



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

When hate kills

Thursday, 12 June 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 25, 20 June 2014)

In order to fully carry out justice, living the commandment of love, it is important to be realists, to be consistent, and to acknowledge that we are children of the same father, and therefore brothers. Reflecting on the Gospel passage from the day's reading (Mt 5:20-26), Pope Francis suggested these three practical criteria in his homily at Holy Mass on Thursday morning, 12 June.

In the Gospel passage, Jesus speaks to us about "how love is to be among us", the Pope explained.

To illustrate "how one should proceed on the path of fraternal love", Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven".

Thus, as Jesus declared, "we must be just, we must love our neighbour, which is a problem these days", Pope Francis indicated. However, he continued, "the legal experts", who consider themselves "intelligent" and "good", tell us "everything one has to do" but then they don't do it themselves. This is why, in regard to those individuals, "Jesus says: do as they say, not as they do". He says this "because they were inconsistent".

They were people who "knew the first commandment was to love God; they knew the second was

to love thy neighbour.” However, “they had many shades of meaning behind their ideas, because they were ideologues.” And “they worked out a series of distinctions on what it means to ‘love thy neighbour’.” In the end, they adopted a manner not of love but rather of “indifference toward thy neighbour.” So this is why Jesus urged the disciples to overcome this manner, which “isn’t justice but social equilibrium.” To do this, the Pope stated, Jesus advocated “three criteria”. The first is a precise “criterion of healthy realism.” Jesus said in fact, “if you have something against another person, and you cannot resolve it”, it is important to “seek a solution”, find a way “to at least make an agreement.” Most of all, the Lord recommends, “make an agreement with an adversary while you’re on the move.” It may not be ideal, but “agreement is a good thing: it’s realism!”

To those who protest that “agreements don’t last” because, as they say, agreements “are made to be broken”, the response is that “the effort to make an agreement” can “save many things: one person takes a step, the other person takes another step” and “this way at least there’s peace.” Even if, Pope Francis recognized, it may be “a very temporary peace” based on an agreement.

In short, “Jesus is a realist” when he states that “the ability to reach an agreement between us also means overcoming the justice of the Pharisees and legal experts.” This is “life’s realism”, such that Jesus expressly suggested that we reach “an agreement while on the move, precisely to put a stop to the conflict and hate between us. However, we often want to finish things, take them to the limits.”

The second criterion from Jesus is “the criterion of truth”, the Pontiff explained. There is, in fact, the commandment not to kill; but bad-mouthing someone is also killing, because it’s rooted in hatred: you don’t have the courage to kill him or you think that would be too much, so you kill him in another manner, with gossip, slander, defamation.”

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus’ words are clear in this regard: “But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says ‘You fool!’ shall be liable to the hell of fire”. Therefore, the Pope indicated, “when we hear people saying awful things”, it’s important to always remember that to call someone “fool” or “psycho” is to kill your brother, because an insult “is rooted in hatred.” In fact, “it stems from the same root as crime: the same — hatred!” Nevertheless, he continued, insulting is like second nature to us. There are people, he noted, “who have a shocking ability to express hatred for another person.” And they don’t think about how much harm is done by “berating and insulting.”

The third of Jesus’ criteria is “kinship”. “We must not kill our brother”, the Pope stated, precisely because he is our brother: “we have the same father.” And, the Gospel instructs that “I cannot go to the father if I am not at peace with my brother.” Jesus says, in fact: “So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your

gift". Thus, the Lord recommends, "don't talk with the father if you aren't at peace with your brother" or you "at least have an agreement."

Here then, summarized the Pope, are "the three criteria: a criterion of realism; a criterion of consistency, that is, don't kill but don't insult either, because to insult is to kill; and a criterion of kinship: don't speak to the father if you aren't at peace with your brother." These are three criteria to "overcome the justice of the scribes and Pharisees."

The Bishop of Rome recognized this is "not an easy plan", but "it's the way that Jesus tells us to go forth." In conclusion, Pope Francis asked the Lord for the very "grace to be able to go forth in peace among us", and hopefully also "in agreement but always with consistency and with the spirit of kinship."