



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Free thought

Friday, 29 November 2013

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 49, 6 December 2013)

In his homily at Holy Mass Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel from St Luke (21:29-33), in which the Lord instructs his disciples regarding what is to come through the parable of the fig tree. "Look at the fig tree," the Lord says, "and all the trees; as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near".

Pope Francis noted how Jesus "with simple words, encourages us to think in order to understand ... to think not only with our head, but also with our heart, with our spirit". This, he said, is what it means to "think as a Christian" in order to "understand the signs of the times". "The Lord wants us to understand what is going on in our hearts, in the world and in history," the Pope continued. He wants us to understand "the meaning of what is happening around us". In fact, he added, it is in answering these questions that we come to perceive "the signs of the times".

Yet in this we have an enemy against us. The enemy, Pope Francis said, is "the spirit of the world, who does not want us to be a people. Rather, he wants us to become 'the masses' who are neither thinking nor free". The Pope detailed this enemy's tactics: "a determinate way of thinking is imposed, this thought is publicized, and people are expected to keep to this line of thought", which he described as "uniform, weak, and yet so widespread".

In practice, the Pope continued, “the spirit of the world does not want us to place ourselves before God and ask: why is this happening?” To distract us from the essential questions, he therefore “proposes a pret-à-porter [ready-to-wear] way of thinking, according to our own tastes: I think as I like”. “The spirit of the world likes this way of thinking”, Pope Francis said. “What he does not want is what Jesus asks of us: free thought, the thought of a man and a woman who belong to the people of God”. Yet, he noted, the Lord redeemed us by making us his people, the people of God, by making us free.

Of course, the Pope added, of ourselves we can do nothing. “We need the Lord’s help, we need the Holy Spirit in order to understand the signs of the time”. In fact, it is precisely the Spirit who gives us “the intelligence to understand”. It is a personal gift given to every man that enables him to understand “what is occurring” and also “the path the Lord wishes him to take” in life.

Pope Francis concluded by exhorting those present to “ask the Lord Jesus for the grace of sending us his spirit of understanding”, so that “our thoughts might not be weak, uniform, and according to our own tastes” but rather “in accord with God” and “with this thinking — with mind, heart and spirit — which is the Spirit’s gift, to seek to understand well the signs of the times”.