



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Not existential tourists

Monday, 31 March 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 14, 4 April 2014)

The Pope reflected on the day's Readings from Isaiah (65:17-21) and the Gospel of John (4:43-54). The Pontiff spoke about the value trusting in the Lord has in a Christian's life, since he "never disappoints". Pope Francis emphasized that: "the First Reading contains God's promise, that which awaits us, that which God has prepared for us: 'Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth... the former things shall not be remembered', the struggles ... all will be new. I create Jerusalem for joy. There shall be joy". It is the promise of joy.

Before God asks anything of us he always makes a promise, the Bishop of Rome explained. Therefore, the fundamental principle of the virtue of hope is confidence in the Lord's promises. "This hope" he affirmed, "does not disappoint, for he is faithful and does not disappoint. "Even Adam, when he was driven out of Paradise, departed with a promise". This, he said, "is our destiny: to walk with a view to the promises, confident that they will become a reality. It is beautiful to read Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews, where the journey of the People of God toward the promises is recounted. This people so loved the promises, they sought them even to the point of martyrdom. They knew that God was faithful. Hope never disappoints".

To further explain the value of trusting in the Father's promises, the Pope cited the day's passage from the Gospel, of John (4:43-54) in which he recounts the episode of the official of the king. Upon learning that Jesus had arrived in Cana, he went and begged him to come and save his son

who was ill and at the point of death. The Pope observed that it was enough for Jesus to say: "Go; your son will live" for the official to believe and set off on his journey home: "This is our life: to believe and take to the road" like Abram, who "trusted in the Lord and also journeyed amid hardship and difficulty". For example, his faith "was put to the test" when he was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac. "He journeyed. He trusted in the Lord and he set out. This is the Christian life: journeying toward the promises". That is why "the Christian life is hope", the Pope said.

Yet we can also fail to journey in life, the Pope remarked. "In fact, there are many Christians and Catholics who do not journey. There is a temptation to come to a standstill.... Some feel they are good Christians because they belong to Church movements. Many Christians have come to a standstill. Their hope is weak. Yes, they believe that heaven exists, but they are not seeking it. They follow the Commandments, they fulfil all the precepts, all of them; but they have come to a standstill. The Lord does not find in them a leaven to help his people grow, and this is a problem: people at a standstill" in their spiritual lives.

"Then there are others," he added, "who have taken the wrong road. All of us at times have taken the wrong path". Of course, the Pope continued, "we all sometimes take the wrong turning. The problem is not taking the wrong road; the problem is not turning back once we realize that we've made a mistake. The fact that we are sinners is what causes us to choose the wrong path. We can return: the Lord gives us the grace to be able to return".

Finally, "there is another, even more dangerous group, because they deceive themselves", the Pope said. They "journey but make no headway. There are wandering Christians: they go round and round as though life were an existential tour with no goal and end ... they do not take the promises seriously. They go round and round and deceive themselves for they say: 'I am walking...'. No; you are not walking, you are wandering! The Lord asks us not to stop, not to take the wrong road and not to wander through life. He asks us to look to the promises, to go forward with the promises before us", like the man from the Gospel of John, who "believed in Jesus' promises and took to the road". It is faith which enables us to set out and continue on the journey.

Lent, Pope Francis concluded, is a propitious time to consider whether we are on the journey or instead "have come to a standstill", if so we must repent, or if we "have taken the wrong road" then we must go to confession in order "to set out on the right path once more"; or, lastly, we are "theological tourists", like those who wander through life but never advance. "Let us ask the Lord for the grace", Pope Francis urged, "to get back on the road, to set out on the journey toward the promises. As we consider this, it will benefit us greatly to reread Chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews "for a correct understanding of what it means to walk toward the promises which the Lord has made".

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