The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Words gone mad

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In his homily at Holy Mass on the first Thursday of Advent, Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel from St Matthew (7:21;24-27), in which the Jesus tells us: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven".

Pope Francis noted that, elsewhere in the Gospel Jesus "admonished the Pharisees for knowing everything but not putting what they know into practice". He said that this is why "the Lord said to the people: do what they tell you, but not what they do, because they don't do what they say!" It is a matter, he said, of "words detached from practice".

And yet the Lord's words themselves "are beautiful," he said. "The Commandments and the Beatitudes" are among the good and beautiful words which the Lord has given us. "However," Pope Francis warned, "we can say them repeatedly, but if we do not put them into practice in our lives, not only do they not help but they actually do us harm ... for they make us believe that we have a beautiful home, when in fact it has no foundation".

In the Gospel passage from St Matthew, he continued, the Lord says that "every one, then, who

hears these words of mine and puts them into practice will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock". Ultimately, the Pope explained, it is "a mathematical equation: I know the word, I put it into practice, I am established on rock". The core of the matter, the Pope explained, is "how I put them into practice". "This is Jesus' message: putting them into practice is like building a house upon rock" and "this figure of the rock refers to the Lord".

Pope Francis then recalled the prophet Isaiah who, in the first Reading (26:1-6) says: "Trust in the Lord for ever, for the Lord is an everlasting rock". "The rock is Jesus Christ, the rock is the Lord. Our word is forceful, it bestows life, it continues on, it can tolerate any attack if this word is rooted in Jesus Christ". However, he said, "a Christian word whose life-giving roots are not grounded in a person, in Jesus Christ, is a Christian word without Christ. And Christian words without Christ deceive, they do harm".

The Pontiff then quoted the English author G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), when speaking about heresy once said that a heresy is a truth, a word, a truth gone mad. "When Christian words lack Christ, they begin to head down the road of madness". The prophet Isaiah, he added, clearly describes the nature of this madness. He says: "The Lord is an everlasting rock. For he has brought low the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city" (26:4-5). "The inhabitants of the height. A Christian word without Christ leads to vanity, to self assuredness, to pride, and to power for power's sake. And the Lord brings these people low".

Pope Francis explained that this reality "has been a constant throughout the history of salvation. Anna, the mother of Samuel, says it; Mary says it in the *Magnificat*: the Lord has humbled the vanity and the pride of those people who thought they were the rock". They pronounce Christian words, he said, "but without Christ: without a relationship with Jesus Christ; without prayer with Jesus Christ; without service to Jesus Christ; without love for Jesus Christ".

"What the Lord tells us today," he continued, "is to build our lives on this rock. And he is the rock. St Paul says it explicitly when he refers to Moses striking the rock with his staff. He says: the rock was Christ. Christ is the rock". This reflection, he said, leads us to examine our consciences by examining our words, by asking whether or not our words are spoken "with Jesus Christ".

Pope Francis prayed that the Lord "might help us truly to have the humility we ought to have: always to speak Christian words in Jesus Christ, not without Jesus Christ". And he asked the Lord to help us "in humility to be disciples, redeemed, to continue on not with words that end in the madness of vanity and pride". Pope Francis concluded, praying: "May the Lord grant us this grace of humility to speak words with Jesus Christ, which are firmly established on Jesus Christ".

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