



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Catholic, but not too Catholic

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There are Christians who stop at the “reception desk” of the Church and linger at the threshold, without going in, to avoid compromising themselves. This is the approach of those who say they are “Catholic, but” not too Catholic. Pope Francis spoke of them during morning Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday.

On the Feast Day of the Apostles, Sts Simon and Jude, the Pontiff pointed out that “the Church causes us to reflect on her”, inviting us to consider “how the Church is” and “what the Church is”. In the Letter to the Ephesians (2:19-22), “the first thing that Paul tells us is that we are neither strangers nor sojourners: we are not passing through, in this city that is the Church, but we are fellow citizens”. Thus, “the Lord calls us to his Church with the rights of a citizen: we are not passing through, we are rooted there. Our life is there”.

And Paul “makes an icon of the building of the temple”, writing: “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone”. Exactly “this is the Church”, the Pope confirmed. For we “are built upon the pillars of the Apostles: the cornerstone, the foundation, is Christ Jesus himself, and we are inside”.

St Paul continues, explaining that in Christ “the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”. This, then, is “the definition of the Church that Paul gives us today: a temple built”. And thus, “we too are built to become a dwelling place of the Spirit”: we are “built”, Francis indicated, “upon the pillars of the Apostles and upon this cornerstone that is Jesus Christ”.

The Pontiff then indicated that “we are also able to see” this same vision of the Church “developed a bit in the passage of the Gospel” according to Luke (6:12-19), which tells how Jesus chose the Apostles. The Evangelist “says that Jesus went into the hills to pray. And then he called these twelve, he chose them”. Then Jesus came down with them from the the hills and found on a level place, waiting for him, “a great crowd of his disciples, whom he would send out” and “a great multitude of people who sought to touch him” in order to be healed.

In other words, the Pope explained, “Jesus prays, Jesus calls, Jesus chooses, Jesus sends out his disciples, Jesus heals the crowd”. And “within this temple, Jesus, who is the cornerstone, does all this work: it is He who leads the Church forward in this way”. Just as Paul writes, “this Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles whom he chose”. This is confirmed by the Gospel passage, which tells that the Lord “chose from them twelve: all sinners, all”. Judas, the Bishop of Rome observed, “wasn’t the most sinful” and “I don’t know who was the most sinful”. But “poor Judas is that one who closed himself to love and this is why he became a traitor”. The fact remains that “all of the Apostles fled at the difficult moment of the Passion, and they left Jesus alone: all are sinners”. But nevertheless, Jesus himself chose them.

Thus, Francis continued, “Jesus creates the Church through his prayer; He does so through the selection of the Apostles; He does so through the choice of the disciples that He then sends out; He does so through the encounter with the people”. Jesus is never “separated from the people: He is always in the midst of the crowd who seeks to touch Him, ‘for power came forth from him and healed them all’”, as Luke highlights in his Gospel.

“We are citizens, fellow citizens of this Church”, the Pope pointed out. For this reason, “if we do not enter this temple and be part of this construction in order that the Holy Spirit may dwell in us, we are not in the Church”. We are rather, watching “from the threshold”, perhaps saying: “How beautiful, yes, this is beautiful!”. And this way, we end up being “Christians who go no further than the ‘reception desk’ of the Church. They are there, at the threshold”, with the attitude of one who thinks: “well yes, I’m Catholic, but” not too Catholic!

According to Francis, “perhaps the most beautiful thing one can say about how the Church is built is the first and last word of the Gospel passage: ‘Jesus prays’, He ‘went out into the hills to pray; and all night He continued in prayer to God’”. Thus, “Jesus prays and Jesus heals”, precisely because “power came forth from Him and healed them all”. Precisely “within this framework — Jesus prays and Jesus heals — there is all that one can say about the Church: Jesus who prays

for his own, for the pillars, for the disciples, for his people; and Jesus who heals, who accommodates the people, who bestows health of soul and body.

In this regard, the Pope repeated Jesus' dialogue with Peter, "the pillar". The Lord "chose him, in that moment" and reassured him, telling him: "I prayed for you, in order that your faith not diminish". It is Jesus who prays for Peter. "This dialogue", the Pope stated, "ends after Peter denies Jesus". And therefore, the Lord asks him, by the Sea of Tiberias: "Peter, do you love me more than than these?".

This dialogue shows, the Pontiff explained, "Jesus who prays and Jesus who heals Peter's heart, wounded by betrayal". And even so, "He makes a pillar of him". This means that "Peter's sin doesn't matter to Jesus: He seeks the heart". But "in order to find this heart, and to heal it, He prayed".

The reality of "Jesus who prays and Jesus who heals" applies even today, for all of us. Because, the Pope emphasized, "we cannot comprehend the Church without this Jesus who prays and this Jesus who heals". And Francis then concluded his meditation by praying to the Holy Spirit, that "He enable us all to understand this Church which has power in Jesus' prayer for us and which is capable of healing us all".