



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Like a mother hen

Thursday, 29 October 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 45, 30 October 2015)

“With the tenderness of a father”. In Pope Francis’ homily during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, he reiterated a certainty: God can’t help but love us. He cannot “break away from us”. We can reject his love, but he waits for us, “he does not condemn us”, but instead he suffers when we are separated from him.

The Pope’s meditation began with the passage from the Letter to the Romans (8:31-39) in which St Paul “summarizes everything that he had explained about our salvation, about the gift of God within us, which was given to us by the Lord”. The Pope noted that the Apostle’s account appears “somewhat ‘victorious’, as if to say: “We won the match!”. It is a certainty expressed in a number of observations: “If God is for us, who could be against us? If God gave us this gift, and we have it, no one can prevail against us. Who shall bring any charge against us? Who is to condemn?”. Pope Francis added that it seems “this strong assurance of victory” was something Paul had “in his hands, as a possession”, as if to say: “Now we are ‘champions!’”. In fact, he says: “In all these things we are more than victors”.

However, the Pope warned, perhaps the Apostle “wanted to tell us something more profound” and not simply that we are the victors, “because we have this gift in hand, but because of something

else". Because of what? The answer lies in the following passage of Paul's letter, where the Apostle "begins to reason in this way: 'I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'". The Pontiff explained that it is not "that we are victors over our enemies, over sin"; rather, it is true that "we are so attached to God's love, that no person, no power, nothing can separate us from this love".

Therefore, in that "gift of re-creation", of "rebirth in Christ Jesus", Paul saw more: "he who gives the gift". Paul saw "the love of God, an inexplicable love". The Pope's reflection then touched upon the daily life of a Christian. "Every man and woman", he said, "can refuse the gift and say: 'I do not want it! I prefer my vanity, my pride, my sin...'. But the gift is there!". That gift "is the love of God, a God who cannot break away from us". This, the Pope added, "is God's 'powerlessness'. We say 'God is powerful, he can do all things!', except for one: be separated from us!".

This concept is so great that it requires exemplification, which the Pope offered by recalling a biblical image: Jesus weeping over Jerusalem — an image which "helps us to understand something about this love". In Jesus' tears, the Pope explained, was "the whole of God's powerlessness: his inability to refrain from loving", his inability "to be separated from us". In the Gospel of Luke (13:34-35) we read Jesus' lament over the city: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you". It is a lament, the Pope said, which the Lord addresses not only to the city but to everyone, using "an image of tenderness: 'How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!'". As if to say: "How often I wanted to express this tenderness, this love, as a hen with her brood, and you refused...".

This is why Paul, having understood this, "can say he is convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else can separate us from this love". The Pope reiterated that God, in fact, "cannot help but love. This is our security".

It is a security that affects everyone, with no exceptions whatsoever. The Pope added that "I can reject this love", but that would mean choosing to be like the good thief who rejected love "until the end of his life", and there at the end "love was waiting for him". Even the man who is "the most wicked, the worst blasphemer, is loved by God with the tenderness of a father, of a dad", and, to use Jesus' words, "as a hen with her brood".

Summarizing his meditation, the Pope said: "the mighty God, the Creator, can do all things"; yet "God weeps" and "in those tears" is all of his love. The Pope said, in his concluding words, "God weeps over me, when I am separated from him; God weeps over each of us; God weeps for those wicked ones, who do so many bad things, so much harm to humanity...". Indeed, he "he waits, he

does not condemn, and he cries. Why? Because he loves!”.

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