



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Sinners yes, corrupt no

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“Sinners yes, corrupt no”. Pope Francis turned once again to the topic of corruption — or better — to the corrupt, whose “double lives” he called a “varnished putrefaction”.

The Pope based his homily on a passage taken from the Gospel of St Luke: “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (cf. Lk 17:1-6). “When I read this passage,” he said, “I always see in it a portrait of Jesus.... He never tires of forgiving. And he counsels us to do the same”. Jesus’ attitude towards those who sin and sincerely repent is always one of forgiveness. However, Pope Francis added, there is another passage which reads: “Woe to those by whom scandals come”.

“Jesus,” he said, “is not speaking here about sin but about scandal” and he says: It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves!”. The Pope therefore asked: “But what is the difference between sin and scandal?”. The difference, he said, is that “whoever sins and repents asks for forgiveness, he feels weak, he sees himself as a child of God, he humbles himself and asks Jesus to save him. But the one who gives scandal and does not repent

continues to sin and pretends to be a Christian". It is as though he leads "a double life," and he added, "the double life of a Christian causes great harm".

The Holy Father put forward the example of someone who puts one hand in his pocket and shows that he helps the Church, while with the other hand he robs "the State, and the poor". It would be better for such a person if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea, Pope Francis said, adding "and it is not I who say it, but Jesus".

"This person deceives," he continued, referring to the day's First Reading from the Book of Wisdom (1:1-7) which states: "a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit, and will rise and depart from foolish thoughts, and will be ashamed at the approach of unrighteousness".

"Where there is deceit, the Holy Spirit is not present," Pope Francis said. "This is the difference between a sinner and a man who is corrupt. One who leads a double life is corrupt, whereas one who sins would like not to sin, but he is weak or he finds himself in a condition he cannot resolve, and so he goes to the Lord and asks to be forgiven. The Lord loves such a person, he accompanies him, he remains with him. And we have to say, all of us who are here: sinner yes, corrupt no".

Those who are corrupt, Pope Francis continued, do not know what humility is. Jesus likens them to whitewashed tombs: they appear beautiful on the outside, but inside they are full of dead bones. "And a Christian who boasts of being a Christian but does not lead a Christian life is corrupt". We all know such people, and we all know "how much harm corrupt Christians, and corrupt priests do to the Church. What harm they do to the Church! They do not live in the spirit of the Gospel, but in the spirit of worldliness. St Paul states it clearly to the Romans: Do not be conformed to this world (cf. Rom 12:2). However, it is even stronger in the original text: do not enter into this world's schemes, into its framework, because this leads to a double life".

Pope Francis concluded: "A varnished putrefaction: this is the life of someone who is corrupt. And Jesus does not call them simply sinners. He calls them hypocrites. And yet Jesus always forgives, he never tires of forgiving. The only thing he asks is that there be no desire to lead this double life. Let us ask the Lord for the grace to flee from every form of deceit and to see ourselves as sinners. Sinners yes, corrupt no".