



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Beware of fireworks

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(by <http://www.osservatoreromano.va>)

In his homily at the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, 10 November, Pope Francis warned against the temptation of remaining fascinated by the “fireworks of entertaining religion”, and always searching for “new things, revelations and messages”, which “last for a moment and then vanish away”. Francis also proposed an examination of conscience to verify whether or not we truly “safeguard hope”: the right attitude of those who work in order to grow “the Kingdom of God that is already in our midst”.

Inspired by the passage from Luke’s Gospel (17:20-25), proposed in the liturgy of the day, the Pope was quick to note that “at that time there was the curiosity of knowing the time of the Kingdom of God: when the liberation of the Romans would come or the liberation of the People of God”. Those people did “not have a good understanding of what the kingdom of God was, and so they asked Jesus”. And “He responded clearly: ‘It has already come, it is in your midst’”. He explained that “the Kingdom of God in our midst is like a mustard seed that is small but is planted and grows, grows, grows and grows, but with time”. And “it is the same with the seed of wheat”.

In the Gospel, the Pope explained, “the image of the seed” is precisely suggested in this regard, but “also the yeast with the flour that the woman presses well in order to make bread, and that

which was small then grows, grows and grows and we do not know how". Jesus, "when he explains this, says that we do not know how the seed grows, how it sprouts; we do not know how the yeast grows the dough, but the Kingdom of God is this way: it is in your midst, as a seed that grows, as yeast in the dough". It is up to us, Francis said, "to safeguard it well and to hope that it grows, that it bears fruit". We "hope, so that the Kingdom of God becomes strong in hope". Paul also "said to the Romans: 'We were saved in hope'".

Moreover, the Pope explained, "our salvation is always the intention of hope: it is not a possession, now", as if to say, "I am saved, I am right". No, the Pontiff continued, "they are intentions of hope and the kingdom of God grows in this way, with our work: we work to safeguard well the grain that grows, that also germinates with our rest". Because "Jesus teaches us that the Kingdom of God is like the grain that is planted: man goes and, even when he is asleep, it grows on its own" because "it is God who ensures its growth". And so "whether during our work or during our rest they grow, the Kingdom of God grows". However, "it takes hope to see that growth". And this is "truly the first thing that Jesus tells us today: the Kingdom of God is among us".

Indeed, Jesus also tells us "another thing: how it is, namely, the way", Francis explained. In fact, "the Kingdom of God does not come about in the way of attracting attention and no one will say 'here it is' or 'there it is'". No, the Kingdom of God "is in the midst of all of you: it is not a religion of entertainment" with which "we are always searching for new things, revelations and messages".

"God has spoken in Jesus Christ: this is God's final say" the Pope affirmed. The rest is "like the fireworks that light you up for a moment, and then what remains? Nothing, there is no growth; there is no light, there is nothing: an instant". However, Francis recognized, "so often we were tempted by this religion of entertainment, searching for strange things rather than revelation, and the meekness of the Kingdom of God that is among us and grows". And this religion of entertainment "is not hope: it is the desire to have something in ones hand". However, "our salvation", the Pope explained, "is measured in hope, the hope that belongs to the man who sowed wheat or the woman who prepared the bread, mixing yeast and flour: the hope that it will grow". On the other hand, "this artificial light is all about an instant and then vanishes, as fireworks do: it is not enough to illuminate a house, it is a show".

"There is the Kingdom of God", the Pope affirmed, "but the question remains: when will the Son of Man come?". And "this is the other question that underlies the first". And it is Jesus who gives us an explanation: "For as the lightning shines darting from one end of the sky, so too will the Son of Man in his day". Paul also says this to the Thessalonians: "It will be a thunderbolt that transforms everything in an instant, and everything will be different. And this will be the end". Therefore, the Pope continued, "this will be the fullness of God's Kingdom, when the Lord will return, and he will return in this way. But before this fullness comes, the Lord says, it is necessary that He, the Son of Man, suffers greatly, and that He is rejected by this generation: it is the suffering of the Cross, of work, of all of this that we carry forward".

In his reflection, the Pope proposed another question: “If God’s Kingdom is already in our midst, and if we must not let ourselves to be lured by the spectacular things, which are fireworks and serve no purpose, what must we do while awaiting the coming of the Kingdom of God, the coming of the Lord?”. In his response Francis proposed a keyword: to “guard”. Yes, “to guard with patience: patience in our work and in our suffering”. Yes, “to guard as the man who planted and guarded the seed, guarding it so that no weeds grow near it, so that the plant will grow”. In practice this means “guarding hope”.

And in this regard the Pope proposed another question: “If the kingdom of God is in our midst, if we all have this seed inside us, if we have the Holy Spirit there, how do we guard this? How do I know how to discern the good plant from the weeds?”. In short, “the Kingdom of God grows, and what should we do?”. The answer is clear: “To guard, to grow in hope, to guard hope”, because “we were saved in hope”. This is precisely the thread: “Hope is the thread of the history of salvation, the hope of meeting the Lord forever”. Pope Francis took the opportunity of offering a personal examination of conscience: “Let us can ask ourselves, how do I guard hope? Do I prefer specific things, fireworks? Do I have the patience, even mortification, the cross, to guard the hope that was sown in our hearts in baptism? That hope which does not disappoint” because “hope never disappoints!”.

The truth that “the Kingdom of God is in our midst” challenges us in “how we guard the Kingdom of God, this hope”. Someone “might want to ask, the Pope said, “do I hope?”. That is why it is proper to ask “ourselves: do I hope or move forward as I can, not knowing how to discern the good from the bad, the wheat from the weeds, the light, the gentle light of the Holy Spirit from the brightness of this artificial thing?”. Thus Francis suggested that we question our own “our hope in this seed that is growing within us, and how we guard our hope: the Kingdom of God is in our midst, but with rest, with work, with discernment, we must guard the hope of the Kingdom of God that grows, to the very moment when the Lord comes and everything is transformed”. Yes, the Pope concluded, “in one moment: everything, the world, us, everything”. And, “as Paul says to the Christians in Thessalonica, in that moment we will all remain with Him”.