



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

MORNING MEDITATION IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE

Diversity in harmony

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(by: www.osservatoreromano.va)

While celebrating mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis called the faithful to three essential duties: “to build, safeguard and purify the Church”. His plea was offered on the liturgical Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome.

“We are all members of the diocese of Rome” the Pope affirmed, and because our Cathedral is “the primatial see”, it “is called the mother of all the churches”. Yet, he stressed, this “should not be a motive of pride for us, but of service and love”. He continued, “our Cathedral is the mother of all churches and in considering the Church of Rome and the other churches of the world, as well as reflecting on the readings, I think that we can talk about three words: building, guarding and purifying the Church”.

Francis began with an explanation of the notion of ‘building the Church’ and pointed to the example outlined in St Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians [3, 9-11.16-17]: “According to the commission of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it.” Thus, “Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church, there is no other”, the Pope affirmed; only “He is the cornerstone”, and “if one constructs a church without foundation, what happens? It all collapses”. Similarly, “if there is no Jesus Christ alive in the Church, it will collapse”.

“The foundation does not change” Francis continued, “and we are living stones that build up this structure”. Indeed, in the process of construction, “one seeks to arrange the stones soundly with each other, so that they are aligned” and yet, “not equal”. “Each one of the stones is different, each one of us is different, and this is the richness of the Church”, the Pope noted. “Each one of us builds according to the gift that God has bestowed. We cannot consider a uniform Church; this is not [the] Church”.

To explain this notion, the Pontiff referred to the image of the human body: “the hand needs the nose and the eyes in order to see how to grip onto something; they complement each other” he explained, and similarly, each one of us has our own unique input for the construction of the Church, a concept which the Pope said lies “at the core of synodality” and he suggested that the Church should be of a synodal nature, “because each one of us has our own charisms at the service of the unity of the Church”. Consequently, there is no need to “be afraid of differences, on the contrary, rather be afraid when someone wants to render everything equal”.

We have “different charisms”, he asserted, “but in unity”, and “it is in such a way that the Church is constructed, upon the cornerstone who is Jesus Christ and with harmonic diversity”. Such harmony, he clarified, consists in “charity: if we love each other, there will be harmony; if we fight against each other, gossip, there will not be harmony and the structure [of the Church] will collapse”.

Regarding the second word, “safeguarding” the Church, the Pontiff warned against thinking that one can pass a “coat of paint” every year and believing that this will suffice. Rather, he stressed, it means “safeguarding the Spirit that dwells within us, both in the Church and in each one of us... He is the life of the Church, and your life, my life”. We, he asserted, “are temples of the Holy Spirit and we have to safeguard the Holy Spirit”.

Finally, Francis indicated that the third word, “purifying” the Church, is revealed in the Gospel reading of John [2: 13-22]. “When the Lord saw what was happening at the entrance to the temple”, the Pontiff said, “he did not speak, he took a whip of cords and cast everyone out of the temple”.

“We are all sinners, all of us” the Pope affirmed, and “if one of you is not, raise your hand, because it would be quite an oddity; we are all sinners, and for this reason we must purify ourselves continually, and purify the community as well: the diocesan community, the Christian community, the universal community of the Church in order to make it grow”.

There are some, the Pope concluded, who might say they'd like “to take out a whip” when they see “some parish administrative offices with the price list for a baptism” and so on. “This is not the Church; it is a market” the Pontiff exclaimed. “This is an example” he added, “but it is the market of vanity”. Rather, he asserted, there is a need “to purify, not looking at the sins of others, but at my

own sin, and my sin is that which renders the Church a market”.

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