



# The Holy See

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PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF SANTA MADDALENA DI CANOSSA

*Borgata Ottavia, Rome*

*Sunday, 12 March 2017*

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[Pope Francis:] The first question was: when did you approach Jesus? That was it, isn't that true? I will ask a question in exchange: why is that each time you draw near to Jesus, you realize that He has approached you first? If we are able to draw near to Jesus, it is because He has drawn near first. He always takes the first step. Do you understand this? Does Jesus refuse to be with us? I ask you....

[Children:] No!

There. Does Jesus await us? Is he or is he not waiting for us?

Yes!

But does he await us like this, or does he do something else? [A boy replies: "He comes to meet us"] He comes to meet us! Well said! Who said this? You are good! Well done! Jesus always

comes to meet us. And if you see Jesus coming from this way, and you somewhat play the fool and look the other way, does Jesus go away?

*No! He helps you!*

Louder!

*No!*

You, what does Jesus do? You said it well....

*[Boy:] He helps you!*

Does he take you by the ear and do this? *[gesturing]*

*[Boy:] No! He makes you understand that you have done wrong.*

That's it. He speaks to your heart; he makes you understand what love is. And if you do not want to hear him, what does he do? Does he go away?

*[Children:] No.*

He stays. He stays there. He is patient. Jesus always waits. And this is the answer to your question. We approach Jesus, but we discover that He has drawn near first. He has been there, waiting for us. And he waits. And he speaks to us. But he is always there; he is always there; he is always there. And if you have done something bad, does he push you away?

*No!*

No?

*He forgives you....*

Ah ... this is a beautiful word that you have said....

*He forgives you!*

And if you.... You have to tell him that you are sorry you did these things, isn't that true?

Yes.

And he forgives you. You are contrite, and he forgives you. But it is always Jesus who first draws

near.

*[Boy:] He is always in our hearts.*

Louder, I didn't hear....

*[Boy:] He is always in our hearts.*

He is always in our hearts. He never abandons us. He is always with us. In beautiful moments, is he with us? When we play, when we are happy, is he with us?... Louder!

*[Children:] Yes!*

And in life's bad moments too?

*Yes, He comforts us; he is near and he comforts us.*

That's it: he comforts us. It's true, Jesus is like this. Thank you, good answer. A good question. Thank you for the question! The second was....

*[The parish priest recalls the question:] "Pope or priest in a small parish..."*

Do you know that you do not study to be Pope? Do you or don't you study?

*No!*

No! This question too: do you pay to become Pope?

*No!*

I don't hear well....

*No!*

You don't pay? If you have a stack of money and you go over there and give it to the cardinals, will they make you Pope for this?

*No!*

No. But if you do not study and do not pay, who makes you Pope?

*God.*

God. And tell me, tell me all of you: who was the first Pope; what was his name?

*Peter.*

Peter was a saint, wasn't he?

*Yes!*

Was he always a saint?

*No!*

No? Did he do something bad?

*Yes!*

What did he do? The worst thing....

*He said he didn't know Jesus!*

He said he didn't know Jesus; he denied Jesus. A terrible sin, terrible! How was this sinner made Pope? Jesus chooses whom he wants to be Pope in this time; in another time he chooses another, and in another, another.... But the question: do I, who was chosen for this job, like it or not? I like it; and I also enjoyed being a priest in a parish, the rector of a faculty and also a parish priest — I liked both callings very much. I also enjoyed doing Sunday school, children's Mass.... I like this. Always, being a priest is something that I have always enjoyed very much. Thus, which is more beautiful: being the Pope or being a priest? Think hard, which is more beautiful?

*The Pope....*

Didn't you understand?

*Both!*

Both: what God wants. What God wants. What the Lord gives you is beautiful, because when the Lord gives you a task to do, a job, being pastor of a parish, or of a diocese, or being Pope, a pastor — indeed, he gives you a task. And what does the Lord ask of you when he makes you a parish priest or he makes you a bishop? What does he ask you? To do what?

*To bring peace.*

To bring peace. More....

*To bring the Word....*

To teach the Word of God, to do catecheses ... what else? You, loudly!

*[Boy:] "To love"*

To love, to make a community of love, that everyone love each other.

*[Children:] To help your neighbour.... To bring peace to the world....*

To bring peace to the world: is it only the Pope who must do this, or must we all do it?

