POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Those with no name

Thursday, 8 October 2015

The desperate "why" that is insistently directed to God by mankind is also seen in the many letters that Pope Francis receives every day. He shared this by telling the stories of a young mother with a family who is facing the difficulty of cancer, and of an elderly woman who mourns her son who was murdered by the mafia. They wrote to the Pope asking why the wicked seem to be happy while the righteous are always faced with difficulties. Pope Francis responded precisely to this serious question in the Mass he celebrated on Thursday morning in the Chapel of Santa Marta, assuring all that God never abandons those who trust in him.

His reflection was inspired by the words of Psalm 1 — "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord" — which is, precisely, "a response to the lamentations of many people, many 'whys' that we express to God". Those "many 'whys'" are actually expressed in the biblical passage from the book of Malachi (3:13-20) in today's Liturgy.

"The Lord", Pope Francis affirmed, "laments to these people, he too laments, saying: 'Your words have been stout against me'". Yet, "says the Lord, you continue to say: 'How have we spoken against thee?'. You have said: 'It is vain to serve God. What is the good of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? Henceforth we deem the arrogant blessed;

evildoers not only prosper but when they put God to the test they escape'".

"How often", the Pope said, "we see this reality in bad people; people who do evil and life seems fine for them: they are happy, they have everything they want, they are not lacking in anything". And this begs the question: "Why Lord?". Yes, the Pope said, "this is one of many 'whys': why is this insolent person, who does not care about God or others, this unjust and wicked person, why is everything fine in their life? Why do they have all that they want while those of us who want to do good have so many problems?".

In this regard, Pope Francis shared that just the day before he had received "a letter from a brave mom" who, at 40 years of age, with her husband and three children, is facing the difficulty of "a very bad kind" of tumour. The woman wrote to Pope Francis, asking: "Why is this happening to me?". Also, the Pope added that "a few weeks ago" he had received another letter in which "an elderly woman, who was left alone because her son had been murdered by the Mafia", also asked "why?", adding: "I pray". And again, in yet another letter: "I am raising children, I am moving forward with a family that loves God, so, why?".

"These 'whys'", the Pope affirmed, are asked by everyone. In particular we ask "why do the wicked seem to be so happy?". The Word of God provides an answer to these questions. The Pope recalled the words from the passage of Malachi: "The Lord heeded and heard them". Indeed, "the Lord hears us when we ask 'why', always". Again we read in today's passage from Malachi: "A book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and thought on his name'. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act". Therefore, the Pope continued, "God remembers the righteous, through those who are suffering now, who are unable to explain their situations". Indeed, "God remembers those who trust in him, even while asking 'Why? Why? Why?'".

This is precisely the attitude that Psalm 1 outlines: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season".

The Pope said that "at this time we do not see the fruits of these suffering people, these people carrying the cross", just as "on Good Friday and Holy Saturday the fruits of the crucified Son of God, the fruits of his suffering, were not yet visible". Psalm 1 says that "in all that he does, he prospers".

What does the same Psalm say about "the wicked, for whom we think everything is fine?". Pope Francis re-read the verse: "The wicked are not so, but are like chaff which the wind drives away.... For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish". In short, "you may be fine today, you may have everything, you do not care about God, you do not care about

others, you exploit others: you are unjust, only thinking of yourself, not of others".

However, the Pope suggested, "there is one thing that Jesus said and it always comes to my mind: 'Tell me, what is your name?'". Yes, this people does not know their name, "they have no name". The Pope recalled the parable of Lazarus, "who had nothing to eat, and dogs licked his wounds". Meanwhile, "the rich man held banquets and enjoyed himself without looking at the needs of others". The Pope noted that "it is curious how this man's name is not mentioned", but instead "he is only identified with an adjective: a rich man". Indeed, "in the book of God's remembrance, the wicked have no name: he is wicked, he an exploiter". These are the people who "have no names but only adjectives".

Instead, the Pontiff pointed out, "all those who try to go the way of the Lord will be with his Son, who has a name: Jesus the Saviour, a name that is difficult to understand, despite the inexplicable evidence of the Cross and all that he suffered for us".

Pope Francis concluded by inviting those present to think over Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked.... But his delight is in the law of the Lord". In this way, "even when you are suffering, hope in the Lord". Just as "we have prayed in the Collect, ask the Lord to give you what your conscience 'does not dare to hope for'". Yes, "ask also for this: that the Lord give you more hope".