

Pope: Holiness comes from experience of Christ's love, not pious talk

VATICAN CITY — Christians reveal their faith not by spewing superfluous words about Jesus but by having a genuine experience of his love despite their sins, Pope Francis said.

People who truly know Christ must ask him for the grace to not “repeat words like a parrot, but rather speak words born from experience,” the pope said Oct. 25 in his homily during Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae.

“This is our strength, this is our witness,” he said. “Christians of words, there are many; even we can be that way, but this isn’t holiness. Holiness means being Christians who practice in life what Jesus taught and what Jesus has sown in your hearts.”

In his homily, the pope reflected on the first reading from St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, in which the apostle prays members of the community in Ephesus will “know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

St. Paul’s personal experience, the pope explained, didn’t come from “theological studies” but from an actual event in his life in which he experienced Jesus’ love toward him despite his sins.

“What Paul felt, he wants us Christians to feel,” the pope said. “Paul wants Christians — in this case the Christians of Ephesus — to have this experience, to enter into this experience to the point that each one can say: ‘(Jesus) loved me and gave himself for me,’ but to say it as their own experience.”

But to have that experience, the pope said, Christians must first recognize that they are “chosen by love, but sinners” and “be aware of one their own sins.”

Pope Francis said that by recognizing their sins and by praying for the grace to truly know Jesus, Christians can bear “the fire that (Christ) has brought to the earth.”

“It would be a beautiful habit if every morning — or at any time — we would say, ‘Lord, may I know you and you know me,’” the pope said. “And thus, we can move forward.”

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