



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

No bureaucracy in the sacristy!

Thursday, 8 May 2014

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 20, 16 May 2014)

Pope Francis reflected on the day's Readings from the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40) and the Gospel of John (6:44-51).

The Pope introduced his remarks by noting how the first Reading from Acts clearly presents the three key moments in evangelization. "The first", he explained, "is the docility of Phillip, who goes to proclaim Jesus Christ". He was engaged "in his work of evangelization" when "the angel of the Lord told him: rise, leave this behind and take that road". Phillip obeys, "he is docile to the Lord's call" and does not hesitate to leave behind the "many things he had to do". He goes where the Lord calls him. "This shows us that, without this docility to the voice of God, no one can evangelize, no one can announce Jesus Christ".

Phillip's dialogue with the Ethiopian is "the second moment of evangelization", the Pope then observed. The Acts of the Apostles recounts that, along the way, Phillip meets "an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of Candace the queen of the Ethiopians" — a region where women governed, the Pope noted, like as "the queen of Saba". This man was "in charge of all the treasures" of the kingdom, a true "minister of the economy". He was on his way "to Jerusalem to worship, because he was a Hebrew". Acts reports that the minister was "seated in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah". And behold, "the Lord said to Phillip: 'go up and join this chariot'". When Phillip heard him "reading the prophet", he "roused his courage and asked him: do you understand what you are

reading?”.

This, Pope Francis said, is the very moment that brings us to the “second moment in the process of evangelization: dialogue”. He warned, however, that dialogue does not mean only saying “what I think”, presuming that the other person believes us. Indeed, true dialogue “begins with the other: you who are reading, do you understand this?”.

In short, the Pope said, the evangelizer welcomes the opportunity for dialogue from the other, “he abases himself, humbles himself before the other. He does not seek to impose ideas, doctrines” saying, “things are like this!”. The true evangelizer goes out to meet the other “in order to offer him Jesus’ salvation”, and “he does so humbly through dialogue”. He also does so in the knowledge that “one cannot evangelize without dialogue” and that one cannot ignore the journey of the person “who needs to be evangelized”.

The Bishop of Rome then posed a possible objection: “But Father, much time is lost because everyone has his own story, he has his ideas...”. It is true, he said, that “one loses time” but certainly “God lost more time in creating the world! And he did it well!”. Therefore, we need “to lose time with the other person because the other person is the one God wants you to evangelize” and to whom he wishes you to give “the news of Jesus”. It is also important, he added, that dialogue happen with a person “as he is” and “not as he should be”.

Returning to the Acts of the Apostles, the Pope noted that the dialogue between Phillip and the Ethiopian minister must have been long and must have focused on baptism, because “when they came to some water the eunuch said: ‘See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’”.

This observation, the Pope said, brings us to the third moment of evangelization. “This man felt the power of God within”, and when he saw water he asked the Apostle: ‘what is there to prevent my being baptized?’ And Phillip, without saying anything, has him get out of the carriage “and he baptized him”. Here, the Pope said, we are standing before “the power of the Sacrament, the power of grace. Thus the process of evangelization is also completed: docility in evangelizing, dialogue with the person, and the power of grace”. The Pope added: “Phillip takes this man of good will, a very good man, and he leads him to the hands of God, to his grace”.

This third moment of grace prompted Pope Francis to reflect “on the minister of the economy’s question: ‘See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized? What is to prevent grace from coming to me?’”.

“Many times we keep people away from an encounter with God, keep people away from grace” because we do not behave like good “facilitators of the Sacraments”. The account from the Acts of the Apostles shows the goal of evangelization. In fact, “when they come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Phillip; and the eunuch saw him no more”. This confirms that God was

present in this process of evangelization. On the one hand, “the eunuch went on his way rejoicing”; on the other, “Phillip was found at Azotus, evangelizing the people”.

This is the moral: the man who came from afar didn't have much culture, he was reading the Bible because he had been taught to do so in the Synagogue; but he was of good will, and he then felt the joy of grace, of this grace which “is free, which cannot be bought because it is not sold: it is given”.

“With this joy, that man who was incapable of giving life — he was a eunuch — carried the seed of life within himself to his people, and he generated a Christian people”. Then Matthew and Mark journeyed to that region “to found churches”.

The passage from Acts, the Pope observed, “will help us to understand better that God is the One who evangelizes. As Jesus says in today's Reading from the Gospel of John: ‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him’. It is the Father who draws us to Jesus”. The Pope then added: “Jesus himself once told Phillip: Phillip, the Father and I are one”.

Pope Francis concluded his reflection by inviting those present to think about “these three moments of evangelization: the docility of evangelization” in doing the will of God; “dialogue with the person” as they are; and “trusting in grace”, since “grace is more important than all the bureaucracy”. He also invited those present to reflect on the eunuch's question: “What is to prevent my being baptized?”. Lastly, he noted that “many times we in the Church are like a company manufacturing impediments so that people cannot arrive at grace. May the Lord make us understand this”.