



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Unity doesn't come from glue

Thursday, 21 May 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 22, 29 May 2015)

Unity in the Church was at the heart of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass on Thursday morning in the chapel at Santa Marta. Reading the day's passage from the Gospel according to John (17:20-26), the Pontiff gave particular emphasis to the comfort which comes from hearing the words: "Father, 'I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word'". These are Jesus' words as He bids farewell to the Apostles. At that moment Jesus prays to the Father for the disciples and he "also prays for us".

Francis pointed out that "Jesus prayed for us at that time, and He continues to do so". In fact, we read in the Gospel: "Father, I pray for these but also for so many others who are yet to come". This seemingly insignificant detail might escape the inattentive reader. However, the Pope emphasized, "Jesus prayed for me", and this "is precisely the source of faith". We can imagine "Jesus before the Father in Heaven", praying for us. And "what does the Father see? His wounds", or rather, the price that Jesus "paid for us".

With this image the Pontiff got right to the heart of his reflection. Indeed, he asked, "what does Jesus ask the Father in this prayer?". Does He say: "I pray that they will have a good life, will have money, will all be happy, will want for nothing?". No, Jesus "prays that they all be one: 'as thou art

in me, and I in thee". At that moment He prays "for our unity. For the unity of his people, for the unity of his Church".

Jesus is well aware, explained Francis, that "the spirit of the world, which is really the spirit of the father of division, is a spirit of divisiveness, of war, of envy, of jealousy". It is also present "in families, even in religious families, even in dioceses, even in the Church as a whole: it is the great temptation". For this reason, "the great prayer of Jesus" is to bear "likeness to" the Father: "as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee", in the "unity which He has with the Father".

Now, one could probably ask: "Father, with this prayer of Jesus, if we want to be faithful, we cannot gossip about each other, can we?". Or: "We cannot label this one as..., this one is this way, that one is...?". And "that other one, who was branded as a revolutionary...?". The Pope responded with a resounding "No". Because, he added, "we have to be one, one single thing, as Jesus and the Father are one single thing". This is precisely "the challenge for all of us Christians: to leave no room for division among us, not letting the spirit of divisiveness, the father of lies enter us". We must, the Pope continued, "always seek unity". Naturally, each person "is how he is", but must seek to live in unity: "Has Jesus forgiven you? He forgives everyone".

The Lord prays that we succeed in this. The Pontiff explained: "The Church has such need, so much need of this prayer for unity, not only that of Jesus; we too must join in this prayer". After all, since the very beginning the Church has demonstrated this need: "If we read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles from the beginning", Francis said, "we will see that quarrels, even deceit, begin there. One deceives the other, consider Ananias and Sapphira...". Even in those early years we find divisiveness, personal interests, selfishness. Building unity truly was and is a veritable "struggle".

Above all one needs to realize that we cannot achieve unity on our own: indeed, "it is a grace". That is why, the Pontiff pointed out, "Jesus prays, He prayed that time, He prays for the Church, He prayed for me, for the Church, for me to take this path".

Unity is so important that, the Holy Father noted, "in the passage we have read", this word is repeated "four times within six verses". However, unity "is not assembled with glue". There is no such thing as a "Church built with glue": the Church is made one by the Spirit. Thus, "we have to make room for the Spirit to transform us, as the Father is in the Son, one single thing".

To accomplish this objective, Francis added, Jesus himself gives this advice: "Abide in me". This word too is a grace. Jesus prays: "Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am", that they may "behold my glory".

This meditation gave rise to some advice from Pope Francis: to re-read the Gospel of John, Chapter 17, verses 20-26, and consider: "Jesus prays, He prays for me, He prayed and prays for

me still. He prays with his wounds, before the Father". He does this "so we may all be one, as He is with the Father, in unity". This "should spur us not to judge", not to do "things that work against unity" and to follow Jesus' advice "to abide in Him in this life so that we may abide with Him in eternity".

These lessons, the Pope concluded, are found in Jesus' discourse during the Last Supper. In the Mass, "we relive" that supper, and Jesus repeats those words to us. Therefore, during the Eucharist, "we leave room so that Jesus' words may enter our hearts and we all may be capable of being witnesses of unity in the Church and of joy in the hope of contemplating the glory Jesus".