



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO THAILAND AND JAPAN  
(19-26 NOVEMBER 2019)

***PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE RETURN FLIGHT TO ROME***

*Papal flight*  
*Tuesday, 26 November 2019*

**[Multimedia]**

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**Matteo Bruni:**

Good Morning everyone. Good Morning, Holy Father. It was a very intense journey, even demanding — certainly for the journalists and also for you —; a beautiful trip, with many great events and many things to say, many discourses. And now there is this moment of encounter with the press. If you wish to say something, perhaps, at the start ...

**Pope Francis:**

I thank you for your work because it truly was an intense journey also with changes in category because Thailand is one thing and Japan another. One cannot evaluate things within the same category. Realities must be evaluated according to the category they share with the same reality. And these were two completely different realities. They therefore required twice the effort and I thank you for this, also for the very intense days, I think the work was solid. I thank you. I felt very close to you in this work. Thank you.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The first question is by Father Yamamoto of “Catholic Shimbun”.

**Father Makoto Yamamoto, “Catholic Shimbun”:**

Good Morning, Holy Father. My heartfelt thanks for coming to Japan from so far away. I am a diocesan priest from Fukuoka, very close to Nagasaki. I would like to ask you this: You visited Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Holy Father, how did you feel? I would like to ask you another thing: Does society and the Church in the West have something to learn from society and Church in the East?

**Pope Francis:**

I will begin with the last question. There is a saying: “*Lux ex Oriente, ex Occidente luxus*” that greatly enlightened me. Light comes from the East, luxury, consumerism comes from the West. There is this Eastern wisdom which is not just the wisdom of knowledge, it is the wisdom of time, the wisdom of contemplation. It is very helpful for Western society — always too rushed — to learn some contemplation, to stop. to look at things, even poetically. Do you know what? Thinking about this — this is my personal opinion — I think that the West lacks a bit of poetry. There are many beautiful poetic things, but the East goes beyond. The East is capable of looking at things with eyes that see beyond. I do not want to use the word “transcendental” because some eastern religions do not mention transcendence, but certainly a vision that is beyond the limits of immanence, without saying transcendence, beyond. This is why I speak of “poetry”, of gratuitousness, seeking one’s own perfection in fasting, in penance and also in reading about the wisdom of Eastern sages. I think that pausing for a while and making time for *wisdom* will do us Westerners good. The culture of rushing [needs] the culture of “stop for a while”. Stop. I don’t know if this helps to clear the difference. It is what we need.

The first [question]: Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Both suffered the atom bomb, and this makes them similar. But there is a difference. Nagasaki not only experiences the bomb but Christians too. Nagasaki has Christian roots, an ancient Christianity. The persecution of Christians occurred throughout Japan, but it was very strong in Nagasaki. The secretary of the Nunciature gave me a wooden copy of a “Wanted” [sign] of that time: “Christians wanted. If you find one, turn him in and you will be well rewarded, if you find a priest, turn him in and you will be well rewarded”. Something like this will go to the museum.

This makes an impression: there were centuries of persecution. This is a Christian phenomenon which “relativizes”, in the good sense of the word, the atomic bomb because they are two things. If one goes to Nagasaki, simply thinking: “Yes, okay, it was Christian ... but there was the atomic bomb”, and stops there [it omits part of its history]. On the contrary, going to Hiroshima is only about the atomic bomb because it is not a Christian city like Nagasaki. This is why I wished to visit both. It is true, there was an atomic disaster in both.

Hiroshima was a true human catechesis on cruelty. Cruelty. I was not able to visit Hiroshima museum because I was only there for the duration [of the encounter] because it was a challenging day, but they say that it is terrible, terrible: letters from Heads of State, from generals which explain how a greater disaster could be made to occur. For me it was a much more moving experience than Nagasaki. In Nagasaki, there was the martyrdom: I saw part of the museum of the martyrs — in passing — but Hiroshima was very touching. And there I reaffirmed that the use of nuclear weapons is immoral —this must also be included in the Catechism of the Catholic Church —, and not only its use, but also its possession because an accident [due to] possession, or the madness of some government leader, a person's madness can destroy humanity. Let us think about that quote from Einstein: "World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones".

**Matteo Bruni:**

The second question is by Dr. Kawarada who works for "Asahi Shimbun".

**Shinichi Kawarada, "The Asahi Shimbun":**

Good Morning, Holy Father. I would like to ask you a question about nuclear power. As you correctly said, lasting peace cannot be achieved without disarmament. Japan is a country that has the nuclear protection of the USA, and it is also a producer of nuclear energy, which entails putting the environment and humanity at great risk as was tragically demonstrated by the Fukushima accident. How can Japan contribute to achieving world peace? Should nuclear power plants be shut down? Thank you.

