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Francis: 'Humility, service as pathway to Jesus'

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So what is the pathway to Jesus?

If you listen to Pope Francis, it is through humility and service. It is a path, Francis said in a homily at Casa Santa Marta the first day back after the holiday season.

According to Vatican Radio [1], Francis took the words "Remain in the Lord," from the first reading from the apostle John, as the starting point for his homily. It is a "counsel for life," Francis said, that John repeats "almost obsessively."

The apostle shows "one of the attitudes of the Christian who wants to remain in the Lord: to understand what's happening in one's own heart." For this reason, he warns us, "Do not to trust every spirit, but test the spirits." It is necessary, Francis said, to know "the discernment of spirits," to discern whether something helps us "remain in the Lord or takes us away from Him."

"Our heart," he added, "always has desires, has cravings, has thoughts." But "are these from the Lord or do some of these things take us away from the Lord?" That's why the apostle John exhorts us to "test" what we think and desire:

"If this goes along the line of the Lord, it will go well, but if not ... Test the spirits to see if they really come from God, because many false prophets have come into the world."

What, then, is the criterion to determine if something comes from Christ? St. John, Francis said, has a clear "simple" idea:

"If a thought, if a desire takes you along the road of humility and abasement, of service to others, is from Jesus. But if it brings you to the road of sufficiency, of vanity, of pride, along the path of an abstract thought, it is not from Jesus.

We think of the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness: All three proposals the demon makes to Jesus are proposals that intended to take him away from this path, the path of service, of humility, of humiliation, of charity. But the charity accomplished with his life, no? To the three temptations Jesus says no: "No, this is not my path!"

Francis then invited everyone to think about what happens in their own hearts. What do we think and feel, what do we desire, do I examine the spirits? "Do I test what I think, what I want, what I desire -- he asked -- or do I accept it all" without discernment?

"So many times, our heart is a road, everything passes there ... Put it to the test! And do I always choose the things that come from God? Do I know which are the things that come from God? Do I know the true criterion by which to discern my thoughts, my desires? Let us think of this, and let us not forget that the criterion is the

Incarnation of the Word. The Word is come in the flesh: this is Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ who was made man, God made man, who lowered Himself, humbled Himself for love, in order to serve all of us. And may the Apostle John grant us this grace to know what is happening in our hearts, and to have the wisdom to discern what is of God and what is not of God."

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