



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

The eye that is opened

Monday, 16 December 2013

(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 51, 20 December 2013)

Pope Francis reminded those present that all baptized are called to be prophets. Recalling the words of the day's reading from the Book of Numbers (24:2-7, 15-17b), which depicts the figure of the prophet, the Pope said: "The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God". "This the the prophet," Pope Francis said: "a man whose eye is opened, and who hears and speaks the words of God, who knows how to see into the moment and to go forward into the future. But first he has listened, he has heard the word of God".

The prophet holds "these three moments within himself," the Pope said: past, present and future. He explained: "The past: the prophet is aware of the promise and he holds God's promise in his heart, he keeps it alive, he remembers it, he repeats it. He then looks into the present, he looks at his people and he experiences the power of the spirit to speak a word to them that will lift them up, to continue their journey toward the future".

Therefore, the Pope said, "the prophet is a man of three times: the promise of the past, the contemplation of the present, the courage to point out the path toward the future". Pope Francis then reminded those present that "the Lord always protected his people through the prophets in

difficult moments, when the people were discouraged and had reached the end; when there was no temple, when Jerusalem was under the power of enemy forces, when the people asked themselves: ‘Lord, you have given us your promise, what will happen now?’”. And he added: “Perhaps the same thing happened to Our Lady, as she stood at the foot of the Cross: ‘Lord, you told me that he would liberate Israel, that he would be its Head, the One who would bring redemption; and now?’”.

The Pontiff continued: “The prophets were needed in those times in Israel’s history. And the prophets were not always well received. Many times they were rejected. Jesus himself told the Pharisees that their fathers had killed the prophets because they were saying uncomfortable things, they were speaking the truth, they were recalling the promises. When prophecy is absent in Israel’s life, something is missing: the Lord’s life is missing”.

The Pope turned to the life of young Samuel as an example. “As he was sleeping, he heard the call of the Lord, but he did not know what it was. And the Bible says: ‘the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision’” (1 Samuel 3:1). It was a time when “Israel had no prophets”. However, he added: “the same thing happens when a prophet comes and the people do not receive him, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew (21:33-27). When there is no prophecy, the emphasis falls on legality; these priests went to Jesus to ask him for his legal card: ‘By what authority are you doing these things?’ they asked him”. Pope Francis continued: “It is as if they’d said to him: ‘We are in charge of the masters of the temple; as for you, by what authority do you do these things?’ They did not understand the prophecies, they had forgotten the promise. They did not know how to read the signs of the present moment, they did not have eyes opened nor did they hear the word of God. They only had authority”.

“It was the same in Samuel’s day,” he added, “when the word of the Lord was rare and there was no frequent vision. Legality and authority. When there is no prophecy among the people, clericalism fills the void. It is precisely this clericalism that asks Jesus: ‘by what authority do you do these things, by what legal authorization?’. The memory of the promise and hope to go forward are reduced only to the present: neither the past, nor a future and hope”.

The Pope then said: “Perhaps the people of God who believed, who went to the temple to pray, in their hearts were mourning the fact that they didn’t find the Lord. Prophecy was missing. They mourned in their hearts as had Anna, the mother of Samuel, asking that the people might be made fruitful with that fruitfulness that comes from the power of God, when he reawakens in us the memory of his promise and moves us toward the future with hope. This is the prophet. This is the man whose eye is opened, and who hears the words of God”.

Pope Francis concluded his homily recommending “a prayer over the course of these days, as we prepare for the celebration of the Lord’s birth”. He prayed to the Lord that prophets not be lacking among his people: “All of us who are baptized are prophets. Lord, may we not forget your promise;

may we never grow weary of going forward; may we never close ourselves in through a legality that closes doors. Lord, free your people from the spirit of clericalism and come to their aid through your spirit of prophecy”.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana