



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Mercy, celebration and remembrance

Friday, 5 July 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 28, 10 July 2013)

Look at the mercy of Jesus; celebrate with him; keep alive the “memory” of the moment in which we have encountered salvation in our lives. This was the threefold invitation given by Pope Francis during his homily. Among the concelebrants was Cardinal Jorge Liberato Urosa Savino, Archbishop of Caracas, whose presence the Pope emphasized at the beginning of the Mass since it was Venezuela’s Independence Day.

In his homily Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel passage (Mt 9:9-13) in which the Apostle speaks of his own conversion: the tax collector whom Jesus called to be one of the twelve. The message that Jesus wants to give, the Pope said, is one that people have always had trouble understanding: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice”. Our God is indeed a God of mercy. You can see it well in the story of Matthew”.

Jesus looks at Matthew and awakens “something new” within him, “something that he did not know”. The “gaze of Jesus”, explained the Holy Father, makes him feel an interior “wonder”, and makes him hear “the call of Jesus: follow me”. “It only took a moment” to understand that that look had changed his life forever. And it is in this moment that “Matthew says yes, leaves everything and goes with the Lord”.

The first moment of the encounter, which consists of “a deep spiritual experience”, is followed by a second experience: that of celebration. The Gospel continues with Jesus sitting at table with publicans and sinners; those who “were rejected by society”. But for the Pope this “is the contradiction of the celebration of God: the Lord feasts with sinners”. Addressing this point Pope Francis referred to Luke’s Gospel (15) where it clearly says that there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who have no need of repentance. This is why celebration is “very important” for the Pope, because the encounter with Jesus and the mercy of God should be celebrated.

But life is not one big party, says Pope Francis. There is a time for celebration, but then there must be “daily work, fuelled by the memory of that first encounter”. It is the memory of mercy and of that celebration that “gives Matthew, and everyone” who has chosen to follow Christ, the strength “to go forward”. This, the Pope added, must be remembered forever.