



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

That adolescent progressivism

Wednesday, 12 June 2013

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There are two temptations to face at this moment in the Church's history: drawing back, because we are afraid of the freedom that comes from the law "enacted in the Holy Spirit"; and giving in to an "adolescent progressivism", namely, the inclination to follow the most captivating values presented by prevailing culture. Pope Francis spoke of these temptations on Wednesday morning, 12 June, commenting on the Readings — from Cor 3:4-11 and Mt 5:17-19 — at Mass in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae. concelebrating with the Pope among others were Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, Major Penitentiary, and João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, who was with dicastery personnel.

The Pope began by reflecting on the explanations Jesus gave to those who accused him of wishing to change the Mosaic Laws. He reassured them, saying "I have come not to abolish but to fulfil". For the law, the Holy Father specified, "is a fruit of the Covenant. It is impossible to understand the law without the Covenant. The law is more or less the way to enter the Covenant", which began with a promise on that afternoon in the earthly paradise, then continued with Noah's Ark, with Moses in the desert and then progressed as the law of Israel in order to do God's will".

This law “is sacred”, he added, “because it brought the people to God”. Therefore “it cannot be touched”. Some said that Jesus “was changing this law”. Instead he was seeking to explain clearly that there was a path that would lead “to the growth”, to “the full maturity of the law”. The Pope then reaffirmed the role of the Holy Spirit in passing on this law. “The law that sets us free is the law of the Spirit”.

However, it is a freedom which in a certain sense is frightening. “Because”, Pope Francis explained, “it can be confused with some other forms of human freedom”. Then “the law of the Spirit leads us to the road of continuous discernment in order to do God’s will”. This too is somewhat frightening to us”. However the Pope said, when we are assailed by this fear we risk succumbing to two temptations. The first is “to turn back because we are uncertain. But this interrupts the journey”. It is “the temptation of the fear of freedom, of fear of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit frightens us”.

At this point Pope Francis recalled an episode that dates back to the 1930s. “A diligent superior of a religious congregation was spending many years collecting all the rules of his congregation: what the religious were and were not permitted to do. Then, once he had finished his task, he went to an important Benedictine Abbot who was in Rome, to show him his work. The Abbot looked at it and said: Father, with this you have killed the charism of your congregation! He had killed freedom. For the charism gives fruits of freedom and he had blocked the charism. This is not life. The congregation was unable to go on living. What happened? Twenty-five years after that masterpiece, no one looked at it and it ended on a library shelf”.

The second temptation is what the Pope called “adolescent progressivism”. But it is not real progress: it is a culture that moves ahead but from which we are unable to detach ourselves and from which we take the laws and values we like best, just as teenagers do. In the end we run the risk of slipping, “just as a car skids on an icy road and ends up in a ditch”.

According to the Pope, this is a recurrent temptation for the Church in our day. “We cannot turn back”, he said, “and skid off the road”. The road to follow is this: “The law is full, always in continuity, there are no short cuts: just as the seed culminates in the flower, in the fruit. The road is that of freedom in the Holy Spirit who sets us free in continuous discernment of God’s will, to make progress on this road without turning back”, or skidding. And Pope Francis ended: “let us ask the Holy Spirit to give us life, to lead us onwards, to bring the law to full maturity, that law which sets us free”.

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