



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Mass for Tawadros II

Tuesday, 25 April 2017

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 19, 12 May 2017)

Just days ahead of his pastoral visit to Egypt, Pope Francis offered Mass on Tuesday morning, 25 April, for his “brother Tawadros ii”, Pope of Alexandria. On the Feast of “Saint Mark the Evangelist, founder of the Church of Alexandria”, the Pontiff prayed for “the grace that the Lord bless our two Churches with the abundance of the Holy Spirit”.

Mark’s words at the end of the Gospel passage proposed by the day’s liturgy (16:15-20), were the guiding principle of the Pope’s meditation: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation”. In this consignment, Francis explained, “is the mission that Jesus gives to the disciples: the mission to announce the Gospel, to proclaim the Gospel”. And “the first thing that Jesus asks” is that they “go forth, not stay in Jerusalem: ‘Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation’”. It is an invitation to “go out and go forth”, the Pontiff stressed.

Moreover, he pointed out, “the Gospel is always proclaimed on a journey: never sitting down, always on a journey, always”. Thus, he continued, we are called to go forth, “to preach the true Gospel” in those places “where Jesus is not known or where Jesus is persecuted or where Jesus is disfigured”. And “as we heard in the Alleluia canticle”, he noted, “we proclaim Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God”. Indeed, Francis said, “this is the Christ whom Jesus sends us to proclaim”.

Therefore, Christians are called “to go out to announce, and also in this going out, life goes forth. A preacher’s life is on the line: he or she is not in a safe place; there is no life insurance for preachers”. But, the Pope cautioned, “if a preacher seeks life insurance, he is not a true preacher of the Gospel: he does not go out, he stays put, safe”.

“First, go forth; go out”, the Pontiff insisted. Because “the Gospel, proclaiming Jesus Christ, is always done by ‘going out’, always: on the journey, always”. It is “a physical journey and a spiritual journey, and a journey of suffering: let us consider the proclamation of the Gospel by so many sick people, — so many sick people! — who offer up their suffering for the Church, for Christians”. They are people who “always come out of themselves”.

But “what is the manner of this announcement?”, the Pope asked. “Saint Peter, who was Mark’s own teacher, is very clear in the description of this manner: how is the Gospel proclaimed?”. The answer, Francis said, can be found in the day’s first reading (1 Pet 5:5-14): “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another”. Yes, the Pope explained, “the Gospel is proclaimed in humility, because the Son of God humbled himself; he annihilated himself: this is God’s way; there is no other”. And, Francis continued, “announcing the Gospel is not a carnival, a celebration that is a beautiful thing”; this, Francis said, “is not announcing the Gospel”. It requires “humility: the Gospel cannot be announced by human power, cannot be proclaimed with the spirit of climbing up and over, no! This is not the Gospel”.

Above all, there must be humility, as Peter strongly advised in his first letter: “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another”. And he immediately explains the reason for this manner: “Because God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble”. And “in order to announce the Gospel, there must be God’s grace, and to receive this grace, humility is necessary; this proposal is the way of the announcement”. Peter also adds the following words: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God ... cast all anxieties on him”.

Humility is necessary “because we carry forth an announcement of humiliation, of glory, but through humility”, Pope Francis said. “The announcement of the Gospel withstands temptation: the temptation of power, the temptation of pride, the temptation of worldliness, of the many types of worldliness that exist and that lead us to preach or to recite”. Indeed, proclaiming “a Gospel that is watered down, without strength, a Gospel without Christ crucified and Risen, is not preaching”, he explained. “This is why Peter says to be vigilant: ‘your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world’” (vv. 8-9).

“If the announcement of the Gospel is true, it withstands temptation”, Francis stressed. “If a Christian who says he proclaims the Gospel with words or by bearing witness” — if such a Christian — “is never tempted”, the Pope continued, then he can rest assured that the devil is not concerned with him. “And when the devil is not concerned, it is because we make no problems for

him, because we are preaching something that serves no purpose”, the Pontiff explained. This is why “in true preaching, there is always some degree of temptation and also of persecution”.

Thus, he observed, it entails the “way of humility, a journey — because we ‘go out’ — a journey of temptation, but hope” must never be lacking. In fact, Peter writes: “after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore ... you”. Indeed, Francis said, “it will be the Lord himself who reclaims us, strengthens us, because this is what Jesus promised when he sent the Apostles forth”. As Mark’s Gospel relates in the day’s liturgy: “they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended them”. So, Pope Francis affirmed, “it will be the Lord who comforts us, gives us the strength to move forward because he works within us if we are faithful to the announcement of the Gospel, if we come out of ourselves to preach Christ crucified, scandal and folly, and if we do so with the manner of humility, of true humility” Francis concluded.

“May the Lord give us this grace, as baptized people, everyone, to follow the path of evangelization with humility, with trust in him, announcing the true Gospel: ‘The Word became flesh’” (Jn 1:14). “This is folly; it is a scandal”. May we evangelize “in the awareness that the Lord is beside us, that he acts with us and confirms our work”.