



# The Holy See

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**POPE FRANCIS**

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE  
*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ*

*Nostalgia for one's roots*

*Thursday, 5 October 2017*

(by: [www.osservatoreromano.va](http://www.osservatoreromano.va))

To set out on “a journey to reclaim one’s roots”: that’s what Pope Francis suggested to the faithful during his homily of 5 October. Moreover, “a person without roots is sick”, he affirmed. The Pontiff drew his reflection from the first liturgical reading, Nehemiah 8: 1-4.5-6.7-12, which told of a “great liturgical assembly” that “gathered in the temple” all the people of Israel after their long exile. It was “the end of a story which lasted for more than seventy years” the Pope explained, namely, “the deportation in Babylon”. They were years “of sadness” and “weeping”, he said, drawing a parallel with the current situation of “the nostalgia of migrants; the nostalgia of those who are far from their country and want to return”. He referred to the popular Genovese song, *Ma se ghe pensu (But if I think about it)*, which the Pontiff heard during his recent visit to the regional capital of Liguria.

Returning to the scripture reading from the Old Testament, Francis explained that Nehemiah strove to bring the people back “to their city” and thus “began the journey”. It was a journey “to rediscover the city in order to reconstruct the city”, and it was no simple task, the Pope affirmed. “He had to convince many people, and to take things with which to build the city, the walls, the temple; but above all it was a journey to rediscover the roots of the people”. In fact, after many years, the people “had not lost their roots, but they had languished”. There was a need to “reclaim” their roots, the sense of “belonging to a people”. After all, the Pontiff explained, “without roots one is not able to live”. Therefore, he stressed, it is necessary “to rediscover one’s roots and draw the strength to go on, the strength to give fruit”.

However, also worthy of consideration is the fact that “there was much resistance on this journey” and it was years before the people were able to gather in the assembly to which the scripture passage refers. For where there is “the will of the people to find their roots”, there is also the “resistance” of those “who prefer exile”. And such exile is not simply “physical”. Indeed, Pope Francis described the existence of “psychological exile”: “those who prefer to be uprooted, without roots” who impose upon themselves “a self-exile from the community, from society” - a condition in which many people find themselves today, the Pontiff observed, describing it as a true and proper “sickness”.

However, the people of Israel forged ahead; the temple and the wall were reconstructed, and they “gathered together in order to restore their own [sense of] membership, to restore their roots, that is, to listen to the Law”. In fact, Pope Francis explained, “the man and woman who rediscover their own roots, who are faithful to their own membership, are a man and woman of joy, and this joy is their strength”. Consequently, one passes “from the weeping of sadness to the cry of joy; from the cry of weakness in being so far from one’s roots, far from one’s people, to the weeping of belonging: ‘I am home’”.