



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

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DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

God's Dreams and Disappointments

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In reference to the day's reading from Exodus (32:7-14) on Thursday morning, 30 March, Pope Francis suggested that the passage could appropriately be entitled "God's Dreams and Disappointments". Because, the Pontiff observed, "God dreamt, and in the end was disappointed".

Indeed, "God had dreamt of a people and he dreamt of them from the beginning", the Pontiff explained. "He chose a man, Abraham; He made him walk for years, and one day He showed him the stars: 'Look, toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them'", it will be likewise for "your descendants, my people", Pope Francis explained. This is "God's dream; he dreamt because he loved". God's love was — and is — so great "that He could not keep it only to Himself. It was to be shared".

"With great kindness", God "promised this people to Abraham who was already elderly, married to a barren woman; 'you will have a son and this son will be your descendancy, as numerous as the stars', and so it was", Pope Francis paraphrased. "Over the years, in time, this people became enslaved in Egypt and the Lord went and set the people free". Indeed, "He set them free and made them cross the ocean as if it were land, because He loved and had this hope for this people". In other words, He was "a father who loved his children".

But they “were a difficult people”, the Pope continued. “On the journey toward the definitive land that He wanted to give them, He had Moses climb a mountain in order to give him the Law”. And “God begins to feel disappointed: ‘Go down; go on, go down — He says to Moses — for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt — whom I brought out with your help — have corrupted themselves’. In fact, Francis explained, “the people did not have the patience to wait for God, to wait just 40 days; they even ended up saying: ‘this God, let us make ourselves another’”. Thus, “they made a [molten] calf” as their god, the Pope said; and “it was for their own entertainment, so as to not get bored”, he explained. “They had forgotten about God, who had saved them”, he stressed.

“The Prophet Baruch has a phrase which depicts these people very well: ‘you forgot the One who brought you up’”, the Pope continued, and it is this “forgetting about God who created us, who brought us up, who accompanied us in life: this is God’s disappointment”.

“Many times in the Gospel Jesus talks about that man who plants a vineyard and then fails because the workers want to take it for themselves”, Francis continued. “In the heart of man, there is always this anxiety; He is not satisfied with God, with His faithful love”. Indeed, “the heart of man is always inclined towards unfaithfulness. This is temptation”, the Pontiff warned. For this reason, the Pope explained, “Through a prophet, God scolds these people who have no steadfastness, do not know how to wait, ‘have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them’”. “In fact, they made a calf out of molten metal, they bowed before it, made sacrifices and said: ‘There is your God; they forgot the other’”, the Pontiff explained.

Thus, God, “through His prophet, tells the heart of these people: ‘you are always looking for another God’”, Francis said. “When the Lord speaks, he speaks forcefully and says some harsh things to us”, he stressed.

Here, then “is God’s disappointment, the unfaithfulness of the people”, the Pope explained. “We too are People of God and we know well how our heart is; and each day we must continue our journey in order to not slip slowly toward idols, toward fantasy, toward worldliness, toward unfaithfulness”, he said.

“Today, it will do us good to think about the disappointed God: ‘Tell me Lord, are you disappointed with me?’. In some things, yes, certainly”, Pope Francis said. It is a good idea “to think about and ask this question”, with the certainty that “He has a tender heart, the heart of a father; let us remember when Jesus saw Jerusalem and he cried over her: ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, ... how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings’, and you did not want it!”. Francis explained that God is saying these words “to me, to you, to you ... to all of us”. Thus we must ask: “Does God weep for me? Is God disappointed by me? Have I moved away from the Lord? — No! I go to Mass every Sunday, every day”. And again, “How many idols do I have which I am unable to rid myself of and which enslave me?” In this way, we can

recognize “that idolatry we have inside us”, the reason that “God weeps for me”.

In light of this examination of conscience, Pope Francis said, “let us think today about this disappointment of God, who made us out of love”, while “we seek love, wellbeing, entertainment in other places and not in our love for him: we distance ourselves from this God who brought us up”, Francis said. “This is a reflection for the Lenten period; it will do us good”. It is an exercise, he explained, that we should do “every day, a small examination of conscience: ‘Lord, you who have had many dreams about me, I know I have distanced myself, but tell me where, how to return. The surprise will be that He always waits for us, like the father of the prodigal son who, from far off, saw his son arrive, because he was waiting for him”, Francis observed.

The Pope ended his reflection by suggesting a prayer to be recited “today and tomorrow, every day: ‘Lord, may I not stray from you. Help me. May I be afraid of idols and thus serve you and be happy’ because God wants all of us to be happy”.