

# Weekday Homilies of Pope Francis



Vol.2, no. 3, Feb 6 – Feb 21, 2014

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### 1. Pope at mass reflects on Christian death

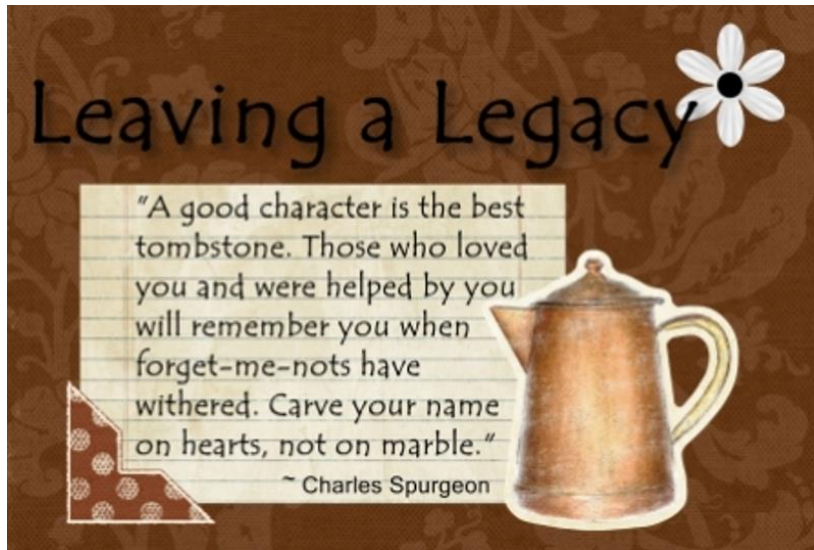
Ask for the grace to die at home, dying in the ‘Church’; ask for the grace to die in hope, with hope, and ask for the grace to leave a great legacy, a human legacy, a legacy of witness to our Christian life". *This is the lesson that Pope Francis drew from the Biblical passage that recounts the death of King David, at Mass celebrated Thursday, February 6. [\(Video\)](#)*

*The Pope, emphasized three things: First, that David dies ‘among his people’. He lives his belonging to the People of God, right to the very end. He had sinned: he calls himself a ‘sinner’, but he never left the people of God!*

"Sinner yes, but no traitor! And this is a grace: to remain with the People of God until the end. Having the grace to die within the Church, among the People of God, and this is the first point that I would like to emphasize. For us too, to seek the grace to die at home. To die at home, in the Church. And this is a grace! This can not be bought! It is a gift from God and we have to ask for it: 'Lord, grant that I may die at home,



in the Church! **Sinners, yes, all of us, we all are! But not traitors! Not corrupt!** Always within the Church! And the Church is such a Mother, that she wants us just as we are, often dirty, but the Church cleans us: she is our Mother.



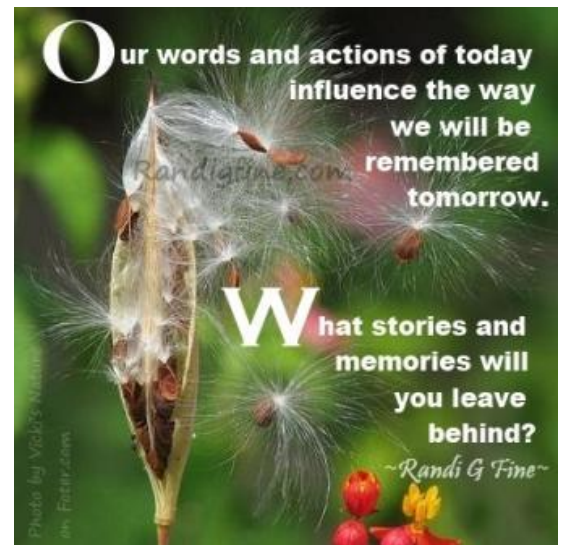
Secondly: David dies quiet , peaceful, serene... in the certainty of going to the other side to be with his fathers. This is another grace: **the grace to die in hope, knowing that there are people waiting for us on the other side.** The home, the family continues on the other side, that we are not alone. And this is a grace that we must ask for, so that in the last moments of life, we know that life is a struggle and the spirit of evil wants his reward.

