



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The greatest legacy

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Faith is the greatest legacy that a man or woman can leave. It is faith that encourages us not to fear death, which is only the beginning of another life. This was the central point of the reflection Pope Francis proposed during Thursday morning's Mass at Santa Marta.

"In these weeks the Church, in the Liturgy, has made us reflect on holy King David", Francis noted. Today, he continued, "we hear about his death". Indeed, the passage taken from the First Book of Kings (2:1-4, 10-12) recounts that "David's time to die drew near".

To emphasize that "in every life there is an end", the Pope recalled David's words to his son Solomon: "I am about to go the way of all the earth". Even though it is "the journey of life", the Pontiff added, it is also "a thought that we don't like very much". Basically, Francis said, we tend to keep our thoughts away from death — "I'm sick, I'm a little old..." — "But you're strong, come on!" — and "we are afraid", even though "it is an everyday reality".

The Pope recalled that "at the entrance to a cemetery in a village in northern Italy, it is written: 'As you go by, stop and think about your steps toward the final passage'". Consider, therefore, that "this is a light which illuminates life". And David's life, he explained, "was a life lived intensely by

that boy who took the flock to pasture, with so many difficulties; then, anointed by the Lord, he lived well, as a man who loved the Lord; then, when he felt secure, he began to sin” and he “nearly ended up in corruption”.

But, Francis continued, David “then repented, he wept, he sinned again. That’s how it is. But he learned to ask forgiveness for his sins. The Church calls him the holy King David. A sinner, but a saint”. Thus, “this life ends in this way: it begins at 16, 17, years and it ends”. Moreover, “the duration of his power, of his reign, was 40 years”. But “even 40 years pass”.

This, the Pontiff emphasized, “is a reality that we must always have before us”. Once, he shared, “in a Wednesday Audience, there was an elderly nun among the sick, but with a peaceful face, a luminous gaze”. Francis asked her how old she was, and she answered with a smile: “83, but I am ending my journey in this life to begin the other journey with the Lord, because I have pancreatic cancer”. And “like this, at peace”, the Pope said, “that woman lived her consecrated life intensely. She was not afraid of death” or of dying. “I am ending my life’s journey in order to begin the other”. Because death, the Pope explained, “is a passage” and “these witnesses are good for us”.

Continuing on, Francis noted that “when one is about to die, it is customary to leave a testament”. David did the same, calling his son Solomon. And “what did he advise him, what did he bequeath to his son?”. He told him: “Be strong, and show yourself a man”. Basically, David “takes up what the Lord said to Moses, to Joshua: ‘be strong, show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses’”.

David also gives this advice to Solomon. “What does he bequeath to him? He leaves him the kingdom, a strong kingdom”. But “he also leaves him something else, which is the greatest and most beautiful legacy a man or woman can leave their children: he leaves the faith”. In the day’s Bible passage we read David’s words: “that the Lord may establish his word which he spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel’”. This is having “faith in God’s promise: he leaves the faith as a great legacy”, Francis explained.

“When a testament is made”, the Pontiff added, “people dispense: ‘I leave this to him, I leave that to another...’”. But “the most beautiful legacy that a man or a woman can leave to their children is faith”, he emphasized. “David remembers God’s promises, he remembers his faith in these promises and reminds his son of them: he bequeaths the faith”.

In this regard the Pope pointed out: “in the Rite of Baptism, when the lit candle — the light of faith — is given to the parents, we are saying ‘Safeguard it, protect it, make it grow in your son and in your daughter, and leave it as a legacy’”. Thus, “bequeath the faith: David teaches us this. And thus he dies, simply, like every man”. But “he knows just what to advise his son and what is the

best legacy he can leave him: not the kingdom, but the faith. And he recites by heart what the Lord had promised”.

Francis then affirmed, “we will all go on the path of our father, but only he knows when”. Therefore “it will do us good” to ask ourselves: “What is it that I bequeath with my life? Am I leaving the legacy of a man or woman of faith? Am I leaving this legacy to my family?”.

On this note, the Pope concluded: “let us ask two things of the Lord”. First and foremost: “not to fear this final passage, like the sister at the Wednesday Audience” who shared: “I am ending my journey and beginning the other”. The second thing to ask of the Lord is “that, with our lives, we may all leave faith as the greatest legacy: faith in this faithful God, this God who is always at our side, this God who is Father and never disappoints.