



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Resist temptation

Tuesday, 18 February 2014

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

Temptation presents itself to us in subtle ways, infecting the whole environment that surrounds us and always causes us to look for justifications. In the end it causes us to fall into sin, and encloses us in a cage from which it is difficult to escape. To resist temptation it is necessary to listen to the Word of God, because “he is waiting for us”, and he always gives us confidence and opens new horizons before us. This was the theme of Pope Francis’ homily at the Mass he celebrated in the Chapel of Santa Marta on Tuesday morning, 18 February.

The Pope took the opportunity to reflect on the liturgy of the day, particularly on the Letter of St James (12-18) in which the apostle, “after having spoken to us yesterday of patience... speaks to us today of resistance; the resistance to temptation. He explains how each person is tempted by his own passions, which attract and seduce him. Then the passions conceive and create sin, and once that sin is committed, it brings forth death”.

But where does temptation come from? How does it act within us? To answer these questions, the Pope again referred to the passage from the Letter of St James. “The Apostle”, he said, “tells us that sin does not come from God but from our passions, from our inner weaknesses, from the wounds that original sin has left within us. That is where temptation comes from”. He then pointed out the characteristics of temptation, which “grow and are contagious”.

Initially, temptation “begins in a soothing way”, but “then it grows. Jesus himself spoke about this when he told the parable of the seeds and the weeds (Mt 13: 24-30). The seeds grew, but the weeds planted by the enemy also grew. This is how temptation grows, it grows and grows. If one does not stop it, then it occupies everything”, and that is when infection occurs. Temptation grows, the Pope said, “and it hates solitude”; it will try to spread to another to have company. This is how it accumulates people, spreading to others”. The third feature is justification; “we justify ourselves in order to feel fine with ourselves”.

The Pope noted how temptation has always justified itself, “since the first original sin” when Adam blames Eve for convincing him to eat the forbidden fruit. Through this growth, infection and justification, it “locks us in a place where you cannot easily escape”. To explain this, the Pope referred to the Gospel of Mark (8:14,21): “This is what happened to the Apostles who were in the boat: they had forgotten to bring bread” and began to blame each other and discuss who had made the mistake of forgetting it. “Jesus looked at them, and I think”, the Pope said, “that he smiled as he watched them. And he said to them: do you remember the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod? Take heed, beware!”. Yet they “did not understand anything, because they were so caught up in blame that they did not have room for anything else, they did not have light to understand the Word of God”.

The same happens “when we fall into temptation. We do not hear the Word of God and we do not understand. Jesus had to remind them of the multiplication of the loaves, to help them to get out of the mindset that they were in”. The Holy Father explained that this happens because temptation closes every horizon “and in this way leads us to sin”. When we are being tempted, “only the Word of God, the Word of Jesus, can save us. Listening to his Word opens horizons”, because “he is always ready to help us escape from temptations. Jesus is great because not only does he help us to get out of temptation, but he also gives us more faith”.

Pope Francis then referred to a passage from the Gospel of Luke (22:31-32), He recounted the conversation between Jesus and Peter in which “the Lord tells Peter that the devil wants to sift him like wheat”. At the same time, Jesus tells him that he has prayed for him and gives him a new mission: “When you have turned back, strengthen your brethren”. Therefore, the Holy Father said, Jesus not only expects to help us escape temptation but he also trusts us. This is a great strength”, because “he always opens up new horizons” while, through temptation, the devil “closes and develops environments which cause you to fight” and “seek justification for accusing others”.

“Let us not be ensnared by temptation” the Holy Father said. You can only escape temptation through “listening to the Word of Jesus”. He concluded his homily with the words: “Let us ask the Lord to always say to us, in times of temptation, as he did with the disciples, with patience: Stop. Do not worry. Lift up your eyes, look to the horizon. Do not close yourself in, move forward. His Word will save us from falling into sin in moments of temptation”.

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