



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Never a spectacle

Monday, 9 March 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 11, 13 March 2015)

God's way is through "simplicity". There is no point seeking it in some "worldly spectacle". In our life as well, He always acts "in humility, in silence, in the small things". This was Pope Francis' Lenten reflection in his homily during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning.

As customary, the Pontiff's thoughts were inspired by the Liturgy of the Word, in which the two Readings shared "a word in common": "anger, rage". In the day's Gospel Reading, Luke recounts the episode in which "Jesus returns to Nazareth, goes to the Synagogue and begins to speak" (4:24-30). At first "all the people hear Him with love", they are happy, and are astonished by Jesus' words: "they are pleased". But Jesus continues his discourse "and reproaches his people's lack of faith; He recalls that this lack is also historical", and refers to the time of Elisha (in which, the Pope recalled, "there were many widows", but God sent the prophet "to a widow from a pagan country"), and to the purification of Naaman the Syrian, in the Second Book of Kings (5:1-15).

Thus begins the dynamic between the people's expectations and God's response, which was the focus of the Pontiff's homily. He explained that, although the people "listened with pleasure to what Jesus was saying", one "was not pleased with what He said" and "some heckler, perhaps, stood

up and said: What has this one come to speak to us about? Where did he study, to say these things to us? Make him show us his degree! What university did he attend? This one is the carpenter's son, and we know him well!"

Thus fury and violence break out. The Gospel reads that "they put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill" in order to throw Him down. However, the Pontiff wondered, how did "that admiration, that astonishment", turn into "anger, fury, violence?". This is also what happens to the Syrian general spoken of in the Second Book of Kings: "This man had faith, he knew the Lord would heal him. But when the prophet says: 'Go and wash', he is angry". He had other expectations, the Pope explained. In fact, he thought Elisha would: "'stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the Leper...'. For we have rivers more beautiful than the Jordan". And so he left. Then, however, "his friends reasoned with him" and, when he returned, the miracle took place.

The two experiences are far apart in time yet very similar: "What did those people want, those in the synagogue and this Syrian?", Francis asked. On one side, "Jesus reproaches those in the synagogue for their lack of faith". The Gospel highlights that "there, in that country, Jesus performed no miracles, due to the lack of faith". On the other, Naaman "had faith, but a particular faith". In any case, Francis emphasized, they were all seeking the same thing: "They wanted a show". But "the way of the good God is not to make a spectacle: God acts in humility, in silence, in the small things". It was no coincidence that "the news of the possible cure" came to the Syrian "from a slave, his wife's servant, a humble young girl". In fact, the Pope said, "this is how the Lord moves: through humility. And if we look at the whole of salvation history, we will find that the Lord always works in this way, always, with simple things".

To make this concept better understood, the Pontiff made reference to other episodes from Scripture. For example, he observed, "the story of creation says nothing of the Lord using a magic wand". He didn't say: "Let us make man", and man was created. But rather, God "worked with mud, simply". And thus, "when He wanted to free his people, He freed them through faith and the trust of one man, Moses". Likewise, "when He wanted to bring down the city of Jericho, He did so through a prostitute". And "also for the conversion of the Samaritans, He requested the work of another sinner".

Actually, the Lord always bewilders man. When "He sent David to fight Goliath, it seemed folly: little David in front of that giant, who had a sword, had many things, and David with only a slingshot and stones". The same happens "when He told the Magi that their king was born, the great king". What did they find? "A baby, a manger". Thus, the Bishop of Rome repeated, "simple things, the humility of God, this is the divine way, never a spectacle".

After all, he explained, the spectacle was "one of Jesus' three temptations in the desert". In fact Satan said to Him: "Come with me, let's go up to the pinnacle of the temple; throw yourself down

and all will see the miracle and will believe in you". The Lord instead reveals Himself "in simplicity, in humility".

Thus, Francis concluded, "it will do us good in this Lenten Season to think about how the Lord has helped us in our life, about how the Lord has made us go forward, and we will find that He has always done so with simple things". It might always seem to us that everything happens "as if by accident". For "the Lord makes things happen simply. He speaks silently to your heart". Therefore, it will be helpful in this season to remember "the many times" in life in which "the Lord has visited us with his grace" and we have understood that humility and simplicity are his way. This, the Pope explained, applies not only in everyday life, but also "in liturgical celebration, in the sacraments", in which "it is beautiful that God's humility is manifest, and not worldly spectacle".