

Look of love: Jesus' gaze will change your life, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

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VATICAN CITY - The gaze of Jesus can change a person's life just like it did with St. Peter, Pope Francis said.

"He always looks at us with love. He asks us something, he forgives us and he gives us a mission," the pope said May 22 during his early morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

Pope Francis suggested that members of the congregation welcome and receive Jesus in the Eucharist with the prayer, "Lord, you are here among us. Fix your gaze on me and tell me what I must do, how I must weep for my mistakes, my sins, and with what courage I must continue on the path you have traveled before me."

The pope, who wakes up several hours before the 7 a.m. Mass to pray and prepare his homily, said he was struck that morning by the exchange of gazes in the day's Gospel, John 21:15-19, which includes Jesus, after the resurrection, asking Peter three times if he loves him.

When Jesus first met his apostle, "Jesus fixed his gaze upon him and said, 'You are Simon, son of John; you will be called Peter,'" the pope said. "That was the first gaze, the gaze of mission" and Peter responded enthusiastically.

Then, after Jesus had been arrested and Peter denied Jesus three times, he feels the gaze of Jesus again and "weeps bitterly," the pope said.

"The enthusiasm of following the Lord was turned into tears because he had sinned, he had denied Jesus," the pope said. "That gaze changed Peter's heart more than the first did. The first changed his name and vocation, but the second was a gaze that changed his heart; it was a conversion to love."

The third gaze is recounted in the day's Gospel, the pope said. Jesus looks at Peter, asks him if he loves him and tells him to feed his sheep.

The third gaze, he said, confirms Peter's mission but also asks Peter to confirm his love.

The Gospel recounts more of the conversation, with Jesus warning Peter that his future will not be easy and that, in fact, he also will suffer and die.

Ask yourself, "how is Jesus gazing upon me? With a call? With forgiveness? With a mission?" the pope said.

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