



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

As the Spirit moves

Friday, 8 May 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 20, 15 May 2015)

On Friday, the Feast of Our Lady of Luján, Patroness of Argentina, Pope Francis offered up morning Mass in the Chapel of the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* for his homeland. He prayed that we know how to follow movements provoked by the Holy Spirit in each one of us and throughout the Church: movements that in appearance seem to cause confusion but instead always lead to unity.

At the beginning of the homily, the Pope remembered how “Jesus promised his disciples the Holy Spirit and said that the Holy Spirit would teach them many things and would remind them of the things that He taught them”. Thus, “from the first moment the Holy Spirit came, the very day of his coming, he began to move the waters: he began a movement in the Church”. The disciples, on their own, “were closed, out of fear, but he started a movement: they went out and Peter addressed the people for the first time”.

Peter’s words, the Pontiff explained, “were heard by each and every person in his own language: everyone in their own language”. Upon hearing them, many “were converted and went out throughout the land with this news: Jesus was alive, the Lord was risen”. Therefore, “this movement towards the world begins”. And that is what the Apostle Philip “also does with the ‘minister of the economy’ of Ethiopia, who was a Jew, a proselytized Jew: he gives him Jesus’

message, he baptizes him and goes back to his land to preach the Gospel”.

Francis retraced those first steps of evangelization narrated in the Acts. “The Apostles — he said — begin to preach in Jerusalem and, after the healing of the paralytic, begging for alms” before the door of the temple called “Beautiful”, Peter and John “are called to judgment and stoned: the persecutions begin”. And thus, “after the death of Stephen, another movement bursts onto the scene: the persecutions”.

At this point, the Pope said, “another issue” comes up. That is, the first disciples, Paul and Peter, set out to preach to “the Jews, but they find pagans too”. And “Peter is the first, because he goes to the house of Cornelius”. It is there that “another movement begins in the Church and Peter, the head, is criticized for it: ‘This is heresy, he enters the house of a pagan, he is unclean!’” And Peter “senses this lack of trust from some in the community”. These are “movements inside the Church; movements of groups who had different points of view”.

For his part, “Paul begins to preach conversion to the pagans as well and they hear this beautiful news and convert”. However, there is a Christian group that is “closed, does not understand”, who repeat: “No, not pagans!”. They reach the point of stoning Paul and leaving him for dead. Then “they seek help among the powers of society... In Antioch they went to pious noblewomen and high-ranking men in an attempt to move them against the apostles”.

The Pope continued: “Thus we arrive at the point in Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles (22-31) where the waters of Antioch are moved, because a group of Christians, deeply tied to the Jewish law, want to impose the Hebrew ways on new Christians before baptizing them: e.g., circumcision”. But “Paul says no”. This “ignites a fight among them, the waters are moving”. One reads, in fact, that there were lively debates going on. “They debated vigorously, because there was a great deal of movement”, the Pope explained. “How do they resolve the problem? They gather and each gives his own judgment, offers his own opinion; they discuss, but like brothers not enemies: they don’t make any outside deals in order to win; they don’t go to civil authorities to impose themselves; they don’t kill in order to profit: they seek a path of prayer and dialogue”. And those who were actually on opposing sides dialogue and reach an agreement: this is the work of the Holy Spirit”.

Chapter 15 of Acts, Francis said, tells how “the process ends”, in today’s liturgy, “with the First Ecumenical Council, the Council of Jerusalem”. They send “a letter to those who do not know how to preach to the closed ones: ‘The Apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia of Gentile origin, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind’. In effect, “they sowed discord”, the Pope added, proceeding to read the text: “‘we have decided to choose representatives and send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul’ — who were considered heretics — ‘who have risked their lives for

the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth”. In reading these words the Pontiff inserted that ultimately they came to an agreement and this even though Barnabas and Paul “were deemed heretics”.

Francis then read, also from the Acts, “this formula, which is one formula, one solemn expression: ‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage’”.

This, Francis said, “is the way of the Holy Spirit, this is the work of the Holy Spirit”. For it is he “who moves the waters, who stirs a little disorder, who seems to throw us into a storm, to torment — think of Pentecost — and then he brings harmony, unity: he has these two characteristics”. And “a Church where are never such problems,” he added, “makes me think that the Holy Spirit is not very present”. Certainly, “in a Church where there is always discord and where there are factions that betray their brothers, one against another, there is also no Holy Spirit”. Indeed, “The Spirit is what brings newness, moves situations forward, creates new spaces, brings the wisdom that Jesus promised: ‘He will teach you’”. The Spirit, therefore, “moves but in the end creates harmony among all people”. And in continuing the celebration, the Pope asked “the Lord Jesus, who is always present among us, to send always the Holy Spirit among us, to each one of us; to send Him to the Church and enable the Church to be faithful to the movement of the Holy Spirit”.