



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

Mercy and judgement

Monday, 17 March 2014

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In his homily at Holy Mass, Pope Francis preached on mercy. Commenting on the day's readings from the Prophet Daniel (9:4-10) and the Gospel of Luke (6:36-38), the Pope explained that "Jesus' invitation to mercy is intended to draw us into a deeper imitation of God our Father: be merciful, as your Father is merciful". However, he added that "it is not easy to understand this willingness to show mercy, because we are accustomed to presenting the bill to others: you've done this, now you have to do this". In short, the Pope said, "we judge, and we fail ... to leave space for understanding and mercy".

In order to be merciful, "two attitudes are needed". The first is "self-knowledge". The Pope noted that in today's first reading, Daniel recounts the humble prayer of the people before God and their acknowledgement that they are sinners: "We have sinned and done wrong, but to thee belongs righteousness, and to us shame". Reflecting on the passage, the Pope said: "In the presence of a repentant people, God's justice is transformed into mercy and forgiveness".

This challenges us, he continued, by inviting us "to make room for this same inner attitude". Therefore, "to become merciful, we must first acknowledge that we have done many things wrong: we are sinners! We need to know how to say: Lord, I am ashamed of what I have done in life".

The Pope continued: "even though none of us has ever killed anyone," nonetheless "we still have

committed many daily sins". Therefore, "acknowledging that we have sinned against the Lord, and being ashamed in his presence is a grace: the grace of knowing that one is a sinner!". It is easy, he said, and yet "so very difficult" to say: "I am a sinner and I am ashamed of it before you and I ask for your forgiveness".

"Our Father Adam gave us an example of what one should not do," the Pope added. For he blamed the woman for having eaten the fruit and he justified himself, saying: "I have not sinned; it is she who made me go down this road!". Eve then does the same thing, blaming the serpent. Yet one should acknowledge one's sin and one's need for God's forgiveness, the Pope said, and not look for excuses and "load the blame onto others". Perhaps "someone helped me" to sin, "and opened the road: but I did it!".

"If we act in this way," he explained, "how many good things will follow: we will truly be men!". Furthermore, "with this attitude of repentance we will be more capable of being merciful, because we will feel God's mercy for us". In the Our Father, in fact, we do not only pray: "forgive us our trespasses". We also pray "forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us".

The second attitude we need is "an openness to expanding our hearts". The Pope noted that it is precisely "shame and repentance that expands a small, selfish heart, since they give space to God to forgive us". What does it mean to open and expand one's heart? First, it means acknowledging ourselves to be sinners and not looking to what others have done. And from here, the Pope said, the basic question becomes: "Who am I to judge this? Who am I to gossip about this? Who am I, who have done the same things, or worse?".

"The Lord says it in the Gospel: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not and you will not be condemned; forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap". This is the "generosity of heart" that the Lord presents through "the image of those going to collect grain who enlarged their aprons in order to receive more". In fact, Pope Francis said, "you can receive far more if you have a big heart!". And he added: "a big heart doesn't get entangled in other people's lives, it doesn't condemn but forgives and forgets" as "God has forgiven and forgotten my sins".

He then noted that in order to be merciful we need to call upon the Lord's help, since "it is a grace". And we also need to "recognize our sins and be ashamed of them" and forgive and forget the offences of others. "Men and women who are merciful have big, big hearts: they always excuse others and think more of their own sins. Were someone to say to them: 'but do you see what so and so did?', they respond in mercy saying: 'but I have enough to be concerned over with all I have done'".

Pope Francis concluded: "If all of us, all peoples, all families, all quarters had this attitude, how much peace there would be in the world, how much peace there would be in our hearts, for mercy brings us peace! Let us always remember: who am I to judge? To be ashamed of oneself and to

open and expand one's heart, may the Lord give us this grace!"

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