Saint Therese of the Child Jesus said that, in her last days, there was a struggle in her soul, and when she thought about the future,

about what awaited her after death, in heaven, she heard a voice saying: 'but no, do not be silly there is nothing waiting for you but the darkness. We expect only the darkness of nothing!'. That's what she said. It was the voice of the devil, the devil, who did not want her to entrust herself to God in hope and die, die trusting in God! Or ask for this grace. But **trusting in God begins now, in the little things of life, as well as with great problems:** always trust the Lord and so one takes this habit of trusting in the Lord and growing in hope. ...To die at home, to die in hope.

The third consideration is the legacy that David leaves. **There are many scandals over inheritances..** ..scandals among families, ..scandals that divide. David, on the other hand, left the heritage of 40 years of government and a consolidated, strong people. A popular saying says that in his lifetime every man must leave behind a child, must plant a tree and must write a book, which this is the best inheritance. The Pope said we should ask ourselves: **'What legacy will I leave to those who come after me? A legacy of life? Have I done so much good that people love me like a father or mother? Did I plant a tree? Did I give life, wisdom? Did I write a book?'** David leaves this legacy to his son, he tells him: "You be strong and be a man. Obey the law of the Lord, your God, proceeding in His ways, and according to His laws!"

This is the legacy: our witness as Christians left to others. And some of us leave a great legacy: We think of the saints who lived the Gospel with such strength that they leave us a path of life and a way of living as our inheritance. Here are the three things that come to my heart reading this piece on the death of David: ask for the grace to die at home, to die in the Church; ask for the grace to die in hope, with hope, and ask for the grace to leave a beautiful legacy, human legacy, a legacy made by the witness of our Christian life. May St. David's grant us all three



## 2. John the Baptist – true disciple, model of humility

‘Proclaiming the Gospel without taking advantage of the privilege of being Christians’: *described Pope Francis during Mass Friday February, 7. Referring to the Gospel of the day on the martyrdom of John the Baptist he pointed out that, like him, the true disciple of Christ follows the path of humility without taking hold of prophecy.* [\(Video\)](#)



Herod had him killed to satisfy the whim of his mistress Herodias and her daughter. John is a man who had a short life, a short time to proclaim the Word of God. He was the man that God had sent to prepare the way for His Son. And John's life ends tragically, at the court of Herod amidst a banquet. **Where courts are concerned anything is possible: corruption, vices, crimes. Courts favour these things.** What did John do? First of all, he proclaimed the Lord. He proclaimed that the Saviour, the Lord was close at hand, that the Kingdom of God was close at hand. And he had done so with great vigour. He baptized. He exhorted all to repentance. He was a strong man. And he preached Jesus Christ.

The first, great thing John did was to proclaim Jesus Christ. Moreover **he did not take advantage of his moral authority. He had a chance to say 'I am the Messiah', because he had so much moral authority, ...all the people came to him!**

And the Gospel tells us that John told them all to convert. And the Pharisees, the doctors saw his strength: He was a righteous man. Then, they asked him if he was the Messiah. And in that ‘moment of temptation, of vanity’ **he could have shrugged and with a false humility said "But I do not know ...". Instead, he was clear: "No, not I! After me comes one who is stronger than I, of whom I am not worthy to bend over and loosen the thongs of his sandals"**. John was clear. He did not steal the title. He did not take over as the master. This then, is the second thing that he did. He was a man of truth. Do not steal dignity. The third thing that John did is to ‘imitate Christ.’ Even Herod, who killed John, believed that Jesus was John.

John observed, ..he imitated Jesus. Especially in the way he humbled himself: John humbled himself even to the end, until death. Also there is the same style of death, shameful: Jesus like a robber, a thief, a criminal on the cross. "Humiliating deaths. **But John also had his 'Garden of olives',** his anguish in prison, when he thought he made a mistake, and sends his disciples to ask Jesus: 'But tell me, is it you or did I make a mistake and there is another? **The darkness of the soul,** ...the darkness that purifies... like Jesus in the Garden of Olives. And Jesus answered John like the Father answered



Jesus, comforting. That darkness of the man of God, the woman of God. **This makes me think of the dark night of the soul of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta...**no? Ah, the woman who was praised all over the world, a Nobel Laureate ! But she knew that in a certain moment of her life, her long life, there was only darkness inside.



