



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

The cost of witness

Monday, 2 May 2016

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 18, 6 May 2016)

There is a “twofold witness” in Christian life: that of the Spirit who “opens the heart”, showing us Jesus, and that of the person who “with the power of the Spirit” proclaims “that the Lord lives”, even at the cost of “paying the price” of persecution.

Once again the Holy Spirit and his action in the heart of every believer was pivotal to Pope Francis’ meditation during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning. The liturgy continued to offer passages from The Acts of the Apostles (16:11-15), regarding the first missions of the burgeoning Church and excerpts from Jesus’ discourse during the Last Supper (Jn 15:26-16:4). Specifically in the day’s Gospel we read that Jesus “speaks of the witness to him that the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, will bear and of the witness to him that we too will have to bear”. Francis emphasized that here the “strongest” word is precisely: “witness”.

The witness of the Spirit is also seen in the First Reading where, as it speaks of Lydia, “from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, a worshiper of God”, it says: “The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul”. So who was it that “touched this woman’s heart?”, the Pontiff asked, recalling that Lydia “felt within her” something that made her say: “This is true! I agree with what this man says, this man who bears witness to Jesus Christ”. The answer is: “the

Holy Spirit". It is he "who made this woman feel that Jesus was the Lord; he made this woman hear salvation in Paul's words; he made this woman hear the witness".

Thus, the Pope explained, the Spirit "bears witness to Jesus. Each time we feel something in our heart that draws us to Jesus, it is the Spirit working within". Jesus explained the action of the Spirit to the disciples: "He will teach you things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you". And the Spirit, Francis added, "continually opens the heart, as he opened the heart of this woman, Lydia", and he "bears witness" so that we may "hear and remember what Jesus taught us".

This witness, the Pope explained, "is twofold". In other words, "the Spirit bears witness to Jesus for us, and with the power of the Spirit we bear witness to the Lord". Jesus emphasizes this in the Gospel passage: "When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning". The Lord, Francis noted, dwells upon the characteristics of this witness — "perhaps the disciples didn't quite understand", he observed — adding: "I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away". Thus, he explains to them "the cost of Christian testimony" in a direct way: "They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God".

Thus, the Pontiff stated, "a Christian, with the power of the Spirit, bears witness that the Lord lives, that the Lord is risen, that the Lord is among us, that the Lord celebrates with us his death, his resurrection, each time we approach the altar". A Christian does this "in his daily life, with his way of acting". This, the Pope added, "is a Christian's unceasing witness". At the same time, a Christian must be aware that sometimes testimony "provokes attacks, provokes persecution". The persecution can be small, such as "gossip" and "criticism", but it can also be the kind that "fills the history of the Church", such as what leads "Christians to prison" or "even to giving their life".

Therefore, it is the "Holy Spirit who lets us meet Jesus", who pushes us "to make him known, not merely with words, but with the witness of life". And, the Pope suggested, "it is good to ask the Holy Spirit, who comes into our heart, to bear witness to Jesus" and to pray to him in this way: "Lord, let me not move away from Jesus. Teach me what Jesus taught. Remind me what Jesus said and did and also help me to bear witness to these things. Do not let worldliness, easy things, the things that come from the father of lies, from the prince of this world, from sin" — do not let these things "distance me from witnessing". Let me not "fall away, as Jesus says, from being Christian, because someone might avoid me or there may be persecution".