*Everyone!*

Everyone! And how do you begin to bring peace to the world? With your family, at school, with your friend, when you play with others ... always peace. And if you get angry with a friend or with a classmate, is this bringing peace?

No.

What must you do if you get angry?

*If you get angry with your friend, you make peace and it all ends there!*

Good! If you get angry with your friend, as he said, make peace and move on. You are good! Thank you. Okay? The third question.... Before moving on to the third, one thing about peace. When spouses argue.... At times you have heard Dad and Mom argue about something: this is normal; this happens. There are always things to argue about, are there not? But what must they do afterwards?

*They have to make peace!*

Make peace. And you, tell your parents....

*[Boy:] ... that they should not argue anymore.*

No. "If you argue, make peace before the day is over". Okay? This is advice you must give your parents. Let's see if you have learned it well: what was the advice? If you argue....

*[Children:] Make peace before the day is over!*

Before the day is over.

*[Boy:] ... also because it is bad to argue.*

It is bad, it is bad ... what?

*[Children:] To argue....*

It's bad to argue, but it happens; it happens. Always. Because we are all sinners, aren't we? But....

*[Boy:] Saying bad words and cursing....*

Well, cursing, curse words are worse. Bad words are not nice; they are a little less [serious], but they are not nice! Cursing: never curse! Never, ever! Bad words, they are bad, but not as serious as cursing. And arguing: what is the advice?... All together: *[together with the children]* Make peace before the day is over. Okay?

The third question: whether there is something that scares me or frightens me.... When she — Sara — asked me the question, she came up to me and said: “Do you know what? Witches scare me!” *[laughter]* But are there witches?

*[Children:] No — Yes....*

Really? When you hear a lady say: “No, I go to the witch because I have a bug [illness], and she will do three or four things and will cure me”.... What do we call this?

*A lie.*

A lie. Lying. Yes, we call this nonsense, because witches have no power. Okay? I said this *[because of the comment]* “witches scare me”. What scares or frightens me.... It scares me when a person is cruel: the evil of people. But when a person — because all of us have seeds of cruelty inside, because it is sin that leads you to this — but when a person chooses to be cruel, that really scares me. Because a cruel person can do so much harm. And it also scares me when in a family, in a neighbourhood, in a workplace, in a parish, even in the Vatican, there is gossip; this scares me. I will tell you something: listen closely. Have you heard or seen on tv what terrorists do? They drop a bomb and run away: they do this. This is one of the things. Gossip is like this: it is dropping a bomb and running away. And gossip destroys; it destroys. It destroys a family; it destroys a neighbourhood; it destroys a parish; it destroys everything. But above all gossip destroys your heart. Because if your heart is capable of dropping a bomb, you are a terrorist; you secretly do evil and your heart becomes corrupt. Never gossip! Do you agree or not?

*Yes!*

Be afraid of gossip! “But I would like to say something about this person ...” — Never! Bite your tongue! Bite your tongue before you say it! — “But it hurts!” — Yes, it will hurt, but never do harm to another person! Understood? Truly, the destruction that gossip can do scares me; this speaking ill of others, but in secret; to destroy him, in secret. This is the worst. Yes, this is “being a witch”: it is as if one were a witch. He or she is a terrorist. Okay?

*[The parish priest recalls the question:] the most beautiful moments of your life, Holy Father....*

There have been so many. So many beautiful moments.... One beautiful moment of my life was when I was a boy, I used to go to the stadium with my Dad; Mom came too, a few times, to watch a match. In those days there were no problems at the stadium, and this was beautiful. On Sundays, after midday, after lunch, going to the stadium and then going home.... It was beautiful, beautiful. It was a beautiful time. Another beautiful moment of life is....

*[Boy:] Hearing yourself on tv....*

No, I don't like it: tv makes me look ugly! [he laughs; they laugh] Have you seen that tv changes your face? It makes you a little ... not like yourself.... No, I like things “live”. I don't like that, it wastes time. Another beautiful time of life is meeting with friends. Before coming to Rome, every two months we would meet: ten friends, classmates, who completed “secondary school” together, we finished at 17, and we continued to meet, yes, each one with his family.... It was beautiful. A beautiful time. And another beautiful moment for me — which I enjoy very much — is when I can pray in silence, read the Word of God: it is good for me; I really enjoy it. There have been so many beautiful moments, so many.... I don't know.... I could speak of others, but there are so very, very many in my life.... And I thank the Lord. You too have beautiful moments, or don't you?