The one who announced Jesus Christ, John, did not take over the prophecy, he is the icon of a disciple. But where was the source of his attitude of discipleship?. It came from an encounter. The Gospel tells us about the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth, when John leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb. They were cousins. Maybe they met a few times. And that encounter was filled with joy, so much joy for John's heart and turned him into a disciple. John is the man who proclaims Jesus Christ, who does not take the place of Jesus Christ but follows the path of Jesus Christ.

It would do us good today, to ponder over our discipleship: do we proclaim Jesus Christ? Do we take advantage or not of our condition as Christians, as if it were a privilege? John did not take advantage of his prophecy. Thirdly, do we follow the path of Jesus Christ? The path of humiliation, humility, humbling ourselves in service? And if we find that we are not firm in this we should ask: ' When was my encounter with Jesus Christ? ..that meeting that filled me with joy? And return to that first encounter, return to the Galilee of our first meeting. We all have one! We must go back there! Meet again with the Lord and go forward on this path that is so beautiful, in which He must grow and we decrease."

### 3. Mass with the Pope is not a tourist attraction

“The liturgical celebration is not a social act, a good social act; it is not a gathering of believers to pray together. It is another thing. In the liturgy, God is present. At Mass, the presence of the Lord is real, very real”. *Rediscovering the sense of the sacred, entering into the mystery of God, allowing ourselves to be part of the mystery, was the focus of Pope Francis at Mass Monday, February 10, during which he also joked that going to Mass with the Pope is not a ‘tourist attraction’.* [\(Video\)](#)



*Pope Francis focused on the first reading of the day, which speaks of a theophany of God at the time of King Solomon.* “The Lord descends like a cloud on the Temple, which is filled with the glory of God. The Lord speaks to his people in many ways: through the prophets, the priests, the Holy Scripture. But with the theophanies, He speaks in another way, different from the Word: there is another, closer presence, without mediation, near. It is His presence! This happens in the liturgical celebration. The liturgical celebration is not a social act, a good social act; it is not a gathering of believers to pray together. It is another thing. In the liturgy, God is present, but it is a closer presence. At Mass, the presence of the Lord is real, very real.

When we celebrate Mass, **we are not re-enacting the Last Supper: no, it is not a re-enactment. It is something more: it really is the Last Supper.** It is really living the Passion and the redemptive death of the Lord once

more. It is a theophany: the Lord is present on the altar to be offered to the Father for the salvation of the world. We hear or say, 'But I can not, now, I have to go to Mass, I have to go to hear Mass'. **We do not 'hear' Mass, we participate**, we participate in this theophany, in this mystery of the Lord's presence among us.



The Christmas crib, the Way of the Cross, are representations, Mass, however, "is a real commemoration, in other words, a theophany; God draws close and is with us, and we share in the mystery of Redemption". **Sadly, many times we look at our watches at Mass, we count down the minutes. This is not the attitude that the liturgy asks of us:** The liturgy is God's time and God's space, and we must place ourselves there, in God's time, in God's space without watching the clock.

The liturgy is entering into the mystery of God, allowing ourselves be led to the mystery and being part of the mystery. For example, I'm sure you all come here to enter into the mystery, although, perhaps someone says, **'Oh, I have to go to Mass in Santa Marta, because there is a visit with the Pope in Santa Marta every morning as part of the sightseeing tour of Rome: it's a tourist site, is it not it? (He laughs)**. All of you come here, we gather here to enter into the mystery: this is the liturgy. It is God's time and God's space; it is the cloud of God that surrounds us all.

As a child, during the preparation for First Holy Communion, there was a song that showed how the altar was guarded by angels to give a sense of the glory of God, the space of God, time of God. And when, during rehearsals, they carried the hosts, the children were told: "Look, these are not what you will receive: these are not worth anything, because first there will be the consecration". Thus, **to celebrate the liturgy means having this willingness to enter into the mystery of God, into His space, His time, and trust in this mystery.**

We will do well today to ask the Lord to give us all this 'sense of the sacred', this sense that we understand that it is one thing to pray at home, pray at church, pray the Rosary, pray many beautiful prayers, do the Way of the Cross, so many beautiful things, read the Bible ... and another to celebrate the Eucharist. In the celebration we enter into the mystery of God, on that path that we can not control: only He is the One, He is the glory, He is the all powerful, He is everything. We ask for this grace that the Lord teach us to enter into the mystery of God".

