



VATICAN RADIO'S ENGLISH SERVICE FOR SOUTH ASIA

Weekday Homilies of Pope Francis

December 16 to 31,
2013

....at the Chapel of Casa di Santa
Martha
at 7 a.m.



Without prophecy, only clericalism

At Mass on **Monday, December 16**, Pope Francis reminded those present that **all baptized are called to be prophets**. Recalling the words of the day's reading from the Book of Numbers which depicts the figure of the prophet, the Pope said: The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened, the oracle of him who hears the words of God. This, the prophet, a man whose eye is opened, and who hears and speaks the words of God, who knows how to see into the moment and to go forward into the future. But first he has listened, ...he has heard the word of God.

The prophet holds these three moments within himself: past, present and future. The past: the prophet is aware of the promise and he holds God's promise in his heart, he keeps it alive, he remembers it, he repeats it. He then looks into the present, he looks at his people and he experiences the power of the spirit to speak a word to them that will lift them up, to continue their journey toward the future.

Therefore, the prophet is a man of three times: the promise of the past, the contemplation of the present, the courage to point out the path toward the future. The Lord always protected his

people through the prophets in difficult moments, when the people were discouraged and had reached the end; when there was no temple, when Jerusalem was under the power of enemy forces, when the people asked themselves: 'Lord, you have given us your promise, what will happen now?'. And he added: Perhaps the same thing happened to Our Lady, as she stood at the foot of the Cross: 'Lord, you told me that he would liberate Israel, that he would be its Head, the One who would bring redemption; and now?'.
Photo: Holy Family, by Harry Anderson, © 1988



The prophets were needed in those times in Israel's history. And the prophets were not always well received. Many times they were rejected. Jesus himself told the Pharisees that their fathers had killed the prophets because they were saying uncomfortable things, they were speaking the truth, they were recalling the promises. When prophecy is absent in Israel's life, something is missing: the Lord's life is missing".

Take the life of young Samuel as an example. As he was sleeping, he heard the call of the Lord, but he did not know what it was. And the Bible says: 'the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision' (1 Samuel 3:1). It was a time when Israel had no prophets. However, the same thing happens when a prophet comes and the people do not receive him, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew (21:33-27). **When there is no prophecy, the emphasis falls on legality**; these priests went to Jesus to ask him for his legal card: 'By what authority are you doing these things?' they asked him". **It is as if they'd said to him: 'We are in charge of the masters of the temple; as for you, by what authority do you do these things?'** They did not understand the prophecies, they had forgotten the promise. They did not know how to read the signs of the present moment, **they did not have eyes opened nor did they hear the word of God. They only had authority"**.

It was the same in Samuel's day, when the word of the Lord was rare and there was no frequent vision. Legality and authority. **When there is no prophecy among the people, clericalism fills the void.** It is precisely this clericalism that asks Jesus: 'by what authority do you do these things, by

what legal authorization?’ The memory of the promise and hope to go forward are reduced only to the present: neither the past, nor a future and hope.



Perhaps the people of God who believed, who went to the temple to pray, in their hearts were mourning the fact that they didn't find the Lord. Prophecy was missing. They mourned in their hearts as had Anna, the mother of Samuel, asking that the people might be made fruitful with that fruitfulness that comes from the power of God, when he reawakens in us the memory of his promise and moves us toward the future with hope. This is the prophet. This is the man whose

eye is opened, and who hears the words of God”.

Pope Francis concluded his homily recommending “a prayer over the course of these days, as we prepare for the celebration of the Lord’s birth”. *He prayed to the Lord that prophets not be lacking among his people:* **“All of us who are baptized are prophets. Lord, may we not forget your promise; may we never grow weary of going forward; may we never close ourselves in through a legality that closes doors. Lord, free your people from the spirit of clericalism and come to their aid through your spirit of prophecy”.** ([Watch Video](#))

A God who walks with us

*Pope Francis turned 77 on **Tuesday December 17**, and celebrated Mass with 4 homeless men, his closest collaborators and staff from the guesthouse, all of whom afterwards greeted him with a birthday song.*

The day’s reading was centered on the genealogy of Jesus and the Pope used this in his homily to reflect on God’s enduring presence in our lives throughout history. He said **“God wished to live out His life alongside us and took His surname from each of us.”**

"Once I heard someone say: 'But this Gospel seems like the telephone directory!' It is not! it is quite another thing: this Gospel passage is pure and has an important message. It is pure history, because God, as Pope St. Leo says, God sent forth his Son. And Jesus is consubstantial with the Father, God, is also inseparable from Mother, a woman. And this is the consubstantiality of the Mother. God has made history. God chose to become history. He is with us. He made the journey with us.

