



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Like grandma's cookies

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(by www.osservatoreromano.va)

Christians should not be like grandma's cookies, specifically those known as "liar's cookies"; they are beautiful on the outside, but empty and devoid of substance on the inside. This theme of hypocrisy, in all of its worst forms, was the theme of Pope Francis' homily during the celebration of Mass in the Santa Marta chapel on Friday, 14 October.

In his homily, the Pontiff also called on each of the faithful to make an examination of conscience with regard to hypocrisy. Building upon the day's reading from the Gospel of Luke (12:1-7), Francis reflected on "one word which the Lord says to the disciples: 'leaven'". In the passage, St Luke cites the teaching of Jesus: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees". Pope Francis pointed out that Jesus "also spoke of leaven on other occasions, when he explained, for instance, that the Kingdom of Heaven was like the leaven which the woman kneaded with the flour: it made the lump grow. So it is with the Kingdom of Heaven". Likewise, "the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians: 'Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump'".

In a step proposed by the liturgy, "Jesus speaks about a leaven that does not make the Kingdom of Heaven, an evil leaven". There are therefore two leavens, one good, one evil: "the leaven which makes the Kingdom of God grow, and the leaven which only makes what appears to be the

Kingdom of God". Indeed, "the leaven always makes it grow, always; and, when it is good, it makes it grow in a way that is consistent, substantial, and it becomes good bread, a good meal: it grows well. But, the leaven of evil does not make it grow well".

To better explain this image, Pope Francis share a personal recollection: "I remember that for Carnival, when we were children, grandma made cookies, and it was a very, very thin batter that she made. Then she dropped it into the oil and that batter swelled, and swelled and, when we began to eat it, it was empty". Those cookies were called "liar's cookies", and his grandmother explained why: these cookies "are like lies: they seem big, but they have nothing inside, there is nothing true there; there is nothing of substance".

Thus, Jesus warns us: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees". That leaven "is hypocrisy". This is why the Lord advises us to be wary "of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy".

Moreover, Francis stated, "many times Jesus said 'hypocrites, hypocrites' to the Pharisees, to the doctors of the law". For example, "it's enough to read Chapter 23 of Matthew: one after the other". But in reality, "what is this leaven of evil, what is hypocrisy?". To answer this question the Pope considered "several passages of the Bible". It so happens that "the Lord laments with the prophet: 'this people invoke me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me'". This is because, the Pontiff explained, "hypocrisy is an internal division, you say one thing and do another: it is a sort of spiritual schizophrenia". Furthermore, "the Pontiff explained, "a hypocrite is a phoney: he seems good, courteous but he has a dagger behind him". Just like Herod, Francis recalled, who with fear "received the Magi" with "courtesy" and "then, as they were leaving, said: 'go and then return and tell me where this child is so that I too can go to adore him'". Instead he wanted "to kill him".

"A hypocrite is two-faced", the Pope continued. "He is a phoney". Jesus, "speaking of these doctors of the law", affirms that they "say but do not do". This "is another form of hypocrisy, it is existential nominalism: those who believe that, by saying things, everything is in order. No, things must be done, not just said". On the contrary, "a hypocrite is a nominalist, he believes that everything is done with words". Moreover, "a hypocrite is incapable of blaming himself: he never finds a smudge on himself; he blames others". Just think, Francis said, "of the speck and the log": this is precisely how "we can describe this leaven which is hypocrisy".

From this perspective, "in order to understand what Jesus wants to tell us", the Pontiff outlined the steps for an "examination of conscience on our way of acting in life, on our leaven", so that "we can be freer to follow the Lord and always tell the truth". For this reason it is important to ask ourselves: "How am I growing? Am I growing with the old leaven that serves for nothing? Am I growing like my grandmothers crêpes, empty, without substance, or am I growing with new leaven, the leaven that makes the Kingdom of Heaven, that makes the Kingdom of Heaven grow? What is my leaven like?". In other words, "With what spirit do I do things? With what spirit do I pray? With what spirit to I address others? With the spirit that builds or with the spirit that turns into air?".

Francis also recommended that we never never mislead ourselves by saying: “I did this, I did that”. Instead he pointed out the example of the little ones: “Children confess with such truth! Children never, never, ever tell a lie in confession, they never say abstract things: ‘I did this, I did that’”. Thus, the Pope explained, children are “concrete, when they are before God and before others they say concrete things, because they have good leaven, the leaven that makes them grow like the Kingdom of Heaven grows”.

The Pontiff then concluded his meditation praying that the Lord “give to us, to all of us, the Holy Spirit and the grace of the clarity to tell ourselves what is the leaven I grow with, which is the leaven I act with”, in order to always be ready to respond sincerely to the question: “Am I a just and transparent person or am I a hypocrite?”.