



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The three gifts from God

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During Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 6 November, Pope Francis identified three “irrevocable gifts” from God, namely, those of “election, promise and covenant”. He explained that such gifts are freely given in mercy because of our disobedient nature, and we, the faithful, must allow ourselves to receive God’s mercy.

Reflecting on St Paul’s letter to the Romans (11:29-36), the Pope began by noting that in this passage, “Paul is finishing his reflection on God’s election of the Israelites and His election of the Gentiles”. This reveals a “theological reasoning that Paul must make” in order to persuade the peoples that they are both God’s elect. The Pope emphasized Paul’s phrase: “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable”. This means that “when God gives a gift, this gift is irrevocable: He does not give it today and take it away tomorrow” and, likewise, “when God calls, that call endures for life”.

In the history of salvation”, the Pontiff continued, God gave three gifts to his people: “the gift of election, the gift of promise and the gift of covenant”. Indeed, “the People of God are an elect people”, Francis affirmed. “It is the Lord who elects Abram – the first elect – and leads him forth with a promise, and makes a covenant with him and his successors”. And, Pope Francis continued, “it is the Lord who continues to emphasized and reinforce that election” the Pope asserted. In fact, in the narrative about Abram, “in Genesis, how many times does the Lord say:

'yes, I have elected you'; and how many times does he emphasize and reiterate the promise: 'I will give you a son, but not this one, another' – 'At 90 years?' – 'At 90 years!'".

Here Francis remarked on the nature of "the promise", that is, on the fact that "the Lord continually celebrates the covenant sealed by Him at the beginning", and "this is the history of salvation", the Pope explained. "But the Lord never turns back". Therefore, "these gifts are irrevocable, for the People of God, for the Church and for each one of us".

"Each one of us has been elected" Francis said. "Each one of us is elect; each one of us bears a promise that the Lord has made: 'Walk in my presence, be irreproachable and I will do this for you'". Thus, "each one of us makes a covenant with the Lord", and one can choose whether or not to do so. The choice is ours, the Pope said, "and that's a fact".

In this prospective, Francis proposed a question for self-reflection: "How do I perceive the election: do I feel I am Christian by chance? How do I live the promise, a promise of salvation on my journey? And how am I faithful to the covenant: am I faithful, as He is?". Because "He is faithful" and for this reason "the gifts and the call are irrevocable; He cannot disavow himself; He is faithfulness itself".

Therefore, the Pontiff recommended, in light of God's unwavering faithfulness, we should each ask ourselves: "Do I feel elected by God? Do I feel God's caress in my heart? Do I feel that God loves me and takes care of me? And when I distance myself, does He come to look for me?"

The Pope then shared a personal experience. "Every time that engaged couples come to me so that I can bless their wedding rings, I see these three things there, in that gesture, and for this reason marriage is among the most perfect figures of the gift of God".

Returning to the text, Francis noted that in the next four lines of the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle repeats the words "'disobedience' and 'mercy'", and there is a tension between them: where there is disobedience there has been mercy". Paul repeats those two words four times, Francis pointed out, which means "that on the path of election towards the promise and covenant, there will be sins, there will be disobedience, but in the face of this disobedience there is always mercy".

"It is like the dynamic of our journey towards maturity", the Pontiff said. "There is always mercy, because He is faithful, He never revokes His gifts", and all this "is related: the gifts are irrevocable because in the face of our weaknesses, of our sins, there is always mercy, and when Paul arrives at this reflection he goes a step further: not in explanation to us, but in adoration".

"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!", the Apostle writes to the Romans. Such words are "an

act of adoration, of praise”, said the Pontiff. “He kneels before this mystery of disobedience and mercy that frees us, and before the beauty of these irrevocable gifts as they are, election, promise and covenant”, Pope Francis observed. And “this is Paul’s reasoning: when he can go no further with his mind, because he has explained everything”, Saint Paul “kneels and adores”. He “adores in silence”.

“I think that it would do us good, each of us”, the Pope suggested, “to think today about our election, about the promises that the Lord has made to us, and about how we live out the covenant with the Lord.” But also, he continued, about how we receive mercy from the Lord, “in the face of our sins, of our disobedience”. And finally, the Holy Father said, consider “whether we are capable, like Paul, of praising the Lord for what He has given to us, to each one of us; to give praise and to perform that act of adoration”.

Concluding the homily, Francis invited the faithful “to never forget” that “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable; He is the faithful one”.