



The Holy See

POPE FRANCISMORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

*DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE***Arm wrestling with God**Thursday, 4 April 2019[Multimedia]

To pray in a serious way means to have “courage”, putting one’s “all into it” and even “arm wrestling” with God or silently “stammering”: the important thing is that one does not do it “like a parrot” by offering “two paltry little prayers”. This is the advice that the Pontiff offered the faithful during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 4 April, which was also attended by Italian President Sergio Mattarella.

Citing the Bible passage which recounts the Lord’s anger with “the people who had made themselves a golden calf”, the Pope said Moses prays to “convince the Lord not to punish them”. This, he said, is a “prayer of intercession” and Moses uses “persuasion” with God: “with meekness, but also firmness”. The Bible offers many examples of intercession, the Pope said. When “the Lord tells Abraham that he will destroy Sodom”, Abraham intercedes on the city’s behalf by “bargaining”, like one does when shopping at the market: “he negotiates”. This is another “form of interceding: negotiating with the Lord”.

Pope Francis then drew from the image of Samuel’s mother Anna, who implores the Lord for a son, “in silence ... stammering before the Lord”.

On the other hand, the Canaanite woman who implores Jesus to heal her daughter possessed by demons, does not “use persuasion, ... bargaining” or “silent insistence”, the Pope observed. Rather, she boldly presses the Lord to grant her request because “even the little dogs eat the bread crumbs that fall to the ground”. And “she gets what she wants”, the Pope said, noting that “it takes courage to pray like that”: with this “parrhesia, the courage to speak to God face to face. And sometimes, when one sees how these people struggle with the Lord to have something, one thinks that they are arm wrestling with God: in order to get what they ask for: “because they are convinced, they have faith that the Lord can give them this grace”.

The Pope warned against lukewarm prayer, saying that true prayer means putting one’s “all into it”, and asking for Jesus’ intercession. When someone asks us to pray, Francis added, “do not do

it with two paltry little prayers, no: do it seriously”.

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