After the first sin in Heaven, He had this idea: to make the journey with us. He called Abraham, the first one who is named on this list and invited him to walk. And Abraham began that journey." And then Isaac, Jacob, Judah. And so it went on this way in history. **God walks with his people. God did not want to come to save us without history. He**



wanted to make history with us. ...A story that moves from holiness to sin. In this list there are saints, but in this list there are also sinners.

There are high-level sinners, ...who have committed major sins. And God has made history with them. Sinners, who have not responded to all that God has thought out for them. We think of Solomon, so great, so smart, and ended up, a poor fellow, who did not know what he was called! But God was with him. **And that's nice, is not it? God is consubstantial with us. He makes history with us.** What's more, when God wants to speak it is He who says 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'.



But what is the surname of God? We are, each one of us. He takes from us the name to make it his surname . 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Pedro, of Marietta, Armony, Marisa, of Simon, of all! He takes His surname from us. The surname of God is each of us.

He has left us to write our own history. We write this story of grace and sin, and He follows us. This is the humility of God, God's patience; God's love which is ours! And this is so much love, so much tenderness, to have such a God.

His joy was sharing his life with us. The Book of Wisdom says that the joy of the Lord is among the children of men, with us. Approaching Christmas , you'd think if he has made his story with us, if He took his surname from us, if He has left us we write our history, at least let us allow him to write our history. **And that is holiness: Letting the Lord write our history.** And this is a Christmas greeting for all of us. That the Lord will write the story and that you let him write it himself. So be it!

Humility necessary for fruitfulness

“Humility is necessary for fruitfulness,” *Pope Francis said at Mass Thursday 19, 2013. The Holy Father said that the intervention of God overcomes the sterility of our life and makes it fruitful. Then he put us on guard against the attitude of pride that makes us sterile.*

Often in the Bible we find women, who are sterile, to whom the Lord gives the gift of life. The



Gospel tells us the story of Elizabeth, who was sterile but who had a son – John. From the impossibility of giving life,...comes life! **And this happened not only for sterile women but to those who had no hope of life, such as Naomi who eventually had a grandson.**

The Lord intervened in the life of this woman to tell us: 'I am capable of giving life.' In the Prophets too there is the image of the desert, the desert land that cannot grow a tree, a fruit, to bring forth anything. 'But the desert will be like a forest,' the Prophets say,

'it will be huge, it will flower.' **But can the desert flower? Yes. Can the sterile woman give life? Yes. The promise of the Lord: 'I can!'** From dryness, **from your dryness I can make life, salvation grow.** From aridity I can make fruit grow!

And that salvation: The intervention of God who makes us fruitful, who gives us the capacity to give life. We cannot do it by ourselves. And yet, many people have tried to imagine that we are capable of saving ourselves:

Even Christians, eh? We think of the Pelagians for example. All is grace. And it is the intervention



of God that brings us salvation. It is the intervention of God that helps us along the path of sanctity. Only He can do it. But what are we to do on our part? **First, recognize our dryness, our incapacity to give life. Recognize this. Second, ask: ‘Lord, I want to be fruitful.’** I desire that my life should give life, that my faith should be fruitful and go forward and be able to give it to others. Lord, I am sterile, I can’t do it. You can. I am a desert: I can’t do it. You can.”

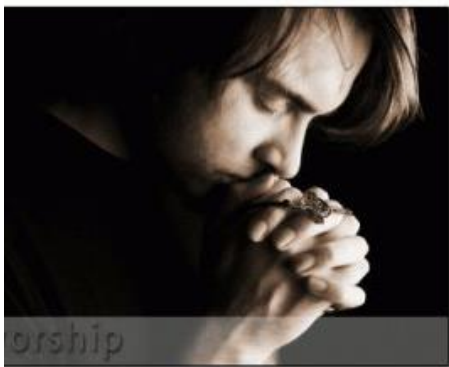
And this could be our prayer during these days before Christmas. We think about how the proud, those who think they can do it all by themselves, are struck. Michal, the daughter of Saul was a woman who was not sterile, but was proud, and was not able to understand what it was to praise God and in fact laughed at the praise that David gave to the Lord. And she was punished with sterility.



Humility is necessary for fruitfulness. How many people imagine they are just like Michal, but who are really [sorry souls (poveracce)]. **The humility to say to the Lord: ‘Lord, I am sterile, I am a desert’** and to repeat in these days this beautiful antiphon that the Church makes us pray: O Son of David, O Adonai, O Wisdom – today! – O Root of Jesse, O Emmanuel, **come and give us life, come and save us, because only You can, by myself I cannot!** And with this humility, this humility of the desert, this humility of a sterile soul, receive grace, the grace to flourish, to give fruit, and to give life.” [\(Watch Video\)](#)

Silence guards one's relationship with God

“Only silence guards the mystery of the journey that a person walks with God”, said Pope Francis in his homily at Mass on **Friday December 20**. “May the Lord,” the Pope added, “give us the grace to love the silence, which needs to be guarded from all publicity.”



