



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The air of the Church

Monday, 30 September 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 41, 9 October 2013)

Peace and joy “is the air of the Church”. Commenting on the daily Readings at Mass on Monday morning, 30 September, in the Santa Marta Chapel, Pope Francis focused on the atmosphere that reigns when the Church is aware of the Lord’s constant presence. It is an atmosphere of peace where the joy of the Lord reigns.

The Holy Father drew from the book of Zechariah (8:1-8) — specifically the prophecy that Jerusalem’s streets were to be filled with the elderly holding canes, portraying longevity, alongside the young people, who play joyfully, portraying the joy of God’s people — and the Gospel passage from Luke (9:46-50), which tells of the dispute among the apostles over who among them was the greatest.

The Pope said that these two accounts bring to mind an exchange of views on the organization of the Church. But, he said, “the Lord likes to surprise”, and so “he shifts the centre of the discussion”; and looking to the child next to him, so he says, “Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me. For whoever is the least among all of you, is the greatest”.

“In the First Reading”, the Holy Father said, “we heard God’s promise to his people: I will return to

Zion, I will dwell in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city. The Lord will return". But, he asked, "what are the signs that the Lord is returning? Perfect organization? A government that moves along smoothly with everything perfect?". To answer this question the Holy Father used the image of the crowded square of Jerusalem filled with the elderly and children.

Therefore "those who are left aside when we think of an organization program", he said, "they will be the sign of God's presence: they are the elderly and the children. The elderly for they bring wisdom, the wisdom of their life, the wisdom of tradition, the wisdom of history, the wisdom of God's law; and children for they are the strength, the future, the ones who will bring forward the future with their strength and with their lives".

A people's future, the Pope said, "is precisely here, in the elderly and the children. And a people who do not take care of their elderly and their children have no future because they will not have memory and will not have a promise". He also recalled that "the only commandment which brings with it a blessing is the fourth, the commandment which regards honouring our parents and the elderly".

The disciples naturally wanted "the Church to move forward without any problems". But the Pontiff warned that this "can become a temptation for the Church: to be a Church of functionalism, a well-organized Church, with everything in its place". Yet this would be a Church "without memory and without promise".

"The Prophet", continued the Pope "speaks about the Church's vitality. However, he does not tell us: I will be with you every week and you'll have a document to think over; every month we will have a meeting to plan". All of this is necessary, he said, but it is not the sign of God's presence. The Lord points to the sign when he says: "The elderly will sit still in the streets of Jerusalem, each with their cane representing longevity. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in the squares... Peace and joy, this is the air of the Church".