



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

What a priest should be

Saturday, 11 January 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 3, 17 January 2014)

In his homily at Holy Mass in the Chapel of Santa Marta, Pope Francis continued his reflection on the first Letter of St John, in which the Apostle says: I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life (5:13).

Pope Francis began by noting that St John is expounding on the verse proclaimed in the liturgy yesterday: And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith (5:4). Our faith is the victory against the spirit of the world, he said. Our faith is this victory which enables us to go forward in the name of the Son of God, in the name of Jesus.

The Holy Father then posed this question: What is our relationship with Jesus like? This is a fundamental question, he said, since our relationship with Jesus strengthens our victory. To priests who were present at the Mass, he added that this question is especially important for us as priests: what is my relationship with Jesus Christ like?

The strength of a priest is rooted in this relationship, the Pontiff added, commenting on the days Gospel when Jesus popularity increased, he went to the Father. As St Luke recounts: He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed (cf. 5:12-16). Thus, Pope Francis noted, as there was more and

more talk about Jesus and large crowds were coming to him to listen to him and be healed, afterwards he went to the Father. Thus, he said, Jesus attitude is a rock of comparison for us who are priests: do we or do we not go to Jesus?.

A series of questions priests might ask themselves flow from this, the Pope said. What place does Jesus Christ have in my life as a priest? Is it a living relationship, disciple to Master, brother to brother, poor man to God? Or is it a bit artificial, like a relationship that doesnt come from the heart?.

We are united through the Spirit and when a priest distances himself from Jesus Christ, instead of being annointed [*unto*], he ends up becoming unctuous [*untuoso*]. How much unctuous priests harm the Church! Those who place importance and power in artificial things, in vanities, those who have an affected attitude and way of speaking. How many times, he added do we hear with dismay: but this is a priest?; he seems more like a butterfly because he is always fluttering about vanities and he does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ: he has lost the anointing; he is unctuous.

Yet with all of our limitations, the Pope continued, we are good priests if we go to Jesus Christ, if we seek the Lord in prayer: the prayer of intercession, the prayer of adoration. If instead we distance ourselves from Jesus Christ, we have to compensate for this with other worldly attitudes. But the priest, the Pope forcefully stated, adores Jesus Christ, the priest speaks with Jesus Christ, the priest seeks Jesus Christ and allows himself to be sought by Jesus Christ. This is the centre of our lives. If we do not have this, we lose everything! And then what shall we give to the people?

The Pope then repeated the Collect prayer from the liturgy and said: We have asked that the mystery which we celebrate, the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ among us, might increase each day. We asked for this grace: that our relationship with Jesus Christ ... might grow in us.

It is beautiful to find priests who have given their lives as priests. Priests of whom the people say: But yes, he has a bit of a temper, hes got this and that, but he is a priest! And the people have a nose about these things! Instead, when the people see idolatrous priests, to say it in a word, who instead of having Jesus have their little idols some are devotees of the god of Narcissus they say: poor things! It is a relationship with Jesus Christ that saves us from worldliness and from the idolatry that makes us unctuous since this relationship enables us to remain in the anointing.

Addressing himself directly to those who were present - among them a group of priests from Genoa accompanied by their Cardinal Archbishop Angelo Bagnasco Pope Francis concluded his homily: To you who have so kindly come to concelebrate here with me, my hope for you is this: lose everything in life but do not lose this relationship with Jesus Christ. This is your victory. Onward with this!

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