



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

"Tranquility" is not peace

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Today's world offers a "tranquil, artificial and anaesthetised peace" in which anyone can put up his own "do not disturb" sign to create his own personal version of tranquility, yet this is not the true peace that Jesus offers: this thought lay at the heart of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday, 16 May. The peace that Jesus offers is "a real peace" because it is rooted in the Cross, and therefore enables one to overcome all of life's many daily tribulations, including suffering and illness, without falling into mere stoicism or playing the martyr. In this regard, Pope Francis offered the wisdom of Saint Augustine who characterized Christian life as "a journey between the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God" (*De Civitate Dei* XVIII, 51).

In his meditation, the Pope drew inspiration from the Gospel of John (14:27-31) proposed by the day's liturgy. Francis observed that "Jesus was at supper with his disciples, the Last Supper, and he said to them: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you'". The Lord, said the Pope, "gives them peace", and then told them: "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid because I give you my peace".

In this way, Pope Francis explained, "the Lord begins to take leave" of his disciples, precisely "with

this gift, with the gift of peace”. Furthermore, the Pope continued, “we have also heard the passage from the Acts of the Apostles” (14:19-28) which recounted “the journey which Paul and Barnabas made from Antioch and then their return to Antioch, where we heard about the things that they suffered”. The Pope thus wondered: “is this the peace which Jesus gives us?”. Paul and Barnabas, in fact, “preached at Lystra”; but — the Acts tell us — “there came from Iconium some who convinced the crowd that what Paul was preaching was not true”. And immediately the crowd “was persuaded against him: they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, believing that he was dead”.

Thus, the Pope asked, “is this the peace which Jesus gives? Or did Paul not receive this peace?”. The Acts then recount that Paul, “when the disciples gathered about him, rose up and entered the city’, since he was not dead, and he continued to proclaim the Gospel”. In the saint’s unique way, Francis explained, Paul “had cultivated a considerable number of disciples and, before leaving them, he ordained priests, elders, that they might take care of that community”. In effect, Paul then “continued to work”. And faced with this reality, Paul urged them to “continue strong in faith, because through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God”.

Therefore, the Holy Father affirmed, “it is a peace amid tribulations”. And for this reason, “when Jesus gave this gift and said to the Apostles: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you’, he added: ‘not as the world gives, do I give to you’”. In actual fact, the Pope explained, “the peace which the world offers is a peace without tribulations: it offers an artificial peace, a peace which, more than ‘peace’, is better called ‘tranquility’”. That is to say: “Please do not disturb me; I want to be left in peace”.

One might say, Pope Francis continued, that the world offers us “a peace that looks only to its own concerns, to its own securities”, so as to ensure “that nothing is lacking”. In this regard the Holy Father referred to the “figure of ‘Dives’ (the rich man), that man who lived in peace, happy, always with friends, but who were ‘so-called’ friends since they visited him because in his house they ate well; there were parties”. And thus, “they were tranquil”, but also, “closed in: they did not look beyond”.

“The world teaches us the path of peace with anaesthesia” the Pope reiterated. And the world “anaesthetises us so that we do not see another reality of life: the cross”. For this reason, “Paul says that on the journey, we must enter the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations”. But, the Pope asked, “can there be peace in tribulation?”. He responded, “on our part, no”, because “we are not capable of creating a peace which is tranquil, a psychological peace, a self-made peace, simply because there are tribulations”, which ‘for one person’ may be “pain; for another, disease; for another, death”.

But “the peace that Jesus gives is a gift: it is a gift of the Holy Spirit”. And “this peace undergoes tribulations and [yet] goes forth. It is not” — the Holy Father clarified — “a sort of stoicism, that of

‘playing the martyr’”. It is really “another thing entirely; it is a gift that helps us to keep going”. Thus, “Jesus, after having said this, went up to the Garden of Olives, as he had told them: ‘I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming’”. And, having said these words, “he went to suffer, to be tempted: he offered everything to the Father’s will and suffered, but God’s consolation did not forsake him”. In the Gospel, in fact, we read: “there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him”.

Behold then, the Pope explained, that “the peace of God is a real peace which is part of the reality of life, which does not negate life”. Since “life is thus: there is suffering, there are sick people, there are many awful things, there are wars; but that peace which comes from within, which is a gift, is never lost”, and helps us “to go forth, bearing the cross and the suffering”. All this with the knowledge that “peace without the cross is not the peace of Christ: it is a peace which can be bought”. Perhaps “we can create it ourselves, but it is not long-lasting”; it eventually comes to an end.

Reflecting then on the daily life of each of us, the Pope explained that “when I get angry and lose my peace, when my heart is unsettled, it is because I am not open to the peace of Jesus: because I am not able to live life as it happens, with the crosses and the sadness that occur: because I am not able to ask: ‘Lord, give me your peace’”. And this, Pope Francis said, “is a beautiful grace to ask for today, listening to this passage about Jesus and those words of Saint Paul: “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God”. The Pontiff therefore urged the faithful to pray for “the grace of peace, so as not to lose that interior peace”. Concluding, Francis offered the following prayer as an example: “May the Lord help us to correctly understand this peace which he has given to us through the Holy Spirit”.