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Francis: 'The gaze of Jesus gives us dignity'

Thomas C. Fox | Sep. 21, 2013 The Francis Chronicles

The transforming gaze of Jesus was the subject of Pope Francis? remarks after the readings at Mass Saturday, the Feast of St Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, whose conversion story is told in the Gospel passage of the day.

Jesus looks at Matthew ? a tax collector, a public sinner whose whole life was money, which he idolized ? right in the eye. Then, said Francis, ?[Matthew feels] in his heart the gaze of the Lord who looked upon him.?

Francis? remarks were reported by Vatican radio [1].

?That gaze overtook him completely, it changed his life. We say he was converted. He Changed his life. ?As soon as he felt that gaze in his heart, he got up and followed him.? This is true: Jesus? gaze always lifts us up. It is a look that always lifts us up, and never leaves you in your place, never lets us down, never humiliates. It invites you to get up - a look that brings you to grow, to move forward, that encourages you, because [the One who looks upon you] loves you. The gaze makes you feel that He loves you. This gives the courage to follow Him: ?And he got up and followed him.??

?The gaze of Jesus,? said Francis, ?[is not something] magical: Jesus was not a specialist in hypnosis.? Jesus looked on everyone, and everyone felt His gaze upon him, as if Jesus had called each person by name ? and this look would change the lives of everyone.? So did Peter change who after denying his Lord then met His gaze and wept bitterly. Then there is the final gaze, from the Cross. ?He looked on His mother, looked at the [beloved] disciple and said, with that look, he told us that His mother was our mother and that the Church is mother - with a look. Then he looked at the Good Thief, and once again to Peter, ?[who was] afraid, after the Resurrection, with those three questions: ?Do you love me?? - a look that shamed him.

Francis said it will do us well to think and pray about this gaze of Jesus, and to let ourselves be looked on by Him. ?Jesus goes to the house of Matthew as he was sitting at the table many sinners arrive. ?Word had spread, and all of society - but not the [respectable folks] - felt invited to lunch,? as it happened in the parable of the king who ordered the servants to go to the main crossroads to invite to his son?s wedding as many people as they met, both good and bad:

?And sinners, tax collectors and sinners, they felt that Jesus had looked on them and that gaze of Jesus upon them ? I believe ? was like a breath on embers, and they felt that there was fire in the belly, again, and that Jesus made lifted them up, gave them back their dignity. The gaze of Jesus always makes us worthy, gives us dignity. It is a generous look. ?But behold, what a teacher: dining with the dregs of the city!?: But beneath that dirt there were the embers of desire for God, the embers of God's image that wanted someone who could help them be kindled anew. This is what the gaze of Jesus does.?

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