*[Children:] Yes....*

Yes.... You do not seem convinced.... Do you have beautiful moments or not?

Yes!

Yes. For example, one....

*Today.*

Before moving on to the young lady's question.... The parish priest spoke of the catechists. Raise your hands, catechists.... Thank you very much. What would the Church be without you? You are pillars in the life of a parish, in the life of a diocese. One could not conceive of a diocese, a parish without catechists. And this has been so since the earliest times, since after Jesus' Resurrection: there were women who went to help their friends, and they were catechists. It is a beautiful

vocation. It is a beautiful vocation. It is not easy to be a catechist, because catechists must not only teach “things”; they must teach attitudes; they must teach values, so many things, how to live.... It is difficult work. I thank you very much, men and women catechists, for your work. Thank you very much. Thank you.

*[The parish priest recalls the question:] So much technology that allows communication, but so difficult to dialogue....*

This question is beautiful, because today we can communicate everywhere. But dialogue is missing. Think about this.... Close your eyes. Imagine this: at the table, mom, dad, me, my brother, my sister, each one of us with his or her mobile phone, talking.... Everyone is talking but they are talking outside: there is no talking amongst themselves. Everyone is communicating, right? Yes, on the telephone, but they are not having a dialogue. This is the problem. This is the problem. The lack of dialogue. And the lack of listening. Yesterday, I had a brief meeting, a nice group came to the Vatican — they were more or less 400 people — who belonged to the association “*Telefono Amico*” — have you heard about this? — It is an association which is available for “listening”: if you are sad, if you are depressed, or if you have a problem or a doubt, you can call there and there is always someone who is willing to listen to you. Listening is the first step in dialoguing, and I think this is a problem which we must resolve. One of the worst ailments of our time is the poor level of listening skills. As if our ears were blocked. Listening.... Yes, “I am communicating with the mobile phone”, but you are not listening to those who are near you, you are not having a dialogue, you are in communication with something else that may not be true communication, it is not dialogue: I say one thing, you say something else, but it is all virtual. We must have a concrete dialogue, and I am saying this to you, young people. How do we begin to dialogue? With the ears. Unblocking the ears. Ears open to hearing what is happening. For example: I am going to visit a sick person and I start talking: “Don’t worry, you will get better soon, blablabla .... Bye, God bless you”. How often do we do this? The poor sick person remains there.... But he needed to be *listened to!* When you visit a sick person, be quiet. Give them a kiss, caress them, one question: “How are you?” And let them talk. They need to let off steam, they need to complain. They also need to say nothing but to feel that they are being seen and heard. The tongue is in second place; what is in first place?

*[Children:] Ears.*

I did not hear you.

*Ears!*

And which place does the tongue take? Always second place. Listening. And from listening to dialogue. And also concrete dialogue, because the one that takes place with the mobile phone is virtual; it is “liquid”, not concrete. The concreteness of dialogue. This is very important. Do you understand?



*[The parish priest indicates:] Holy Father, they are right here, in the front, the small group that brought up this question.*

Good. Do this: learn to ask questions: “Oh how are you?” — “Well ...” — “What did you do yesterday...?”. You ask a question and let the other person speak. This is how dialogue begins. But let the other person always speak first, and you, listen closely. This is called “the apostolate of listening”. Do you understand? This is how dialogue works. Back home we have a saying, that often priests have to “speak to the daughter-in-law so the mother-in-law hears”; and I say these things to children, but so that grown ups will also hear! We all need to learn these things.

*[The parish priest describes a gift being presented to Pope Francis:] Holy Father, this is the book which contains all the questions, letters and drawings that the children and the youth have made for you.*

Thank you for this, because I know that each of you did this with your heart, with love. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. And I thank these postmen who brought it: for me this is so valuable, because this is really a bridge of dialogue, because dialogue is always a bridge. Bring it ... that’s it, thank you. There is always the last one in the mail, this was the last one to arrive. It came late, but it is all right. Thank you very much. Now all together, I invite you to pray to our Mother in Heaven, Mary.

“*Hail Mary...*”.