#### 4. A vain believer can lose his faith, but a humble pagan can find it

Welcoming the Word of God with humility can lead a pagan to find faith, but yielding to passions can make a believer lose his faith. *This is the lesson drawn from the readings of the day by Pope Francis at Mass on Thursday, February 13. [\(Video\)](#)*

*Pope Francis was reflecting on the Gospel, in which a courageous woman, a Canaanite, who is a pagan asks Jesus to free her daughter from the devil. "She is a desperate mother, and a mother, confronted with the ill health of a child, is ready to do anything. Jesus explains that He came first of all for the sheep of the house of Israel and he does so with harsh words: 'Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs'. **This woman, who certainly had not attended a university, responds, not with***

her intelligence, but with her mother's womb, with her love: ' Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's scraps!' This woman was not ashamed and because of her faith Jesus performed a miracle for her.

She risked making a bad impression, but she insisted, and from paganism and idolatry she found health for her daughter and she found the living God. **This is the journey of a person of good will who seeks God and finds him.** The Lord blesses her. How many people take this path and the Lord waits for them! But it is the same Holy Spirit that brings them forward to make this journey. Every day in the Church of God there are people who are making this journey, silently, to find the Lord, because they allow themselves to be carried forward by the Holy Spirit.



**But there is also the opposite path, that of Solomon,** about which we hear in the first reading. Solomon was the wisest man on earth, he had received great blessings from God, he had a universal fame, all the power, he was a believer in God, but what happened? He liked women and had many pagan concubines who led his heart astray to follow other gods: he introduced idols into Israel. And **these women slowly, slowly weakened Solomon's heart. His heart did not remain intact in the Lord, like the heart of David his father.**

His heart is weakened; he weakened and lost his faith. He lost his faith. The wisest man in the world allowed himself to be led along by an indiscreet love, (a love without discretion), he allowed himself to be led by his passions. **'But father, Solomon did not lose his faith, he believed in God and was able to recite the Bible!'. Yes, it is true, but being able to recite the Creed does not mean you have faith. You can say the Creed and have lost faith.**



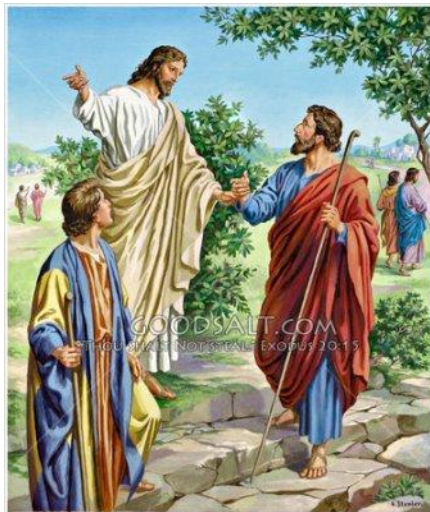
Solomon was a sinner, like his father David. But then he went ahead and as sinner converted into a corrupt man. His heart was corrupt, because of this idolatry. His father was a sinner, but the Lord had forgiven him all of his sins, because he was humble and asked for forgiveness. Solomon, however, was so wise, but vanity and his passions led him to corruption. **It's in our hearts, where we lose our faith.**

**The evil seed of his passions nourished Solomon's heart and led him to idolatry.** And we have heard, after the first reading, in the Alleluia, this beautiful advice: 'welcome the Word with docility' 'the Word that was planted in you can lead you to salvation'. Let us take the path of the Canaanite woman of that pagan woman, welcoming the Word of God, which has been planted in us and that will lead us to salvation. May the powerful Word of God keep us on this path and not allow us to be led into corruption or idolatry."

## 5. Christians disciples like lambs among wolves, but filled with joy

“A true Christian is someone who walks joyfully through the world as a lamb of the Lord.” *These were the words of Pope Francis at Mass on Friday, February 14, feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, co-patrons of Europe. Pope Francis dedicated his homily to our Christian identity, to how disciples of Jesus should be.*

[\(Video\)](#)



The Pope, commenting on the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, pointed out that “The Christian is ‘sent out.’ The Lord sends his disciples, asks them to move onwards. And that means that the Christian is a disciple of the Lord who journeys, who moves forward. You can not think of a stationary Christian: **a Christian who is standing still is sick in his Christian identity, and his identity is suffering from some disease.** A Christian is a disciple that walks, that moves forward. At the end - we heard in the Psalm, the Lord's parting words - at the end the Lord also says: 'Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel. Go. Walk. This is the first attitude that a Christian must have: to walk, walk and even if there are difficulties, go beyond the difficulties.

