



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Hope the hidden virtue

Tuesday, 29 October 2013

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In his homily during Holy Mass on Tuesday, 29 October, Pope Francis commented on the first Reading of the day taken from St Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:18-25), in which the Apostle speaks of the eager longing with which Christians and all creation await the revealing of the sons of God.

Pope Francis used the occasion to reflect on the virtue of hope. First, he explained what hope is not. "Hope is not optimism, it is not the ability to look at the bright side of things and move forward", nor is it merely a positive attitude. "This is all good, but it is not hope".

"Hope," he said, "is the most humble of the three theological virtues, for it hides itself in this life". Pope Francis continued: "hope is a risky virtue; as St Paul says, it is a virtue of eager longing for the revelation of the Son of God... hope means striving toward this revelation, toward this joy that will fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy", like the Israelites when the Lord delivered them from slavery and restored to them the fortunes of Zion (cf. Ps 126: 1-2). "This is a beautiful image!" he exclaimed.

Pope Francis then set forth two images, two icons for hope: the anchor and the pangs of childbirth.

“The first Christians depicted hope as an anchor. Hope was an anchor” fixed to the shores beyond. “But where are we anchored” the Pontiff asked? Addressing those who were present, he continued: “are we anchored on the shores of that far away ocean, or are we anchored in an artificial lagoon we ourselves have made, with our rules, our behaviour, our schedules, our clericalism ... are we anchored where everything is comfortable and secure? This is not hope”.

He borrowed the second image from St Paul, who found a fitting icon for hope in the image of labour and childbirth. Citing the passage for the day from Paul’s Letter to the Romans, Pope Francis said: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning together in travail until now; and not only the creation, but we too who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan ... we groan inwardly as we wait. We are waiting. This is a kind of labour”.

Hope, then, gives way to life; it is intimately involved in the dynamic of giving life. However, it often remains invisible and hidden to human eyes.

Yet we know, Pope Francis said, that “the Spirit is at work”. “[Today’s] Gospel speaks to us about this”, he said. “The Spirit is at work in us. He works like a mustard seed, which is small but full of life and power until it grows into a tree. The Spirit works like leaven which helps all the dough to rise. This is how the Spirit works”.

The Pope then pointed to Mary as the great icon of hope. Mary “was a young girl” when she learned she would become a mother. How did she respond, he asked? “She goes and helps and sings the canticle of praise”. For, he explained, “when a woman is pregnant, she is a woman” but it is as though she has been transformed in her very depths because now “she is a mother”. And hope is similar: “it changes us within, it changes our attitudes”. Therefore, he said, “let us ask for the grace to be men and women of hope”.

Addressing a group of Mexican priests who were celebrating their 25th anniversary of priestly ordination, the Pope concluded by turning to an image of Mary which they had given him as a gift. He said to them: “look to your Mother, the image of hope for America. Look, she is depicted as being with child. She is Our Lady of America, she is Our Lady of hope. Ask her for the grace that the years to come will be years of hope for you and for the grace to live as priests of hope”.