



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Bite your tongue

Friday, 4 September 2015

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 37, 11 September 2015)

Speaking against others is an act of terrorism, akin to dropping a bomb to destroy people and then clearing out to save yourself. Instead, in order to be holy, Christians must always bring “peace and reconciliation” and in order to avoid giving in to the temptation of gossip, they must also bit their tongue. Your tongue may hurt, it may feel swollen but at least no war or conflict will break out. Pope Francis gave this advice during Mass at Santa Marta on Friday morning.

“In a passage of the Letter to the Colossians” (1:15-20), the Holy Father began, Paul “describes Jesus’ i.d. card”. Basically, the Apostle asks, just “who is this Christ that we have seen among us?”. And he gives this response: “He is the first. He is the first-born of God, the first-born of all creation, for in him things were created, all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” and “are reconciled”.

To the Colossians Paul “presents Jesus-God: Jesus is God, he is greater. First of all he is the beginning, the Creator. The first-born of everyone, that in everything he might be pre-eminent”. Paul goes so far that “when he speaks about who Jesus is”, said the Pontiff, “it seems somewhat exaggerated, does it not?”. Yes, “the Father sent this Jesus so that ‘through him and for him all things were reconciled, peace was made by the blood of his cross’”.

Repeating Paul's affirmations to explain "Jesus' work", Francis offered two key phrases: to reconcile and to make peace. Jesus, Paul tells us, "reconciled mankind with God". Thus, "peace is the action of Jesus, of his blood, of his work, of humbling himself by obeying until death, death on the Cross".

Thus, Francis continued, "Jesus made peace for us and reconciled us". Such that "when we speak of peace or reconciliation — small-scale peace, minor reconciliations — we must consider the great peace and the great reconciliation, that which Jesus made". We must understand that "without him peace is not possible; without him reconciliation is not possible". This discourse also applies to us, "who every day hear news of wars, of hatred". Moreover, "even in families there is fighting". Thus, "our task is to follow that path" so as to be "men and women of peace, men and women of reconciliation".

The Pope then recommended a true examination of conscience: "It will do us good to ask ourselves: Do I sow peace? For example, with my tongue, do I sow peace or do I sow discord?". Then, he added: "How many times have we heard that a person has a serpent's tongue, because he does what the serpent did with Adam and Eve, he destroyed the peace". This, the Pontiff warned, "is an evil, this is an ill in our Church: sowing divisiveness, sowing hate, not sowing peace". Francis continued by asking a question which, he indicated, would be good to ask ourselves every day: "Today have I sown peace or have I sown discord?". And don't try to justify yourself by suggesting that "sometimes you have to say things because this or that...". The Pope asked, "what are you really sowing with this attitude?".

Returning to Paul's Letter, the Pontiff repeated that Jesus, "the First One, came to us to make peace, to reconcile". As a result, "if a person, during her life, does nothing but reconcile and make peace, she should be canonized: that person is a saint!". However, he warned, "we must grow in this, we must convert: never a word to divide, never, never a word to cause conflicts, little conflicts, never gossip". With regard to gossip the Pope paused to ask "what is it", really? It seems like "nothing", he said. It amounts to "saying a few words about another person or telling a story", such as: "This person did...". But in reality it isn't so. "Gossiping is an act of terrorism", Francis said, "because gossip is like terrorists who drop a bomb and leave. They destroy: with the tongue they destroy, they don't make peace. But they're clever, eh? They aren't suicide bombers, no, no, they protect themselves well!

Returning again to the passage of the Letter of Paul, the Pontiff recalled that in Jesus "all things are reconciled, peace is made by the blood of his cross". Thus, "the price is high", he said. "Every time your mouth is about to say something that sows discord and divisiveness and to speak ill of another person" the sound advice is to "bite your tongue!". And, he continued, "I assure you that if you do this exercise of biting your tongue instead of sowing discord, the first few times your tongue will swell, wounded, because the devil helps to do this because it is his work, it is his job to divide!".

Before continuing this sacrifice — “this is the sacrifice of reconciliation; here the Lord comes and we do the same as on Calvary” — Francis prayed: “Lord you gave your life, give me the grace to make peace, to reconcile. You poured out your blood, let it not concern me should my tongue swell a little if I bite it before speaking ill of others”. He concluded by thanking the Lord for reconciling us with the Father, forgiving our sins, giving us “the opportunity to have peace in our souls”.