



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

When shepherds become wolves

Wednesday, 15 May 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 21, 22 May 2013)

Bishops and priests who succumb to the temptations of money and the vanity of careerism turn into wolves “who devour the flesh of their own sheep”. Mincing no words to stigmatize the conduct of anyone who, the Pope said, citing St Augustine, “takes the flesh of the sheep to eat it, exploit it or trade in it, and who is attached to money, becomes a miser and frequently also a simonist”. Or else he makes use of the wool for his own vanity, in order to boast”.

Bishops and priests must pray not to give in to these “true and proper temptations”, but they need the prayers of the faithful too, for which the Pope himself asked everyone taking part in the Mass he celebrated in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae on Wednesday, 15 May.

The Pope explained several key phrases from the day’s Gospel (Jn 17:11-19), such as “keep them”, which expresses a relationship of protection and love between God and the pastor and between the pastor and the people. This, the Pope said, “is a message for us bishops and for priests and clergymen”. They must care for their people and “be ready to sound the alarm when wolves are approaching”. Bishops and priests are not for themselves but for the people. “Do you always think of bishops and priests? We need your prayers.... We too are men and sinners... and are also tempted. What are the temptations of the bishop and the priest?”, the Holy Father asked.

According to St Augustine these temptations are avarice and vanity. “When a priest takes the road of vanity he enters into the spirit of careerism and does great damage to the Church.... He boasts, he likes to be seen as high and mighty. And the people don’t like it! You see what our difficulties and our temptations are; so you should pray for us that we be humble, gentle, and at the service of the people”.

Concelebrating with the Pope were Archbishop Ricardo Blázquez Pérez of Valladolid, Spain, and Fr Andrzej Koprowski, SJ, Vatican Radio’s Programme Director, who had come with a group of collaborators.