



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

But who do you say that I am?

Thursday, 20 February 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 9, 28 February 2014)

Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel from St Mark (8:27-33), in which the evangelist recounts Peter's Confession of faith. Pope Francis began by noting that Peter "was certainly the most courageous one that day, when Jesus asked his disciples: but who do you say that I am?". For he responded decisively: "You are the Christ". The Pope added that Peter was likely quite "satisfied within himself" thinking "I answered well!". And truly "he had answered well", the Pope said.

However, his dialogue with Jesus did not end so well, the Pope added. "The Lord began to explain what would happen", but "Peter did not agree" with what he was hearing. "He did not like the path" that Jesus set forth.

Today, too, "many times we hear within ourselves" the same question that Jesus addressed to the Apostles. Jesus "turns to us and asks us: who am I for you? Who is Jesus Christ for each of us, for me? Who is Jesus Christ?". Surely, Pope Francis said, "we will respond as Peter did, as we learned in the catechism: you are the Son of the living God, you are the Redeemer, you are the Lord!".

Yet Peter's reaction was different once "Jesus began to explain all that would happen to him: the Son of man would have to suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and by the chief

priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again". Peter most certainly "did not like this talk". He thought: "You are the Christ! Conquer and let's move ahead!". For Peter "did not understand the path of suffering" that Jesus indicated. So much so, the Gospel tells us, that Peter "took him, and began to rebuke him". He was "so pleased with having responded, 'you are the Christ', that he felt he had the strength to rebuke Jesus".

The Pope then read, word for word, Jesus' reply to Peter as recorded by the evangelist: "Turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, 'Get behind me Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men'".

Therefore, in order "to respond to that question which we all hear in our hearts — Who is Jesus for us? — what we have learned and studied in the Catechism does not suffice". Certainly "it is important to study and to know it, but it is not enough", the Pope insisted. For in order to know him truly, "we need to travel the path that Peter travelled". Indeed, "after this humiliation, Peter continued on with Jesus, he saw the miracles that Jesus worked, he saw his power. Then he paid the taxes, as Jesus had told him, he caught the fish and took the coin from its mouth: he saw so many miracles of this kind!".

However, "at a certain point Peter denied Jesus, he betrayed Jesus". That is when "he learned the difficult science — which is more wisdom than science — of tears, of weeping". Peter "asked for forgiveness" from the Lord.

And yet, "in the uncertainty of that Easter morning, Peter did not know what to think" about all that the women had told him concerning the empty tomb. And so he "went to the tomb". The Gospel does not recount "that moment explicitly," the Pope said, "but it does say that the Lord met Peter" and that Peter "encountered the living Lord, alone, face to face".

Pope Francis then noted how, in the course of the 40 days following the Lord's Resurrection, Peter "heard many explanations from Jesus on the kingdom of God. And he may have been tempted to think: Ah, now I know who Jesus Christ is!". Yet he still "lacked so much in terms of knowing who Jesus is".

Thus, "that morning, on the shore of Tiberias, Peter was questioned once again. Three times. And he felt ashamed, as he remembered the evening of Holy Thursday: the three times he had denied Jesus". He remembered "that weeping". According to the Pope, "on the shore of Tiberias Peter did not weep bitterly as on Holy Thursday, but he did weep". And he added that he was "sure" that Peter wept as he spoke those moving words: "You know everything Lord, you know that I love you".

Therefore, one only understands "the question posed to Peter — Who am I for you? — within the context of a long journey, after having travelled a long path. A path of grace and of sin". It is "the

disciple's path", the Pope said. In fact, he added, "following Jesus enables us to know Jesus. To follow Jesus through our virtues" and "also through our sins. Always following Jesus!".

The Pope repeated that, in order to know Jesus, "what is needed is not a study of notions but rather a life as a disciple". For "in journeying with Jesus we learn who he is ... we come to know Jesus as disciples". We come to know him "in the daily encounter with the Lord, each day. Through our victories and through our weaknesses". It is precisely "through these encounters" that "we draw close to him and come to know him more deeply". For it is "in these everyday encounters that we acquire what St Paul calls the mind of Christ, the hermeneutic to judge all things".

Yet the Pope explained that "it is a journey that we cannot make alone". He recalled that in Matthew's account (16:13-28) "Jesus says to Peter: the confession that I am the Son of God, the Messiah, you have not learned from human knowledge, it has been revealed to you by my Father". And Jesus will go on to say to his disciples: "The Holy Spirit, whom I shall send to you, will teach you all things and will make you understand all that I have taught you".

Therefore we come to know Jesus "as disciples on the path of life, following behind him". But this "is not enough", the Pope said. In reality, this "is a work of the Holy Spirit, who is a great worker: he is not a union organizer, he is a great worker. And he is always at work in us: and he carries out this great work of explaining the mystery of Jesus, and of giving us the mind of Christ".

Pope Francis concluded his reflection by posing Jesus' question: Who am I for you? "As disciples," he said, "let us ask the Father to grant us a deeper knowledge of Christ, and let us ask the Holy Spirit to explain to us this mystery".