



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAЕ

A definitive gesture

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

Every Christian, especially priests, are asked to examine their conscience over the question: Is God “my Lord”, or is my heart “attached to money”? This was the focus of Pope Francis’ meditation during morning Mass celebrated at the Casa Santa Marta on Friday, 18 November. Joining him as concelebrants were Cardinal Pietro Parolin, along with superiors and officials of the Secretary of State, and a large group of collaborators in the roles of papal representatives. With their participation at the Mass, they dedicated the start of the day to the celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy.

The Pope’s reflection centred on the day’s Gospel (Lk 19:45-48) which gives an account of Jesus expelling the money changers from the temple. The scene depicts “a very definitive gesture” which is perfectly placed within the catechesis of “these two weeks of the liturgical year” in which the Church “makes us reflect on the final things, definitive things”.

It is a well-known scene which chronologically takes place shortly before the start of Holy Week; indeed, the Pontiff noted, John places this passage after the entrance into Jerusalem, along with the song of the children who acclaim “Hosanna” to him who Comes in the name of the Lord. In the scene, “the Lord makes us understand where the seed of the antichrist is, the seed of the enemy, the seed which ruins the kingdom”. It is as if, Francis said, he was making us “choose between the house of God and the den of robbers”, or between the “house of God or money changers, the

house of prayer, or money changers". Within this dichotomy, Jesus points to money "as the enemy", since "the heart attached to money is an idolatrous heart". Moreover, the Pope explained, the Gospel gives money "the status of lords". Jesus himself does this "when he says: 'You cannot serve two lords, two masters'". And who are the two masters? "God and money"; these are their "two lords". Money, therefore, is "the anti-Lord".

However, man has the freedom to choose between these two lords. For this reason, "Jesus takes the whip and begins to cleanse the temple". In reality, the Pontiff explained, he "does nothing more than repeat the many actions of the prophets", as recounted in the Old Testament, in which "they threw the idols from the homes, temples, or even those idols hidden in the garments". For instance, "we think about Rachel", who "had hidden teraphim [idols]".

In the Gospel account, there is this juxtaposition: On the one hand, the "Lord God, the house of the Lord God, which is a house of prayer "where there is "the encounter with the Lord, with the God of love"; and on the other hand, there is "the money-lord, who enters into the house of God, always seeking to enter". These money changers, moreover, "exchanged currencies or sold things" and paid the priests for the venue.

Money, the Pope said, "is the lord that is able to ruin our life, and which can lead us to end our life badly, without happiness, without the joy of serving the true Lord, the only one able to give us true joy". However, all of this derives from "a choice", from a "personal choice". Therefore, Jesus, "in this definitive gesture", it is as if he is saying to each one of us: "What is your attitude with money? What do you do with money?" At this point, the Pontiff points to the present: "I will say to you, paternally: What is your attitude with money? Are you attached to money?"

It is an important question addressed to priests. In fact, Francis explained: "The people of God, who has a great sense of accepting, of canonizing as in condemning - because the people of God has the ability to condemn - forgive many weaknesses, many sins of priests; but there are two which they cannot forgive: the attachment to money, when they see a priest attached to money, this they do not forgive", and "when the priest mistreats the faithful: this is something God's people cannot stomach, and they do not forgive him". Regarding the "other weaknesses", and the "other sins", the people are more forgiving and tend to "justify": they recognize the sin, they accuse him, "but the sentence is not so strong and definitive". With this attitude you see that God's people know how to understand "the state of a man who has money", a state which can bring a priest "to be like the master of a firm or prince or we can go on...".

The Pontiff went on to consult the priests before him, saying that he was pleased with the meeting organized by the Secretariat of State, and referring directly to them he said: "I ask a favour of you: take a bit of time, each one of you, and ask yourselves this question: what is my attitude towards money?". And again, going deeper into the question: "How is my heart? Is it attached to money? Am I curious to see how much interest the bill gave me the bill, or do I not care?". Thus he added

this consideration: “It is sad to see a priest who reaches the end of his life and is in agony, in a coma”, and to see “the nephews as vultures”, looking to see “what they can take”. This, therefore, is the “true examination of conscience: ‘Lord, Are you my Lord?’”, or, like Rachel, do I have “this teraphim hidden in my heart, this idol of money?”.

Still, the Pope urged the priests: “Be brave; be brave. Make choices”. A priest, he said, has “enough money, that of an honest worker, sufficient savings, that of an honest worker”. Interest, however, “is not permissible, this is idolatry”. He concluded with a prayer to the Lord, that He might give everyone “the grace of Christian poverty”, the grace “of this poverty of workers, of those who work and earn what is fair and do not seek more”.