



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The joy of Christian memory

Thursday, 3 October 2013

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When the memory of the history of salvation wrought by Jesus becomes a simple recollection for a Christian, he loses sight of one of the fundamental principles of the Christian faith: memory becomes joy. As a result he is alive in the Eucharist that is, the memory becomes the Church. Pope Francis reflected upon this at Mass on Thursday morning, 3 October, in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

In the First Reading from the Book of Nehemiah (8:1-4, 5-6, 7-12) we find the story of the discovery of the book of the Law that had been lost, and which Ezra reads before the People of God. The Pope described how the people were “moved and cried. Crying with joy, crying with love”, because the book that was lost had been found. This means that “the people of God had the memory of the Law”, the Pope explained, but “it was a distant memory”. Theirs was a cry of joy, the Pope said, “not of pain”. It was joyful, because they had the experience of the closeness of memory, the memory of salvation. And this is important not only in great historic moments, but also in the moments of our lives”.

We all have the memory of salvation, assured Pope Francis. But one might ask: “is this memory close to us? Or is it a distant memory, a bit diffused, a bit archaic, as if it were in a museum?”.

When the memory is not close to us, when we no longer experience the memory, it slowly turns into “a mere recollection”.

When a memory comes, he repeated the Pontiff, “it does two things: it warms the heart and gives us joy”. Instead, “a memory that has been subdued, which moves away and becomes a mere recollection, it does not warm the heart, and gives us neither joy nor strength”. The encounter with memory “is an event of salvation, an encounter with the love of God who has made history with us and has saved us. It is so beautiful that we have been saved, and we must celebrate this”.

The Church makes her memory, the memory of the Passion of the Lord, which we are about to remember now. The Lord himself told us: Do this in memory of me. This means that we are close to the memory of the Church, which is the presence of the Lord in front of us. “Let us imagine”, he continued “this beautiful scene of the book of Nehemiah: Ezra brings the book of Israel's memory and the people that are close to the memory cry. The heart is warmed, it is joyful, it feels the joy of the Lord and his strength and it celebrates, without fear, simply”. “Let us ask the Lord”, the Pope concluded “for the grace to always have his memory close to us. A memory that remains close and does not become subdued into a routine, into other things, and dismissed as a mere recollection”.