

Pope Francis: A life built on Christ is guarantee against hypocrisy

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Dec. 5, 2013 The Francis Chronicles
Vatican City

People can say things that sound Christian and call themselves Christian as they tell others what to do, but if they don't pray often and live the Gospel, they harm others and the church, Pope Francis said.

Concelebrating his morning Mass on Thursday with the eight members of the Council of Cardinals advising him on the reform of the Roman Curia and church governance, Pope Francis prayed that God would give all Christians "the grace of humility" to build their lives on the rock that is Christ.

According to Vatican Radio, the pope's homily focused on the Gospel story of Jesus scolding the Pharisees who knew all of the commandments, but did not live them.

Modern-day Pharisees know the right words, he said, but by not putting them into practice, "they do harm; they trick us and make us believe that we have a beautiful home, but it is without a foundation" because it is not built on rock.

"The rock is Jesus Christ. The rock is the Lord," he said. "A word is strong, it gives life, it carries on, it withstands attacks if the word has its roots in Jesus Christ."

Christian preaching and admonitions, he said, "trick and do harm" if they are not built on Christ and rooted in a life lived for him.

Paraphrasing G.K. Chesterton, Pope Francis said, "A heresy is a truth, a word, gone mad. When Christian words are without Christ they begin to journey toward madness."

The madness of the hypocrite leads to haughtiness, he said. "A Christian word without Christ moves you toward vanity, self-confidence, pride and power for power's sake."

"The Lord will bring those people down," Pope Francis said. "That's a constant in the history of salvation. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, said it and Mary said it in the Magnificat: The Lord takes down the vain, the pride of those who think they are the rock."

Pope Francis told those at the Mass that it is important for Christians to make an examination of conscience about their words and attitudes when speaking about Christ and the faith and whether what they say is reflected in the way they live their lives.

When words and lives don't match, he said, "this creates divisions between us, divisions in the church."