



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Like children in the presence of a gift

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In his homily at Holy Mass Pope Francis commented on St John's account of Jesus' words to his disciples in his farewell discourse (Jn 14:27-31): "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you".

Pope Francis began: Peace "is the gift that [Jesus] leaves before going away", and he explains "not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid".

Therefore, "the Lord gives us peace: it is his gift to us before he goes to his Passion". The Pope noted, however, that Jesus warns his disciples "that [his] peace is not that which the world gives. It is another peace". The Pope then asked: "What is the peace that the world gives?".

He replied by describing three aspects of the peace the world gives: First, "it is a bit superficial"; second, it is "a peace that does not reach the depths of the soul"; and third, "it is a peace" that procures "a certain tranquility and also a certain joy", but it reaches only "a certain level".

One type of peace that the world offers is "the peace of wealth", which leads one to think: "I'm at peace because I have everything organized, I have enough to live on for my entire life, I don't have to worry!". This idea of peace begins with the conviction: "Don't worry, you won't have problems because you have so much money!". However, Jesus himself reminds us "not to trust in this peace, for with great realism he tells us: look, there are thieves, eh! And the thieves can steal

your riches!”. This is why “the peace that money gives you is not permanent”.

The Pope then added: let us not forget “that metal corrodes ... a crash in the market and all your money is gone”. The peace which money gives, he said, is therefore “not secure”, and only “a superficial and temporal peace”.

To help us understand, Jesus himself describes the ephemeral peace of that man “whose barns were all full of grain” and who thought about putting up others so that he might take a rest “in peace, calmly”. But the Lord told him: “Fool, this night you will die!” That is why the peace that comes from wealth “is useless” even if “it helps”.

Another peace that the world gives, the Pope continued, “is that of power”. It leads us to think: “I have power, I am secure, I command this, I command that, I am respected: I am in peace”. This was Herod’s situation, but “when the Magi arrived and told him that the King of Israel had been born”, at that very moment “his peace immediately vanished”. It only confirms that “the peace of power does not work: A coup takes it away from you immediately!”.

A third type of peace “that the world gives” is vanity, which leads us to tell ourselves: “I am esteemed, ... I am a person that all the world regards and when I go to receptions everyone greets me”. However, the Pope said, this too is “not a definitive peace, for today you are esteemed and tomorrow you will be insulted!”.

“Think about what happened to Jesus,” he said. “The same people who were saying one thing on Palm Sunday, on Good Friday were saying another”. Therefore, “the peace of vanity does not work”, because it is “temporary, superficial and not secure”.

To understand what true peace is, we need to return to the words of Jesus: “Peace I leave you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you”. What is the peace that Jesus gives? “It is a Person; it is the Holy Spirit,” the Pope explained. “On the day of the Resurrection”, in the Upper Room, Jesus’ greeting to his disciples was: “Peace be with you, receive the Holy Spirit”. Therefore, Jesus’ peace “is a Person, it is a great gift”. For “when the Holy Spirit is in our heart, no one can take away our peace. No one! It is a lasting peace!”.

In the face of so great a gift, what is our task, Pope Francis asked. We have to “guard this peace”, he said. It is “a great peace, a peace that is not mine: it belongs to another Person who gives it to me as a gift, another Person who is in my heart, who accompanies me throughout my life and whom the Lord has given me”.

“How do we receive the Holy Spirit’s peace?”. First “we receive it in Baptism, for the Holy Spirit comes, and also in Confirmation, for the Holy Spirit comes”. And then “we are to receive it as a child received a gift”. In fact, “Jesus said: unless you receive the kingdom of God like a little child,

you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven". Thus, "one receives the peace of Jesus without conditions and with an open heart: as a great gift". And "this is the peace of the Holy Spirit". It is ours "to guard it, not to cage it, to listen to it, to ask for help, for he is within us".

To possible objections that "there are so many problems about", the Pontiff replied with Jesus' words: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid". In fact, it is the Lord who comforts us: "If you have this peace of the Spirit, you have the Spirit within you and be aware of this, do not let your hearts be troubled, be secure!".

St Paul also "told us that in order to enter into the Kingdom of heaven it is necessary to pass through much tribulation". Experience confirms that "we all have many of them, both greater and smaller. All of us!". But Jesus' peace assures us: "Let not your hearts be troubled". In fact, "the presence of the Spirit enables our hearts to be at peace, aware but not anaesthetized, with that peace that only the presence of God can give".

If we want to know where we find our peace, the Pope suggested that "we ask ourselves several questions: Do I believe that the Holy Spirit is within me? Do I believe that the Lord has given him to me? Do I receive him as a gift, as a child receives a gift, with an open heart? Do I guard the Holy Spirit's presence within me so as not to sadden him?".

However, the Pope said, there is also a question that signals the opposite: "Do I prefer the peace that the world gives me, the peace offered by money, power, vanity?" He added: "these 'forms of peace' are always accompanied by fear": the fear that they will end. Instead, "Jesus' peace is definitive: we only need to receive it as children and guard it". The Pope concluded with a simple prayer: "May the Lord help us to understand these things".