “but simply to say that our life is a today”. It’s either “today or never. I think about this. The tomorrow will be the eternal tomorrow, with no sunset, with the Lord, for ever, if I am faithful to this today”. And, the Pope continued, “the question I ask you is this one that the Holy Spirit asks: ‘how am I living this today?’”.

“The other word” found in reading from the Letter to the Hebrews proposed for the day’s liturgy is “heart”. For “with our heart, we encounter the Lord”. But, Francis asked, “how is our heart?”. Saint Paul gives specific advice in his Letter: “Do not harden your hearts”. Thus, it is good to ask ourselves if our “heart is hard, if it is closed”, perhaps “faithless, sinful, seduced”. After all, “Jesus often rebukes” the people who are “slow at heart, slow to understand”. It is precisely “in our heart” that “the today is at play”. This is why we must ask ourselves if “our heart is open to the Lord”.

“It always strikes me”, Francis shared, “when I find an elderly person, oftentimes a priest or a nun, who tells me: ‘Father, pray for my final perseverance’”. It is natural to ask those persons if they have “fear” after having lived “their whole life well”, living every day of their “today in service to the Lord”. But it is really not a question of fear, as those people respond: “The sun has not yet set on my life, I would like to live it fully, pray that today is full, full, with my heart steadfast in faith and not ruined by sin, by vices, by corruption”.

Thus, it is these “two words” offered by the liturgy that the Pope invites us to make our own. Above all, “today: this today full of days”, but a today “that will not be repeated; today, the days keep repeating until the Lord says ‘enough’”. But “today is not repeated: this is life”. The second word is “heart”, and we must always keep our “heart open to the Lord, not closed, not hard, not hardened, not faithless, not sinful, not seduced by sins”. And “the Lord encountered many who had a closed heart: the doctors of the law, all these people who persecuted him, put him to the test in order to condemn him, and in the end managed to do so”.

“Let’s go home”, Francis said, “with just these two words”, and ask ourselves: “how is my today?”. Without forgetting that “the sunset might be today, this very day or many days thereafter”. But it it

is important to check “how my today is going in the Lord’s presence”. We should also ask ourselves: “how is my heart: is it open, is it steadfast in faith, does it let itself be led by the Lord’s love?”. And “with these two questions”, the Pope concluded, “let us ask the Lord for the grace that each one of us needs”.