This is what happened with Paul in Antioch Pisidia, where there was trouble with the Jewish community and so the Gentiles moved on. Jesus urges us to go to the crossroads and invite everyone, the good and the bad. ..Even the bad! ..Everyone. **The Christian, therefore, walks and if there are difficulties, goes beyond them** to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is near.



A second aspect of Christian identity is that **the Christian has to remain a lamb.** A Christian is a lamb and must always retain this identity. The Lord sends us like lambs among wolves. But someone could propose the use of force against them. We recall David when he had to fight against the Philistine, they wanted to dress him in Saul's entire armour and he could not move. In that way he was not himself, he was not humble, he was not the simple David. Eventually, he took up his sling and won the battle. As lambs ... Do not become wolves... Because, sometimes, temptation makes us think: ' But this is difficult, these wolves are smart and I



will be even more cunning than them, no?' Lambs... Not a fool, but a lamb. ...Lamb. ...**With astuteness of a Christian, but always a lamb.** A lamb...because if you are a Lamb, He will defend you. But if you feel as strong as a wolf, He will not defend you, He will leave you alone, and the wolves will eat you alive. Like a lamb.

**The third aspect of this identity is the ‘Christian style’ which is ‘joy’.** Christians are people who rejoice because they know the Lord and bring the Lord to others. And you can not walk as Christians, without joy. You can not walk like a lamb without

joy. Even in problems, difficulties, mistakes and sins there is the joy of Jesus who forgives and always helps. The Gospel then must go forward, carried by these lambs sent by the Lord walking with joy.

**Those Christians who have a habit of constant complaining and lamenting are of no help to the Lord or to His Church.** They always live, complaining about everything; sad ... This is not the style of the disciple. St. Augustine tells Christians: 'Go, go ahead, sing and walk with joy: This is the style of the Christian. ...Proclaiming the Gospel with joy and the Lord does everything else. Instead, too much sadness, this extreme unhappiness, even bitterness, leads us to live a so-called Christianity without Christ: the Cross empties the Christians who are in front of the tomb crying, like Mary Magdalene, but without the joy of having found the Risen Lord.



On the feast of these two Christian disciples, Cyril and Methodius, the Church makes us reflect on our 'Christian identity'. The Christian never stands still; the Christian is a man or a woman who always walks, walks beyond difficulties. And he or she walks, like a lamb, his or her strength is not enough: the Christian is a man or a woman who walks with joy. May the Lord through the intercession of these two brothers, Saints- Patrons of Europe, grant us the grace to live as Christians who walk like lambs and with joy.

## 6. The patience of God's people keeps the Church going



The people of God endure the challenges of daily life with faith and patience. *That – Pope Francis said at Mass Monday, February 17. He was commenting on the Letter of St. James: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds."* [\(Video\)](#)

“It appears to be an invitation to bear the burden, but it is not. **Patience, enduring trials, the things that we do not want, it helps us mature in our lives.** Those who have no patience want everything at once, all in a hurry. Those who do not know this wisdom, patience are capricious people, just like children who are capricious and nothing suits them. The person who has no patience is a person who does not mature,

instead retains the whims of the child, who can not take life as it comes: either this or nothing. This is one of the temptations: to become capricious. Another temptation for those who have no patience is the omnipotence of wanting just one thing, as is the case with the Pharisees asking Jesus for a sign from heaven, they wanted a spectacle, a miracle.

**They confuse God's way of acting with that of a sorcerer. And God does not act like a sorcerer,** God has His own way of moving forward. ...The patience of God. He also has patience. Every time we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we sing a hymn to God's patience! How the Lord carries us on His shoulders, with so much patience, so much patience! Christian life should unfold to the melody of this patience, because it was the



music of our fathers, the people of God, those who believed in the Word of God, who followed the commandment which the Lord gave to our father Abraham: 'Walk before me and be blameless.



