



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Fear of the Cross

Saturday, 28 September 2013

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The Cross is frightening. However, following Jesus inevitably means accepting the cross that is placed along every Christian's path. Therefore, we need to ask Our Lady, who knew how to remain beneath the Cross, for the grace not to run away from it even when we are afraid. This was the heart of the reflection Pope Francis offered on Saturday morning, 28 September, during the Mass he celebrated at the Chapel of Santa Marta.

Commenting on the day's Gospel passage from St Luke (9:43-45), the Holy Father recalled that "Jesus was involved in many activities and everyone marvelled at everything he did. He was the leader at the time. All Judea, Galilee and Samaria were talking about him. And perhaps in a moment when the disciples were greatly rejoicing, Jesus said to them: 'Let these words sink into your minds: the Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men'".

In a moment of triumph, the Pope noted, Jesus announces his Passion. The disciples, however, were so taken by the festive atmosphere that "they did not understand this saying; and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it". The Holy Father continued: "they did not ask for explanations. The Gospel says: 'they were afraid to ask him about this saying'". Better not to talk about it. Better "not to understand the truth". They were afraid of the Cross.

The truth is that even Jesus was afraid of it. However, the Pope explained, “he could not deceive himself. He knew. And so great was his fear that on the night of Holy Thursday he sweat blood. He even asked God: ‘Father, remove this cup from me’. But, he added: ‘Thy will be done’. And this is the difference. The Cross scares us”.

This also happens when we commit ourselves to being witnesses of the Gospel and to following Jesus. “We are all content”, the Holy Father noted, but we do not ask any further questions, we do not speak about the Cross. And yet, he continued, just as there is a rule which states that “a disciple is not greater than his master” (a rule we respect), so too there is also a rule which states that “there is no redemption without the shedding of blood”. And “there is no fruitful apostolic work without the Cross”. Each one of us, he explained, might think: “what will happen to me? What will my cross be like? We do not know”, he said, “but there will be a cross, and we need to ask for the grace not to flee when it comes. Of course it scares us, but this is precisely where following Jesus takes us. Jesus’ words to Peter come to mind: “Do you love me? Feed ... Do you love me? Tend ... Do you love me? Feed ... (cf. Jn 21:15-19), and these were among his last words to him: ‘They will carry you where you do not wish to go’. He was announcing the Cross”.

This is precisely why the disciples were afraid to ask him, the Holy Father concluded, returning to the Gospel passage. “It was his mother who was closest to him at the Cross. Perhaps today, on the day when we pray to her, it would be good to ask her for the grace, not to take away our fear since this must be. Let us ask her for the grace not to run away from the cross. She was there and she knows how to remain close to the Cross”.