



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Stop and choose

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In the hustle and bustle of life, it is important to have the courage to stop and choose. The season of Lent serves this very purpose. During Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning Pope Francis placed emphasis on the need to ask those questions, important for Christian life and to know how to make the right choices.

Interpreting the Readings for the day after Ash Wednesday (Deut 30: 15-20; Ps 1; Lk 9:22-25), the Pontiff explained that “at the beginning of the Lenten journey, the Church makes us reflect on the words of Moses and of Jesus: “You have to choose”. It is thus a reflection on the need we all have, to make choices in life. And Moses, Francis emphasized, “is clear: ‘See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil’: choose”. Indeed “the Lord gave us freedom, the freedom to love, to walk on his streets”. We are free and we can choose. However, the Pope indicated, “it’s not easy to choose”. It’s more comfortable “to live by letting ourselves be carried by the inertia of life, of situations, of habits”. This is why “today the Church tells us: ‘You are responsible; you have to choose’”. And thus the Pontiff raised some questions: “Have you chosen? How do you live? What is your lifestyle, your way of living, like? Is it on the side of life or on the side of death?”.

Naturally the response should be to “choose the way of the Lord. ‘I command you to love the

Lord'. This is how Moses shows us the path of the Lord: 'If your heart turns back and if you do not listen and you let yourself be drawn to prostrate yourself before other gods and serve them, you will perish'. Choose between God and the other gods, those who do not have the power to give us anything, only little things that pass".

Returning to the difficulty of choosing, Francis said he was aware that "we always have this habit of going where the people go, somewhat like everyone". But, he continued, "today the Church is telling us: 'stop and choose'. It's good advice. And today", the Pope continued, "it will do us good to stop during the day and think: what is my lifestyle like? Which road am I taking?".

After all, in everyday life we tend to take the opposite approach. Many times, he said, "we live in a rush, we are on the run, without noticing what the path is like; and we let ourselves be carried along by the needs, by the necessities of the days, but without thinking". And thus came the invitation to stop: "Begin Lent with small questions that will help one to consider: 'What is my life like?'". The first thing to ask ourselves, the Pope explained, is: "who is God for me? Do I choose the Lord? How is my relationship with Jesus?". And the second: "How is your relationship with your family: with your parents; with your siblings; with your wife; with your husband; with your children?". In fact, these two series of questions are enough, "and we will surely find things that we need to correct".

The Pontiff then asked "why we hurry so much in life, without knowing which path we are on". He was explicit about this: "because we want to win, we want to earn, we want to be successful". But Jesus makes us think: "What advantage does a man have who wins the whole world, but loses or destroys himself?". Indeed, "the wrong road", the Pope said, is that of always seeking success, one's own riches, without thinking about the Lord, without thinking about family". Returning to the two series of questions on one's relationship with God and with those who are dear to us, the Pope emphasized that "one can win everything, yet become a failure in the end. He has failed. That life is a failure". So are those who seem to have had success, those women and men for whom "they've made a monument" or "they've dedicated a portrait", but didn't "know how to make the right choice between life and death".

And to emphasize the concept, Francis explained that "it will do us good to stop for a bit — five, 10 minutes — and ask ourselves the question: what is the speed of my life? Do I reflect on my actions? How is my relationship with God and with my family?". The Pope indicated that we can find help in "that really beautiful advice of the Psalm: 'Blessed are they who trust in the Lord'". And "when the Lord gives us this advice — 'Stop! Choose today, choose' — He doesn't leave us on our own; He is with us and wants to help us". And we, for our part, need "only to trust, to have faith in Him".

Repeating the words of the Psalm, "Blessed are they who trust in the Lord", the Pope then urged that we be aware that God does not abandon us. "Today, at the moment in which we stop to think

about these things and to take decisions, to choose something, we know that the Lord is with us, is beside us, to help us. He never lets us go alone. He is always with us. Even in the moment of choosing". And he concluded with these instructions: "let us have faith in this Lord, who is with us, and when He tells us: 'choose between good and evil' helps us to choose good". And above all "let us ask Him for the grace to be courageous", because "it takes a bit of courage" to "stop and ask myself: how do I stand before God, how are my relationships in the family, what do I need to change, what should I choose?".