The people of God as in the Letter to the Hebrews: 'suffered so much, they were persecuted, killed', but had the joy of seeing God's promises from afar. This is the patience that we must have in times of trial: the

patience of an adult person, the patience of God who carries us on his shoulders. And this is the patience of our people.

How patient our people are! Even now! **When we go into the parishes and find those people who are suffering, who have problems, they have a disabled child or have a disease, but carry on in life with patience.** They do not ask for signs, like those people in the Gospel, who wanted a sign. They said: 'Give us a sign'. No, they do not ask, but know how to read the signs of the times: they know that when the fig tree germinates, the spring has arrived they know how to distinguish that. Instead, these impatient from today's Gospel, who wanted a sign, they could not read the signs of the times, and that's why they did not recognize Jesus.

**Those of our people, who suffer, who suffer greatly, from many things, but do not lose the smile of faith, that joy of faith... and these people, our people, in our parishes, in our institutions - many people - they are the ones who carry the Church, with their holiness, every day, every day.** Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance' (James 1, 2-4). May the Lord give us all the patience, joyous patience, patience in labour, ...peaceful patience. May He give us the patience of God and give us the patience of our faithful people, who are so exemplary".



## 7. Temptation grows, infects and justifies itself, but Word of Jesus liberates



“Resisting the seduction of temptation is possible only when listening to the Word of Jesus.” *Those were the words of Pope Francis in his homily at the Mass **Tuesday, February 18.** Despite our weaknesses, the Pope repeated, Christ always gives us confidence and opens to us a horizon wider than our limitations. [\(Video\)](#)*

Temptation manifests itself as a harmless attraction and ends up turning into a cage. Rather than trying to escape, more often we try to minimize the slavery, being deaf to the Word of God. *In his homily, Pope Francis reaffirms a truth and a sequence described by St. James*

*in the day's reading.* **The truth is that man is tempted not by God, but by his passions.** The sequence is produced by the same passions, which, the Apostle says, 'conceive and produce sin. And sin, once committed, brings forth death.'



Where does temptation come from? How does it work in us? The Apostle tells us that it is not from God, but from our passions, our inner weaknesses, from the wounds left in us by original sin: that's where temptations come from, from these passions. **It's curious... temptation has three characteristics: it grows, is contagious and is justified.** It grows: it begins with a tranquil air, and grows ... Jesus himself said this when He spoke about the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The wheat grew, but so did the weeds sown by the enemy. And the temptation grows: it grows, it grows... And if one does not stop it, it fills everything.

Further, temptation looks for another to keep it company, it is contagious and in growing, in being contagious, the temptation closes us in, in an environment where you can't get out easily. This is the experience of the Apostles related in the Gospel of the day, where the Twelve blame each other under the eyes of the Master for not having brought bread on board the boat. Jesus perhaps smiling at the quarrel invites them to watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, of Herod. But the Apostles, who, not listening to Him, continued to argue, **were so closed in on the issue of who was to blame for not having brought the bread, that they did not have space, the time, the light for the Word of God.**

And so, when we are tempted, we do not hear the Word of God, we don't listen. We don't understand. And Jesus had to remind them of the multiplication of the loaves to get them out of that environment, because temptation closes us in, it **takes away any ability to see ahead, it closes every horizon, and so leads us to sin.** When we are tempted, only the Word of God, the Word of Jesus saves us, hearing that Word, opens the horizon... He is always willing to teach us how to escape from temptation. And Jesus is great because He not only brings us out of temptation, but gives us greater confidence.

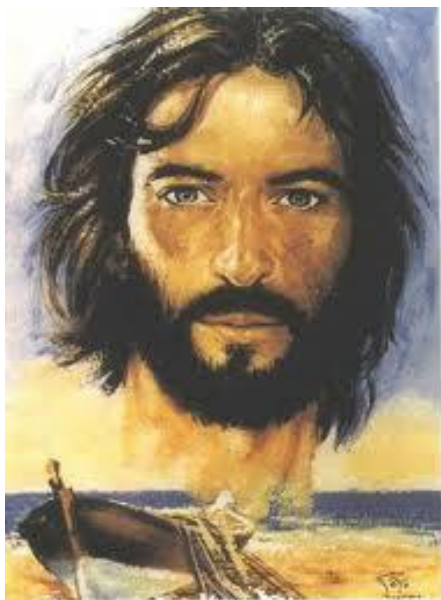


This confidence is a great strength when we are tempted: the Lord waits for us... **He trusts us who are so tempted, who are sinners... He always opens horizons.** On the other hand, the devil with temptation, closes, closes, closes and makes an environment similar to the boat of the Apostles. And not to be 'imprisoned' by this type of environment is possible only when listening to the Word of Jesus.

