



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The prayer of praise

Tuesday, 28 January 2014

(by L'Osservatore Romano, Weekly ed. in English, n. 5, 31 January 2014)

Pope Francis continued his reflection on the second Book of Samuel (6:12-15, 17-17) which tells of David's dancing before the Ark of the Lord on its entry into Jerusalem. "King David," the Pope said, "offered sacrifice in honour of God; he prayed. Then his prayer became exultant ... it became the prayer of praise and of joy, and he began to dance. The Bible says: 'David danced before the Lord with all his might'", and he rejoiced greatly as he offer praise to the Lord. "That," Pope Francis said, "was truly the prayer of praise".

Pope Francis remarked: "I thought immediately of Sarah after she gave birth to Isaac: 'God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me'. This elderly woman at the age of 90 laughed and danced for joy". David was young, but he also "danced, he danced before the Lord. This is an example of the prayer of praise".

The prayer of praise is quite different than the prayer we normally raise to God, the Pope continued, when "we ask something of the Lord" or even "thank the Lord". "We often leave aside the prayer of praise". It doesn't come so easily to us, he said. Some might think that this kind of prayer is only "for those who belong to the renewal in the spirit movement, not for all Christians. The prayer of praise is a Christian prayer for all of us. Each day during Mass, when we sing: 'Holy, Holy...', this is the prayer of praise. We praise God for his greatness, for he is great. And we tell him beautiful things, because we like it to be so". And it does not matter if we are good singers, the

Pope remarked. In fact, he said, it is impossible to imagine that “you are able to shout out when your team scores a goal and you cannot sing the Lord’s praises, and leave behind your composure a little to sing”.

Praising God is “totally gratuitous”, Pope Francis continued. “We do not ask, we do not thank. We praise: you are great. ‘Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...’. We say this with all our heart. It is also an act of justice, for he is great, he is our God. Let us think about a good question we can ask ourselves today: How is my prayer of praise? Do I know how to praise the Lord? Or when I pray the *Gloria* or the *Sanctus*, do I only pray with my lips and not with all my heart? What does David’s dancing say to me? And Sarah who dances for joy? As David enters into the city, he begins something else as well: celebration. The joy of praise leads us to the joy of celebration”. This celebration then extends to the whole family, the Pope continued. “Each person was given a cake of bread and departed to his own house to celebrate” (cf. v. 19). But when David reentered his household, he had to face the reproach and scorn of Michal, the daughter of King Saul: “‘Aren’t you ashamed of what you have done?. How could you have done this, you the king, dancing in front of everyone? Are you not ashamed?’ I wonder how many times in our hearts we hold in contempt good people who praise the Lord?” so spontaneously, as it comes to them.

In the Bible, the Pope recalled, we read that “‘Michal had no child to the day of her death’. What does the word of God mean here? That joy, that the prayer of praise makes us fruitful. Sarah was dancing for joy at 90 years old in the great moment of her fruitfulness! Fruitfulness gives praise to the Lord”. The man or woman who praises the Lord, who prays by praising the Lord and rejoice “as they sing the *Sanctus* at Mass” is fruitful. On the other hand, the Pope said, those who “close themselves into the formality of a cold, measured prayer perhaps end up like Michal, in the sterility of formality”.

“Let us think of and imagine David who dances with all his might before the Lord. Let us think about how beautiful it is to offer the prayer of praise. Perhaps it will do us good to repeat the words of the psalm we just prayed, number 23: ‘Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in, the Lord strong and mighty, he is the king of glory! Lift up your heads O gates! Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory!’”. This ought to be our prayer of praise, Pope Francis said. And he concluded: when we raise this prayer to the Lord we ought “to say to our heart: ‘Lift up your hearts, for you stand before the king of glory’”.