



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The Christian identity card

Monday, 9 June 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 24, 13 June 2014)

Pope Francis reflected on each point of the passage in the Gospel that day (Mt 5:1-12). The Beatitudes are “the Christian’s identity card”, the Pope remarked, urging us to reread those pages of the Gospel in order to live to the fullest a “plan of holiness” that goes “against the grain” of the world’s mentality.

He reiterated the Beatitudes, interjecting them into an everyday context, explaining that Jesus speaks with total simplicity, paraphrasing the meaning of the two great commandments: “Love the Lord” and “Love thy neighbours”. Thus, when someone asks, “How does one become a good Christian?”, the answer is simple: do what Jesus says in his discourse on the Beatitudes. A discourse, the Pope indicated, which really goes “against the grain” of what is generally the norm. The Lord knows sin and grace, and he knows the paths that lead to sin and to grace. Here is the meaning of his words, “blessed are the poor in spirit”: that is, “poverty versus wealth”.

“The rich man usually feels secure with his wealth”, the Pope explained. “Jesus himself said so in the parable of the wheat farmer”, which talks about the rich man who, in poor judgment, doesn’t imagine that he could die the same day.

“Riches don’t guarantee you anything”, he added. Most of all “when the heart is rich, so self satisfied”, it leaves no room for the Word of God”. This is why Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in

spirit, whose hearts are humble, because the Lord can enter". And also, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted".

On the contrary, Pope Francis pointed out, "the world tells us: joy, happiness, amusement, those are the beauty in life!". It tells us to "ignore, to look the other way" when it comes to "problems of illness" or "heartache in the family". Indeed, "the world doesn't want to cry, it prefers to ignore painful situations, cover them up". However, "only the person who sees things as they are, and cries in his heart, is happy and will be consoled" — but by Jesus, not by the world.

"Blessed are the meek", the Pontiff continued, is a powerful statement, most of all "in this world which is, from the beginning, a world of war; a world where fighting is everywhere, where hatred is everywhere". Yet, "Jesus said: no war, no hatred! Peace, compassion!". One could object: "If I'm so meek in life, they will think I'm a fool". This may be so, the Pope confirmed; however, others may instead think that, being so meek, "you will inherit the earth!".

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice". Jesus addressed this to those who "fight for justice, so there may be justice in the world". The Pope commented that reality shows us how easy it is to fall into corruption, to take part in "the everyday politics of *quid pro quo*" where "it's all business". And "so many people suffer due to these injustices!". To these, "Jesus says: blessed are those who fight against these injustices". Thus, the Pope specified, we really see that this doctrine "goes against the grain" compared to "what the world tells us".

Even more, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will find mercy". This refers, he explained, to "those who forgive, who understand others' mistakes". Jesus doesn't say, "Blessed are those who seek vengeance", or who say "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", but he calls blessed "those who forgive, the merciful". It's always important to think, the Pontiff recalled, that "we are all an army of forgiven! All of us have been forgiven! And this is why he who takes this path of forgiveness is blessed".

With the phrase, "Blessed are the pure of heart", Jesus refers to those who "have a simple, pure heart, without filth: a heart which knows how to love with such beautiful purity". And, "Blessed are the peace makers" refers to the many situations of war that repeat themselves. For us, "it is so common to be makers of war or at least makers of misunderstandings". This happens when I go to others and repeat something I hear; and when I "stretch" the story a bit, and repeat it. In short, it is "the world of gossip", made of "people who gossip, who don't make peace"; this is the enemy of peace, and this for certain is not blessed.

Last, proclaiming "Blessed are those who are persecuted for justice", Jesus recalls those people who are and "who have been persecuted simply for fighting for justice".

Thus, the Pontiff emphasized, "this is the life plan" that Jesus proposes to us. A plan that is "really

simple but really difficult” at the same time. “And if we want something more, Jesus gives us even further instructions”. In particular, he noted, “is the protocol on which we will be judged”, found in the Gospel of Matthew. “I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me”.

This is the path, he explained, to “live the Christian life” in a holy way. The saints did nothing other than “live the beatitudes” and that “protocol of final judgment”. They are “few words, simple words, but practical for everyone, because Christianity is a practical religion”, to practice, to do, not to simply think about.

Pope Francis’ final proposal is practical as well: “Today, if you have a little time at home, pick up the Gospel of Matthew, the fifth chapter: the Beatitudes are at the beginning”. And then, “in chapter 25, there are other” words of Jesus. “It will do you good to read” this plan of holiness “once, twice, three times”.