

Pope Francis: the fruitfulness of praise



2014-01-28 Vatican Radio

Pope Francis celebrated Mass on Tuesday morning in the Vatican's Casa Santa Marta residence. Following the readings of the day, the Holy Father spoke about the proper attitude of the Christian at prayer.

Reflecting on the episode from the Second Book of Samuel, which was read at Mass, in which "David danced with all his might before the Lord," Pope Francis recalled that the whole people of Israel were celebrating because the Ark of the Covenant was returning home. He went on to say that David's prayer of praise, "led him to move beyond all composure," adding, "this was precisely a prayer of praise."

Explaining that the passage caused his thoughts to turn to Sarah, Abraham's wife, who, after giving birth to her son, Isaac, said, "The Lord made me dance with joy." He said that it is easy to understand a prayer of petition – asking something of the Lord – and prayer of thanksgiving, as well. Even prayer of adoration, he said, "is not so difficult," to understand. Prayer of praise, however, "We leave aside – it does not come to us so easily."

"'But, Father! This is for the Renewal in the Spirit folks, not for all Christians!' No: prayer of praise is a Christian prayer, for all of us. In the Mass, every day, when we sing the Holy, Holy, Holy ... This is a prayer of praise: we praise God for his greatness, because He is great. We say beautiful things to Him, because we are happy for His greatness. 'But, Father! I am not able....' Well, you're able to shout when your team scores a goal, and you are not able to sing praises to the Lord? To come out of your shell ever so slightly to sing His praise? Praising God is completely gratis. In it we do not ask Him to give us anything: we do not express gratitude for anything He has given; we praise Him!"

We need to pray "whole-heartedly," he said. "It is also an act of justice, because He is great! He is our God." David, Pope Francis went on to observe, "was so happy, because the ark was returning, the Lord was returning: his body, too, prayed with that dance."

“Here is a good question for us to pose to ourselves today: ‘But how am I doing vis à vis prayer of praise? Do I know how to praise the Lord? Do I know how to praise the Lord when I pray the Gloria or the Sanctus? Is my whole heart really in it, or do I merely mouth the words. What does David dancing here say to me, and Sarah, dancing for joy? When David enters the city there begins another thing: a party!’”

“The joy of praise,” said Pope Francis, “leads us to the joy of the feast - the feast of the family.” The Pope went on to recall how, when David returned to the palace, Michal, the daughter of King Saul, scolded him and asked him if he did not feel ashamed for having danced like that in front of everyone, he, who is the king. Michal “despised David”:
“I wonder sometimes how many times we despise good people in our hearts, good people who praise the Lord as it comes to them, so spontaneously, because they are not cultured, because they do not follow the formalities? I mean really despise them?”

The Bible says that, because of this, Michal remained sterile for the rest of her life. What does the Word of God mean, here? It means that joy, that the prayer of praise makes us fruitful! Sarah danced in the great moment of her fecundity – at the age of ninety! The fruitfulness that praise of the Lord gives us, the gratuity of praising the Lord: that man or that woman who praises the Lord, who prays praising the Lord, who, when praying the *Gloria* is filled with joy at doing so, and who, when singing the *Sanctus* in the Mass rejoices in singing it, is a fruitful person.”

On the other hand, warned Pope Francis, “Those, who are closed in the formality of a prayer that is cold, stingy, might end up as Michal, in the sterility of her formality.” The Pope asked, then, that we imagine David dancing, “with all his might before the Lord,” and that, “we think how beautiful it is to make the prayer of praise.”

It will do us good, he said, to repeat the words of Psalm 23, which we prayed today: “Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory.”

