



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

With joy and hope

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A Christian does not numb the pain, even the strongest pain that shakes his faith, and he does not experience joy and hope as if it were always carnival. Instead, he finds the meaning of his existence in the image of a woman giving birth: once her baby is born she is so happy that she no longer remembers her suffering. This is the image Jesus proposed, which the Pope referred to at the Mass he celebrated on Friday morning, in the Chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae.

“In the liturgy of the Ascension of the Lord”, Pope Francis immediately noted, referring to the prior day’s celebration, “the Church explodes in a manner that is not usual, and initially the first prayer is an outcry: ‘Exult, O Lord, your Church!’”. He continued, saying, “exult, with the hope of experiencing and reaching the Lord: ‘Exult with joy your Church’”. The Pope noted that in the opening prayer “today, we prayed: ‘Lord, raise our hearts to Jesus!’”. It is an invocation that expresses “precisely the joy that permeates through the whole Church, joy and hope: both go together”. Indeed, “joy without hope is simply fun, a fleeting joy”, and “hope without joy is not hope, and goes no further than healthy optimism”.

That is why “joy and hope go together”, Pope Francis explained, “and both make this outburst that the Church — I dare say — shouts almost shamelessly in her liturgy: ‘Exult your Church!’, exult

with joy, without formalities". Because "when there is great joy, there is no formality: that is joy". Therefore, the Pope repeated, "Exult with joy your Church, and live in the hope of attainment", and "raise, O Lord, our hearts to Jesus who sits in the glory of the Father".

"With three brushstrokes", the Pope said, "the Church speaks of what the Christian attitude should be: joy and hope together". In this way "joy strengthens hope, and hope flourishes in joy". And "with this attitude that the Church wants to give, both of these two Christian virtues indicate a way to go out of ourselves: the joyful are not closed in on themselves; hope takes us there, it is precisely the anchor on the beach of heaven and it takes us outside". We can, therefore, "go out of ourselves with joy and hope". The reflection made reference to the Gospel passage of John (16:20-23) from the liturgy.

"The Lord tells us that there will be problems", the Pope continued, "and in life this joy and hope are no carnival: they are another thing, having to face difficulties". Pope Francis revived "the image that the Lord uses in today's Gospel: a woman whose time of giving birth has come". Indeed, he explained, "the woman in labour is in pain, because the time has come; but when her child is born, she no longer remembers the suffering".

This is precisely "what joy and hope do together in our lives, when we are facing tribulations and problems, when we suffer". This is certainly not an "anaesthetic: pain is pain, but when lived with joy and hope it opens the door to a new fruit for you".

"This image of the Lord should help us greatly in times of difficulty", the Pope reassured, even in those "bad, horrible times that make us doubt our faith". However, "with joy and hope we move forward, because after this storm comes a new man, like a woman giving birth". And "Jesus says that this joy and hope are lasting, they do not pass".

"So you also are now in anguish" were Jesus' words to his disciples in the Gospel passage. But he immediately reassures them, saying: "I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you".

These words should be emphasized, the Pope added: "Difficulties can remove human joy from anything. But the joy that the Lord gives us, that makes us rejoice, raises us in the hope of finding it, the joy that no one can take away, it is lasting, even in the darkest moments".

"Joy and hope are the Church's outcry, elated after the Ascension of the Lord". Pope Francis recalled how "in The Acts of the Apostles, Luke tells us that at a certain point, when the Lord had gone away and the disciples did not see him anymore, they were looking at the sky and were a little sad". And "the angels woke them up, inviting them to go. Then, in the Gospel of Luke, we read: 'They came back happy, full of joy'". It was precisely "the joy of knowing that our humanity had entered heaven: for the first time!".

Pope Francis concluded his meditation with the hope “that the Lord may give us the grace of a great joy that is the expression of hope; and a strong hope that becomes joy in our lives”. He prayed that “the Lord watch over this joy and hope, so that no one can take away this joy and hope”.