



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Salvation our way

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Man experiences within himself “the tragedy of not accepting God’s salvation” because he would prefer “to be saved in his own way”. Jesus even reaches the point of tears over man’s “resistance”, and repeatedly offers his mercy and his forgiveness. However, we cannot say “Save us, Lord, but” do it “our way!”, Pope Francis noted during Mass at Santa Marta.

In the Gospel passage from Luke (10:13-16), Jesus “appears to be a little angry”, and “he speaks to these people to reason with them”, saying: “If marvels had happened among you in the pagan cities, you would have already, for some time, been wearing sack cloth and ashes, you would have converted. But you, no”. Thus, Jesus traces “the outline of the whole history of salvation: it is the tragedy of not wanting to be saved; it is the tragedy of not accepting the salvation of God”. It is as if we were to say: “Save us, Lord, but” do it “our way!”.

Jesus himself recalls many times that “these people rejected the prophets, they stoned those who had been sent to them because they were a bit troublesome”. The idea is always the same: “We want salvation, but we want it our way! Not how the Lord wants it”.

We are facing the “tragedy of resisting being saved”, the Pontiff said. It is “a legacy that we have

all received", because "in our heart too, there is this seed of resistance to being saved the way the Lord wants to save us".

In the context of the passage of the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus is seen "speaking to his disciples who have returned from mission". And he says to them too: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me'. Your fathers did the same with the prophets". Again the idea of wanting "to be saved" our way. Certainly "the Lord saves us with our freedom", the Pope indicated, adding, however, that "we want to be saved, not with freedom but with our own autonomy": we want to "make the rules".

This, Francis noted, is "precisely the tragedy of the stories of salvation, from the first moment". It is first of all "a tragedy of the people", because "the people rebel many times, in the desert for example". However, he added, "with trials, the people mature: they become more mature". And thus, "they recognize in Jesus a great prophet and they also say: 'God has visited his people'".

On the other hand, he continued, "it is actually the ruling class to close the doors to the way that God wants to save us". In this sense "the powerful dialogues between Jesus and the ruling class of his time are understandable: they argue, they put him to the test, they lay traps to see if he falls", because they have "resistance to being saved".

In confronting this attitude Jesus says to them: "I don't understand you! You are like those children: we played the flute for you and you didn't dance; we sang a sad song for you and you didn't weep. What do you want?". The answer is again: "We want salvation to be done our way". It comes back to this "closure" to God's *modus operandi*.

Then, "when the Lord goes forward", the Pope recalled, "doubts also begin in the group close to them". John mentions this in Chapter 6 of his Gospel, giving voice to all those who say of Jesus: "This man is a bit strange, how can he give us his flesh to eat? But perhaps it is a little strange". Someone probably said these things and, Francis affirmed, even "his disciples began to turn back". Thus "Jesus looked at the Twelve" and he told them: "If you too want to go...".

There is no doubt, the Pontiff explained, that "this word is harsh: the word of the cross is always harsh". But it is also "the only door to salvation". And "the faithful accept it: they sought Jesus to be healed" and "to hear his word". Indeed, they said: "This man speaks with authority, not like our class, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, the Sadducees, who spoke in terms that no one understood". For them salvation was in fulfilling the countless commandments "that their intellectual and theological fever had created". However, "the poor people could not find an exit to salvation". They found it, though, in Jesus.

In the end, however, "they did the same as their fathers: they decided to kill Jesus", the Pope stated. The Lord finds fault with this manner of behaviour: "Your fathers killed the prophets, but to

clear your conscience, you build them a fine monument". Thus, "they decide to kill Jesus, that is, to put him out", because, they say, "this man will bring us problems: we don't want this salvation! We want a well organized, reliable salvation. We don't want this one!". As a result, "they also decide to kill Lazarus, because he is the witness to what Jesus brings: life", as Lazarus is "raised from the dead".

"With this decision, that ruling class nullify God's power", the Bishop of Rome said, recalling that "today in the prayer at the beginning of Mass, we splendidly praised the omnipotence of God: Lord, let your almighty power be revealed, above all in mercy and forgiveness". The "tragedy of resistance to salvation" leads one not to believe "in mercy and in forgiveness" but in sacrifice. And it compels one to want "everything well organized, everything definite".

It is "a tragedy", Francis recalled, which "even each one of us has inside". For this reason he offered several questions for examining the conscience: "How do I want to be saved? My way? According to a spirituality that is good, that is good for me, but that is set, having everything defined and no risks? Or in a divine manner, that is, on the path of Jesus, who always surprises us, who always opens the doors for us to that mystery of the almighty power of God, which is mercy and forgiveness?".

The Pontiff assured that when Jesus "sees this tragedy of resistance, and also when he sees ours, he weeps". He "wept in front of Lazarus' tomb; he cried looking at Jerusalem" as he said, "You who kill the prophets and stone all those who are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings!". And he also weeps "facing this tragedy of not accepting his salvation as the Father wants it".

Pope Francis therefore urged us to "consider that this tragedy is in our heart", asking that each of us ask ourselves: "What do I think the path of my salvation is like: that of Jesus or another? Am I free to accept salvation or do I confuse freedom with autonomy, wanting my salvation, the one that I believe is fair? Do I believe that Jesus is the master who teaches us salvation or do I go everywhere to hire a guru who teaches me about another one?". Do I take "a more reliable path or do I seek refuge under the roof of rules and of many manmade commandments? And do I feel confident this way, and with — this is a bit hard to say — this confidence, do I buy my salvation, which Jesus bestows gratuitously, with the gratuitousness of God?". All these questions, which "will do us good to ask ourselves today", culminated in the Pope's concluding proposal: "Am I resistant to the salvation of Jesus?".