



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Jesus' work

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“Peace, love and joy” are “the three key words” which Jesus has entrusted to us, and it is the Holy Spirit who makes them a reality in our lives not according to the world’s criteria.

The authentic Christian meaning of the words *peace*, *love* and *joy* was the focus of Pope Francis’ homily at Santa Marta. His remarks were based on the Collect for the day’s Mass: “O God, by whose grace, though sinners, we are made just and, though pitiable, made blessed, stand, we pray, by your works, stand by your” gift, that is, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

With this prayer, the Pope began, “we reminded the Lord of the work he has performed for us: ‘though sinners, we are made just and, though pitiable, made blessed’”.

Yes, he said, this is precisely “the work which Jesus accomplished” and today “we remember it with gratitude”. But, the Pope said, we also ask him “to stand by his gift, the gift which he has given us”: the Holy Spirit. For we do not say, “stand by us”, but rather “stand by your gift”.

This is a matter of the utmost importance, the Pope said, for “in his farewell discourse, in the final days before going up to heaven, Jesus spoke of many things”, but they all revolved around the

same point, represented by “three key words: peace, love and joy”.

Regarding the first, the Pope recalled that two days prior he had reflected on the fact that the Lord “does not give us peace like the world gives us; instead he gives us another kind of peace: a lasting peace!”.

Regarding the second key word, “love”, the Pope emphasized that Jesus “said many times that the commandment is to love God and to love thy neighbour”; indeed, “he spoke about it on various occasions”; for example when “he taught [his disciples] how to love God, without idols”, and also “how to love thy neighbour”. Jesus sums this up in the “protocol” contained in Chapter 25 of St Matthew’s Gospel, “on which we shall be judged”. There, the Lord explains how “we are to love our neighbour”.

However, in the Gospel passage set forth in the day’s liturgy (Jn 15:9-11), “Jesus tells us something new about love: you are not only to love, but to abide in my love”. In fact, “the Christian vocation is to abide in God’s love, i.e., to breathe in and live on this oxygen, to live on this air. Thus, we must abide in God’s love”. And with this affirmation the Lord “concludes his deep discourse on love”.

But what is God’s love like? Pope Francis replied with the words of Jesus: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you”. It is therefore “a love that comes from the Father”, and the “relationship of love between him and the Father” becomes “a relationship between him and us”. Thus, “he asks us to abide in this love that comes from the Father”.

“The Apostle John will then go on and tell us that we must also give this love to others”. Yet we must first “abide in love”. Love is therefore the “second word” that Jesus leaves us.

How are we to abide in love? Again, the Pope responded with the words of the Lord: “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love”. Therefore, “keeping the commandments” is “the sign that we abide in Jesus’ love”. The Pontiff then exclaimed: “this is a beautiful thing: I follow the commandments in my life!”. So much so that “when we remain in love the commandments follow on their own, from love”. Indeed, “love leads us to fulfil the commandments quite naturally”, for “the root of love blossoms in the commandments”, and the commandments, “in the love that comes” are “the guiding thread” which binds the chain that unites the Father, Jesus and us.

The third word indicated by the Pope during his homily was “joy”, and here the Pope turned again to Jesus’ words in the day’s Gospel: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”. The Pope highlighted that “joy is the sign of the Christian”. He said: “a Christian without joy either is not a Christian or he is sick”, his Christian health is not good ... I once said that there are Christians with faces like pickled chilli peppers: always with red faces,

with souls to match. And this is unseemly!”. These “are not Christians”, for “a Christian without joy is not Christian”.

Indeed, for a Christian, joy is present “even amid suffering, tribulation and persecution”. The Pope then invited those present to consider the martyrs of the first centuries — like Saints Felicity, Perpetua and Agnes — who “went to their martyrdom as though they were going to their wedding”. This “great Christian joy”, he said, “safeguards peace and love”.

Three key words, then: *peace*, *love* and *joy*. However, the Pope warned, we need to thoroughly understand their true significance; their meaning does not derive “from the world” but from the Father. In fact, he explained, it is the Holy Spirit “who creates this peace; who creates this love that comes from the Father and the Son and which then comes to us; who gives us joy”. Yes, he said, “it is the Holy Spirit ... who is the great forgotten One in our lives”. Addressing those who were present, the Pope confided that he would have liked to ask everyone if they pray to the Holy Spirit. “No, don’t raise your hands!”, he immediately added with a smile. The problem, he repeated, is that the Holy Spirit is truly “the great forgotten One!”. Yet he is the “gift that gives us peace, that teaches us to love, and who fills us with joy”.

Pope Francis concluded by repeating the Collect from the day’s liturgy, in which, he said, “we asked the Lord: stand by your gift!”. Together, he said, “we asked for the grace that the Lord may always stand by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, the Spirit who teaches us to love, who fills us with joy, and who gives us peace”.