



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Jesus looks at each of us

Tuesday, 31 January 2017

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

Jesus does not look at statistics but at each of us, one by one. In the Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, 31 January, Pope Francis focused “amazement of the encounter with Jesus”, the astonishment that overcomes those who look at him and realize that the Lord had already “fixed his gaze” on them.

The meditation, which focused on the “gaze”, was taken from the Letter to the Hebrews (12:1-4), in which the author, after highlighting the importance of remembrance, invites everyone: “let us run with perseverance ... looking to Jesus”. Taking up this suggestion, the Pontiff examined the day’s Gospel passage (Mk 5:21-43) to observe “what Jesus does”.

The most obvious detail is that “Jesus is always in the midst of the crowd”. Francis noted that, in the Gospel passage proposed by the liturgy, the word ‘crowd’ is repeated at least three times. It isn’t an orderly “procession of people”, the Pope stated, with guards forming “a security detail so that the people do not touch him”. It is instead a crowd that envelops Jesus, that is “pressing around him”, and “there he was”. Moreover, “every time Jesus went out, there was a greater crowd”.

Perhaps, Francis said, jokingly, “statistics experts could have published: ‘the popularity of Rabbi Jesus is falling’”. But “he was seeking something else: he was seeking people. And the people were seeking him: the people had their eyes fixed on him and he had his eyes fixed on the people”.

One could argue that Jesus turned his gaze “on the people, on the multitude”. But instead, the Pontiff clarified, he gazed “upon each one”. This is “the particular thing about Jesus’ gaze. Jesus does not depersonalize people: Jesus looks at each one”. The proof is found many times in the Gospel narratives. In the day’s Gospel, for example, we read that Jesus asks: “Who touched me?” when “he was in the midst of those people, who were pressing around him”. It seems curious enough that the disciples “say to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing around you!’”! They were disconcerted, the Pope said, trying to imagine their reaction. They must have thought: “Perhaps this man didn’t sleep well. Perhaps he is mistaken”. But Jesus was certain: “Someone touched me!”. In fact, “in the midst of that crowd Jesus realized that the old woman had touched him. And he healed her”. There were “many people” there, but he paid attention to her, “a woman, a little old lady”.

The Gospel narrative continues with the episode of Jairus, whose daughter they said had died. Jesus reassures him: “Do not fear, only believe”. Thus, as he had said to the woman before, “Your faith has made you well!”! In this situation too, Jesus is in the midst of the crowd, with “many people who were weeping, crying out at the deathbed vigil” — in fact, the Pope explained, at that time it was common to “‘hire out’ women to weep and cry there, at the vigil. To feel the pain...”. Jesus says to them: “Be calm. The girl is sleeping”. Perhaps those people, too, “may have thought: ‘This man didn’t sleep well!’”, because “they derided him”. But Jesus enters and “revives the child”. The thing that jumps out, Francis noted it, is that in that confusion, with “the women crying and weeping”, Jesus says “to the father and mother: ‘Give her something to eat!’”. It is the attention to the “small things”; it is “Jesus’ gaze at the small things. Didn’t he have other matters to concern himself with? No, this”.

In spite of the “statisticians who could have said: ‘the popularity of Rabbi Jesus continues to fall’”, the Lord preached for hours and “the people listened to him; he spoke to each one”. And how “do we know that he spoke to each one?”, the Pontiff asked. Because he was aware, he observed, that the girl “was hungry” and he said: “Give her something to eat!”.

The Pontiff continued to give examples, citing the episode of Naim. There too, “there was a crowd following him”. And Jesus sees a funeral procession coming out: a young man, a widowed mother’s only son”. Once again the Lord is aware of “the small things”. Among so many people “he goes, stops the procession, revives the young man and gives him back to his mother”.

Again, in Jericho, when Jesus enters the city, there are people “shouting: ‘The Lord lives! Long live Jesus! Long live the Messiah!’”. There is a great racket.... A blind man also begins to cry out: and

He, Jesus, with the great racket that there was, hears the blind man". The Lord, said the Pope, "is aware of the small things, of the blind man".

All this is to say that "Jesus' gaze goes to the great and the small". He "looks at all of us", the Pontiff said, but in particular, "he looks at each one of us. He looks at our big problems, our great joys; and he also looks at our small things, because he is near. This is how Jesus looks at us".

Returning to the narrative thread of his meditation, the Pope recalled that the author of the Letter to the Hebrews recommends that we "run with perseverance" ... looking to Jesus", with our gaze fixed on him. But, Francis asked, "what will happen to us if we do this; if we keep our gaze fixed on Jesus?". What will happen to us, he said, is what happened to the people after the girl was raised: "They were overcome with amazement". In fact it so happens that "I go, look at Jesus, walk ahead, fix my gaze on Jesus, and what do I find? That he has fixed his gaze on me". This makes me feel "great amazement. It is the amazement of the encounter with Jesus". To experience it, however, one need not fear, "as that little old lady wasn't afraid to go and touch the hem of his cloak". Thus, the Pope said, "Let us not be afraid! Let us run along this path, with our gaze always fixed on Jesus. And we will have this beautiful surprise: it will fill us with amazement. Jesus himself has fixed his gaze on me".