



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

On the path of Jesus

Friday, 27 September 2013

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The choice we have to make is between being “Christians of comfort” and “Christians who follow Jesus”. This was the heart of Pope Francis’ homily delivered on Friday morning, 27 September, at the Mass he celebrated at the Chapel of Santa Marta. Expanding on various ways we can come to know Jesus, Pope Francis recalled the question that begins this search: “Who is he?”. Today, however, he said, “Jesus is the one who asks a question,” as St Luke records in the day’s Gospel (9:18-22). Jesus’ question is a general one: “Who do the people say that I am?”. However, it is then transformed into a question addressed to specific persons, in this case to the Apostles: Jesus asks them: “but who do you say that I am?”.

This question, the Pontiff continued, “is addressed also to us at this moment with the Lord present among us in this celebration, in his Word and in the Eucharist on the altar, in his sacrifice. Today, he asks each one of us: Who am I to you? The owner of this company? A good prophet? A good teacher? Simone who brings comfort to your heart? Someone who walks with you in life, who helps you to go forward and to be somewhat good?”. Pope Francis then affirmed, “Yes, all of that is true, but it doesn’t end there,” since “it was the Holy Spirit who touched Peter’s heart and made him say to Jesus: You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”. Whoever among us, the Holy Father continued, “who looks upon that tabernacle in prayer, and says to the Lord, ‘you are the

Christ, the Son of the living God' has to know two things". The first is that "he cannot say this of his own accord; it has to be the Holy Spirit who says it through him". The second is that he has to be prepared "because he will answer you".

The Holy Father then described the different ways that Christians may respond. There are those, he said, who follow him up to a certain point, and there are those who follow him to the end. The risk we run, he warned, is "to give into the temptation of spiritual comfort" i.e., of thinking we have everything we need: the Church, Jesus Christ, the sacraments and Our Lady, and that we don't need to look for anything more". However, he explained, this "is not enough". "Spiritual well being can only take us so far". What remains in order to be a true Christian is "the anointing of the Cross, the anointing of humiliation. He humbled himself even to death, death on the Cross. This is the touchstone, the proof of who we are as Christians".

"Am I a Christian of the culture of comfort, or am I a Christian who accompanies Jesus to the Cross?" What is the sure sign that we are Christians who follow Jesus to the Cross? He responded: "the ability to endure humiliation. The Christian who doesn't agree with the Lord's plan is only halfway down the road: he is tepid. He is good and he does good things", but he continues on unwilling to endure humiliation, and he wonders "why does this happen to him, and not to me? ... And why do they make him a Monsignor and not me?" "We think of James and John, when they asked the Lord for honours. 'You don't know, you don't understand anything', the Lord replied. The choice is clear: the Son of man must suffer much, be rejected by the elders, by the leaders among the priests and scribes, and be killed and rise on the third day".

"And what about us? ... We all want to rise on the third day, and this is good, it is good, we should want this". But not everyone, the Pope said, is ready to follow the way, the way of Jesus, in order to reach the goal. The sign that "a Christian is a true Christian" is "his ability to bear humiliation with joy and patience". And yet, he affirmed, "there are many Christians who look upon the Lord and ask for humiliation in order to be more closely conformed to him".