



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

On Jesus' list

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The Lord is the “one who prays, who chooses and who is not ashamed to be close to the people”. Commenting on a passage from the Gospel according to Luke (6:12-19), Pope Francis highlighted these three characteristics which “effectively portray Jesus’ personality” and which also motivate our “trust in him: we trust him because he prays, because he has chosen us and because he is close”.

The Pontiff first spoke about prayer. Luke says that the Lord “went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God”. He “was praying for us. It seems a bit strange that he has come to grant us salvation, he has that power”, and yet, Pope Francis observed, “he so often prays, he even talks about it”, recalling the phrase addressed to Peter during the Last Supper: “I have prayed for you”.

Jesus has prayed and continues to pray for us: “he is the intercessor”, the Bishop of Rome declared. “Even now, as he stands before the Father in heaven, this is his work: to intercede. He is the great intercessor”. It is not by chance that “when we pray to the Father, at the beginning of Mass, every day, at the end of the prayer we say to the Father: ‘We ask this of you through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who prays for us’”. Because in that very moment the Son is before the Father

“praying for us”.

This truth “should give us courage”. Because in “times of difficulty or of need”, Pope Francis urged, one must remember: “You are praying for me. Jesus is praying for me. Jesus prays to the Father for me”. Thus, the Pope added, this “is his work today: to pray for us, for his Church”. And even if “we often forget that Jesus is praying for us”, this is indeed “our strength”. The strength of being able “to say to the Father: ‘But if you, Father, do not see us, look at your Son who is praying for us’”. From the first moment Jesus prays: he prayed when he was on earth and he continues to pray now for each of us, for all the Church”.

Passing to the second moment in the Gospel scene — “And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named Apostles” — the Pontiff pointed out that “it was he who chose; and he clearly says so: ‘You did not choose me but I chose you’”. Therefore, this approach of Jesus also gives us courage, because we have that assurance: “I am chosen, I am chosen by the Lord. On the day of Baptism he chose me”. St Paul was conscious of this, and thinking of this he said: “He chose me, from the very womb of my mother”.

And why are we “chosen” as Christians? Francis finds the answer to this question in the love of God, who “does not look to see whether one’s face is ugly or fair: He loves”! And Jesus does the same: he loves and chooses with love. And he chooses everyone”. On his “list” there are no important people “according to worldly criteria: there are common people”. The only feature which characterizes them all is that “they are sinners”. Jesus chose sinners. He chooses sinners. And this is the accusation that the doctors of the law, the scribes, make: “This one eats with sinners, he speaks with prostitutes”.

But this is how Jesus is and thus “he calls everyone”, the Bishop of Rome continued, recalling the parable of the marriage feast of the son: “When the guests did not come, what did the master do? He sent his servants: ‘Go and bring everyone home! The good and the bad’”, the Gospel says. Jesus chose everyone. He chose sinners and for this he is reproached by the doctors of the law”. His criterion is love, which is clear from “the day of our Baptism”, when “we were officially chosen”. And in that choice “is the love of Jesus”. Indeed, he “looked at me and he said to me: you!”. It is enough to ponder the choice of “Judas Iscariot, who became the traitor, the greatest sinner for him. But he was chosen by Jesus”.

Lastly the third moment, described in the day’s Gospel with these words: “And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases.... And all the crowd sought to touch him”. The scene essentially presents a “Jesus close to the people. He is not a professor, a teacher, a mystic who distances himself and speaks from a pulpit”, but rather a person who “is in the midst of the people; he lets himself be touched; he lets the people call him. This is how Jesus is: close to the people”.

And this closeness, Pope Francis explained, “is not a new thing for him: he emphasized it in his manner of conduct, however, it is something which comes from God’s first choice for his people. God tells his people: “Consider, which people have a God as close as I am to you?”. God’s closeness to his people, the Pontiff concluded, “is Jesus’ closeness to the people”. All the crowd sought to touch him, because a power emanated from him which healed everyone. Close in this way, in the midst of the people”.