



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Hearts free of envy and jealousy

Thursday, 23 January 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 5, 31 January 2014)

I

Pope Francis spoke about jealousy and envy and described them as the doors through which the devil entered the world. The Bishop of Rome drew upon the day's first Reading from 1 Samuel (18:6-9; 19:1-7), where we read that, after the chosen people conquered the Philistines through David's courage, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul". Saul too "was happy", the Pope remarked, "but something he heard displeased him. As the women sang David's praises, "bitterness and sadness" arose in Saul's heart. When he heard the women's songs, "he was incensed" by the words their songs contained.

It was then, the Holy Father said, that "a great victory was turned into great defeat in the king's heart, the same bitterness that took hold of Cain's heart: the worm of jealousy and envy began to gnaw".

The same thing happened to Saul that happened to Cain when the Lord asked him: "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?" (Gen 4:6). In fact, Pope Francis explained, "the worm of jealousy leads to resentment, envy, bitterness" and also instinctive decisions, such as the one to kill. It is not by chance that Saul and Cain determined in their hearts to commit murder. Thus, Saul decided to kill David.

This same reality is repeated today “in our hearts”, the Pope added. “It is an evil disquiet, which will not tolerate that a brother or sister have something that I do not have”. And thus “instead of praising God, as the women of Israel did over the victory” we prefer to withdraw into ourselves “stewing in our feelings, cooking them in the broth of bitterness”.

Jealousy and envy are the doors through which the devil entered the world, the Pope continued, emphasizing that it is the Bible which affirms it: “through the devil’s envy evil entered into the world”. And “jealousy and envy open the doors to every evil thing”, causing strife even between believers. The Pope referred explicitly to the life of Christian communities, underlining that when “some members suffer jealousy and envy, they end in division”. Pope Francis called this division a “strong poison”, the same poison that is found in the first pages of the Bible, in account of Cain and Abel.

The Holy Father then described what happens in the heart of a person who is consumed by jealousy and envy. First comes bitterness: “the envious and jealous person is a bitter person, he doesn’t sing, he doesn’t praise, he doesn’t know what joy is; he is always looking” at what others have. And unfortunately bitterness “spreads through the entire community” since all who fall prey to this poison become “sowers of bitterness”.

The second poison fruit of jealousy and envy is gossip. There are those who cannot bear for anyone else to have anything, the Pope said, and so “the solution is to put the other person down, so that I am a bit higher. And the instrument for carrying this out is gossip: always look and you will see that jealousy and envy are always lurking behind gossip”.

“Gossip divides communities, it destroys communities,” he said. “It is the devil’s weapon. How many beautiful Christian communities have we seen go well” but then “the worm of jealousy and envy entered” some of its members “and sadness comes” and “they take offence”. Hence the Pope’s warning to not forget the episode concerning Saul, because in his case “after a great victory, a process of defeat began. A person who is under the influence of envy and jealousy kills. John the Apostle tells us: ‘whoever hates his brother is a murderer’. And someone who is envious, who is jealous, begins to hate his brother”.

The Pope concluded his homily expressing this hope: “Today at this Mass let us pray for our Christian communities, that the seed of jealousy not be sown among us; that envy have no place in our hearts, and in the hearts of our communities. In this way, we can go forward joyously praising the Lord. It is a great grace: the grace not to fall into sadness, resentment, into jealousy and envy”.

©Copyright - Libreria Editrice Vaticana