

Pope Francis Reflects on the Meaning of Christian Joy

*"Be courageous in suffering and remember that
the Lord will come after,
joy will come after, and
after the dark comes the sun"*



At Mass in Casa Santa Marta yesterday morning Pope Francis reflected on Christian joy, which we cannot buy because it is a gift from God.

The Pope likened this joy given by God to the joy of a mother embracing her baby after childbirth, because it is a joy “purified” by the suffering of labor. The joy of the Christians, he said is a “joy in hope”.

Pope Francis based his homily on the observation that St Paul “was very brave”, “because he had strength in the Lord”.

“Of course, he noted, sometimes even the Apostle to the Gentiles was afraid. “It happens to all of us in life, to have some fear,” he added. So much so, that sometime one wonders whether “it would be better to keep a lower profile, to not be a little less Christian and seek a compromise with the world.”

Paul knew that “neither the Jews, nor the Gentiles” liked what he did, but this didn’t stop him and in the end he endured hardship and persecution. The Pope said that this should make us think about our fears. Even Jesus in Gethsemane felt fear and anguish. And in his farewell speech, to his disciples clearly says that “the world will rejoice” for their suffering, as was the case with the first martyrs in the Coliseum:

“We must tell the truth: Christian life not just one big party. Not at all! We cry, we cry so many times. When we are sick; when we have a problem with our son, in the family, with our daughter, or wife, or husband; When we see that our salary does not reach the end of the month and we have a sick child; when we see that we cannot pay the mortgage on the house and we must somehow survive ... So many problems, we have so many. But Jesus tells us: ‘Do not be afraid!’. ‘Yes, you will be sad, cry and people will even rejoice, the people who are against you’”.

“But – he continued – there is another sadness: the sadness that comes to all of us when we take the wrong road”. When , “to put it simply”, “we try to buy the happiness, joy of the world, of sin. In the end there is a void within us, there is sadness”. And this, he reiterated , “is the sadness of the wrong sort of happiness”. Christian joy, “is a joy in hope, which comes”.

“In times of trial we do not see this. It is a joy that is purified by trials, our everyday trials: ‘Your sorrow will turn to joy’. But it’s hard to go to a sick person who is suffering greatly and say: ‘Come on! Come on! Tomorrow you will have joy!’ No, you cannot say this! We have to help them feel what Jesus made us feel. When we are in the dark, we do not see anything , ‘I know, Lord, that this sorrow will turn to joy. I do not know how, but I know it!’. An act of faith in the Lord. An act of faith!”.

“To help us understand the sadness turns to joy, Jesus takes the example of a woman in labour: “It’s true, women suffer a lot in childbirth – the Pope said – but then when she holds her child, she forgets”. What remains is “the joy of Jesus, a purified joy”. That is “the joy that remains”. The Pope acknowledged that this joy is “hidden in some moments of life, we do not feel it in bad times, but it comes later: a joy in hope”. This, then, “is the message of the Church today: Do not be afraid!”

“Be courageous in suffering and remember that the Lord will come after, joy will come after and after the dark comes the sun. “

“May the Lord give us all this joy in hope. And the sign that we have this joy in hope is peace. How many sick, who are at the end of life, in pain, have that peace of soul ... This is the seed of joy, this is the joy of hope and peace.”

“Do you have peace of soul in times of darkness, in times of trouble, in times of persecution, when everyone else rejoices at your suffering? Do you have peace?”

**“If you have peace, you have the seed of joy that will come later.
May the Lord help us understand these things”**

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