



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Three loves for one wedding

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In his homily at Santa Marta Pope Francis offered a reflection on love, which came primarily from Jesus' farewell address to the apostles, from today's reading from the Gospel of John (16:29-33). For fifteen married couples celebrating their wedding anniversaries, this Mass was a small anniversary party. Taking the experience of these families as his starting point, the Pope indicated the essential elements of the Sacrament of Marriage and "of Jesus' spousal love for the Church", that is, "for all of us": fidelity, perseverance and fruitfulness.

Jesus, Pope Francis explained, "reflected on the same topic: the world, the spirit of the world, which really hurts us, and the Spirit that he brings, the Spirit of the Beatitudes, the Spirit of the Father". He stated expressly: "The Father is with me", and for this reason he overcame the world.

"The Father sent Jesus to us", the Bishop of Rome stated, because "he loved the world so much that he sent his Son to save it, out of love". Thus "Jesus was sent out of love, and Jesus loves". But what is the love of Jesus? The Pope noted that "many times we read nonsense about the love of Jesus! But Jesus' love is great". And, in particular, he indicated "three loves of Jesus".

First of all, Jesus "truly loved the Father in the Holy Spirit". It is a "mysterious" and "eternal" love.

Such that “we cannot imagine how great, how beautiful this love is”; we can “only ask for the grace to be able to see it once, when we are there”. The “second love of Jesus is his Mother”. We see him “at the end: in so much pain and with so much suffering, from the Cross he thought of his mother and said, “Take care of her!”. Lastly, “the third love of Jesus is the Church, his beloved bride: beautiful, holy, sinful, yet he loves her just the same”.

The presence of the 15 couples inspired the second part of the Pope’s meditation. “St Paul”, he explained, “when referring to the sacrament of marriage, he called it the great sacrament, because Jesus is married to his Church, and every Christian marriage is a reflection of Jesus’ marriage to the Church”.

The Pope then confided that he would like to ask each couple to tell “what transpired in this time, in these 60 years, 50 years, 20 years”. But, he quickly added, “we would not even finish by noon: so we will leave it be!”. However, he continued “we can say something about the spousal love of Jesus for the Church”. A love that has “three features: it is faithful; it perseveres — he never tires of loving his Church; and it is fruitful”.

Above all, “it is a faithful love”. Jesus is the faithful one”, as St Paul also reminds us. “Fidelity — said the Pope — is the very being of Jesus’ love. And Jesus’ love for his Church is faithful. This fidelity is like a light on the marriage: the fidelity of love, always!”. The Pope recognized that “there are hard times, many times you argue. But in the end you return, you ask for forgiveness and the matrimonial love goes forward, like the love of Jesus for the Church.

Married life, then, is “also a persevering love”, because, if this dedication is missing “love cannot go forward”. “Perseverance” is necessary “in love, in good times and in difficult times, when there are problems with the children, economic problems”. Even in these predicaments “love perseveres, it always moves forward, seeking to resolve things in order to save the family”. Once again addressing the couples present, most of all those celebrating 60 years of married life, the Bishop of Rome remarked on the beauty of this experience of perseverance, witnessed by “the man and woman who get up every morning and bring their family forward”.

The Pontiff then talked about fertility, “the third trait of Jesus’ love for his bride, the Church. The love of Jesus makes his bride fruitful, renders the Church fruitful with new children and baptisms. And the Church grows with this nuptial fruitfulness of Jesus’ love”. But “sometimes the Lord does not send children: it is a test”. And “there are other tests: when a sick child arrives, many problems”. And “these tests bring the marriage forward, when they look at Jesus, and take strength from the fruitfulness that Jesus has with his Church, from the love that Jesus has for his Church”.

Pope Francis bore in mind “that Jesus does not like marriages in which couples do not want children, in which they want to remain fruitless”. They are the product of “the well off culture of 10

years ago”, according to which “not having children is better, this way you can travel and see the world, you can have a house in the country and relax!”. It is a culture that suggests “it is more comfortable to have a little dog and two cats”, this way “love is given to the two cats and the little dog”. But living this way “in the end of this marriage old age arrives in solitude, with the bitterness of awful loneliness: it is fruitless, it does not do what Jesus does with his Church”.

The Pope concluded with a prayer for the married couples, asking “the Lord that your marriage be beautiful, with crosses to bear but beautiful, like that of Jesus and his Church: faithful, persevering and fruitful”.