



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Moving forward beyond difficulties

Friday, 14 February 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 8, 21 February 2014)

To walk, to move forward past difficulties. This is the attitude the Christian must have, because it is part of his identity. A Christian who does not move forward, has an identity that is “not well”. Pope Francis said these words at the Mass he celebrated on Friday morning, 14 February, in the Chapel of Santa Marta. He recalled the story of the two brothers, Cyril and Methodius, Europe’s patrons, whose feast day was being celebrated. They were sent as disciples to bring the Christian message to the world, and this, the Pope said, “makes us reflect on the ‘identity of the disciple’”, on Christian identity.

“Who is the Christian?” the Pope asked. How does the Christian behave? He responded that: the Christian “is a disciple. He is a disciple who has been sent. The Gospel is clear: the Lord sent them out saying: go, go forward! And this means that the Christian is a disciple of the Lord who walks, who always goes forward. There is no such thing as an idle Christian. A Christian who remains still has an identity that is “not well”. We recall the proclamation in the Psalms which repeats that the Christian is precisely a disciple who walks, who moves: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel” (cf. Ps 115).

For the Christian, walking also means “moving difficulties”. To explain this, Pope Francis referred to the day’s Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (13.46-49), in which Paul and Barnabas are at Antioch in Pisidia. Observing that the Jews would not follow them, they “move on to the Gentiles:

they move forward!”.

The Pope added that Jesus did the same, “he continued on: those who were invited did not come; all found a reason not to go. What does Jesus say? That we should not have a celebration? No! He says to go to the byways and invite all people, good and bad alike. This is what the Gospel says. But even the bad people? Yes, even the bad people! Everyone! The Christian walks, he moves past difficulties and announces that the Kingdom of God is near”.

The second aspect of Christian identity is that we “must always remain as a lamb. In an ancient Easter antiphon we sing: these are the new baptized lambs. The Pope referred to the passage from the Gospel of Luke (10:1-9). He said: “The Christian is a lamb and needs to preserve his identity as a lamb: ‘Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves’”. David, the Pope recalled, did not accept the armour that he was offered for fighting the Philistines: he would not have been able to move, he would not have been “himself, humble, the simple David. In the end he took his slingshot and won the battle”. We must therefore remain as lambs and “not become wolves. Sometimes”, the Pope continued, “temptation causes us to think: ‘this is difficult, these wolves are clever and I will be even more clever than they are!’”. Therefore we must remain “lambs, not fools, but lambs. Lambs with Christian cunning, but always as lambs. If you are like a lamb the Lord will defend you. But if you feel as strong like the wolf, he will not defend you, he will leave you alone. And the wolves will viciously eat you”.

To show the third element that characterizes the Christian, the Pope posed a question: “How does the Christian walk as a lamb?”. He replied with one word: “Joy”. “In his Book, Isaiah tell us: how beautiful are the feet of the messenger, who announces peace on the mountains, who come to tell us that the Lord is King. These are people who rejoice because they know the Lord and carry him”. The Pope added: “Joy is the way of the Christian. The Christian cannot walk without joy. One cannot walk as a lamb without joy”. The Christian must preserve this attitude always, even amid problems, in moments of difficulty, even “amid his own mistakes and sins”, because “Jesus always forgives and helps us, and there is always joy”.

Therefore, the Pope repeated, the Gospel must be brought into the world by lambs who walk with joy, he clarified. “Those Christians are mourning, always living this way, and are sad, complaining about everything. This is not the attitude of a disciple. St Augustine says: Go, go forward, sing and walk with joy!”. That is the Christian attitude: to proclaim the Gospel with joy. “Too much sadness and bitterness leads us to live Christianity without Christ”. The Christian is one who never stands still, but always moves forward beyond difficulties. And he does this with strength and joy. “May the Lord”, the Pope concluded, “grant us the grace to live as Christians who walk as lambs and with joy”.

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