



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

One after the other

Tuesday, 24 January 2017

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

Starting with Abraham, culminating with Jesus to the Father and continuing until today, one finds many instances in which these words are spoken: “here I am”. As Pope Francis said on Tuesday, 24 January, during Mass at the Casa Santa Marta, Christians are called everyday “to do the Lord’s will”, becoming part of God’s providential plan in the history of salvation. The Holy Father’s meditation for the day was centred on the “priesthood of Jesus, the definitive, unique priesthood”. Drawing from the day’s first reading (Hebrews 10:1-10), he spoke on the theme of sacrifice.

“Priests”, Francis explained, “at that time, offered sacrifices, but they had to offer them continuously, year after year, because they were not final, [in that] they were not once and for all”. The decisive change came with “the priesthood of Jesus, whose sacrifice is the only one [that is] once and for all”. This is the essential difference between the sacrifices offered by the priests and Jesus’ sacrifice: “in those sacrifices, they renew, year after year, the memory of sin, asking for forgiveness year after year”; In contrast, Christ says: “Sacrifices and offerings thou hast not desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me.’ Then he said: “Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God””.

The Pope said that this was Jesus’ “first step” into the world: “I come to do thy will”. The will of the

Father was that, “with this sacrifice, all sacrifices would be abolished, and this would be the only one”. As is read in Scripture: “Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings. Lo, I have come to do thy will”.

These words of Jesus brings to a close a history marked by links in a chain, with each link consisting of the words “here I am”, the Pope said. “The history of salvation is this: a history of a ‘here I am’ chain link”. This history began with Adam, who “hid himself because he was afraid of the Lord”: from then on, the Lord began “to call and to hear the response of those men and women who say: ‘Here I am. I am willing. I am willing’”. It continued until “the last ‘Here I am’, that of Jesus: ‘To do thy will’”. The Pope briefly recalled the history of this statement, citing a series of examples, including Abraham, Moses, the prophet Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Samuel. In the case of Samuel, he heard the voice of the Lord and replied: “Here I am, Lord”. The Pope went on to recall the “final, great ‘Here I am’ of Mary: ‘Let it be the will of God. I am his servant. Here I am’”.

In light of this history, Francis observed that the statement “here I am” is “not automatic”. In every Biblical account, “the Lord dialogues with those whom he invites”. Abraham “even negotiated” with God so that he would “not destroy those two cities”. Isaiah, meanwhile, was objective: “But, they are sinners, I cannot...”, or Jeremiah: “But, I am a child, I do not know how to speak...” at which point the Lord reassures him: “I will make you speak!”. For his part, Elijah lamented: “I am afraid, I want to die, no, no, I’m afraid, I don’t want to”, to which the Lord replied: “Get up: eat, drink, and go on!”.

“The Lord”, the Pope said, “always dialogues with those he invites to take this path and to say ‘here I am’. He has so much patience, so much patience”. Giving another example, he called “line of reasoning of Job, who does not understand”, and the Lord’s responses which “corrects him” until he says “here I am”: “Lord, you are right: I only knew you by hearsay; now, my eyes have seen you”. Here, the Pontiff offered a valuable lesson for everyone: “The Christian life is this: a ‘here I am’, a continuous ‘here I am’”.

In one instance “after the other”, the words “here I am” are uttered throughout the Bible. “It is lovely”, the Pope said, “to read Scripture” looking for these “replies by people to the Lord”, for every instance in which someone has said: “Here I am, I have come to do thy will”. It is beautiful and engaging because, Francis explained, “this liturgy of the word from today invites us to reflect: ‘But how is my “here I am” to the Lord? And the “here I am” of my life, how is it?’”. By reflecting on the Scriptures, we realize that such responses are not always obvious: “Do I go hide myself, like Adam, to avoid replying? Or, when the Lord calls me, do I instead say ‘here I am’, or ‘what do you want of me?’, [or do] I run away, like Jonah, who did not want to do what the Lord asked of him?” Or again, “Do I pretend to do the Lord’s will, but only externally, like the doctors of the law who Jesus firmly condemns”, and who “pretended” by saying: “Everything is okay... no questions: I do this and nothing more”? In addition to these possible responses, Francis said, there are those who look the other way, such as “Levite and the priest before the poor wounded man, beaten by

robbers and left for dead”.

Because the Lord calls “each one of us” “every day”, you have to ask yourself: “What is my response to the Lord?” Do I respond with “here I am”, the Pontiff stressed, “or do I hide myself? Or do I run away? Or do I pretend? Or do I look the other way?”

There are those who might have their doubts: “Can you argue” with the Lord? “Yes”, Francis said, “he likes it. He likes to argue with us”. For this reason, he said, when “someone tells me: ‘But, father, frequently when I go to pray, I am angry with the Lord...’”, his response is: “Even this is prayer! He likes when you are angry and tell him to his face what you feel, because he is Father! But even this is a ‘here I am’”.