



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Lukewarm thinking

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

The confrontation with a “powerful” Lord, who scolds harshly, though always out of love, was the focus of Pope Francis’ homily at the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, 15 November. The liturgy proposed the image of Jesus “who stands before us”, and does so in order to reprove us, because he loves us; either to invite us or to be invited”.

The reproach can be found in the book of Revelation (3:1-6,14-22) and in how the Lord addresses the Christians of the Church of Laodicea. The Pontiff explained that it consists of the “example of a Church”, but that it is found “everywhere”. It can indeed be applied to all “those Christians who are neither cold nor hot: they are lukewarm. They are always as quiet waters”. The Lord rebukes them and they ask: “Why do you rebuke me, Lord? I am not bad”.

“Perhaps”, the Pope said, “I was bad! But this is worse. You are dead”. In fact, the Lord uses powerful words: “Why are you as quiet water, which do not move, because you are lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth”. It is the situation you encounter, Francis noted, when “warmth enters the Church, into a community, into a Christian home”, and you hear people say: “No, no, all is calm, everything is alright here, we are believers, we do things well”; that is to say, when everything is “starched” and lacking “consistency” and “with the first rain it dissolves”. However, the Pope asked, “what does a lukewarm person think” that merits him such harshness? We read in the Scripture passage: “think of being rich”. In fact it is certain: “I am rich and I do not need

anything. I am calm". He is a victim, therefore, of "the tranquillity that deceives". However, the Pontiff warned, "when the soul of a Church, a family, a community or a person, is always calm, God is not there. Let us be careful not to walk in this manner in the Christian life". In fact, the Pope added, paraphrasing the passage from the Book of Revelation: "You say: 'I am rich'", but "you do not know what it means to be wretched? Nor miserable, poor, blind and naked?". There are three "great slaps", the Pope commented, "to awaken the tepid soul, asleep in the warmth". And to those who complain: "But I do not hurt anyone, I am calm", they should remember: "Neither do you do good!".

The Lord's answer is tough, "it seems like an insult"; but he "does so out of love". In fact, shortly after we read: "All those whom I love, I rebuke them and teach them". It he also adds a suggestion: that of "purchasing, from me, gold refined by fire in order to become rich". Namely: to discover another richness, "one that I can give you. Not that wealth of the soul that you believe you have because you are good, because you do things well, everything in a calm manner"; but precisely "another wealth, that which comes from God, which always brings a cross, always brings storm, always brings some unrest in the soul".

The next counsel is that of "buying white clothes, to dress yourself, so that you do not appear in your shameful nakedness". Other people who are lukewarm, the Pope explained, "do not realize that they are naked, like the tale of the naked king in which the child says: 'The king is naked!'". Even the Lord suggests buying eye drops in order to "anoint your eyes, recall the view and you can see": those who are lukewarm", Francis pointed out, "indeed lose the capacity for contemplation, the ability to see the great and beautiful things of God".

Therefore the Lord stands before those who are lukewarm and says: "Wake up, correct yourselves!". He does this "to help us convert". However, the Pope continued, God is also present "in another way: he goes to invite us". We read again in Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come to him, I will eat with him and he with me". The Pope explained that "the ability to hear when the Lord knocks at our door" is very important, "because he wants to give us something good, he wants to come to us". Unfortunately there are Christians "who are not aware when the Lord is knocking. Every noise is the same for them". They do not realize that the Lord is knocking and says: "It is I, have no fear. I want to enter, to be with you, to make dinner with you. In other words, to celebrate, and to console you. Not with the consolation of warmth, that which is not needed; but with the consolation of fruitfulness, that which helps you to move forward, to give life to others. You open".

Finally, the Lord also wants to "be invited". As we read in the scene with Zacchaeus from Luke's Gospel (19:1-10): the tax collector from Jericho "feels that curiosity, a curiosity that comes from grace", which "was sown by the Holy Spirit" and brings Zacchaeus to say: "I want to see the Lord". The initiative "comes from the Spirit", the Holy Father said. Hence the Lord "looks up and says: 'Come down, invite me to your house!'".

God, therefore, “always acts with love: either to correct us, to invite us to dinner, or to be invited”. He is going to tell us: ‘Wake up’. He is going to tell us: ‘Open’. He is going to tell us: ‘Come down’. But it is always him”. Hence the final invitation, that every Christian ask himself: “Do I know in my heart how to distinguish when the Lord says ‘wake up’? When he says ‘open’? And when he says me “come down’?”.