



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The scandal of the Incarnation

Saturday, 1st June 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 23, 5 June 2013)

The “scandal” of a God who became man and died on the Cross was the focus of Pope Francis’ Homily at Mass on Saturday morning, 1 June, in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

The commemoration of Justin the Martyr, whose liturgical Memorial is celebrated on 1 June, gave the Pope the opportunity to reflect on the coherence of life and on the heart of every Christian’s faith: the Cross. “We can do all the social work we like, and people can say: ‘how good the Church is, what good social work the Church does!’. But if we say we do this because those people are the flesh of Christ, it gives rise to a scandal”.

Without the Incarnation of the Word the foundation of our faith is lacking, as the Pope underlined. “That is the truth, that is the revelation of Jesus. That presence of Jesus Incarnate. That is the point”. If it is forgotten, there will always be a strong temptation “to do good things without the scandal of the Incarnate Word, without the scandal of the Cross”.

Justin was a witness of this truth, for it was precisely the scandal of the Cross that attracted the persecution of the world. He proclaimed the God who came to dwell among us and made himself like his creatures. The proclamation of the Crucified and Risen Christ upset his listeners, but he

continued to witness consistently to this truth. “The Church is not a cultural or religious organization, nor is it a social one, it is not this. The Church is the family of Jesus. The Church confesses that Jesus is the Son of God who came in flesh. This is the scandal and this is why they persecuted Jesus”.

The Pope referred to the Gospel passage of the day (Mk 11:27-33), and in particular to the question put to Jesus by the priests and scribes: “By what authority are you doing these things?”. Jesus realized that the real aim of his interlocutors was to “set a trap for him”. Each question was a trick to put him in a corner, to induce him to say the wrong thing and to find an excuse to condemn him. When the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of God?”, Jesus replied yes and was immediately sentenced to death. “This is the centre of persecution”, the Pope said. In fact, “if we become merely reasonable, social and charitable Christians what will the consequence be? That we will never have martyrs”. However when we say that “the Son of God came and became flesh, when we preach the scandal of the Cross, there will be persecution, there will be the Cross”. In conclusion Pope Francis urged the faithful to ask the Lord “not to be ashamed of living with this scandal of the Cross”.

Concelebrating with the Pope among others was Cuban Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of San Cristóbal de La Habana; also present was a group of the Gentlemen of His Holiness.