



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Amid memory and hope

Thursday, 15 May 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 21, 23 May 2014)

Jesus is not a solitary hero who comes down from heaven to save us, but rather the central point and final end of the history which God initiated with his People. That is why a Christian must always be a man of the Eucharist who walks amid memory and hope and never as a solitary monad. If he does not walk with the people, if he does not belong to the Church, his faith is artificial. This message was the central focus of Pope Francis' homily at Holy Mass.

The Pope introduced his remarks, saying: "It is interesting that when the Apostles proclaim Jesus Christ they never begin with him", saying for example: "Jesus Christ is the Saviour!". Rather, the Apostles introduce their testimony by presenting "the history of the people". We see it today, he said, in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles (13:13-25), which recounts St Paul's testimony in Antioch of Pisidia. Yet, "Peter does the same in his first discourses and Stephen also did likewise".

Thus, when the Apostles are asked "why do you believe in this man?", they begin to speak about "Abraham and the whole history of the people". The reason for this attitude is clear, the Pope said. "We cannot understand Jesus without this history. Jesus is precisely the final end towards which this history moves and journeys".

We therefore read in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul began in the Synagogue, preaching: "Men

of Israel ... the God of this people Israel chose our fathers". In saying that God "chose our fathers", Paul begins his address "with God's choice of one man, Abraham", whom he commanded to leave his homeland, the house of his fathers. God chose him and initiated "a journey of election: the People of God are a Chosen People, chosen yet always on a journey". That is why "one cannot understand Jesus Christ without this history of preparation which moved toward him".

Consequently, "one cannot understand a Christian apart from the People of God". For "a Christian is not a monad, off somewhere alone. No, he belongs to a people, to the Church", so much so, the Pope said, that "a Christian without the Church is a pure ideal, not a reality!".

God promised Abram: "I will make of you a great people!". Thus, "this people journeys with a promise", the Pope said, adding that this is where the dimension of memory enters in. "It is important that we, in our lives, keep the dimension of memory always present before us". Indeed, he said, "a Christian is a man who remembers [*memorioso*] of the history of his people; he is a man who remembers the journey his people have made; he is a man who remembers his Church". A Christian is therefore a man who holds "the memory" of the past.

"The people journey toward the final promise and toward its fullness; they are a Chosen People who have a promise in the future and who journey toward this promise, toward the fulfilment of this promise", the Pope added. That is why "a Christian in the Church is a man, a woman, with hope. He or she has hope in the promise, which is not expectation: that is quite another thing! It is hope: forward! It is the hope which does not disappoint!".

Thus, in "looking back the Christian is a person 'who remembers' [*memorioso*]; he always asks for the grace to remember!"; whereas, "looking ahead, the Christian is a man or a woman of hope". Amid memory and hope, "in the present a Christian follows the path of God and renews the covenant with God". In practice, "he continually says to the Lord: yes, I want the commandments; I want your will; I want to follow you!". In doing so, "he is a man of the covenant ... the covenant we celebrate here each day" on the altar. Therefore, the Christian is always "a woman, a man of the Eucharist".

Within this context, the Bishop of Rome said, "one cannot understand a Christian alone". For "Jesus Christ did not fall from heaven like a hero that comes to save us. No, Jesus Christ has a history!". Furthermore "we can say that God has a history since he willed to journey with us". That is why "one cannot understand Jesus Christ without history", and that is also why "a Christian without history, a Christian without a people, a Christian without the Church is incomprehensible: it is something invented in a lab, something artificial, something lifeless".

The Pope went on to propose an examination of conscience based on his reflection. What is the status of our Christian identity? Let us ask ourselves "if our Christian identity is a matter of belonging to a people, to the Church". If this is not the case "we are not Christians" since "through baptism we entered the Church".

In this regard it is important, the Pope said, “to be in the habit of asking for the grace to remember the journey which the People of God made”. It is also important to ask for the grace of “personal memory: what has God done with me in my life? how has he had me journey?”. We also need to know how “to ask for the grace of hope, which is not optimism: it is something else”.

Finally, Pope Francis said, let us “ask for the grace to renew each day our covenant with the Lord who has called us”. May the Lord, he prayed, “grant us these three graces which are necessary for one’s Christian identity”.