



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

In heaven's stock exchange

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The treasures that count are those that are recognized by “heaven’s stock exchange”. They do not correspond to the greedy logic of mankind, and are destined to be consumed by “moth and rust”, and even to incite war. Thus the real secret is to conduct ourselves as authentic stewards who place all goods “at the service of others”. This practical advice was offered by the Pope in the Mass at Santa Marta on Friday morning.

“Jesus returns to a catechesis very precious to Him: the catechesis on treasures”, Francis began, as he reinterpreted the day’s Gospel reading (Matthew 6:19-23). “His advice is very clear here: ‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth’”. And Jesus also explains why: “where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal”. In other words, the Pope said, “Jesus tells us that it is dangerous to play with this attitude and store up treasures on earth”. It’s true, the Pontiff recognized, that perhaps “this attitude is rooted in the desire for security”. As if to say “I want to be secure and, for this reason, I have these savings”.

However “riches are not like a statue, they are not stationary: riches have the tendency to grow, to move, to take their place in life and in a person’s heart”. And “this person who stores up treasures so as not to become a slave to poverty, ends up a slave to treasures”. Therefore, this is Jesus’

advice: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth”. After all, the Pope added, “wealth even invades the heart, takes over the heart and corrupts the heart. And that person ends up corrupt due to this attitude of laying up treasures”.

Francis then recalled that “Jesus, in another catechesis on the same theme, on the same topic, speaks of the man who has a large harvest of grain and thinks: what shall I do now? I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones”. But the Lord says: “Fool, this night you will die”. And this, the Pope explained, “is a second feature of this attitude: the man who lays up treasures doesn’t realize that he will have to leave it”.

In the day’s Gospel passage, “Jesus speaks of moths and rust: but what are they? They are the destruction of the heart, the corruption of the heart, and even the destruction of families”. Thus the Pontiff also recalled that “this is the man who goes to Jesus to tell Him: ‘Please, tell my brother to share my inheritance with me!’”. And again comes the Lord’s counsel: “Be careful not to become attached to treasures!”. But “this discourse goes further”, the Pope clarified. “The passage following what was read is very clear: no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other”. In other words, the Lord says, “You cannot serve God and mammon”.

The affirmation is extremely clear, Francis remarked. “It’s true, if we hear people with this attitude of storing up treasures, they will ‘stockpile’ so many excuses to justify themselves, so many!”. However, “in the end, these treasures do not provide security for ever. Instead, they diminish your dignity”. And this also applies to families: so many families become divided over treasures.

What’s more: “Even at the root of war there is this ambition which destroys, corrupts”, the Pope pointed out. In fact, “in this world, at this moment, there are so many wars out of greed for power, for wealth”. But “we can think about war in our heart: ‘Beware of all covetousness’, the Lord says”. Because “greed goes forward, it goes on, it goes on: it’s a step, it opens the door, then comes vanity — believing you are important, believing you are powerful — and, at the end, pride”. And “from there all vices, all: they are steps, but the first is greed, the desire to lay up treasures”.

Francis then recalled “a very beautiful saying: the devil enters through the pocketbook” or “he enters through the pockets, it’s the same thing: this is the entrance of the devil, and of all the vices, adding to these insecure securities”. And, the Pope explained, “this is actually corruption, it is the moth and the rust that leads us on”. After all, “accumulating is really a quality of man: to make things and to dominate the world is even a mission”. But “what do I have to store up?”. Jesus’ response in today’s Gospel is clear: instead, “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal”. This is truly “the daily struggle: how to manage well the treasures of the earth so they are directed to heaven and become the treasures of heaven”.

“When the Lord blesses a person with treasures”, Francis stated, “He makes him the steward of those treasures for the common good and for the good of all”, and “not for his own good”. But “it isn’t easy to become an honest steward, for there is always the temptation of greed, to become important: the world teaches us this and leads us down this road”.

One must instead “think of others, considering that what I have is for the service of others and that I won’t be able to take with me anything I have”. Indeed, “if I use for the common good what the Lord has given me, as a steward, this sanctifies me, it will make me holy”. However, “it isn’t easy”, the Pope said again. Thus “every day you must rest in your heart by asking yourselves: where is your treasure? In wealth or in this stewardship, in this service for the common good?”.

This is why “when a wealthy person sees that his treasure is administered for the common good, and in his heart and in his life he lives simply, as if he were poor: that person is holy, that person is on the road of sainthood, because his treasures are for everyone”. But “it’s difficult, its like playing with fire”, the Pontiff added. This is the reason why “so many appease their conscience with charity and hand out their left-overs”. However, “that person is not a steward: a steward takes for herself what is needed and gives to others, everything, in service”. Indeed, “administering riches is a continuous divesting of our own interests, knowing that these riches will not give us salvation”. Therefore, “store up: yes, okay, build a treasure: yes, okay, but one that has real value — so to speak — in ‘heaven’s stock exchange’: there, store up there!”.

After all, the Pope explained, “the Lord in his life lived as a poor man, but such treasures!”. Paul himself, Francis continued, referring to the First Reading (2 Cor 11:18, 21-30), “lived as a poor man and what did he boast of? Of his weakness”. And “he had opportunities, he had power, but always in service, always in service”. Thus, Pope Francis underscored, “in service” is really the key phrase, adding: “Baptism makes us brothers of one another through serving, through stripping ourselves: not stripping each other, but stripping myself and giving to the other”.

Let us think, Francis recommended, “how is our heart, how is the light of our heart, how is the vision of our heart: is it simple?”. The Lord says, again in the Gospel according to Matthew, that “the whole body shall be luminous”. However, if “one is bad, if one is attached to his own interests and not to others, this will darken the heart”. This person “makes treasures through vices and corruption: it darkens the heart when a person is attached to them”.

The Pope concluded by recalling that “in the Eucharistic celebration the Lord who is so rich — so rich! — made himself poor to enrich us”. Precisely “with his poverty he teaches us this way of not laying up treasures on the earth, for they corrupt”. And, “when we have them, to use them, as stewards, in service to others”.

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