



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Orphans or disciples

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With the 'Our Father', Jesus conveyed to each one of us the state of paternity: no one is an orphan, but we risk becoming one by closing our hearts and not letting ourselves be drawn by the love of God. This reminder came from Francis on Tuesday morning during Mass at Santa Marta. The Pope also suggested that, with the spirit of daughters and sons, we offer a humble prayer: "Father, draw me to Jesus; Father lead me to know Jesus". This is the attitude to have in order to avoid that of the doctors of the law who, even in the face of the miracles and Resurrection of Jesus, did everything they could to deny the evidence.

The Pontiff's meditation arose from the day's passage from the Gospel of John (10:22-30). "Jesus was once again confronted by the doctors of the law", Francis began. "They asked him the question: 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly'". These doctors "always returned to the same subject: 'who are you? By what authority are you doing this?'". The Gospel tells us that "Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me; but you do not believe'".

They did not believe, even though "they saw many things, many miracles". Thus, "when Jesus healed the man blind since birth — in Chapter Nine of the Gospel of John — they did all the

research that was possible and imaginable: they called that man's parents; they called those who knew him; they called him...". In other words, "it was clear that he had been blind since birth, yet they did not believe". It was then that "Jesus said a few words about spiritual blindness: these men, who believed they could see, the illustrious men who knew everything — all the law — could not see because they were the blind ones, blind since birth".

Thus, Jesus said to the doctors of the law: "You do not believe". He explained why, and herein lies "the novelty of this passage of the Gospel", the Pope affirmed. "You do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep", the Lord said. Essentially, Francis continued, you might think that "in order to believe I must say 'I believe' and then join Jesus' flock". But no, "it is the reverse: only those who belong to Jesus' flock are able to believe".

This is confirmed by John's words in the Gospel: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand". But, the Pontiff stated, "did these sheep learn by following Jesus, and then believe? No". Jesus himself provides the definitive response: "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all". It is thus "the Father who gives the sheep to the shepherd; it is the Father who draws hearts to Jesus". The Lord states it clearly: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him". And "these people, who are Jesus' sheep, are drawn by the Father, they let themselves be drawn".

However, Francis noted, "those doctors of the law had closed hearts, they felt they had mastered themselves but, in reality, they were orphans, because they did not have a relationship with the Father". It's true, "they spoke of their fathers — of our father Abraham, of the patriarchs — but as distant figures". However, "in their hearts they were orphans, they lived in the condition of orphans and preferred this condition to that of letting themselves be drawn by the Father".

The Pope indicated that we are looking at "the drama of the closed hearts of these people: they believed they had created themselves because they knew it all and, for this reason, their hearts were unable to believe, because they did not let God draw them to Jesus and therefore they did not belong to Jesus' sheep". This "drama continues all the way to Calvary". And then, "even on the day of the Resurrection: when the soldiers went to tell what had happened, what did they do? They gave them some fine advice: 'Say that you were asleep and that the disciples stole the body'". Thus, the doctors "put their hands in their pockets", following "the bribery principle: you keep quiet and I'll pay for your silence".

Therefore, Francis pointed out, "not even before this proof, did these witnesses to the Resurrection let the Father draw them to Jesus". This is why "they could not believe, because they did not belong to Jesus' flock. They were orphans", because "they denied their Father".

Referring to the first reading, taken from The Acts of the Apostles (11:19-26), the Pope

emphasized that one can recognize “the opposite attitude: after the persecution that broke out in Jerusalem after Stephen’s death, the disciples went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, proclaiming the word to the Jews, not to others, but the faith went forth”. However, “some of them also began to preach, to proclaim Jesus Christ to pagans, to Greeks, and this was a very important change: their awareness of access to salvation was transformed”.

Thus, the Pontiff continued, “the disciples who remained in Jerusalem were somewhat fearful and sent Barnabas to Antioch”. When Barnabas “came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose”. Thus, “they received the message, because they let the Father draw them toward Jesus who wanted this”.

The Pope then explained that “Jesus calls us to be his disciples, but to be so we must let the Father draw us toward him”. And “the humble prayer that we can say as daughters and sons is: ‘Father, draw me to Jesus; Father, lead me to know Jesus’”. Indeed, “the Father will send the Spirit to open our hearts and lead us to Jesus”, because “Christians who do not let the Father draw them to Jesus are Christians who live in the condition of orphans. We have a Father. We are not orphans”. In conclusion, Francis recommended that we turn “to the Father as Jesus taught us — ‘Our Father, who art in heaven...’ — and ask for the grace to be drawn to Jesus”.