

# FAITH AND REASON

**At the end of the Angelus , 29 August, Pope Francis called all Christians to intensify their prayer and to practice fasting in a true spiritual mobilization, aimed at showing the Church's solidarity with the people of Afghanistan.** Earlier, the Holy Father had reflected on the day's liturgy. The following is a translation of the words he shared in Italian with the faithful gathered in Saint Peter's Square. Dear Brothers and Sisters, Buongiorno! The Gospel for today's liturgy shows a few scribes and Pharisees amazed by Jesus' attitude. They are scandalized because his disciples pick up food without first performing the traditional ritual ablutions. They think among themselves: "This way of doing things is contrary to the religious practice".

We too could ask ourselves: why do Jesus and his disciples disregard these traditions? After all, they are not bad things, but good ritual habits, simple cleansing before eating. Why is Jesus not concerned with this? Because for him it is important to bring faith back to its center. We see it repeatedly in the Gospel: this bringing faith back to the center. And to avoid a risk, which applies to those scribes as well as to us: to observe outward formalities, putting the heart and faith in the background. Many times, we too "put makeup" on our soul. Outward formality and not the heart of faith: this is a risk. It is the risk of a religiosity of appearances: looking good on the outside, while neglecting to purify the heart. There is always the temptation to "deal with God" with some outward devotion, but Jesus does not settle for this worship. Jesus does not want outward appearances; he wants a faith that touches the heart.

In fact, immediately afterwards, he calls the people back to speak a great truth: "there is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him". Rather, it is "from within, out of the heart" that evil things are born. These words are revolutionary, because in the mindset of the time, it was thought that certain foods or external contacts would make one impure. Jesus reverses the perspective: it is not what comes from the outside that is harmful, but rather, what is born from within.

Dear brothers and sisters, this also pertains to us. We often think that evil comes mainly from the outside: from other people's conduct, from those who think badly of us, from society. How often we blame others, society, the world, for everything that happens to us! It is always the fault of "others": it is the fault of people, of those who govern, of misfortune, and so on. It seems that problems always come from the outside. And we spend time assigning blame; but spending time blaming others is wasting time. We become angry, bitter and keep God away from our heart. Like those people in the Gospel, who complain, who are scandalized, who cause controversy and do not welcome Jesus. One cannot be truly religious while complaining; it leads you to anger, to resentment and to sadness, that of the heart, which closes the door to God.

Let us ask the Lord today to free us from blaming others — like children: "No, it wasn't me! It's the other one, the other one...". Let us ask in prayer for the grace not to waste time polluting the world with complaints, because this is not Christian. Jesus instead invites us to look at life and the world starting from our heart. If we look inside ourselves, we will find almost all that we despise outside. And if, with sincerity, we will ask God to purify our heart, then indeed we will be starting to make the world cleaner. Because there is an infallible way to defeat evil: by starting to conquer it within yourself. The first Fathers of the Church, the monks, when they were asked: "What is the path of holiness, how should I begin"? The first step, they used to say, was to blame oneself: blame yourself. Blaming ourselves. How many of us, during the day, in a moment of the day or a moment in the week, are able to blame ourselves within? "Yes, this one did this to me, the other one ... that one, a barbarity...". But me? Do I do the same thing or do I do it this way.... It is wisdom: learning to blame yourself. Try to do it, it will do you good. It does me good, when I manage to do so, but it is good for us, it is good for everyone. May the Virgin Mary, who changed history through the purity of her heart, help us to purify our own, by overcoming first and foremost the vice of blaming others and complaining about everything.

