



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Joseph the dreamer

Monday, 20 March 2017

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 13, 31 March 2017)

On Monday, 20 March, the day's liturgy commemorated the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, which is usually celebrated on 19 March. This year, however, the Feast coincided with the third Sunday of Lent; thus, in his homily for Monday's Mass, the Pope focused on the figure of the Patron Saint of the universal Church: "a just man ... a man capable of dreaming, of safeguarding and fostering ... God's dream" for mankind. Therefore, Pope Francis presented the Saint as an example for everyone, in particular for young people whom Joseph teaches never to lose "the ability to dream, to take risks" and to take on "difficult tasks".

The Holy Father dedicated the Mass to the 13 university students killed one year ago in a bus accident in Catalonia. The Mass was attended by the families of seven of the Italian victims.

Francis' reflection took its cue from the day's Gospel reading, which dealt with "ancestry, heredity, paternity, filiation, stability", expressions which "are a promise but which focus on a man, a man who does not speak, who does not say a single word, a man of whom it is said only that he was just. And then a man whom we see behave like an obedient man". Indeed, Joseph!

He is a man "whose age we don't even know" and who "carries on his shoulders all these

promises of ancestry, heredity, paternity, filiation, stability of the people”, Francis continued. It is a great responsibility which, as we read in the Gospel according to Matthew (1:16, 18-21, 24a), is entirely concentrated in a dream. Apparently, the Pope continued, all this appears too “subtle” and transient, and yet, “this is God’s way” which quite suited Joseph: a “dreamer” able to “accept this task, this serious task which has a lot to show us in this time of great orphanhood”. Thus Joseph accepts “God’s promise and he carries it forward in silence and with strength. He brings it forward in order that God’s will be done”.

This is the profile “of the figure of Joseph: the hidden man, the man of silence who acts as foster father; the man who has the greatest authority at that moment without showing it”, the Holy Father continued. He is a man who could “tell us many things”, yet “he does not speak”; a man who could “command”, just as he has command over God’s son, yet “he obeys”. God entrusts weaknesses to Joseph’s heart. Indeed, a “promise is weak”, as is a child, but so too is “a young woman of whom he was suspicious”. These weaknesses also continue in later events: “let us consider the child’s birth, the flight into Egypt.

Joseph “takes all these weaknesses in hand, he takes them to heart” and he fosters them “in the way you foster weaknesses, with tenderness, much tenderness, with the tenderness with which you pick up a child”, Pope Francis explained. The Liturgy therefore, offers us the example “of the man who does not speak but who obeys; a man of tenderness capable of fostering promises so that they become firm, secure; a man who guarantees the stability of God’s kingdom, the paternity of God, our filiation as children of God”. Thus, Francis continued, “I like to think of Joseph as the guardian of weaknesses”, and also “of our weaknesses”. Indeed, Joseph “is able to cause many beautiful things to be born out of our weaknesses, out of our sins”. He is the “guardian of weaknesses so that they may become firm in the faith”.

It is a fundamental responsibility which Joseph “received in a dream” because he was a “man who was capable of dreaming”, the Pontiff said. Thus, not only is he “guardian of our weaknesses, but we can also say that he is the guardian of God’s dream: the dream of our Father, the dream of God, of redemption, of saving us all, of this re-creation entrusted to him”, he added.

“This carpenter was great!”, the Holy Father exclaimed, emphasizing once again that Joseph was “quiet, he worked, he guarded, he fostered weaknesses, he was able to dream”. The Pope thus asked that the Saint: “grant all of us the ability to dream because when we dream great things, good things, we draw near to God’s dream, what God dreams about us”. Pope Francis ended by asking Saint Joseph to “give young people — because he was young — the ability to dream, to take risks and to take on the difficult tasks seen in their dreams”; and to give all Christians the gift of “the faithfulness that generally grows in a correct attitude, grows in silence and grows in the tenderness that is able to safeguard one’s weaknesses and those of others”.

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