



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The intuition of Magdalene

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

Mary Magdalene understood that Jesus wanted to “re-create” her, not simply cover up her sins as though with make-up. As Pope Francis explained during his homily for Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 5 December, she had the courage to give a “name and surname” to her own sins, thereby giving an example of allowing oneself to be truly renewed, deep within, by the Lord.

The day’s first reading, taken from the book of Isaiah (35:1-10), “speaks to us of renewal: the wilderness rejoices and blossoms so that they will be given glory”, Francis noted. Therefore, “the wilderness will blossom, and that which was desert, that which was ugly, that which was rejected, will be filled with flowers, new: it will be renewed”. Thus, “the prophecy of Isaiah foretells the coming of the Saviour: it is the change from ugly to beautiful, from evil to good”. Moreover, “this will give us joy, will help us because of the foretold healings: ‘Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap’”, and even in the desert “a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way”. It will be “a path that his people may follow”. The Pontiff said these are words which illustrate “a change for the better; and thus, the people waited for the Messaiah, waited for he whom the prophet Isaiah had announced”.

Indeed, “Jesus came”, the Pope said, “and Jesus healed, and Jesus taught, and Jesus showed the people a path of change, and for this reason the people followed him”. However, “he was not followed because he was ‘today’s news’: he was followed because the message of Jesus reached

the heart". The Bible says "that he spoke with authority, not as the doctors of the law spoke, and the people understood". Furthermore, "the people saw that Jesus healed, and they followed him also for this reason: many sick were brought to him there because he gave them back their health". This is all recounted in the day's Gospel passage (Lk 5:17-26).

Nonetheless, the Pope said, "what Jesus did was not just a change from ugly to beautiful, from evil to good: Jesus made a transformation". Indeed, "it is not a problem of making beautiful, not a problem of maquillage, of make-up". In reality, the Lord "changed everything from within; he changed with a re-creation: God created the world; man fell into sin; Jesus came to re-create the world".

Thus is "the message of the Gospel that is clearly seen: before healing that man, Jesus forgave his sins", Francis said. The Lord "goes there, to the re-creation, he re-creates that man from a sinner into an upright person: he re-creates him as an upright person". In essence, "he makes him new, he renews, and this scandalizes". Therefore, "the doctors of the law begin to question, to murmur: 'But, who is this one who does these things? With what authority does he do this?'".

Jesus "scandalized" because "he is able to make us – we sinners – into new persons", the Pontiff stressed. "Magdalene realized this when she went to him, weeping and washing his feet with her tears, drying them with her hair". She "realized that here was the healer of her scourge; she was a healthy woman, she had her health, but she had a wound within; she was a sinner". Thus, "she realized that this man could heal not only the body, but the wound of the soul; he could re-create her". However, "it takes great faith" to recognize this. Francis explained that in order to understand such faith, "we have prayed to the Lord today, in the Collect prayer, in order that he might help us prepare ourselves with great faith for Christmas".

"Great faith" is needed, the Pope said, "for the healing of the soul, for existential healing, the re-creation that Jesus brings...it isn't easy". He cited Jesus' remark in Mark's Gospel, "'All things are possible to him who believes': Jesus had said this to the father of that [possessed] child after the transfiguration; 'I believe, Lord, but help my unbelief', said the poor man". This, because he too understood "that there was something more".

"To be transformed: this is the grace of health which Jesus brings", the Pontiff continued. "Often, when we think about this, we say: 'but, I can't take it!'", because "to begin a new life, to allow myself to be transformed, to allow myself to be re-created by Jesus is very difficult". Again citing the prophet Isaiah, the Pope said: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God'".

This is why, the Pope said, "'courage' is the word of God: 'Courage, allow yourselves to be re-created'". Therefore, "not only to heal, but to re-create: to re-create the heart. We are all sinners, but look at the root of your sin, and the Lord goes down beneath and re-creates it. And that bitter

root will blossom; it will blossom with works of justice, and you will be a new man, a new woman”.

Francis then spoke of the temptation of not allowing oneself to be re-created by the Lord, whereby we limit ourselves to recognizing that “yes, yes, I have sins”, but “I go, I confess, two little words, and then I continue in the same way”. In other words, with “just two brushstrokes of paint, we believe that that’s the end of the story”. Rather, no, it means recognizing “my sins, with a name and a surname: I did this, this, this, and I am ashamed in my heart”. Thus, “I open my heart; Lord, the only one I have, re-create me, re-create me”! Only in this way “will we have the courage to go with true faith – as we’ve asked – towards Christmas”. Without ever “hiding the gravity of our sins”.

The Pope gave a concrete example with regard to the sin of envy. There are those who admit to having had only “a little bit” of envy, he observed, when instead it is “a horrendous thing, like the poison of a snake”, because it seeks “to destroy the other”. For this reason, he said, it is appropriate “to get to the bottom of our sins, and then give them to the Lord, in order that he might erase them and help us go forward with faith”.

Before resuming the celebration of the Mass, the Pope recounted a story involving “a great saint, a Biblical scholar, who had too strong a character with many impulses towards anger”. However, “He asked forgiveness from the Lord, always, doing many penances and he offered to the Lord many sacrifices”. That “saint, speaking with the Lord, said: ‘Are you content, Lord?’ – ‘No!’ – ‘But I have given you everything!’ – ‘No, something is lacking’. So the poor man did another penance, another prayer, another vigil: ‘I gave you this, Lord, okay?’ – ‘No, something is lacking’ – but what is lacking, Lord?’ – ‘Your sins are lacking, give me your sins!’”.

The Pontiff concluded: It is precisely “this that, today, the Lord asks of us: ‘Courage, give me your sins, and I will make you a new man and a new woman’”. May the Lord, he prayed, “give us the grace to believe in this”.