Let us ask the Lord, who always — as He did with the disciples, with his patience — when we are tempted, tells us: 'Stop, don't worry. Remember what I did with you at that moment, at that time: remember. Lift up your eyes, look at the horizon, do not be closed, do not close in on yourself, go forward.' And this Word will save us from falling into sin in the moment of temptation."

## 8. Jesus did not say to Peter ‘know me’; he said 'Follow me!'

"Jesus did not say 'Get to know me' to Peter and his apostles, he said 'Follow me!'. You get to know Jesus by following him, more than studying him." *This was Pope Francis message during his homily at Mass Thursday, February 20, recalling the question "who am I to you?" asked by Jesus himself to the apostles. [\(Video\)](#)*



The Gospel of the day portrays the Apostle Peter in the guise of a courageous witness - who responds to Jesus' question: "Who am I for you?" with "you are the Christ" – immediately followed by that of an adversary, when he reproaches Jesus for announcing that he will suffer and die, and then rise again . Many times Jesus turns to us and asks us: 'But who am I for you?' ... obtaining the same response as Peter, what we have learned in the catechism. But that is not enough. It seems that to respond to that question that we have heard in our hearts: ‘Who is Jesus for us?’ **what we have learned, what we have studied is not enough. It is important to study and to understand, but it is not enough. To know Jesus it is necessary to take the journey that Peter took:** after that humiliation, Peter went forward with Jesus, he saw the miracles Jesus did, he saw his power. Then he paid the tax as Jesus had told him, he caught a fish, removed a coin, he saw many miracles like that. But, at

a certain point, Peter denied Jesus, he betrayed Jesus, and he learned that most difficult knowledge: more than knowledge, wisdom: of tears, of weeping.

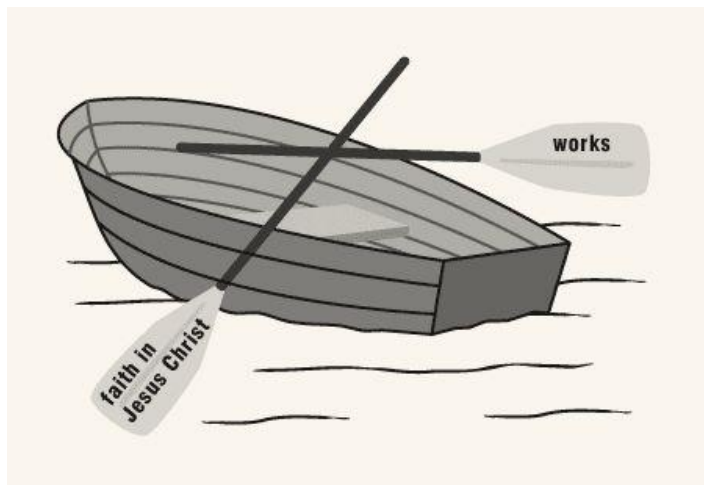
Peter asks Jesus for forgiveness and yet, after the Resurrection, he is questioned three times on the beach of Tiberias, “Do you love me?” and probably in reaffirming his total love for his Master he weeps with shame in recalling his three denials. **This first question - 'Who am I for you?' - can only be understood along a path, after a long path, a path of grace and of sin, a path of a disciple.** Jesus did not say to Peter and to His Apostles “Get to know me”; He said, “Follow me!” And this following of Jesus makes us know Jesus. ...**Following Jesus with our virtues, even with our sins, but always following Jesus.** It's not the study of things that's needed, but a life of discipleship.



It takes a daily encounter with the Lord, every day, with our triumphs and our weaknesses. But, it is a journey that we can't make on our own. The intervention of the Holy Spirit is necessary: To know Jesus is a gift of the Father; it is He who makes us know Jesus. **It is a work of the Holy Spirit, who is a great worker. Not a trade unionist... He is a great worker and He works in us always.** He does this work of explaining the mystery of Jesus, and of giving us this sense of Jesus. Let us look at Jesus, Peter, the Apostles, and we hear in our hearts the question: ‘Who am I for you?’ And as disciples let us ask the Father to grant to us the knowledge of Christ in the Holy Spirit, to explain this mystery to us.”

