



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Salvation in the little things

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God's salvation comes not from great things, not from power or money, not from clerical or political networks, but from small and simple things that sometimes even arise from disdain. Francis proposed this meditation during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning.

"The Church prepares us for Easter and today makes us reflect on salvation: what do we think salvation is like", Francis began, "the salvation that we all want?". The story of "Naaman's disease", narrated in the Second Book of Kings (5:1-15), presents "the fact of death: and afterwards?". Indeed, "when there is sickness, it always leads us back to that thought: salvation". But, the Pontiff asked, "how does salvation come about? What is the path to salvation? What is God's revelation to us Christians with regard to salvation?".

In the Pope's view, "the key word to understanding the Church's message today is disdain". After "Naaman arrived at Elisha's house and asked to be cured, Elisha sent a boy to tell him to wash in the Jordan seven times. A simple thing". Perhaps for this reason "Naaman disdained", exclaiming: "I have made such a journey, with so many gifts...". Instead everything was resolved by simply bathing in the river. Moreover, Naaman continued, "our rivers are more beautiful than this one".

Francis then pointed out, in reference to the Gospel passage taken from Luke (4:24-30), that “the inhabitants of Nazareth” similarly “disdained after hearing Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah that Sabbath in the synagogue”, when he said “‘today this has happened’, speaking of the liberation, of how the people would be freed”. The people commented: “What do you think about this man? He is one of us, we saw him grow up from boyhood, he never studied”. And the people “disdained” and even “wanted to kill him”.

Again, the Pope continued, “later on Jesus felt this disdain on the part of the leaders, the doctors of the law who sought salvation in moral casuistry — ‘this can be done to this point, to that point...’ — and thus I don’t know how many commandments they had, and the poor people...”. This is why the people did not trust them. The same thing happened with “the Sadducees, who sought salvation in compromises with the powerful men of the world, with the emperor: some with clerical networks, others with political networks sought salvation in this way”. But “the people had an instinct and didn’t believe” in them. Instead, “they believed in Jesus because he spoke with authority”.

And so, the Pope asked, “why this disdain?”. It is because, he said, “in our imagination salvation must come from something great, from something majestic: only the powerful can save us, those who have strength, who have money, who have power, these people can save us”. Instead, “God’s plan is different”. Thus, “they feel disdain because they cannot understand that salvation comes only from little things, from the simplicity of the things of God”. And “when Jesus proposes the way of salvation, he never speaks of great things”, but only “little things”.

From this perspective Francis suggested a re-reading of the Gospel Beatitudes — “you will be saved if you do this” — and of Matthew, Chapter 25. They are “the two pillars of the Gospel: ‘Come, come with me because you have done this’”. It involves “simple things: you did not seek salvation or hope in power, in networks, in negotiations, no; you simply did this”. Yet actually, this gives rise to much disdain.

The Pope then proposed, “preparing for Easter”, as he too intends to do, by “reading the Beatitudes and reading Matthew 25, and thinking and seeing if something about this causes me disdain, takes peace away from me”. Because “disdain is a luxury that only the vain, the proud allow themselves”.

Here, “at the end of the Beatitudes”, Francis explained, Jesus says something powerful: “Blessed is he who is not shocked by me”, who “does not disdain this, who does not feel disdain”. Reflecting on the reasons for these words, the Pope repeated that “it will do us good to take a little time — today, tomorrow — and read the Beatitudes, read Matthew and pay attention to what is happening in our heart: whether there is something that causes disdain”. And “ask the Lord for the grace to understand that the only way to salvation is the folly of the Cross, that is, the annihilation of the Son of God, of his becoming small”. In today’s liturgy, Pope Francis concluded, “the little thing” is

“represented by bathing in the Jordan and by the little village of Nazareth”.