



Pope Francis warns Christians against remaining attached to worldly ways of thinking and behaviour at his homily during Mass celebrated on Tuesday at the Vatican's Santa Marta residence.

Taking his inspiration from the day's reading from the First Letter of Peter that urges Christians to be holy in every aspect of their conduct, the Pope's homily reflected on that call to holiness and the importance of moving away from our worldly way of thinking and behaviour that formerly enslaved us.

"And the call to holiness, which is the normal call, is our call to live as a Christian, namely living as a Christian is the same as saying 'living as a saint'. Many times we think of holiness as something extraordinary, like having visions or lofty prayers ... or some think that being holy means having a face like that in a cameo ... no. Being holy is something else. It is to proceed along this path that the Lord tells us about holiness. And what is it, to proceed along the path of holiness? Peter says it: "Put all your hope in that grace that will be given to you when Jesus Christ manifests Himself".

Walking towards the light

Pope Francis explained that walking towards holiness means proceeding towards that grace, that encounter with Jesus Christ. It's like walking towards the light: many times we don't see the road that well because the light dazzles us.

"But we are not mistaken, noted the Pope, "because we see the light and we know the way". When you walk with the light behind you, you can see the road well, but in reality there is shadow, not light, in front of you.

Don't go back to our worldly patterns of behaviour

Warning that there are many things that enslave us, the Pope told Christians that they need “to be free and to feel free” in order to walk towards holiness.

It is for this reason, he said, that Peter urges us not to conform “to the desires of our former ignorance.” Paul also says in his First Letter to the Romans: “Do not conform,” which means don't get involved in worldly patterns of behaviour.

“This is the correct translation of this advice - do not adopt the worldly patterns, - do not adopt those patterns of behaviour, that worldly way of thinking, that way of thinking and judging that the world offers you because this deprives you of freedom. And to proceed towards holiness, one must be free: free to go forward, looking at the light, going forward. And when we return, as he says here, to the way of life we had before our encounter with Jesus Christ or when we return to those patterns of worldly behaviour, we lose our freedom.”

Without freedom one cannot be holy

When facing difficulties, warned Pope Francis, we are often tempted to look back with nostalgia at our old ways just like the People of God did in the Book of Exodus when they complained and thought back “to the beautiful life they lived in Egypt.”

“In moments of trials and tribulations, we always are tempted to look back, to look at the worldly patterns of behaviour, at the patterns that we had before setting out the path towards salvation: without freedom. And without freedom one cannot be holy. Freedom is the condition for moving forward while looking at the light ahead of us. Do not adopt the worldly patterns of behaviour, walk forward, looking at the light that is the promise, in hope; this is the promise like the people of God in the desert: when they looked forward everything went fine; when they were nostalgic because they could no longer eat the

good things they formerly had, they made mistakes and forgot that they had no freedom back there.”

Worldly patterns promise everything and give nothing

The Pope reminded his listeners that the Lord calls us to holiness every day. And there are two parameters, he added, to know if we are on our way to holiness: first of all, if we look towards the light of the Lord in the hope of finding it and, then if when the trials come, we look ahead and do not lose our freedom by taking refuge in worldly patterns of behaviour, which "promise you everything and give you nothing". "You will be holy because I am holy": this is the Lord's commandment.

In conclusion, Pope Francis offered a prayer to God to grant us the grace to understand correctly what the path of holiness is: "a path of freedom" but with "a tension of hope" on our path towards Jesus.