## 9. A faith that does not bear fruit in works, is not faith

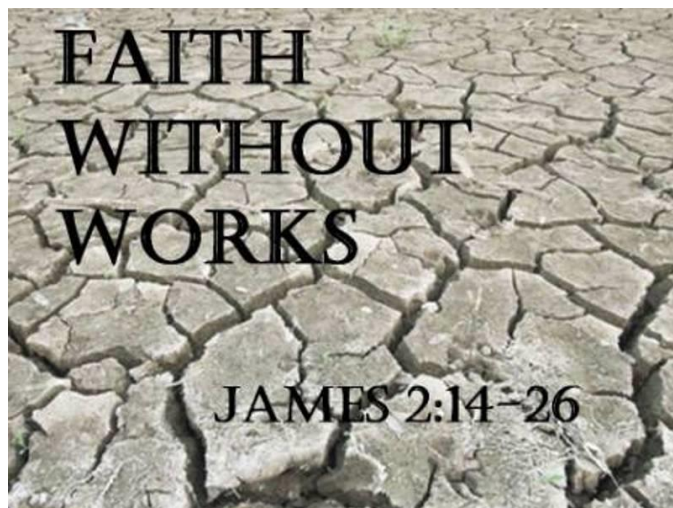
“A faith that does not bear fruit in works is not faith.” *This was the affirmation with which Pope Francis began his homily at Mass on **Friday February 21**, following the readings of the day. [\(Video\)](#)*



The world is full of Christians who often recite the words of the Creed, while very seldom putting them into practice; or erudite scholars who reduce theology to a series of neat categories, neatly removed and shielded from having any influence on real life. It is a danger that St. James feared even two thousand years ago. The first reading from the letter of St. James which was read today is clear: ‘faith without fruit in life, a faith that does not bear fruit in works, is not faith.’

Also, we often make the mistake. We hear it being said: ‘But I have a lot of faith’, and ‘I believe everything, everything ...’ and maybe such a person who says something like this leads a lukewarm life, a weak life. **His faith is as a theory, though it is not alive** in his life. The Apostle James, when he speaks of faith, speaks precisely of doctrine, of that, which is what is the content of the faith. Nevertheless, one might learn all the commandments, all the prophecies, all the truths of faith, though if these are not put into practice, put to work, they are useless. **We can recite the Creed theoretically, even without faith, and there are many people who do so: even the demons! The demons know very well what is said in the Creed and know that it is the Truth.**

St. James asserts: “You believe that there is one God? You do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” The difference is that the demons do not have faith insofar as authentic faith. Faith is not merely to possess knowledge. Rather, to have faith means receiving the message of God, brought by Christ. In the Gospel, there are two **telltale signs of those, who, know what is to be believed, but do not have faith.** The **first sign is a tendency to ‘casuistry’**, represented by those who asked Jesus if it was lawful to pay taxes, or which of the seven brothers of the husband would have to marry the widowed woman. **The second sign is a commitment to ‘ideology.’**



There are Christians who think of faith as a system of ideas, ideologically. There were such as these even in Jesus’ own day. The Apostle John says of them, that they were the antichrist, the ideologues of faith, of whatsoever ideological stamp they might have been. At that time there were the Gnostics, but there will always be many – and thus, **those who fall into casuistry or those who fall into ideology are Christians who know the doctrine, but without faith, like demons. The difference is that the demons tremble, these Christians, no: they live peacefully.**

There are also examples of **people who do not know the doctrine, but have so much faith**. ...The Canaanite woman, who, with her faith obtains healing for her daughter, who was the victim of possession, and the Samaritan woman who opens her heart because, she has not met with ‘abstract truths’, but ‘Jesus Christ’. Then there is the blind man healed by Jesus, who then faces interrogation by the Pharisees and teachers of the law until he kneels with humility and adores the one who healed him. These three people show how faith and witness are inseparable.

Faith is an encounter with Jesus Christ, with God, from which faith is born, and from there it brings you to witness. That is what the Apostle means: a faith without works, **a faith that does not involve one’s whole self, that does not lead to witness, is not faith. It is words ...and nothing more than words.”**

