



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Half a life

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(by www.osservatoreromano.va)

Are we living “half a life”, a life which ignores the power of the Holy Spirit? Or, are we able to open ourselves to this “great gift of the Father”? These are the questions raised by Pope Francis during Mass celebrated at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 6 October. His homily centred around a reflection on the Holy Spirit, as based on the day’s reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians (3:1-15), and the Gospel from Luke (11:5-13). In the reading from Paul, there is a “theological discussion” on the Spirit, which, Pope says, is “difficult to follow”. Then in the Gospel passage, one encounters a “surprise”: a parable in which Jesus “speaks of prayer, and in the end he says: Ask and it will be given to you. You will be given the Holy Spirit; the Holy spirit is a great gift”.

Here, Francis presented his first point, and speaks of the Holy Spirit as “Jesus’ promise” made during the Last Supper, and the “great gift of the Father”. As recounted in parable from the day’s Gospel, the Pope said, “Your Father will give you the Spirit”. This Spirit, moreover, is “also the strength of the Church”. Not surprisingly, Pope Francis observed, “when the Spirit had not yet come, and Jesus was ascending into Heaven, [the disciples] were locked in the Upper Room; they were a little afraid and did not know what to do”. However, “from the moment the Holy Spirit comes, the Church opens, she goes out, she goes forward, and the word of the Lord reaches even

to the ends of the earth”.

The Holy Spirit is “the protagonist of the Church,” the Pontiff said. He is “the protagonist of this going forward in the Church”. Without him, one is “closed, afraid”, but with him there is “courage”.

Pope Francis went on to issue a challenge for all Christians. “How is our attitude with the Spirit; how do we live with the Spirit?”.

In response, the Pope offered three possibilities: The first recalls the attitude shown by the Galatians, as recounted by Paul. “It is true”, the Pontiff said, “that all of us received the law, but after the law the Lord justifies us with grace, with his Son, dead and risen”. We have been given “something greater than the law”, namely, Jesus “who gives meaning to the law.”

Although the Galatians believed in the crucified Jesus, “they heard some theologians who said to them: ‘No, no! The law is the law. What justifies you is the law’”. In so doing, “they left Jesus aside”. In practice, they were “too rigid”, the Pope said. “For them, what mattered most was the law: one must do this, one must do that...”. These are the same sorts of people who attacked Jesus, and who he referred to as “hypocrites”.

What happens to those who think in this way? “This attachment to the law ignores the Holy Spirit”, and does not take into account “that the power of Christ's redemption proceeds by means of the Spirit”. The Pontiff clarified that “there are commandments, and we must follow the commandments”, but always from the view “of the grace of this great gift, which has been given to us by the Father”. Only in this way can we truly understand the law, without reducing “the Spirit and the Son to the Law”.

The Pope explained that this “was the problem of these people: ignoring the Holy Spirit, and not knowing how to move forward. They were closed, closed within regulations: one must do this, one must do that”. Every Christian is susceptible to the same temptation, he added: that of “ignoring the Holy Spirit”.

Francis went on to cite a second attitude, one which causes the Holy Spirit “to grieve”.

In this sense, “Paul says to the Ephesians: ‘Please, do not grieve the Holy Spirit!’” However, when does this happen? It happens, the Pope said, when we do not let him inspire us, to carry us forward in the Christian life; when we say: ‘Yes, yes, there is the Spirit who gives sense to my life’, but we do not let him tell us – and it is not with the theology of the law, but with the freedom of the Spirit – a what we must do”. It happens that “we do not know by what inspiration we do things, and we become lukewarm.” Ultimately, this is “Christian mediocrity”, which occurs when one prevents the Spirit from achieving “great works in us”.

Therefore, the first attitude is to “ignore the Holy Spirit”. It is the attitude of the doctors of the law who “bewitch with ideas, because ideologies are bewitching”. St Paul, in fact, asks: “Foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?”. This also applies to people who have been taken in by “those who preach with ideologies,” and who believe everything is clear for them. On the contrary, Francis explained, while it is true that God’s revelation “is very clear”, it is also true that “we must find the way”; and that those “who believe” they have “the whole truth in hand are ignorant”.

Following the second attitude, which refers to potentially grieving the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis spoke of “the third attitude”: that of “opening ourselves to the Spirit, and allowing the Spirit to lead us forward. This happened to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, when “they lost their fear and were opened to the Holy Spirit”. Indeed, this is reiterated by the day’s Gospel acclamation: “Open our hearts, oh Lord, and give heed to the words of your Son”. The Pope explained: In order “to understand, to receive the word of Jesus, it is necessary to open ourselves to the Holy Spirit. And when a man, a woman, is open to the Holy Spirit, he or she is like a sailboat swept by the wind, and goes forward, forward, forward, and never stops.”

In order to live in the fullness of this reality, we must pray, Francis said. This is seen in the parable from the day’s Gospel, in which the man insistently asks: “Give me bread. Open the door, give me bread”. As Jesus says: “Just as you know how to give good things to your children, will not your Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him, the great gift, the great good thing?”.

The pontiff concluded his meditation by challenging everyone to consider some questions: “Am I ignorant of the Holy Spirit?”; “Is my life a half a life, lukewarm, which grieves the Holy Spirit, and does not give me the strength to move forward”, or, is it “a continuous prayer to be opened to the Holy Spirit, in order that he might carry me forward with the joy of the Gospel, and make me understand the doctrine of Jesus – the true doctrine, which does not bewitch us, which does not make us foolish – but the truth” which teaches us “the path of salvation”?