



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The counsel of Paul

Tuesday, 5 May 2015

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In the inevitable “hardships of life” a Christian must entrust herself to the Lord in prayer, with the certitude that she will receive that “true peace” that infuses “courage and hope”. The Pope said this at morning Mass on Tuesday in the Chapel of the Casa Santa Marta.

“In today’s liturgy”, the Pope said, “there are three words that can help us on our journey of faith and hope”. He then explained “at the beginning of the Mass we asked the Lord [in the Collect] to strengthen us in faith and hope... and the three words that shine out in the Readings are “hardships”, “trust” and “peace”.

The Pope recounted what happened to Paul, according to the Acts of the Apostles (14:19-28): after being stoned, he was dragged out of the city and left for dead. Paul, therefore, “suffered”, but then, “he rose”, and he exhorted them to “persevere in the faith, because we must enter the kingdom of God through much hardship”. Francis remembers that “in life trials are waiting for us: it is part of life to pass through dark moments, difficult times”.

But Paul’s counsel “to enter the kingdom of God through many hardships is not a sadomasochistic attitude: it is the Christian struggle”. And the reason, the Pontiff explained, is that, as Jesus says,

“the prince of this world comes, he is close and seeks to sever us from the kingdom of God, from the word of Jesus, from faith, from hope”. That is why “we ask the Lord to strengthen us in faith and hope”.

“Hardships” there will always be, therefore. But Jesus encourages us to take courage: “I have conquered the world”. And “he is above every tribulation, he helps us to go forward”. The words Christ chooses to explain this are meaningful “parable of the sower”: when “he speaks of the seed that falls on rocky ground he says it is like a person who receives the word with joy and then in a moment of tribulation no longer hears it and becomes discouraged”.

This then is the meaning of “undergoing hardship”. And “to endure”, Francis stated, “is a word that Paul uses frequently: it is more than just having patience, it is carrying on your shoulders, bearing the weight of tribulation”. And “the Christian’s life has moments like this”. But “Jesus tells us: ‘Have courage in that moment. I have won, and you too will be winners’”. Thus “this first word enlightens us” in facing “the most difficult moments in life, those moments that make us suffer”.

Francis then recalled how Paul, “after having given this counsel, organizes the Church, prays over the presbyters, lays hands upon them and entrusts them to the Lord”. And we come to the second word: “trust”. Indeed, “a Christian can carry forward every tribulation and even outright persecution by entrusting himself to the Lord: only he is capable of giving us strength, of allowing us to persevere in the faith, of giving us hope”.

We need to know how “to entrust something to the Lord, entrust this difficult moment to the Lord, entrust oneself to the Lord, entrust our faithful to the Lord, our priests, bishops, entrust our families to the Lord, our friends”. We need to know how to say to the Lord: “Take care of these, they are yours”.

However, the Pope highlighted, it is “not a prayer that we always make: the prayer of entrustment”. It is a beautiful Christian prayer when one says: “Lord I entrust to you this, I bring it here before you”. It is “an attitude of trust in the power of the Lord, and in the tenderness of the Lord who is Father”. That is why “when this prayer is said — but truly, from the heart — one feels that this person who was entrusted to the Lord is safe: he never disappoints”.

In short, “hardship makes you suffer, trust in the Lord gives you hope and, from here, the third word rises: peace”. All this, the Pope came to the point, “gives you peace”. And it is also “what Jesus says as a farewell to his disciples: ‘Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you’, as we read in the Gospel of John (14:27-31). But, the Pope warned, this is not about “mere tranquility”. Jesus is more precise: “My peace is not the kind of peace that the world gives”, the kind that gives a sort of tranquility. Rather the peace that comes from Jesus “goes within”, it is “a peace that gives you strength, that reinforces what today we asked of the Lord: our faith and our hope”.

We should never forget that “in life we must go through hardship”, because that “is the law of life”; but we should always remember in those moments to “entrust ourselves to the Lord”. And “he will respond to us with peace”. The Lord “is Father, he loves us very much and never disappoints us” the Pope reaffirmed. And he closed by asking that God “strengthen us in our faith and in our hope”, granting us “the trust to overcome every tribulation, for He has overcome the world”, and to all people everywhere he offers his peace.