“In the history of salvation, neither in the clamour nor in the blatant, but the shadows and the silence are the places in which God chose to reveal himself to humankind. The imperceptible reality from which his mystery, from time to time, took visible form, took flesh.” *The Gospel spoke about the Annunciation, and the Pope focussed on the passage in which the angel tells Mary that **the power of the Most High***

would “overshadow” her. “The shadow, has almost the same quality as the cloud, with which God protected the Jews in the desert. The Lord always took care of the mystery and hid the mystery. He did not publicize the mystery. **A mystery that publicizes itself is not Christian; it is not the mystery of God: it is a fake mystery!** And this is what happened to Our Lady, when she received her Son: the mystery of her virginal motherhood is hidden. It is hidden her whole life! And she knew it. This shadow of God in our lives helps us to discover our own mystery: the mystery of our encounter with the Lord, our mystery of our life’s journey with the Lord.

Each of us knows how mysteriously the Lord works in our hearts, in our souls. And what is the cloud, the power, the way the Holy Spirit covers our mystery? **This cloud in us, in our lives is called silence: the silence is exactly the cloud that covers the mystery of our relationship with the Lord, of our holiness and of our sins.** This mystery ...that we cannot explain. But when there is no silence in our lives, the mystery is lost, it goes away. **Guarding the mystery with silence!** That is the cloud, that is the power of God for us, that is the strength of the Holy Spirit.

The Mother of Jesus was the perfect icon of silence. From the proclamation of her exceptional maternity at Calvary. I think about how many times she remained quiet and how many times she did not say that which she felt in order to guard the mystery of her relationship with her Son, up until the most raw silence at the foot of the cross.



The Gospel does not tell us anything: if she spoke a word or not... She was silent, but in her heart, how many things told the Lord! ‘You, that day, this and the other that we read, you had told me that he would be great, you had told me that you would have given him the throne of David, his forefather, that he would have reigned forever and now I see him there!’ Our Lady was human! And perhaps she even had the desire to say: ‘Lies! I was deceived!’ John Paul II would say this, speaking about Our Lady in that moment. But she, with her silence, hid the mystery that she did not understand and with this silence allowed for this mystery to grow and blossom in hope.

Silence is that which guards the mystery, for which the mystery of our relationship with God, of our journey, of our salvation cannot be... publicized. May the Lord give all of us the grace to love the silence, to seek him and to have a heart that is guarded by the cloud of silence. ([Watch Video](#))

The third coming of Christ

*Pope Francis celebrating Mass on **Monday December 23**, focused his remarks after the readings of the day on the coming feast of the Nativity, and the threefold coming of Christ into history, at the end of time, and into our daily lives. Drawing on the lesson of St. Bernard, Pope Francis spoke of a “Third coming” of Christ – that which occurs every day in the life of the Church and of Christian faithful:*

“There is a third coming of the Lord: that of every day. The Lord visits His Church every day! He visits each of us, and so our souls as well [experience something similar]: our soul resembles the Church, our soul resembles Mary. The desert fathers say that Mary, the Church and our souls are



feminine, and that what is said about one can be said analogously of the others. **Our soul is also in waiting, this waiting for the coming of the Lord – an open soul that calls out, ‘Come, Lord.’**

The Holy Spirit moves each of us in these days to make this prayer his own and all throughout the Advent season the Church has described herself as being in vigilant expectation – the attitude that is the hallmark of the pilgrim. **‘We are pilgrims,’**

Are we expectant, or are we [indifferent]? Are we vigilant, or are we closed up ‘safely’ in an inn along the way, without the desire to go forward? Are we pilgrims, or are we vagabonds? For this reason, the Church invites us to pray, ‘Come!’, in order to open our soul and in order that that our soul be, these days, vigilant and expectant. Keep vigil! Be mindful of the difference the Lord’s coming (or not) makes in us. Is there a place for the Lord, or only for parties, for shopping, for revelry ... **Is our soul open, as is Holy Mother Church and as was the Virgin Mary? Or is our soul rather closed, with a “Do Not Disturb!” sign hung on**



the door to it?”



The world does not end with us, but with the Lord, with Our Lady and with Mother Church. So, we do well to repeat (the invocation): ‘O Wisdom, O Key of David, O King of the nations, come!’

Now, repeat [the call] many times, ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’ and look to see our soul be not one of those souls that say, “Do not disturb!” No! Let ours be great souls – souls open to receive the Lord in these days and that begin to feel that, which tomorrow the Church will speak to us in the

antiphon: ‘Know that today the Lord will come, and in the morning you will see his glory!’