



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Fear of resurrection

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Christian identity is fulfilled for us only with the resurrection, which will be “like a reawakening”. This is why Pope Francis advised “being with the Lord”, walking with him as disciples, in order that the resurrection may begin here and now. But “without fear of the transformation that our body will undergo at the end of our Christian journey”.

The Pontiff focused precisely on the essence of the resurrection in his homily during Mass. Drawing from the day’s Reading from the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (15:12-20), the Pope first explained that the Apostle “has to make a correction which is difficult for that time: that of the Resurrection”. Indeed, “the Christians believed that yes, Christ is risen, he went away, he finished his mission, he helps us from heaven, he accompanies us” but what was “not very clear” for them was “the following result that we too will be raised”.

In reality, Francis affirmed, “they thought in another way: yes, the dead are justified, they will not go to hell — very good! — but they will go a bit in the cosmos, in the air, there, the soul before God: only the soul”. But “they did not understand, the resurrection did not enter their mind”: that is, that “we too will be raised”.

“There was strong resistance”, the Pope pointed out, and it was so “from the first days”. Thus, Peter himself, who “had contemplated Jesus in his Glory on Mount Tabor, in the morning of the Resurrection, rushed to the grave”, believing that the Lord’s body had been stolen. He did this because “a true resurrection” never “not entered their mind”. Their “theological” vision, the Pontiff explained, ended with the triumph. Such that “the day of the Ascension they said: But tell me, Lord, now will you free the kingdom of Israel?”.

The did not understand “our passage from death to life through the Resurrection”, the Bishop of Rome explained. “Not even Mary Magdalene, who loved the Lord so much”, understood. And she too thought: “They stole the body!”.

The Disciples did not understand “the resurrection either of Jesus or of Christians”. In the end they only accepted “that of Jesus, because they saw it”; but the resurrection “of Christians was not understood in the same way”. They were convinced that “we will go to heaven, but nothing unusual” such as: “the dead will be raised”.

The same thing happens “when Paul goes to Athens and begins to speak” about the Resurrection: “the wise men and philosophers from Greece, are frightened” the Pope recalled. The question is that if “the Resurrection of Christ is a miracle, perhaps a frightening thing, the resurrection of Christians is a scandal: they cannot understand it!”. And this is why “Paul reasons this very clearly: If Christ is raised, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If Christ is raised, the dead will also be raised”.

The Pontiff observed that there is “resistance to the transformation, resistance that the work of the Spirit, which we received in Baptism, transforms until the end, at the resurrection”. And “when we speak about this, our language says: but I want to go to heaven, I do not want to go to hell!”. However, “we stop there”. And “none of us says: I will be revived like Christ!”.

For us as well, Francis continued, “it is difficult to understand this”. Very difficult. It is easier to imagine a sort of “cosmic pantheism” and to think: “We will be in the contemplation, there, in the world, the world will be changed”. Thus, there is “resistance to being changed, which is the word which Paul uses: ‘We will be changed. Our body will be changed’”. This resistance is “human”, the Pope recognized. Such that “when a man or a woman must undergo surgery” they are very frightened because either something will be removed or something else will be placed inside them: they “will be transformed, so to speak”. And so there is fear. But, the Pope clarified, “with the Resurrection, we will all be transformed”.

“This is the future that awaits us”, the Pope emphasized, “and this leads us to put up great resistance to the transformation of our body”, but “resistance also to the Christian identity”. And, he added: “Perhaps we do not have much fear of the Apocalypse of the Evil One, of the Antichrist who must come first; perhaps we do not have much fear. Perhaps we do not have much fear of

the call of the Archangel or of the sound of the trumpet: but, the victory will be the Lord's". Yet we have "fear of our resurrection: all of us will be transformed". And "that transformation will be the end of our Christian journey".

"This temptation to not believe in the resurrection of the dead", the Pope explained, "was born in the early Church, in the first days of the Church. Paul, in about the year 50, must clarify this very thing to the Thessalonians and speak about it once or twice". And "at the end, to console them, to encourage them, he says one of the most hope-filled phrases in the New Testament: 'At the end we will be with him'". And it will be "to stay with the Lord, this way, with our body and with our soul". This is our "Christian identity: to stay with the Lord". It is an affirmation which, the Pontiff remarked, is certainly not "news". Indeed, "it is the first thing said by the first disciples". In fact "when John the Baptist signals Jesus as the Lamb of God and the two disciples come with him, the Gospel reads: 'and they stayed with him that day'".

"We will be raised to stay with the Lord", the Pontiff affirmed, "and the resurrection begins here, as disciples, if we stay with the Lord, if we walk with the Lord. This is the path toward the resurrection. And if we are accustomed to staying with the Lord, this fear of the transformation of our body falls away".

In reality the resurrection "will be like a reawakening", Francis clarified, repeating the words of Psalm 17[16]: "when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form". And "Job also tells us: whom 'my eyes shall behold'. Not spiritually: with my body, with my eyes, transformed". This is why one must not "have fear of the Christian identity", which "does not end with a temporal triumph, it does not end with a good mission". Because "the Christian identity is fulfilled with the resurrection of our bodies, with our resurrection: the end is there, that we are sated with the image of the Lord".

For this reason, the Pope indicated, "the Christian identity is a journey, it is a path where one stays with the Lord, like those two disciples who stayed with the Lord all that evening". Thus "even our whole life is called to be with the Lord to remain, to stay with the Lord, after the call of the Archangel, after the sound of the trumpet". And the Pope recalled in conclusion that St Paul, in the Letter to the Thessalonians "ends with this line of reasoning with this phrase: 'Comfort one another with these words'".