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If you can cheer for a sports team, you can praise God, pope says

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Prayers of praise for God aren't just for charismatics, Pope Francis said in a morning homily.

"We find it easy to understand praying to ask God for something and also to thank the Lord," he said Tuesday at his early morning Mass. But prayers of praise "don't come so spontaneously."

According to a report in Vatican Radio, Pope Francis focused his homily on a line from the day's first reading, which described David as "dancing before the Lord with abandon."

Pope Francis said he could imagine someone objecting, "but, Father, that's for people in the Renewal in the Spirit, not for all Christians."

"No," he said, "prayers of praise are Christian prayer."

In fact, the pope said, the Psalms are filled with prayers of praise and that's what the Sanctus or "Holy, Holy" and the Gloria recited at Mass are.

Returning to possible objections, he said he knows some people might think they just can't pray that way. He said he would counter, "You're able to shout when your team makes a goal, but you cannot sing the Lord's praises?"

Explaining more of the biblical story from the 6th chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, Pope Francis noted how Michal, the daughter of Saul, reproached David for dancing in public and making a spectacle of himself. The chapter ends abruptly with the line, "Saul's daughter Michal was childless to the day she died."

"I wonder how many times we scorn in our hearts good people who praise the Lord naturally, spontaneously," rather than formally or with great dignity, he said.

When the Bible says Michal remained childless, it is telling believers that "prayers of praises make us fruitful," he said, while "those who close themselves up in the formality of a cold, careful prayer might end up like Michal in the sterility of her formality."

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