



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Harmony, poverty and patience

Tuesday, 14 April 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 16, 17 April 2015)

There are three types of grace to ask for Christian communities: harmony, poverty and grace. During Tuesday's Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis continued his reflection on the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus — at the heart of the Liturgy of the Word — and dedicated his homily to the theme of “rebirth”, which for the Church signifies “being reborn in the Spirit”.

The Bishop of Rome reconnected to the Readings of the day before, recalling that they invited us to reflect “on one of the many transformations” that the Spirit performs: that of giving courage, transforming man “from cowardly and fearful” to “brave, with a strength of courage to proclaim Jesus, without fear”. From the individual, the Pope went on to consider “what the Spirit does in a community”.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles (4:32-37) describes the first Christian communities. It almost seems to describe an ideal world: “all were friends, everyone put everything together, no one argued”. The narrative, Francis explained, is “like a review, as if life stopped for a bit and the Spirit of God allowed us to see what he could do in a community, how a community could be transformed: a diocesan community, a parish or religious community, a family community”.

In this description the Pope highlighted two characteristic signs of “rebirth in a community”. The first is harmony: “the community of believers was of one heart and soul”. In other words, those reborn by the Spirit have “the grace of unity, of harmony”. The Holy Spirit is “the only One who can give us harmony” for “he too is the harmony between the Father and Son”. The second element is that of the “common good”. Scripture reads: “there was not a needy person among them, no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common”.

Here the Pope underscored that these two aspects were simply “one step” along the path of the reborn community which, in fact, also begins to experience “problems”. There is, for example, the case of the “marriage of Ananias and Sapphira”, who “tried to cheat the community” after entering it. This kind of negative experience can also happen in our day: it is similar, Francis explained, to the “benefactors who approach the Church, enter to help her and use the Church for their business”. Then there is the “persecution”, which Jesus speaks about, and in which regard the Pontiff recalled “the last of the Beatitudes in Matthew: ‘Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you on my account.... Rejoice’. Francis also recalled that Jesus “promises so many beautiful things, peace, abundance: ‘You will receive a hundredfold by cause of persecution’”.

All of this returns “in the first community reborn by the Holy Spirit”, to whom Peter explains: “Brethren do not be surprised about this persecution, this fire which breaks out among you”. In the “image of fire”, the Pontiff remarked, we again find that of the “fire that purifies gold”. In other words, the “gold of a community reborn by the Holy Spirit is purified of difficulties, of persecution”.

Here the Pope introduced the third important element, recalling “Jesus’ advice”, given to those who find themselves “in the midst of difficulties, of persecution: ‘Have patience, for with patience you will save your lives, your souls’”. Thus, it is important to have “patience to withstand: withstand problems, withstand difficulties, withstand malicious gossip, slander, withstand illness, withstand the pain of losing a child, a wife, a husband, a mother, a father, ... patience”.

Thus, these are the three elements shown by a Christian community “reborn in the Holy Spirit, when it is a community that seeks harmony” and not internal strife, “when it seeks poverty”, and “not the accumulation of riches” — riches should in fact be put to service — and when it has patience, that is, when “it does not immediately become angry and feel offended in facing difficulties”, because “the servant of Yaweh, Jesus, is patient”.

The Pope concluded his reflection by exhorting everyone “in this second week of Easter” during which the paschal mysteries are celebrated, to “think of our communities”, be they diocesan, parish, family, or other types, to ask three kinds of grace: that “of harmony, which is more than unity”, that “of poverty” — which does not mean “misery”: indeed, Francis specified, those who have property “must manage it well for the common good and with generosity” — and lastly, that “of patience”. Thus, we need to understand that the grace to “be reborn in the Spirit” is not only a grace for “each one of us” but also for “our communities”.

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