**After the Angelus the Holy Father said:** Dear brothers and sisters, with great concern I am following the situation in Afghanistan, and I take part in the suffering of those who are grieving for the persons who lost their lives in the suicide attacks that happened last Thursday, and of those who are seeking help and protection. I entrust the deceased to the mercy of Almighty God, and I thank those who are striving to help that population so tried, in particular the women and children. I ask everyone to continue to help the needy and to pray that dialogue and solidarity may lead to the establishment of a peaceful and fraternal coexistence and offer hope for the country's future. In historic moments like this one we cannot remain indifferent; the history of the Church teaches us this. As Christians this situation involves us. For this reason, I address an appeal, to everyone, to intensify your prayer and practice fasting. Prayer and fasting, prayer and penance. This is the moment to do so. I am speaking seriously: intensify your prayer and practice fasting, asking the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

**Do all the good you can,** by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can.

**Remember Me:** My name is Gossip, I have no respect for justice, I am without killing, I break hearts and ruin lives...I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age. The more I am quoted, the more I am believed. I flourish at every level of society. My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face. To track me down is impossible, the harder- you try the more elusive I become. I am nobody's friend, once I tarnish a reputation, it is never quite the same. My name is Gossip.

**Peter the Rock:** But how are we to understand the new first name Peter? It certainly does not portray the character of this man whom Flavius Josephus' description of the Galilean national temperament so recognizably fits: "brave, kind-hearted, trusting", but also easily influenced and eager for change." The designation "rock" yields no pedagogical or psychological meaning; it can be understood only in terms of mystery, that is to say, Christologically and ecclesiologically: Simon Peter will be by Jesus' commission precisely what he is not by flesh and blood"... A rabbinical text may shed some light on what is meant here: "Yahweh spoke: "How can I create the world, when these godless men will arise to vex me?" But when God looked upon Abraham, who was also to be born, he spoke: "Behold, I have found a rock upon which I can build and found the world". He therefore called Abraham a rock: "Look upon... the rock from which you have been hewn". Abraham, the father of faith, is by his faith the rock that holds back chaos, the onrushing primordial flood of destruction, and thus sustains creation. Simon, the first to confess Jesus as the Christ and the first witness of the Resurrection, now becomes by virtue of his Abrahamic faith, which is renewed in Christ, the rock that stands against the immoral tide of unbelief and its destruction of man... Pope Benedict XVI

#### **A Thought For the Day**

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| <b>Sunday</b>    | No matter what be your lot in life, build something on it.                     |
| <b>Monday</b>    | We are morally responsible for every wrong which we have the power to prevent. |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   | To avoid criticism: Do nothing, Say nothing, Be nothing.                       |
| <b>Wednesday</b> | When you feel you just can't stand on your feet any longer, try a bended knee. |
| <b>Thursday</b>  | Everyone smiles in the same language.  |
| <b>Friday</b>    | People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing.                          |
| <b>Saturday</b>  | Some people would not hesitate to drive up to the gates of heaven and honk!    |

**Teacher:** Great teachers give instructions to their disciples, has any teacher made his death the pattern of theirs? This is impossible, no earthly teacher could foresee the manner of his death nor was death ever the reason why he came to teach. Socrates never told the young philosophers of Athens to drink hemlock juice, because he would die by it. Jesus did make his Cross the basis of his first instructions to his Apostles. It is because this fact is so often missed, and for the moment was missed by the Apostles that the true vision of Christ is beclouded. Even when he acted as a teacher, he made the Cross to cast its shadow over his Apostles. The sufferings they would endure would be identical to what He would endure. He had been called the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed for the sins of the world... **Bishop Fulton Sheen**

**Everyone Needs Someone:** People need people and friends need friends. We all need love, for a full life depends not on vast riches or great acclaim. Not on success or worldly fame, but on just knowing that someone cares. Holds us close in their thoughts and prayers. For only the knowledge that we are understood, makes everyday living good. We rob ourselves of life's greatest need, when we lock up our hearts and fail to heed the outstretched hand reaching to find a kindred Spirit, whose mind and heart are lonely a longing to somehow share our joys and sorrows and to make us aware that life's completeness depend on the things we share with others. As we continue our Journey, prepared to deal with difficulties, let us never overlook the fact that when you walk with God, you can, and you will, make a difference in the lives of those you meet. "Lord help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go. Flood me with your spirit and life. Possess my whole being so utterly that all life may be a radiance of yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your Presence in my soul. Let them look us and see not me but You O Lord. We should give thanks to God for all that he does in us, with us, and through us. We should thank him for using us to be his love and his mercy in a world so much in need of such gifts.

**In His Will is Our Peace**  
**Fr. William C. Mooney**

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