



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Wherein lies the scandal

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The Copts who were beheaded because they were Christians, died “with the name of Jesus on their lips”; they truly understood “the scandal of the Cross”. The “path of martyrs” is part of everyday Christian life, also in the family, in the defense of human rights and in the experience of the sick. It is the Holy Spirit who helps us know how to give witness and to welcome “the whole truth”. Pope Francis said this at the Mass he celebrated on Monday in the Chapel of Santa Marta. At Mass he also recalled his telephone call on Sunday to the Coptic Patriarch Tawadros on the occasion of the day of friendship between Copts and Catholics, celebrated on the second anniversary of their meeting in the Vatican on 10 May 2013.

“In the first prayer today” at the beginning of Mass, the Pontiff said, “we asked for the grace to experience at all times the fruit produced by the paschal observance”. In fact, he said, “Easter is fruitful” because “it is the life that Jesus Christ, the Lord, gave us through his Cross and Resurrection”. “How can this fruitfulness be implemented?”. The answer, Pope Francis noted, can be found in today’s liturgy in John’s Gospel (15:26-16:4).

“The Lord prepares his disciples for the future”, the Pope said, and “there is a phrase which may

seem a bit strange: falling away". According to John, Jesus says: "I have said all this to you to keep you all from falling away". What needs to be understood is "to what falling away is Jesus referring. The falling away due to the persecutions that will occur, or the falling away after the Cross".

The Lord "adds a promise". He says: "When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of truth, he will bear witness". And then, in that same address. He affirms, "I have yet many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. When the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth". Basically, the Pope explained, Jesus "is speaking to us about the future, about the cross that awaits Him and He is speaking to us about the Spirit, who prepares us to bear Christian witness".

Moreover, Francis continued, "in these days the Church calls us to reflect a lot on the Holy Spirit. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit who will come, whom He will send, will lead us to the truth, i.e. will teach us things that I have not taught," — the Pope added, citing a passage from the day's Gospel — "these things that he must say and the burden of which the disciples are still not able to bear". Furthermore, the Lord also affirms that "the Spirit will make them remember the things that I have said, and that with life fell into oblivion". Francis continued, explaining what the Spirit does: "he makes us remember the words of Jesus and he teaches us the things that Jesus was not yet able to tell us, because we were not able to understand".

"In this way the life of the Church is a path on which the Spirit guides us". The Spirit "reminds us, teaches us that he leads us to the entire truth", the Pope underlined. And "this Spirit, who is our partner on the journey, helps prevent us from falling away from the cross". Speaking to the Corinthians, St Paul says: "The Cross is a folly to those who are perishing". Then he adds: "The Jews demand signs". "How many times in the Gospel do the Jews, the doctors of the law demand that Jesus" give them a sign, the Pope said. The "Greeks or the pagans, seek wisdom, new ideas". But "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly for pagans".

The Cross of Christ is scandalous. The Pope clarified, "Jesus prepares the hearts of His disciples with the promise of the Paraclete". And he says: "I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away" from the Cross. According to John, the Lord says: "They will put you out of the synagogue, indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think they are offering service to God". And today, the Pontiff said, we "are witnesses to those who are killing Christians in the name of God because they are disbelievers, according to these people". This "is the Cross of Christ". Jesus' words in the Gospel of today's liturgy are still relevant: "They will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me". Jesus reminds us that what happened to Him will also happen to us. Therefore we must not fall away, we must be certain that "the Spirit will guide us and help us understand".

In fact, Pope Francis said, "yesterday I had the joy of calling Coptic Patriarch Tawadros, because

it was the day of friendship between Copts and Catholics” and “we spoke about several things”. He added “I recalled his faithful who were beheaded on the beach because they were Christians. These faithful people, through the strength given to them by the Holy Spirit, did not fall away. They died with the name of Jesus on their lips. That is the strength of the Spirit. The testimony. It is true, theirs was a martyrdom, the supreme testimony”.

There is also, the Pope continued, “the witness of every day, the witness which makes the fruitfulness of Easter present — which we asked for at the beginning of Mass — that fruitfulness which the Holy Spirit gives us, which guides us to the full truth, the entire truth, and which makes us remember what Jesus tells us”.

Thus, Pope Francis said, “a Christian who does not take this dimension of martyrdom seriously, does not understand the path that Jesus taught: the everyday path of martyrdom, the path of martyrdom in defending human rights, the path of martyrdom in defending one’s children: fathers, mothers who defend their family, the path of martyrdom of the many, many sick people who suffer for the love of Jesus. We all have the possibility to carry forward the fruitfulness of Easter on this path of martyrdom, without falling away”.

Later, in the celebration of the Eucharist — “the memorial of the Cross” in which “the fruitfulness of Easter is made present” — the Pontiff asked “the Lord for the grace to receive the Holy Spirit who makes us remember the things of Jesus who will guide us to the truth and prepare us every day to bear this witness, to make this small martyrdom every day or a great martyrdom, according to the Lord’s will”.