



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Stones and bricks

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It is the Holy Spirit who builds the Church and cements her unity, founded on the cornerstone that is Jesus. To guide our collaboration in this construction, we have a “floor plan”, which we call hope, and one instruction: we must be weak in order to be strong. These spiritual suggestions of St Paul were highlighted by Pope Francis on Friday, during morning Mass at Santa Marta.

The Holy Father focused immediately on the word “one” as “the word most repeated by the Apostle Paul in the passage from the Letter to the Ephesians” (4:1-6) offered in the day’s liturgy. Indeed, it reads: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”. See, then, that the word “one” is repeated many times. And in just this perspective, Paul writes explicitly: “I, a prisoner, beg you to build unity in the Church”. Paul’s exhortation, Francis explained, is aimed at building “the Church united, with one baptism, one faith, one Lord, one Father”. And “it is the the work of the Church and of every Christian throughout history to build the unity of the Church”.

In particular, the Pope stated, when “the Apostle Peter speaks of the Church, he speaks of a temple made of living stones, which are us”. Essentially, Peter proposes “the opposite of the other temple of arrogance, which is the Tower of Babel”. In fact “this temple” leads to unity”, while that of Babel “is the symbol of disunity, of not understanding, of diversity of languages”.

Therefore, the Pope stated, “building the unity of the Church, constructing the Church, this temple, this unity of the Church, is the task of every Christian, of each one of us”. And, “when we need to build a temple, a building, we look for a building site prepared for this”. But “the first thing we do is to look for a foundation stone: the cornerstone, the Bible says”. And “the cornerstone of the Church is Jesus”, while “the cornerstone of the Church’s unity is Jesus’ prayer at the Last Supper: Father, that they may be one”. This, the Bishop of Rome said, is “the strength” and “the stone upon which we build the unity of the Church. Without this stone it isn’t possible. There isn’t unity without Jesus Christ at the foundation: He is our security”.

But, asked Francis, “who builds this unity?”. Certainly not us, he emphasized, because “this is the work of the Holy Spirit: the only one capable of building the unity of the Church”. Jesus, in fact, “sent Him to make the Church grow, to make her strong, to make her one”. It is “the living Spirit that we all have inside: He creates the unity of the Church, in the diversity nations, of cultures, of people”. Precisely “in that diversity He knows how to create unity. But only He can do it, none of us can”.

Francis then posed another question: “How do we build this temple?”. In this regard, the Apostle Peter “said that we were living stones in this building”. But, the Pontiff noted, “here, the Apostle Peter advises us not to be stones but rather, bricks, weak”. As a result, “the counsel that Paul gives in order to help the Holy Spirit build this unity is the advice of weakness, according to human thought”. And indeed, “humility, gentleness, magnanimity are weaknesses, because humility doesn’t seem to be helpful for anything; gentleness, meekness aren’t useful; magnanimity, being open to everyone, to have a big heart...”.

Moreover, Paul adds: “bearing with one another through love”, but “striving to serve the unity”. Therefore, “we become stronger stones in this temple, the weaker we are with these virtues of humility, of magnanimity, of gentleness, of meekness”.

And it is exactly “the same path” taken by Jesus, who “doesn’t claim to be God’s equal: He lowers himself, He abases himself, He weakens himself, weak, weak until the Cross, and He becomes strong”. The Pope recalled that we are called to do “the same: the more we are bricks, thus with these virtues, the more helpful we will be to the Holy Spirit in building the unity of the Church”. On the contrary, “pride, arrogance aren’t useful”.

In the end it can be said, the Pope remarked, that “it is the Holy Spirit who creates this building, this temple that is the living Church, on the cornerstone that is Jesus, who is one; on the cornerstone that is Jesus’ prayer for unity”. But Paul adds one other thing: “One body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call”. Because “when we construct a building, it is necessary for an architect draw to the floor plan”. And “what is the Church’s floor plan? The hope to which we have been called: the hope to go toward the Lord, the hope of living in one living Church, built with living stones, with the strength of the Holy Spirit”. For this reason,

“only according to the floor plan of hope can we go forward in the unity of the Church”.

Francis concluded by recalling that “we have been called to great hope”; and thus, he urged, “let us go there”. But let’s do so “with the strength given us by Jesus’ prayer for unity and with docility to the Holy Spirit, who is capable of making living stones from bricks”. And also “with the hope of finding the Lord who has called us, to find Him in the fullness of time”.