



At the morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta, Pope Francis speaks about the importance of recognising that we are sinners, and knowing the love of Jesus Christ.

Who is Jesus Christ for you? Pope Francis posed this question in his homily during the morning Mass at Casa Santa Marta. If someone asks us the question, “Who is Jesus Christ?”, we should say what we have learned: He is the Saviour of the world, the Son of the Father, which “we recite in the Creed.” But, the Pope said, it is a little more difficult to answer the question of who Jesus Christ is “for me.” It is a question that can embarrass us a little bit, because in order to answer that question, “I have to dig into my heart”; that is, we have to begin from our own experience.

Chosen through love, though a sinner

Saint Paul experienced precisely this uneasiness in bearing witness to Jesus Christ. He knew Jesus through his own experience of being thrown from his horse, when the Lord spoke to his heart. He didn’t begin to know Christ by studying theology, even if later he “went to see how Jesus was proclaimed in Scripture.”

Paul wants Christians to feel what he himself felt. [In response] to the question that we can put to Paul – “Paul, who is Christ for you?” – he spoke simply about his own experience: “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” But he was involved with Christ who paid for him. And Paul wants every Christian – in this case, the Christians of

Ephesus – to have this experience, to enter into this experience, to the point that each one can say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me,” but to say it from their own personal experience.

Reciting the Creed can help us to know about Jesus, Pope Francis said. But in order to really know Him, as St Paul came to know Him, it is better to begin by acknowledging that we are sinners. This, the Pope said, is the first step. When Paul says that Jesus gave Himself for him, he is saying that He paid for him, and this comes out in all of his letters. And the first definition Paul gives of himself follows from this: He says he is “a sinner,” he admits that he persecuted Christians. He begins precisely by recognising that he was “chosen through love, although he is a sinner.”

“The first step in knowing Christ,” Pope Francis emphasised, lies precisely in recognising that we are sinners. He said that in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sin – but, he noted, “it is one thing to tell our sins,” and another to recognise ourselves as sinners, capable of doing anything.” St Paul “had this experience of his own wretchedness,” and recognised that he needed to be redeemed, recognised that he needed someone who “would pay for his right to call himself a ‘son of God’”: “We are all sinners, but to say it, to feel it, we need the sacrifice of Christ.”

Knowing Jesus, not just being “Christians of words”

But in order to know Jesus, there is also a second step: we get to know Him through contemplation and prayer. The Pope recalled a “a beautiful prayer, from a saint: ‘Lord, let me know You, and know myself.’” We should not content ourselves “with saying three or four good things about Jesus,” he continued, because knowing Jesus “is an adventure, but a serious adventure, not an adventure of a child,” because the love of Jesus is without limits.

Paul says that He “is able to accomplish far more than all we can ask or imagine.” He has the power to do it. But we have to ask Him: “Lord, let me know you; so that when I talk about you, I am not repeating words like a parrot, [but rather] I am saying words born from my own experience. So that like Paul I can say: ‘He loved me, and gave Himself for me’ – and say it with conviction.” This is our strength, this is our witness. Christians of words, we have many words; we too, so many [words]. And this is not sanctity. Sanctity is being Christians who work in life that which Jesus has taught and what Jesus has

sown in our hearts.

Pray to know Jesus and oneself everyday

In conclusion, Pope Francis repeated the two steps we need to take to really know Jesus Christ:

The first step is knowing oneself: [that we are] sinners, sinners. Without this understanding, and without this interior confession – that I am a sinner – we cannot go forward. The second step is prayer to the Lord, who with His power makes us know this mystery of Jesus, which is the fire that He has brought upon the earth. It would be a good habit if every day, in every moment, we could say, “Lord, let me know You, and know myself.”