



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

We all have an angel

Thursday, 2 October 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 41, 10 October 2014)

We all have an angel who is always beside us, who never abandons us and helps us not to lose our way. And if we know how to be like children we can avoid the temptation of being self-sufficient, which leads to arrogance and even to extreme careerism. During the Mass celebrated at Santa Marta, Pope Francis recalled the definitive role of guardian angels in a Christian's life.

There are two images — the angel and the child — Francis pointed out, which “the Church shows us in today's liturgy”. The Book of Exodus (23:20-23a), in particular, proposes “the image of the angel” that “the Lord gives to his people to help them on their journey”. It reads, in fact: “Behold, I send an angel before you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place which I have prepared”.

Thus, the Pope commented, “life is a journey, our life is a journey that leads us to the place that the Lord has prepared”. But, he stated, “no one walks alone: no one!”. Because “no one can walk alone”. And, “should one of us believe he is able to walk alone, he would be greatly mistaken” and “would fall into that mistake, so harmful, which is arrogance: believing that one's self is great”. He would also end up having that attitude of “sufficiency” that leads one to say: “I can, I can do it” myself.

Instead, the Lord gives a clear indication to his people: “Go, you will do what I tell you. You will journey in your life, but I will give you help which will continuously remind you what you must do”. And thus “he tells his people what the attitude with the angel should be. The first recommendation is: “Give heed to him”. And then, “hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him”. Therefore, in addition to “respect” one must also be able to “listen” and “not rebel”.

At the basis, the Pope explained, “is that docile but non-specific attitude of obedience owed to the Father, which is precisely filial obedience”. It is in essence “that obedience of wisdom, that obedience of listening to advice and making a better choice based on advice”. And, he added, it is necessary “to have an open heart to seek and heed advice”.

The Gospel passage from Matthew (18:1-5, 10) offers the second image, that of the child. “The disciples”, the Bishop of Rome commented, “argued about who was the greatest among them. There was an internal dispute: careerism. These men, who were the first bishops, were tempted by careerism” and said among themselves: “I want to become greater than you”. In this regard, Francis remarked: “It is not a good example that the first bishops did this, but it is the truth”.

From his side “Jesus teaches them the true attitude”: calling a child to him, he puts the child in their midst, the Pope said, referring to Matthew. And in doing so reveals “the docility, the need for advice, the need for help, because a child is the very symbol of the need for help, of docility in order to go forward”.

“This is the way”, the Pontiff indicated, and not that of determining “who is the greatest”. In truth, he stated, repeating the words of Jesus: whoever humbles himself like a child will be “the greatest”. And here the Lord “makes that mysterious connection that cannot be explained, but it is true”. He says, in fact: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven”.

In essence, Francis suggested, “it is as if he said: if you have this attitude of docility, this attitude of listening to advice, of an open heart, of not wanting to be the greatest, that attitude of not wanting to walk the path of life alone, you will be closer to the attitude of a child and closer to the contemplation of the Father”.

“According to Church tradition”, the Pope continued, “we all have an angel with us, who guards us, who makes us hear things”. After all, he said, “we have often heard: ‘I should do this this way... this is not good, be careful!’. It is really “the voice of our travel companion”. We can be “certain that he will lead us to the end of our life with his advice”. This is why it is necessary to “hearken to his voice, do not rebel against him”. On the other hand, “rebellion, the desire to be independent, is something that we all have: it is arrogance itself, which our father Adam had in the earthly paradise”. At this point the Pope instructed to each one: “Do not rebel, follow his advice!”.

In truth, the Pope confirmed, “no one walks alone, and none of us can think he is alone: this companion is always there”. Of course, it happens that “when we don’t want to listen to his advice, to hear his voice, we tell him: ‘Go away!’”. But “it’s dangerous to drive away our travel companion, because no man, no woman can advise him/herself: I can give advice to another, but I cannot advise myself”. Indeed, Francis recalled, “it is the Holy Spirit who advises me, it is the angel who advises me” and this is something “we need”.

The Pope urged that this “doctrine on the angels” not be considered “a little imaginative”. It is rather one of “truth”. It is “what Jesus, what God said: ‘I send an angel before you, to guard you, to accompany you on the way, so you will not make a mistake’”.

Francis concluded with a series of questions so that each one can examine his/her own conscience: “How is my relationship with my guardian angel? Do I listen to him? Do I bid him good day in the morning? Do I tell him: ‘guard me while I sleep?’ Do I speak with him? Do I ask his advice? Is he beside me?”. We can answer these questions today, Pope Francis said. Each one of us can do so in order to evaluate “the relationship with this angel that the Lord has sent to guard me and to accompany me on the path, and who always beholds the face of the Father who is in heaven”.