



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Salvation is a gift

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In his homily on the Solemnity of the Annunciation, Pope Francis invited those present at Holy Mass to “celebrate and give thanks to God” because “today we commemorate a definitive step along the journey” of salvation “since man first departed the garden of paradise”.

“Today marks the celebration of the journey from one mother to another mother, from one father to another father”, the Pope explained. He therefore invited those present to contemplate “the image of Eve and Adam, the image of Mary and Jesus”, to survey salvation history, and to contemplate God who continually journeys together with his people. “Today”, the Pope said, “we can embrace the Father who, through the Blood of his Son ... has saved us”.

Pope Francis then reflected on God’s command to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth and subdue it, and on his promise of redemption after they had sinned. “With this commandment and with this promise”, he said, our first parents “began their journey, a long road travelled over the course of many centuries” that began “through their disobedience”. Indeed, Adam and Eve “were deceived and seduced; they were seduced by Satan, who suggested: you will be like God’s!”. “Pride and haughtiness” prevailed in them, the Pope said. “They fell into sin: they sought to take the place of God through self-sufficient pride”. The Pope added that “this is precisely the attitude that Satan himself embodies completely”.

Our first parents “did not make this journey alone”, the Pope explained. “The Lord was with them”, and has accompanied mankind on the long road that “began with disobedience yet ended in an act of obedience”. By way of explanation, and citing the famous words of a second century Bishop and Church Father, Pope Francis noted that “the Second Vatican Council takes up a beautiful expression of St Irenaeus who said: ‘the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by Mary’s obedience’”.

God always abides “with his people along their journey”, the Pope added. “He sends the prophets and sends others to explain the Law”. But “why has the Lord walked with his people with such tenderness?”, the Pope asked. “To soften our hearts”. In fact, he said, through the Scriptures God tells us explicitly: “I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh”.

The Lord desires “to soften our hearts” so that we might receive “the promise which he made in paradise: as sin came into the world through one man, so also through another Man salvation has come”. “This long journey” has helped “us all to have a more human heart, closer to God; not so proud, not so self- sufficient”.

“Today the liturgy speaks to us about this journey of restoration ... and it speaks to us about obedience, about docility to God’s word”. The day’s second Reading taken from the Letter to the Hebrews (10:4-10) “is very clear”: “Brothers, it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins”.

Therefore, Pope Francis said, “salvation cannot be bought and sold; it is given as a gift, it is free”. “We cannot save ourselves, salvation is a totally free gift”. As St Paul affirms in his Letter to the Hebrews, it cannot be bought “with the blood of bulls and goats”. The Pope continued: “since it cannot be bought, in order for this salvation to enter into us we need a humble heart, a docile heart, an obedient heart like Mary’s”. Moreover, “the model on this journey of salvation is God himself, his Son, who did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied himself, and was obedient unto death, even death on a cross”.

In conclusion, Pope Francis asked: what does “the path of humility, of humiliation” mean? Simply put, he said, it means saying: “I am a man, I am a woman, and you are God! And going forward in God’s presence, as a man, as a woman, in obedience and docility of heart”.