



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The fear of surprise

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Jesus often weeps for his Church, even today, as he did before the closed gates of Jerusalem. At morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae on Thursday, Pope Francis spoke about the day's Reading from the Gospel of Luke, 19:41-44. He reminded us that Christians continue to close their doors to the Lord out of fear of his "surprises", which undermine established certainties and securities. In reality, he explained, "we are frightened of conversion because to convert means allowing the Lord to guide us".

The Pontiff began his reflection with the image of Jesus weeping at the gates of Jerusalem. Jesus "wept over the city: He wept over her closure". He wept because the city was closed to Him, she didn't want to receive Him. Francis highlighted that this was similar to the Apostle John weeping at the closed scroll, "sealed with seven seals", as told in the Book of Revelation, 5:1-10, which was heard in the day's First Reading.

The Pope remarked that this closing "makes Jesus weep; the closure of the heart of his chosen one, of his chosen city, of his chosen people", who "didn't have time to open the gate" because they were "too busy, too satisfied with themselves". Even today, "Jesus is still knocking on doors, as he knocked at the gate of the heart of Jerusalem: at the doors of his brothers, of his sisters; at

our doors, at the doors of our heart, at the doors of his Church”.

The fact is, the Pontiff explained, “Jerusalem was content, at peace with her life, and had no need of the Lord” and his salvation. This is why the city had “closed her heart before the Lord. And the Lord wept before Jerusalem. As he also wept at the closed grave of his friend Lazarus. Jerusalem was dead”.

In weeping “over his chosen city”, Jesus also weeps “over his Church” and “over us”. But why, the Pope asked, “wouldn’t Jerusalem receive the Lord? Because she was at peace with what she had, she didn’t want problems”. This is why Jesus exclaimed at the gates, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! ... because you did not know the time of your visitation”. Indeed, the city “was afraid to be visited by the Lord; she was frightened of the gratuitousness of the Lord’s visit. She was certain about the things she could manage”.

This is an attitude seen among Christians even today, Francis noted. “We’re sure about what we can manage. But the Lord’s visit, his surprises, we aren’t able to manage them. And Jerusalem was afraid of this: of being saved on the path of the Lord’s surprises”. The city was “frightened of the Lord, of her spouse, of her beloved”. This was because “when the Lord visits his people, He brings us joy”, but He also “brings us conversion. And we are all afraid”. The Pontiff emphasized that what we fear is not “happiness”, but rather “the joy the Lord brings, because we can’t control it”.

In this regard, the Pope recalled “Lamentations”, which the choir sings on Holy Friday in the Liturgy of the Adoration of the Cross: “How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow, a solitary vassal has she become”. The Pontiff then recalled Lord’s dialogue with the city: “What have I done against you, that you would respond this way?”, and explained that the Cross is “the price of that rejection”. The Cross is “the price to make us see the love of Jesus”, that love which “led him to tears, to weep even today, so many times, for his Church”.

Jerusalem at that time “was at peace, content; the temple worked; the priests made sacrifices; the people came in pilgrimage; the doctors of the law had everything organized”: it was “all clear, all the commandments were clear”. Nevertheless, the Pontiff observed, “the gate was closed”. He then invited an examination of conscience, starting with the question: “Today, we Christians, who know the faith, the catechism, who go to Mass every Sunday, we Christians, we pastors: are we pleased with ourselves?”.

There is a risk of already feeling satisfied, because “we’ve got everything organized” and we don’t feel the need for the Lord to make “new visits”. But, Francis advised, Jesus “is still knocking at the door, of each of us and of his Church, of the pastors of the Church”. And should “the door of our heart, of the Church, of the pastors not open, the Lord weeps, even today”, just as He did at the gates of Jerusalem: “lonely, once full of people, a widow”. Jesus sees the city “and weeps

because she doesn't open her gates, because she fears his surprises, because she is too satisfied with herself". Francis then concluded by asking us to consider: "How are we doing, at this moment, before God?"