



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

When priests don't make news

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Pope Francis reflected on the first Reading from the second Book of Samuel (5:1-7,10), which tells of the anointing of King David. “We have listened to the account of that meeting” when “all the tribes of Israel come to David at Hebron and proposed that he be made king”. “David was the king of Judah, however his kingdom was divided”. The elders of the people “saw that the only capable of being king was David”. Therefore “they went to him to make a covenant”, the Pope said. “Surely they spoke, they discussed how they ought to make a covenant. And in the end they decided to make him king”. “This was not, let us say, a democratic decision”. The Pope said. “Rather, it came from their unanimous agreement: “you shall be king!”.

“This was a first step,” the Pope continued. “Then came the second: King David made a covenant with them” and the elders of the people “anointed David king of Israel”. Here we see the importance of the anointing, he said. “Without this anointing David would have only been head and organizer of a company that carried forward this political society of the kingdom of Israel”. “The anointing is something else”, and it was “the anointing that consecrated David king”.

“What is the difference between being a political organizer of a country and being an anointed king?,” the Pope asked. “When David was anointed king of Judah by Samuel, he was young, he was a young man. The Bible says that after the anointing the Spirit of the Lord descended on David”. And so “the anointing makes the Spirit of the Lord descend upon the person and be with

him”.

The passage from today’s liturgy “says the same: David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him”. And “this is what is specific to the anointing”.

The Bishop of Rome then recalled David’s attitude towards Saul, “who wanted to murder him through jealousy and envy”. David “had the opportunity to kill King Saul but he didn’t want to do it: I shall never lay hands on the Lord’s anointed, he is someone chosen for the Lord, anointed by the Lord!”. In his words, the Pope said, there is “the sense of the sacredness of a king”.

“We have inherited this in the Church in the person of the bishops and priests”. Bishops, in fact, “are not chosen merely to carry forward an organization called a particular Church. They are anointed. They have the anointing and the Spirit of the Lord is with them”. We bishops, the Pope said, “we are all sinners, but we are anointed! We all want to be holier each day, we want to be more faithful to this anointing”. The Pope continued: “what makes the Church, what gives unity to the Church is the person of the bishop, in the name of Jesus Christ, because he has been anointed: not because he has a majority vote, but because he is anointed”.

The particular Church derives its strength from this anointing and, through participation, priests are also anointed: the bishops lay hands and effect this anointing in them ... for bishops and priests, this anointing is their strength and their joy”. Strength, because therein “they find their vocation to lead a people forward, to help the people” and to “live at the service of the people”. And joy, “because they feel they have been chosen by the Lord, protected by the Lord with that love with which the Lord protects us all”.

That is why, he said, “when we think of bishops, of priests — both are priests because this is the priesthood of Christ: bishop and priest — we should think of them in this way: as anointed”. Otherwise, he said “we cannot understand the Church” and “not only would we not understand her but we would also be unable to explain how the Church continues on only by human strength. A diocese moves forward because its people are holy ... and because one who is anointed helps it to grow”. The same is true for a parish, which “carries on because it has many organizations ... but also because it has a priest: an anointed one who leads it forward”.

We only remember “a small handful of the many holy bishops, the many priests, the many holy priests” who have dedicated “their entire lives to the service of the diocese, of the parish”.

Therefore, we also only remember of small portion “of the many people who have received the strength of faith, the strength of love and hope from these anonymous parish priests whom we do not know. And there are many!.... Parish priests in the countryside and parish priests in the city who by their anointing gave their people strength, transmitted doctrine, conferred the sacraments; that is, holiness”.

The Pope then said: “someone might object: but, Father, I read in the newspaper that a bishop did such, or that a priest did such and such!”. To this objection the Pope replied: “yes, I read it too! But tell me: do the newspapers print all the good that so many priests do, so many priests in so many parishes in the city and countryside? The charity they show? The work they do to carry their people forward?” And he added: “No, this isn’t news!” The proverb still holds true: “A single tree falling in the forest causes more sound than an entire forest that slowly grows and matures”.

Pope Francis concluded his homily by inviting those present to think “about David’s anointing” and about “our courageous, holy, good and faithful bishops and priests”. He also asked those present to pray for them: “It is thanks to them that we are here today, since it was they who baptized us”.