



# The Holy See

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POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE  
*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE*

*Contemplation, closeness, abundance*

*Tuesday, 22 October 2013*

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 44, 1 November 2013)

Pope Francis commented on the first Reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans (5:2;15;17-19;20-21) in which the Apostle boldly states: "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more".

The Holy Father suggested that this passage from Paul's Letter is among the most difficult to understand. He therefore also suggested three words that can aid our understanding: contemplation, closeness and abundance.

The first word is *contemplation*. The mystery of our redemption in Christ is extraordinary, the Pope said. So much so, he added, that "when the Church wishes to tell us something about the manner of this mystery, she uses one word: wondrously. She says: O God, you have wondrously created the world and even more wondrously recreated it...". This is precisely what Paul wishes to tell us: "in order to understand this mystery we need to put ourselves on our knees, we need to pray and contemplate". Then he said, "contemplation is mind, heart, knees, prayer", and it is the way we enter into this mystery, for it "can only be understood on bended knee, in contemplation, and not with the mind alone".

The second word is *closeness*. Pope Francis noted that God's closeness is a recurring theme in

this passage from St Paul's Letter to the Romans: "one man sinned, another man saved us. He is a God who is close to us. This mystery reveals a God who has been close to us throughout our history; from the first moment when he chose our father Abraham, when he walked with his people, and when he sent his Son to accomplish this work".

He then added: "God gets involved with our misery, he draws close to our wounds and he heals them with his hands; he became man in order to have hands with which to heal us".

"Jesus' work is personal: one man committed the sin, one man came to heal it" for "God does not save us merely by decree or by law; he saves us with tenderness, he saves us with caresses, he saves us with his life given for us".

The third word is *abundance*. The Holy Father noted that this word is repeated numerous times throughout St Paul's Letter to the Christian community in Rome. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more". It is abundantly clear, he said, that sin abounds in the world, and even in our own hearts: "Each one of us has his own inner poverty and weakness, we are very familiar with it. Yet God triumphs over sin and heals our wounds, as Jesus did". What is more, "he bestows on us the superabundant gift of his love and grace".

Understanding God's superabundant love helps us also to understand Jesus' preferential love for sinners, the Pope said. "They accused him of always keeping company with tax collectors and sinners" and "eating with tax collectors was scandalous, because sin abounded in their hearts. But Jesus went to them with the superabundance of his grace and love".

Pope Francis noted: "some of the saints say that one of the ugliest sins is the sin of diffidence, i.e. distrust of God".

"How can we distrust a God who is so close, so good, and who shows such preferential love for our hearts, sinners though we are? Such is the mystery: it is not easy to understand, and our unaided intelligence alone can never comprehend it. But perhaps these three words will help us: contemplation, to contemplate this mystery; closeness, this mystery hidden for all ages in a God who is close and who draws near to us; and abundance, a God who always triumphs over sin through the superabundance of his grace and tenderness, or as we prayed in the Collect, through the richness of his mercy".