
Pope Francis: “Wonder is the thermometer of our spiritual life”

Wonder “sets us free from the temptation of thinking that we can ‘manage things’, or from the false security of thinking that today is somehow different, no longer like the origins; today the Church is big, solid, and we occupy eminent positions in its hierarchy”, the Pope said in the homily for the Mass he presided over in Saint Peter’s Basilica, attended by some 4,500 people, including the new Cardinals created last Saturday and approximately 200 more Cardinals who took part in the two-day reflection on Praedicate Evangelium. Francis went on to explain: “Indeed, there is some truth to this, but also much deception, whereby the Father of Lies seeks to make Christ’s followers first worldly, then innocuous.” “This can lead you to the temptation of worldliness, which step by step takes away your strength, takes away your hope. Those are the seeds of spiritual worldliness”, Francis added in unscripted remarks. “Truly, the word of God awakens in us wonder at being in the Church, of being Church!”, Francis exclaimed: “Let us return to our initial baptismal wonder. That is what makes the community of believers attractive, first to themselves and then to others: the double mystery of our being blessed in Christ and of going forth with Christ into the world.” “This wonder does not diminish with the passing of the years; it does not weaken with our increasing responsibilities in the Church”, the Pope said: “No, thanks be to God. It grows stronger and deeper. I am certain that this is also the case with you, dear brothers, who have now become members of the College of Cardinals. We rejoice too that this sense of gratitude is shared by all of us, all the baptized. Brothers and sisters, this kind of wonder is a way to salvation! May God keep it ever alive in our hearts.”

“May we set out from this celebration, and this assembly of Cardinals, ever more ready to proclaim to all the peoples the wonders of the Lord”,

was Francis’ auspicious remark. “Praise, blessing, adoration and the gratitude that acknowledges all that God has done”, are the attitudes recommended by the Pope, commenting on two kinds of “wonder” stemming from the readings of this celebration: “the wonder of Paul before God’s saving plan and the wonder of the disciples, including Matthew himself, at meeting the risen Jesus, who then commissioned them.” “Praise born of wonder, praise that will never become force of habit, as long as it remains rooted in wonder and nourished by that fundamental attitude of the heart and spirit”, the Pope explained: “I would like to ask each of us, you dear brother Cardinals, Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, people of God: how is your wonder? Do you sense wonder at times? Or have you forgotten what it means?”, Francis asked off-text: “Do you sense wonder at times? Or have you forgotten what it means?”. “We all have our own Galilee within our particular histories: go back to that Galilee.” Francis’ guidance: “God calls us to share in this plan.” Finally, the Pope paid homage to his formation: “We should be immensely grateful to Saint Paul VI, who passed on to us this love for the Church, a love which is first and foremost gratitude, grateful wonder at her mystery and at the gift of our being not only members of the Church, but involved in her life, sharing in and, indeed, jointly responsible for her.” “The Church needs to cultivate a deeper awareness of her identity... her origin and her mission”, Paul VI writes “at the beginning of his programmatic encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, written during the Council”, in which he made explicit reference to the Letter to the Ephesians, “to the providential plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God... so that through the Church... it may be made known.” “This, dear brothers and sisters, is what it is to be a minister of the Church”, the Pope’s identikit: “One who experiences wonder before God’s plan and, in that spirit, passionately loves the Church and stands at the service of her mission wherever and however the Holy Spirit may choose. This was the case with the Apostle Paul, as we see from his letters: His apostolic zeal and the concern for the community was always accompanied, and indeed preceded, by words of blessing filled with wonder and gratitude: “Blessed be God...”.

“Wonder. This is perhaps the measure, the thermometer of our spiritual life”,

the Pope concluded off-text, repeating the initial question: “Dear brother, dear sister, all of here together: how is your ability to be amazed? Or are you used to it, so used to it that you have lost it? Are you able once again to be amazed? May it be the case with us! May it be the case with each of you, dear brother Cardinals! May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary – who looked and carried everything in her heart with wonder – may the Mother of the Church obtain this grace for each of us.”

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