



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

He always gives more

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“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Lk 11:9-10). At the morning Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis returned to meditate on the theme of prayer. He paused on the day’s Reading from the Gospel of Luke, which speaks of the man who asks, and on the love of God who answers and gives in overabundance.

After recalling the text of the collect prayer recited before the Liturgy of the Word — “O God, source of all good, hear the prayers of your people beyond every wish and all merit, pour out your mercy upon us: forgive our conscious fears and bestow that which prayer does not dare to hope” — the Pontiff began his reflection pointing out that “God’s mercy is not only forgiving — we all know this — but being generous and giving more and more...”. Pausing on the invocation “and bestow that which prayer does not dare to hope”, Francis highlighted: “Perhaps in prayer we ask for this and that, and He always gives us more! Always, always more”.

The Pope then resumed the thread of the Gospel narrative, recalling that, a few verses before the passage offered in the day’s liturgy, the Apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray as John had done with his disciples. “And the Lord taught them the Our Father”. Afterwards the Gospel goes on

to speak of the “generosity of God”, of that “mercy of which he always gives more, more than what we believe can be given”.

Pope Francis went to the heart of the text: “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight...’. There are three words, three key words in this passage: friend, Father, and gift”. This is the idea linked to the everyday experience of each person: in our life, the Pontiff said, there are golden friends, “who would give their life for a friend”, and there are other more or less good ones, but a few are friends in a more profound way. There are not very many of these: “The Bible tells us ‘one, two or three... no more’”. Then the others are friends, but not like these”.

Along the lines of the passage from Luke, the Pope continued: “I go to his house and ask, I ask, and in the end he feels bothered by the intrusion; he gets up and gives what the friend asks”. The very “bond of friendship” sees that “we are given what we ask”. But, he explained, “Jesus takes a step forward and speaks of the Father”, posing these questions to his listeners: “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”. From here the following reassurance: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give...!”. This means “not only the friend who accompanies us on the journey of life helps us and gives us what we ask; but also the heavenly Father, this Father who loves us so much”, to the point that He concerns himself — Jesus says — with feeding the birds of the field”.

In this way, Pope Francis indicated, the Lord “wants to reawaken trust in prayer”. Then, turning again to the Gospel of Luke, he quoted: “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (11:9-10). The Pontiff explained: “This is the prayer: ask, seek the way, and knock at the heart of God, the friend who accompanies us, the Father” who loves all of his creatures.

At the end of the passage, the Pope pointed out a phrase which “seems a little cryptic: ‘If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children’, will your heavenly Father give much more than you ask? Yes! He ‘will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’”. This is precisely “the gift, this is the ‘more’ of God”. Because the Father, the Pontiff underlined, “never gives you a gift, something you ask him for, like this, without wrapping it well, without something more that makes it more beautiful”. And “what the Lord, the Father gives us that is ‘more’, is the Spirit: the true gift of the Father is what prayer does not dare to hope”. Man knocks at God’s door with prayer to ask for grace. And “He, the Father, gives me that and more: the gift, the Holy Spirit”.

It is this, the Pope emphasized, the dynamic of prayer, which “one does with a friend, who is the companion on the journey of life, one does with the Father and one does in the Holy Spirit”. The true friend is Jesus: it is he, in fact, “who accompanies us and teaches us to pray. And our prayer must thus be Trinitarian”. It is a very important point of emphasis for Pope Francis who,

approaching his conclusion, recalled a classic dialogue he has had many times with the faithful: “Do you believe? Yes, yes! What do you believe in? In God! But what is God for you? God, God!”. A rather generic, abstract concept, which, for the Bishop of Rome, does not fit reality. Because, he stated, “the Father, the Son and the Spirit exist: they are persons, not an idea in the air”. In other words, he specified, “this ‘mist God’ does not exist: people exist!”.

The Pontiff’s final message in brief: “Jesus is the companion on the journey who gives us what we ask; the Father who cares for us and loves us; and the Holy Spirit who is the gift, is that ‘more’ that the Father gives, for which our conscience does not dare to hope”.