



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Without compromise

Tuesday, 17 November 2015

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Let us not be weakened by the worldly spirit but live Christian life coherently, without giving in or compromising. On Tuesday, Pope Francis offered this message in his homily during Mass at Santa Marta. Following the path by which the Church in these days “prepares us for the end of the liturgical year”, the Pontiff spoke of how we should behave in the face of persecution. In doing so, he returned to the line of thought he had begun the previous day when he reflected on the worldliness of apostasy and persecution.

The Pope drew inspiration from the day’s passage from the Second Book of the Maccabees (6:18-31) in which 90-year-old Eleazar — a “Polycarp” of the *paterfamilias* of the Old Testament — “would not let himself be weakened by the worldly spirit” and “did not give in when tested”.

What happened was “the singular thinking of apostasy”, the Pope explained, “that wanted him to eat swine’s flesh”; instead he refused and spit it out. Then “his worldly friends, those who gave in to the worldly spirit, called him and took him aside and tried to convince him”, offering a comfortable solution: “Let’s do something, you make a nice soup with the meat and you can eat it and pretend to eat the swine’s flesh, thereby saving your life without sinning”. But the elderly scribe “became indignant”. And “with the dignity, with the nobility that he had from a coherent life”,

he went to his martyrdom, bearing witness: “No, at my age I will not give this example to the young”. It is a clear example of the “coherence of life” by which we distance ourselves from “spiritual worldliness”. On this very point Francis paused to analyze the behaviour of many people: “You pretend to be like this, but live in another manner”. This is the worldliness that worms its way into the human spirit and gradually takes it over: “it’s difficult to recognize it at first”, Francis noted, “because it’s like the woodworm that slowly destroys, breaking down the fabric, and that fabric then becomes useless”. Likewise “a man who lets himself be led on by worldliness loses his Christian identity”, ruins it, becoming “incapable of coherence”. Indeed, the Pope continued, some say: “oh, Father, I’m so Catholic, I go to Mass every Sunday, I’m really Catholic”. However, in their everyday life or at work, they are incapable of coherence”. Thus, for example, they give in to the flattery of those who suggest: “If you buy me this, we’ll make this bribe and you take the kickback”.

This, the Pontiff reiterated, “is not coherence of life, this is worldliness”. And it is worldliness that “leads to a double life, one that is seen and one that is true, and it distances you from God and destroys your Christian identity”. This is why “Jesus is so strong when he asks the Father: ‘Father, I ask not that you remove them from the world but that you save them, that they not have a worldly spirit”, meaning “that spirit that destroys Christian identity”.

From Sacred Scripture, particularly from the account of the elderly Eleazar, comes a “counterexample to this worldly spirit”. Not by chance the Pontiff repeated the coherent words of the elderly scribe: “lest many of the young should suppose that I in my 90th year have gone over to an alien religion, through my pretence they should be led astray because of me”.

Eleazar, therefore, was concerned about the example that he might set for the young should he give in. It is a choice that the Pope interpreted in this way: “Christian spirit, Christian identity, is never selfish, it always seeks to take care through its own coherence, to take care, avoid scandal, take care of others, give a good example”.

Of course, Francis added, some could object: “But it’s not easy, Father, living in this world where temptations are many, and the ploy of a double life tempts us every day. It’s not easy!”. In reality, the Pope explained, “for us not only is it not easy, it’s impossible. He alone is capable of doing it”. For this reason the Liturgy of the day invites us to pray with the Psalm: “The Lord sustains me”.

God, the Pope said, “supports us against the worldliness that destroys our Christian identity, that leads us to a double life”. He alone can save us. Thus “our humble prayer will be: ‘Lord, I am a sinner, truly, we all are, but I ask your support, give me your support, so that I should not on one hand pretend to be a Christian, and on the other live as a pagan, as a nobleman”.

The Pontiff concluded his homily with this advice: “If you have a little time today, pick up the Bible, the Second Book of the Maccabees, sixth chapter, and read this story of Eleazar. It will do you good, it will give you the courage to be an example for all and will also give you strength and

support to carry on your Christian identity, without compromises, without a double life”.

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