



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Choosing the Better Part

Tuesday, 8 October 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 42, 18 October 2013)

On Tuesday morning, 8 October, Pope Francis commented on the liturgical Readings of the day taken from the book of Jonah (3:1-10) and the Gospel of St Luke (10:38-42). He highlighted the evangelist's account of Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary, and proposed Mary as a model for prayer.

"The word of the Lord is clear," the Pope began. "Mary chose the better part: prayer and the contemplation of Jesus, and yet it seemed to her sister that she was wasting time". Yet Mary's attitude was the right one for she "listened to the Lord and prayed with her heart". This, he said, is what the Lord wishes to tell us: "The most important task in life is to pray, not to pray with many words ... but to pray with the heart" for this prayer enables us "to gaze upon the Lord, to listen to the Lord, and to ask the Lord for what we need". "And we know" he added, "that prayer can work miracles".

Pope Francis drew a parallel between the Gospel and the first reading from the book of Jonah. The prophet, he said, was "stubborn" because he did not want to do what the Lord was asking of him. "It was only after the Lord saved Jonah from the belly of a whale that he decided: Lord, I will do whatever you say". As Jonah went through the streets prophesying Nineveh's imminent

destruction, the Ninevites “began to pray with words, with their hearts and with their bodies. Prayer can work miracles in the midst of problems and even calamity”.

However, there are those with a more pessimistic view of things, the Pope explained. They say: “why pray? Let it be, that's just the way life is!”. This was Martha's attitude. “She did many things, but she didn't pray”. Then, he continued, there are those like the “stubborn Jonah” who “went about prophesying, but in his heart he said: if they deserve it let it be … he prophesied but he didn't pray, he didn't ask the Lord to forgive them, he only sought to cudgel them”. Even when God saved the people of Nineveh “Jonah was angry with the Lord, and said to him, 'You are always like this. You are always forgiving'”. Then he added, “and when we don't pray, we close the door to the Lord” so that “he can do nothing”. But “praying in difficult situations is like opening the door to the Lord, in order that he might enter” and, he added, “the Lord knows how to put things back in order”.

Pope Francis concluded by exhorting us to look to Mary who “chose the better part and shows us the way to open the door to the Lord”.