



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

With the Gospel in your pocket

Monday, 9 January 2017

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

Only if we know, recognize, adore and follow Jesus will he truly be “the centre of our life”. And to do this there are a few gestures available to everyone: to always have close at hand a pocket version of the Gospel so as to easily read it each day, along with the recitation of brief prayers of adoration, such as the Gloria, while paying close attention not to simply “parrot” the words. These are the counterparts of the “simplicity of Christian life” to which the Pontiff returned in his homily during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning, 9 January.

The liturgical season that we just experienced, the Pope began, centred on “the wait for Jesus and then the coming of Jesus: his birth and the mysteries of his birth until his baptism”. Thus, “today begins a new liturgical season”, he explained, “and the Church shows us” that Jesus is “also at the centre of this beginning”. Indeed, “the centre of today’s liturgy is Jesus: Jesus as the first and last word of the Father”. In fact, “God, who often and in different ways in ancient times, spoke to the fathers through the prophets, recently, in these days, has spoken to us through the Son whom He established as heir of all things and through whom He also created the world: Jesus the Son, the Saviour, the Lord: He is the Lord of the Universe”.

“It was a long journey”, the Pontiff said of “this moment of the manifestation of Jesus whom we

celebrated in the Christmas Season". But, he added, "he continues to be the centre of Christian life: Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, Saviour of the world. There is no other, he is the One". And "this is the centre of our life: Jesus Christ who manifests himself, shows himself, and we are invited to know him, to recognize him in life, in the many circumstances of life".

The point is: "to recognize Jesus, to know Jesus". And although it is good to know about "the life of this or that saint" or about "the apparitions of that one here and there", one must never lose sight of the fact that "the centre is Jesus Christ: without Jesus Christ there are no saints". Of course, Francis continued, "the saints are saints; they are great", they are "important", but "not all apparitions are true".

In this perspective, the Pope suggested, we should ask a "question: is the centre of my life Jesus Christ? What is my relationship with Jesus Christ?". Francis pointed out that at the start of the celebration, in the oration of the collect prayer, "we asked for the grace to see, the grace to know what we have to do and the grace to have the strength to do it". But "the first thing we have to do is look to Jesus Christ". In doing so, "there are three things, let's say three tasks, to assure ourselves that Jesus is at the centre of our life".

"First of all", the Pope explained, "recognize Jesus, know him and recognize him. In his time, the Apostle John, at the beginning of his Gospel, says that many did not recognize him: the doctors of the law, the high priests, the scribes, the Sadducees, some Pharisees". What's more, "they persecuted him; they killed him". Thus, "the first approach is to know and recognize Jesus; to seek how Jesus was: does this interest me"? It is, Francis stated, "a question that all of us must ask ourselves: does it interest me to know Jesus or perhaps am I more interested in soap operas or gossip or ambitions or knowing about other people's lives"?

Indeed, to "know Jesus, one must first "be able to recognize him". And, the Pope added, "to know Jesus, there is prayer, the Holy Spirit, yes, but it is also good practice to "pick up the Gospel every day". He then asked the congregation: "How many of you pick up the Gospel each day and read a passage? I would tell you to raise your hands: but I won't do so", he added, telling them not to worry. It is important, the Pope said, to always take a copy of the Gospel with you, such as "the pocket version, which is small, in order to be carried in a pocket, purse", so it is "always with me". It is said, the Pontiff continued, that "Saint Cecilia had the Gospel close to her heart: close, close!". And in this way, keeping it always close at hand, we can "read a passage of the Gospel every day: it is the only way to know Jesus", to know "what he did, what he said".

It is essential, said the Pope, "to read the story of Jesus: yes, the Gospel is the story of Jesus, the life of Jesus, it is Jesus himself, it is the Holy Spirit that shows us Jesus there". For this reason Francis wanted to renew his advice: "Please, do this: each day a passage of the Gospel, a small one — three, four, five minutes". It is precisely by reading it that the Gospel is understood, "and this works within: it is the Holy Spirit who then does his work. This is the seed. It is the Holy Spirit

who makes the seed sprout and grow”.

While the first task is “to recognize Jesus, to know Jesus”, the second task recommended by the Pope is also found “at the beginning of the liturgy, before the collect prayer, and then in the Psalm” from the day’s reading: “adore Jesus, he is God!”. It is important to “adore Jesus”, Pope Francis said, adding: “In the Psalm we prayed: “Let us adore the Lord with the angels” (cf. Psalm 96). And if “the angels adore him” truly, then we should ask ourselves “if we adore him as well”. Most often we pray to Jesus, the Pontiff said, to ask or thank him for something, which is all well and good. However, he continued, the real question is whether we adore Jesus.

“Let us consider the two manners of adoring Jesus”, Francis proposed. First there is “the prayer of silent adoration: ‘You are God; you are the Son of God; I adore you’”. This is “adoring Jesus”. But then we must also “remove from our heart the other things that ‘we adore’, that interest us more”. There must be “God alone; other things are helpful if in the direction of God; they are useful if I am able to adore God alone”. Therefore, we must “adore God, adore Jesus, know Jesus with the Gospel, adore Jesus”.

In this regard the Pope offered another practical suggestion: “There is a little prayer that we pray, the Gloria — “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit” — but we often say it mechanically, like parrots”. Instead, “this prayer is adoration, glory: I adore the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit”. The Pope then recommended: “adore, with little prayers, in silence before the grandeur of God, adore Jesus and say: ‘You are the only One, you are the beginning and the end, and I want to be with you for all my life, for all eternity. You are the only One’. And in this way, “banish the things that prevent me from adoring Jesus”.

“The third task I recommend to you in order to have Jesus at the centre of our life”, the Pontiff continued, referring to the Gospel of Mark (1:14-20), “is what today’s Gospel reading tells us: follow Jesus”. When the Lord “saw Simon and Andrew working - they were fishermen - he said to them, ‘Follow me’”. We must therefore “follow Jesus, the things he taught us, the things we find each day when we read that piece of the Gospel”. And we must ask: “Lord, what do you want me to do? Show me the way”.

In conclusion, Francis reiterated that the essential thing is to always keep “Jesus at the centre”. And, he said, “this means knowing, recognizing Jesus, adoring and following Jesus: Christian life is very simple, but we need the grace of the Holy Spirit, so he may awaken in us this will to know Jesus, to adore Jesus and to follow Jesus”. For this very reason, the Pope emphasized, “we asked the Lord at the beginning in the collect prayer, that we may know what we have to do and have the strength to do it”. He also hoped that “in the simplicity of every day — because in order to be Christians every day - unusual things, difficult things, superfluous things are not necessary. No, it is simple. May the Lord give us the grace to know Jesus, to adore Jesus and to follow Jesus”.

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