



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The navigator and the four woes

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If the Beatitudes are “the navigator for our Christian life”, then there are also “anti-beatitudes” which surely make us go the “wrong way”. Pope Francis warned against attachment to wealth, vanity and pride, indicating that meekness — which should not be confused with “foolishness” — is a beatitude that we ought to reflect upon more. At the Mass he celebrated on Monday morning in the Chapel of Santa Marta, the Pope recommended a re-reading of the Beatitudes as told by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

“We can imagine”, Pope Francis said, the context in which Jesus delivered his sermon on the Beatitudes, as Matthew relates in his Gospel (5:1-12). Jesus, the crowds and the disciples were on the mountain, and “Jesus began to speak and taught the new law, which does not erase the old one, because he himself said that every last iota of the old law must be accomplished”. In fact, Jesus “perfects the old law, the door to its fullness”, and “this is the new law, that which we call the Beatitudes”. The Pope explained that they are indeed “the Lord’s new law for us”, that the Beatitudes are, in fact, “the guide for the journey, the itinerary; they are the navigators of the Christian life: it is precisely here, on this road, according to the indications of this navigator, that we can move forward in our Christian life”.

Within the Beatitudes, Pope Francis noted, “are so many beautiful things: we could reflect on each one of them until 10 o’clock in the morning”. However “I would like to focus on the way the evangelist Luke explains this”. Compared to the passage from Matthew in today’s liturgy, the Pope said, in Chapter 6 of Luke’s Gospel “he says the same, but in the end he adds something that Jesus said: the four woes”. Therefore it is here that Luke lists the “blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed are everyone”, but he then adds “woe, woe, woe, woe”.

There are precisely “four woes”. That is to say: “Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets”. The Pope explained that these woes “illuminate the essence of this page, this guide for the Christian journey”.

The first “woe” concerns the wealthy. “I have said many times”, the Pope recalled, that “riches are good” and that “what is bad, what is wrong, is the attachment to riches, woe!”. Wealth, in fact, “is idolatry: when I am attached, then I am idolatrous”. It is certainly no coincidence that “most idols are made of gold”. In this way there are “those who feel happy, they are not lacking anything”, and they have “a satisfied heart, a closed heart, with no horizons: they laugh, they are satiated, and they have no appetite for anything”. Then there are “those who like the incense: they like that everyone speaks well of them and in this way they are calm”. But “woe to you”, says the Lord: this is the anti-law, it is the wrong navigator”.

It is important to note, the Pope said, that “these are the three steps that lead to perdition, whereas the beatitudes are the steps that bring you forward in life”. The first of the “three steps that lead to perdition” is, in fact, “attachment to riches”, feeling that there is “nothing that you need”. The second is “vanity”, desiring “that everyone says nice things about me, that everyone speaks well: I feel important, too much incense”, and in the end “I believe that I am right, unlike others”, said Pope Francis. He suggested that we think about “the parable of the pharisee and the publican: ‘I thank you that I am not like that’”. When we are consumed by vanity we even end up saying — and this happens every day — “thank you, Lord, because I am such a good Catholic, unlike my neighbour, that neighbour”.

The third woe is “the pride that is satiety”, which is “laughter that closes the heart”. “These three steps lead us to perdition”, the Pope explained, because “they are the anti-beatitudes: attachment to riches, vanity and pride”.

“The Beatitudes, on the contrary, are the guide for the journey that leads us to the kingdom of God”, said the Pope. Among all of them, however, “there is one that, though I would not say it is the key, it does make us think a lot: “Blessed are the meek”; precisely “meekness”. Jesus “speaks of himself, saying: Learn from me for I am meek of heart, I am humble and meek of heart”. Therefore “meekness is a way of being that brings us very close to Jesus”; whereas “the opposite

attitude always procures enmity, war and many horrible things”. Pope Francis also warned against confusing “meekness of heart” with “foolishness. No, it is another thing; meekness is depth in understanding the greatness of God, and adoration”.

Before concluding his homily, the Pope invited the faithful to think about the “Beatitudes, which are the ticket, the guide sheet for our life, so as to avoid getting lost and losing ourselves”. He said that “it will be good for us to read them today: there are not many, it takes five minutes, Chapter 5 of Matthew”. Yes, he said, “read them a bit, at home, for five minutes, it will be good for us”, because the Beatitudes are “the way, the guide”. He said we should also think about the “four anti-beatitudes” as told by the Evangelist Luke, those four woes “that make me take a wrong turn and end up badly”.