



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Prayer for peace in the Middle East

Wednesday, 25 September 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 40, 2 October 2013)

Shame before God; prayers to implore divine mercy and unreserved trust in the Lord. Pope Francis' reflection at the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae on Wednesday, 25 September, was based on these themes. The Holy Father concelebrated with Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, and with Cardinal Béchara Boutros Raï, Patriarch of Antioch for Maronites, together with a group of Maronite Bishops from Lebanon, Syria and the Holy Land as well as from various other countries on every continent.

In commenting on the Readings of the Liturgy (Ezra 9:5-9; Lk 9:1-6), he summed up his thoughts on three concepts. First of all Ezra's shame and embarrassment before God was so acute that he could not raise his eyes to him. Shame and confusion are common to all of us, because of the sins we have committed that have brought us into bondage for serving idols that are not God.

The second concept is prayer. Following the example of Ezra, who falling upon his knees, spread out his arms to God, beseeching him for mercy. We must do likewise in reparation for our innumerable sins. It is a prayer, the Pope said, which we should also raise to God for peace in Lebanon, in Syria and throughout the Middle East.

The third concept presented by the Holy Father was the boundless trust in God who never abandons us. We may be certain, he said, that the Lord is with us, and therefore we must be persevering on our journey, thanks to hope which instills fortitude.

After communion, Cardinal Béchara Raï expressed his gratitude to the Holy Father and a deeply cordial greeting on behalf of the participating bishops, of all Maronites and of the whole of Lebanon, confirming their faithfulness to Peter and to his Successor. The Cardinal thanked the Pope in particular for the strong impetus he has given to the quest for peace: "His prayers and his exhortations for peace in Syria and in the Middle East have sown hope and comfort".