### **To parents of newborns baptized in the past year**

Thank you very much for being here: it is tiring to stand with children.... Thank you very much, thank you very much! I ask you to pray for me; I need it. And I will pray for you, that these children may grow up well and be good people. Thank you for bringing life: this is great! It makes us resemble God greatly; to bring life: this is what He brings.

Now I invite you to pray to Our Lady and then I will give the blessing to the families. “Hail Mary...”.

*[Blessing]*

Thank you very much! Pray for me. And carry on!

### **To the sick and the elderly**

I thank you for being here. I promise to pray for you. And I would also like to tell you simply that

illness is a cross — you know this — but the Cross is always a seed of life, and by bearing it well one can give much life to many people whom we do not know; and then, in Heaven, we will know them. I thank you for bearing your illness in this way.

I am close and I also ask you to pray for me, that the Lord give me spiritual life, that he make me good, that he make me a good priest so as to be at the service of others. I trust in your prayers.

Now, together, let us pray to Our Lady: “Hail Mary ...”.

[*Blessing*]

See you soon. Pray for me. May the Lord bless you! Thank you!

### *Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration*

In this Gospel passage (cf. Mt 17:1-9), reference is made twice to the beauty of Jesus, of Jesus-God, of luminous Jesus, of Jesus full of joy and life. First, in the vision: “And he was transfigured”. He was transfigured before them, his disciples: “his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light”. And Jesus is transformed; he is transfigured. The second time, as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to speak of this vision before He had Risen from the dead, meaning the Resurrection Jesus was to have — did have, but at that moment he had not yet risen — the same bright, shining face will be like this! But what did he mean? That between this Transfiguration so beautiful, and that Resurrection, there will be another face of Jesus: there will be a face not so beautiful, disfigured, tortured, despised, bloodied by the crown of thorns.... Jesus’ whole body will be just as something to be discarded. Two Transfigurations, and between them Jesus Crucified, the Cross. We must really look at the Cross! It is Jesus-God — “this is my Son”, “this is my beloved Son!” — Jesus, Son of God, God himself, with whom the Father is well pleased: He is completely destroyed in order to save us! To use too strong a word, too strong, perhaps one of the strongest words of the New Testament, a word which Paul uses: He made him to be sin (cf. 2 Cor 5:21). Sin is the most terrible thing; sin is an offense to God, a slap in the face to God, it is saying to God: “You do not matter to me; I prefer this...”. So Jesus became sin, he annihilated himself, he debased himself to that point.... And in order to prepare the disciples not to be scandalized to see him like this, on the cross, he appeared Transfigured.

We are accustomed to speaking about sins: when we confess “I did this sin; I did that sin...”; and also in Confession, when we are forgiven, we feel that we are forgiven because He took this sin upon himself in the Passion: He became sin. We are used to speaking about the sins of others. It is a bad thing.... Instead of speaking about others’ sins, I am not saying to make ourselves sin, because we cannot, but to look at our own sins and at the One who became sin.

This is the journey toward Easter, toward the Resurrection: with the certainty of this Transfiguration, to go forward; to see this face so bright, so beautiful, which will be the same one in the Resurrection and the same that we will find in Heaven, and also to see this other face, which is made sin, which paid in this way, for all of us. Jesus is made sin, he becomes *the curse* of God, for us: the *blessed* Son, in the Passion, became *the accursed* because he took our sins upon himself (cf. Gal 3:10-14). Let us think about this. How much love! What love! And let us also think about the beauty of the transfigured face of Jesus that we will meet in Heaven.

May this contemplation of the two faces of Jesus — the one transfigured and the one made to be sin, made a curse — encourage us to go forward on the journey of life, on the journey of Christian life. May it encourage us to ask forgiveness for our sins, not to sin so much.... May it encourage us above all to have faith, because if He was made to be sin it is because He took ours upon himself. And He is always willing to forgive us. We need only to ask for it.

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### ***Final farewell outside the church***

Good evening everyone!

Thank you very much for your warm welcome. I see that you are a vibrant community, which moves, and this pleases me.

Go forward with joy, always, without becoming discouraged. Always go forward, with joy. I ask you to pray for me: I need it, because I must do good work, not “so-so”; and to do it well, your prayers are necessary. Now, I invite you to pray to Our Lady, everyone together, and I will give you the blessing: “Hail Mary...”.

[*Blessing*]

Have a good evening, everyone. May the Lord bless you! *Arrivederci!*