



Be docile to the Holy Spirit - Pope Francis at Casa Santa Marta

(Vatican Radio) One must be docile to the Holy Spirit, said Pope Francis Thursday at Mass in his residence of Casa Santa Marta, and one must not resist Him. Pope Francis warns against those who resist the Spirit with "so-called fidelity to the law" and invites the faithful to pray for the grace of the docility to the Spirit.

Philip evangelized the Ethiopian, a senior official of Queen Candace. Pope Francis was inspired by this fascinating account in the Acts of the Apostles, in the first reading of today, focusing his attention on the docility to the Holy Spirit.

Do not resist the Spirit under the guise of loyalty to the law

The protagonist of this meeting, Pope Francis noted, is in fact not so much Philip, nor even the Ethiopian, but just the Spirit. "It is Him who does things. It is the Spirit who gives birth to and grows the Church."

"In days past, the Church has shown us how there can be a drama of resisting the Spirit: closed, hard, foolish hearts resisting the Spirit. We've seen things - the healing of the lame man by Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; the words and the great things Stephen was doing ... but they were closed off to these signs of the Spirit and resisted the Spirit. They were seeking to justify this resistance with a so-called fidelity to the law, that is, to the letter of the law."

In referring to the reading, Pope Francis said that "the Church proposes the opposite: no resistance to the Spirit, but docility to the Spirit, which is precisely the attitude of the Christian." He continued: "Being docile to the Spirit, this docility is the yes that the Spirit may act and move forward to build up the Church." Here, he added, is Philip, one of the Apostles, "busy as all bishops are, and this day surely he had his plan to work." But the Spirit tells him to leave what he has planned and go to the Ethiopian - "and he obeyed." Pope Francis then outlined the meeting between Philip and the Ethiopian, in which the Apostle explains the Gospel and its message of salvation. The Spirit, he said, "was working in the heart of the Ethiopian", offers him "the gift of faith and this man felt something new in his heart." And at the end he asks to be baptized, being docile to the Holy Spirit.

Docility to the Spirit gives us joy

"Two men," the Pope said, "one an evangelist and one who knew nothing of Jesus, but the Spirit had sowed a healthy curiosity, not the curiosity of gossip." And in the end the eunuch goes his way with joy, "the joy of the Spirit, in the docility of the Spirit."

"We have heard, these past days, about resistance to the Spirit; and today we have an example of two men who were docile to the voice of the Spirit.

And the sign of this is joy. Docility to the Spirit is a source of joy. “But I would like to do something, this ... but I feel the Lord ask me to do something else. Joy I will find there, where there is the call of the Spirit!”

It is the Holy Spirit who carries the Church forward

A beautiful prayer asking for this docility, the Pope revealed, we may find in the First Book of Samuel, the prayer which the priest Eli suggests to the young Samuel, who during the night heard a voice calling to him: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening."

"This is a beautiful prayer that we can always pray: 'Speak, Lord, because I am listening.' The prayer asking for this docility to the Holy Spirit and with this docility to carry forward the Church, to be instruments of the Spirit so that the Church can move forward. 'Speak, Lord, because your servant is listening'. We should pray this many times a day: when we have a doubt, when we do not know what to do, or when we want simply to pray. And with this prayer we ask for the grace of docility to the Holy Spirit."

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