



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Liberated servants

Tuesday, 8 November 2016

(by <http://www.osservatoreromano.va>)

I am a servant, yet I am free; I am a son or a daughter, not a slave. This aspect of the Christian identity was the focus of Pope Francis' homily on Tuesday, 8 November for Mass at the Casa Santa Marta. The Pope based his reflection on the passage from the day's Gospel reading (Lk 17:7-10), in which Jesus tells the Apostles to say: "We are unworthy servants".

The Pontiff explained the meaning of this expression by turning to the Collect prayer for the day, during which "we prayed, asking for three graces", namely: "Lord, graciously keep from us every obstacle, so that, in serenity of body and spirit alike, we may pursue in freedom of heart the things that are yours" (cf. Collect). This prayer summarizes the steps necessary in order to enter into a true dimension of service: that is, of being "unworthy servants".

"The first thing that we asked is that the Lord keeps obstacles from us, in order to serve him well, to serve him freely, like sons and daughters", the Pope said. Among the obstacles which the Christian faces on his journey, and which "prevent him or her from becoming servants", we should remember at least two. One, of course, is "the desire for power". It is a common difficulty which is frequently encountered in daily life: for instance, Francis said, how often, "perhaps in our home", is it said: "Here I am in charge!", or how often, "without saying it", have we ensured that others were aware of our "desire for power"? In contrast, Jesus "taught us that the leader becomes as one who serves", and that "if any one would be first, he must be servant of all". Thus, Jesus "overturns the

values of worldliness, of the world". This is because the desire for power "is not the way of becoming a servant of the Lord. On the contrary: it is an obstacle, one of those obstacles which we prayed that the Lord might keep us from".

There is, moreover, another obstacle, which can be observed "even in the life of the Church", which is "disloyalty". We encounter it "when someone wishes to serve the Lord, but also serves things which are not the Lord". The Pontiff noted how "Jesus told us that no one can have two masters; serve God or serve money". And disloyalty, he stressed, "is not the same as being a sinner". Indeed, "we are all sinners, and we feel sorry because of this". However, being disloyal is "like double-crossing". And this "is an obstacle". Therefore, "those who want power and those who are disloyal, can hardly serve, become a free servant of the Lord".

Continuing along this line of meditation, the Pope went on to reflect on the second half of the day's Collect prayer. After having asked the Lord to keep away obstacles, the prayer continues: "... in order that – the second question – in the serenity of body and spirit", we might dedicate ourselves to service. The second key word therefore, is "serenity", he said, that is: "serving the Lord in peace". As Francis explained it: "obstacles – either the desire for power, or disloyalty – take away peace, and cause a yearning of the heart which cannot be in peace, which is always anxious, evil... without peace".

It is a dissatisfaction "which leads us to live in that tension of worldly vanity, to live for appearances". One sees many people who "live only to be in a shop window, for appearances, in order to say: 'Ah, what a good thing it is...', for fame, worldly fame". Doing this, however, "you cannot serve the Lord". That is why "we ask the Lord to remove obstacles because in serenity, be it in body or spirit", we can "dedicate ourselves freely to his service".

The Pope turned then to the third key word, which is "freedom". Serving God "is free: we are sons and daughters, not slaves. To serve God in peace – with serenity, when he has removed from us the obstacles that rid us of peace and serenity – is serving him with freedom". It is no coincidence, he added, that "when we serve the Lord freely, we feel an ever more profound peace". It is like hearing once again the Lord say: "Come, come, come, good and faithful servant!".

In order to do this, however, "we need his grace: by ourselves, we are unable". However, the Pontiff explained, this does not mean that, "when we arrive at this state of free service, of sons and daughters, with the father, we can say: 'we are good servants of the Lord'". Above all, we are "unworthy servants". This expression demonstrates "the unworthiness of our work: by ourselves, we are unable" to accomplish it. We must simply "ask and make space" in order that God "may transform us into liberated servants, into sons and daughters, [who are] not slaves".

Francis concluded his homily with this prayer: May the Lord "help us open our hearts and leave the Holy Spirit to carry out his work, in order that he may remove obstacles from us, especially the

desire for power which causes great pain, and disloyalty, [being] two-faced”; and that “he may give us this serenity, this peace to be able to serve him as free sons and daughters until the end, with great love”, saying to the Lord: “Father, thank you, but you know: I am an unworthy servant”.