



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The strength of the little ones

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(by <http://www.osservatoreromano.va>)

To meet the Lord “who is and will be”, we must have “big hearts”, humility and a “childlike” attitude. In his homily during Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday, 29 November, Pope Francis continued his reflection from the previous day recalling the way of life to which Christians are called.

During the Advent season, he observed, Christians should be mindful of three things: vigilance “in prayer, carrying out works of brotherly charity and rejoicing and giving praise”.

The Pope focused on the Gospel image of Jesus (Luke 10: 21-24) who “rejoiced in praise of the Father”. What is the reason for Jesus’ joy? “For the Lord revealed to the little ones the mysteries of salvation, the mystery of himself”, Francis, emphasized — “to the little ones, not to the wise and the learned: to little children”. For the Lord cherishes children, he said, “to sow in the hearts of children the mystery of salvation”, because “the little ones are able to understand this mystery”.

This is confirmed in the day’s first reading, from the book of the prophet Isaiah (11: 1-10), which, the Pope noted, contains many “little things”, many “little details that make us see God’s promise of peace to his people” the promise “of redemption, the promise to always save them”. The text, Francis noted, points out that “on that day, a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse”: the prophet “does not say: ‘An army will come to liberate you’, but refers to “a small bud, a little thing”. And, the Pontiff added, “at Christmas we see this smallness, this little thing: a baby, a stable, a

mother, a father” , and thus the importance of having “big hearts but the attitude of a child”.

For “upon this bud will rest the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit”. And this bud, explained Francis, will have “that virtue” which is typical of little ones: “fear of the Lord”. He “will walk in fear of the Lord”. But, the Pope immediately clarified that fear of the Lord does not mean “dread”. It means testifying in our own lives to “the commandment that God gave to our father Abraham: ‘Live in my presence and be blameless’. And all this means humility. The fear of the Lord is humility”. That’s why “only the little ones are able to understand fully the meaning of humility, a sense of fear of the Lord, because they walk in the presence of the Lord, for ever”: they, in fact, “feel watched by the Lord, guarded by the Lord; they feel that the Lord is with them, which gives them the strength to go on”. The little ones, continued the Pope, understand they are “a little sprout of a very large trunk”, a shoot upon which alights “the Holy Spirit”. They therefore embody the “Christian humility” that leads them to recognize: “You are God; I am a person, I journey forward in this way with the little things of life, but walking in Your presence and trying to be above reproach”.

This is “true humility” not of course, a “‘theatrical’ humility” as ostentatious as he who said: ‘I am humble, but proud of it’. The humility of the childlike, the Pope stressed, is that of someone who “walks in the presence of the Lord, does not speak ill of others, looks only at service, and feels that he or she is the smallest.... That’s where their strength lies”. A clear example, he added, can be seen in Nazareth: “God, in sending his Son, casts his eye upon a humble maiden — very humble — who immediately afterwards hastens to help a cousin in need and she tells her nothing of what had happened”. This is humility: “to walk in the presence of the Lord, happily, joyfully, because this is the joy of the humble: to be seen by the Lord”. Therefore, with the humility of which the Gospel reading speaks, we must always remember that “humility is a gift, a gift of the Holy Spirit”. It is what we call “the gift of the fear of God”. A gift, the Pope concluded, which we must seek from the Lord: “Looking at Jesus who rejoiced because God reveals his mystery to the humble, we can ask for the grace of humility for all of us, the grace of the fear of God, of walking in his presence, trying to be beyond reproach”. A gift that will help us to “be vigilant in prayer, carrying out works of brotherly charity and rejoicing and giving praise”.