



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Fewer words, more deeds

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To help distinguish true love from that false “soap opera love”, Pope Francis offered two criteria. The first is “concreteness, deeds and not words”, so as not to see God as far away, as agnostics do. The second is “communication”, for one who loves is never isolated. By following these two criteria, the Pope indicated, one experiences love as authentic joy. This was his reflection during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday.

“The Lord asks us to abide in his love, in other words, to abide in the love that is his”, the Pontiff stated, in reference to the day’s passage from the Gospel according to John (15: 9-11). He followed with this key question: “What is that love?”. It is “the love of the Father”. Jesus himself assures us: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you”. It is, therefore, “the fullness of love: to abide in Jesus’ love”.

We need to “really understand this reality of true love, the Pope explained. Thus, he asked, “what is Jesus’ love like?” How do I know that I am experiencing true love?”. Francis indicated “two criteria that will help us distinguish true love” from false. The first is that “love must be established more in deeds than in words”. And the “second criterion” is understood in the fact that communication is truly a part of love: “love is communicated”. Only “with these two criteria can we

find the true love of Jesus in deeds”, in deeds which are “concrete”.

Concreteness, therefore, is fundamental. The Pope emphasized that “we can watch a soap opera”, but “soap opera love is a fantasy. Yes, they are love stories, but they don’t involve us. They make our hearts beat a little, but nothing more”. On the other hand, Jesus admonished: “Those who say ‘Lord! Lord!’ will not enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who have done my Father’s will, who have kept my commandments, will abide in my love”.

These words lead us back to the “concreteness of Jesus’ love”. This love, Francis stated, “is concrete” and lies “in deeds, not in words”. Therefore, “when that young doctor of the law came to Jesus and asked Him: ‘Tell me Lord, which is the great commandment in the law?’, Jesus spoke the law as it was: ‘You shall love your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and your neighbour as yourself’”. At that point, the Pope continued, that young man “felt somewhat ill at ease and didn’t know how to escape that little embarrassment”. So, “as a way out, he asked the question: who is a neighbour?”. To explain this, “Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan”. And at the end He proposed to that young man: “Go and do the same”.

With this exhortation, Jesus demonstrates that “true love is concrete”, it lies “in works” and “is a constant love; it is not simple enthusiasm”. Yet “often it is also a painful love: let’s consider the love of Jesus bearing the cross”. In any case, “works of love are those that Jesus teaches us in the passage of St Matthew’s Chapter 25”. The words are clear and concrete, as if to say: “one who loves does this”. It is somewhat like the “judgement protocol: I was hungry, you gave me to eat, etc...”.

“The Beatitudes, which are Jesus’ pastoral programme, are also concrete”, the Pontiff remarked. Thus, he reaffirmed, “the first criteria to abide in Jesus’ love is that our love be concrete, and as He says: keep the commandments, his commandments”. To confirm the importance of concreteness, Francis recalled that “one of the first heresies in Christianity was that of agnostic thinking”, which considered God as “far away” and according to which “there was no concreteness”.

By no coincidence “the Apostle John condemns it clearly: These men didn’t believe that the Word became flesh”. Yet, with his love the Father “was concrete; He sent his Son, who became flesh to save us”. Thus, the Pope summarized, “the first criterion is love: it is more in works, in deeds, than in words”.

The “second criterion”, on the other hand, is that “love is communicated, it doesn’t remain isolated: love gives itself and receives, it creates that communication between the Father and Son, a communication which the Holy Spirit creates”. This is why “there is no love without communication, there is no love in isolation”, the Pontiff reiterated”. One could object, he added, that “cloistered monks and nuns are isolated”. It isn’t so, Francis explained, because they are people who

“communicate, and often, with the Lord, and also with those who seek God’s word”.

“True love cannot be isolated”, because “if it is isolated, it isn’t love” and instead becomes “a spiritualistic form of selfishness, remaining closed within itself, seeking its own benefit”. In a word, it is “selfishness”. Thus, the Pontiff explained, “to abide in Jesus’ love means to abide in the love of the Father who sent us Jesus; to abide in Jesus’ love means to do, not just to say; to abide in Jesus’ love means having the capacity to communicate, to dialogue, both with the Lord and with our brothers and sisters”.

In essence, Pope Francis pointed out, “it is quite simple; but it isn’t easy, because selfishness, our own interest draws” us, leading us not “to perform concrete acts: luring us not to communicate”. Moreover: what does the Lord say of those who abide in his love? “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”. Thus, the Pope said, “the Lord who abides in the Father’s love is joyful”. Francis then added: “should you abide in my love, your joy shall be full”. Truly this is “a joy which often times comes together with the cross”. But is is still a “joy; Jesus himself told us so: no one can take it away from you”.

In the Eucharistic celebration, “with the Lord who will come to us on the altar”, the Pope asked for the grace “to abide in his love: by our deeds and by our communication”. May the Lord, he concluded, also give us “the grace of joy, that joy which the world cannot give”.