**Pope Francis:**

I return to the possession of nuclear industries. An accident can always occur. You have experienced this, as well as the triple disaster which destroyed so much. Nuclear power is at its limits. Let us exclude weapons because they are destructive. But the use of nuclear power is very much at its limits because we have not reached complete safety yet. We have not reached it. You could say to me: "Yes, you could have a disaster due to lack of safety with electricity too". But it is a small disaster. A nuclear disaster, from a nuclear plant will be a huge disaster. And safety measures have not yet been developed. I — but it is my personal opinion — would not use nuclear energy until its use is completely safe. But I am profane in this and I am expressing an idea. Some say nuclear energy goes against the care of creation, that it will destroy it and that it must stop. It is under discussion. I stop at safety. It does not have the safety measures to avoid a disaster. Yes, there is one in the world every ten years, but then it [affects] creation: the disaster of a nuclear power on creation and also on people.

The nuclear disaster in Ukraine still persists, for many years. I make a distinction between wars, weapons. But here I say that we have to conduct research on safety, both on the disasters and on

the environment. And regarding the environment I think we have gone beyond the limit, beyond the limit: in agriculture for example with pesticides, in chicken farming — doctors tell mothers not to feed [their children] battery hens because they have been fattened with hormones and they are bad for children's health —; Today's many rare diseases resulting from the bad use of the environment. They are rare diseases. Electric cables and many other things ... Caring for creation is something that must be done now or never. But returning to the topic of nuclear energy: construction, safety and care of the environment.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The third question is from Elisabetta Zunica who works for a Japanese newspaper "Kyodo news".

**Elisabetta Zunica, Kyoto News:**

Hakamado Iwao is a Japanese man who has been sentenced to death and is awaiting the review of his trial. He was at the Mass in Tokyo Dome but he did not have the opportunity to speak with you. Can you confirm whether a brief encounter with you was planned? Because the death penalty issue is greatly debated in Japan. Thirteen death sentences were carried out shortly one month before the changes to the Catechism on this issue. There was no reference to this issue in your discourses throughout this journey. Why did you not wish to speak [about this] on this occasion, or did you have an opportunity to discuss this with Prime Minister Abe?

**Pope Francis:**

I heard about that case regarding the death penalty later. I did not know about that person. I did not know. I spoke with the Prime Minister about many problems in general: trials with sentences that never end, neither in death nor without death. I spoke about this as a general problem that also exists in other countries; overcrowded prisons, people who wait on preventive detention, without the presumption of innocence .. Wait over there, wait, wait ... Fifteen days ago I gave a speech at an International Conference on Criminal Law and I spoke about this topic: the issue of prisons, the issue of preventive [pre-trial detention] and then of the death penalty which was clearly defined as immoral, it cannot be done. I think that this goes together with a conscience which is increasingly developing. For example, some countries do not dare abolish it due to political problems but then they suspend it. It is a way of sentencing without sentencing: a life sentence for example. But the problem is that the sentence should always allow for reintegration. A sentence without a "ray of hope" toward a horizon is inhuman. Including life sentences. One must think about how a person serving a life sentence can be reintegrated, inside or outside. But the horizon is always necessary, the reintegration. You might say to me: but there are mentally ill detainees, due to illness, madness, genetically incurable, so to speak ... In this case, one must seek a way in which they can do things to make them feel like people. In many parts of the world today, there are overcrowded prisons. There are warehouses of human flesh, who instead of

getting better, many times becomes corrupt because of this. We must fight against the death penalty, a little at a time. There are cases that bring me joy because there are some states, countries that say: we will stop. I spoke to the government leader of one state last year, who prior to leaving his post, suspended it almost definitively. They are steps, steps of a human conscience. However, other countries have not yet been able to include this within the framework of humanity.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The next question is from Jean-Marie Guenois for “Le Figaro”

**Jean-Marie Guenois “Le Figaro”:**

Good Morning Holy Father. You said that true peace can only be disarmed peace. But what about legitimate defence when one country is attacked by another? In such cases, is there still the possibility of a “just war”? A small question: an encyclical on non violence was discussed. Is this encyclical on non violence still being planned? Two questions. Thank you Holy Father.

**Pope Francis:**

Yes, the plan exists, but the next pope will do it because I barely have the time to ... There are other projects on the back burner ...: one on peace for example, it is there, it is maturing and when the time is right, I will do it. But I speak about this quite enough. For example the bullying problem with the kids in schools. It is a problem of violence. I spoke about this topic with young people in Japan. It is a problem that we are trying to help resolve with many educational programs. It is a problem of violence, and violence related problems must be faced ... But I do not feel that the time for an encyclical on non violence has ripened as yet on peace and arms: there is that Roman saying “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*”. We have not made progress there. International organizations don’t succeed, the United Nations does not succeed. They do many things, many mediations. It is worthy of merit. Countries like Norway for example: always willing to mediate, to find a way out, to avoid war ... This is being done and I like this. But it is little. More must be done. Think — without being offensive — of the security council: if there is a problem with arms, everyone agrees to resolve that problem to avoid a conflict, everyone votes ‘yes’. One country with veto powers votes ‘no’ and everything stops. I heard — I am not capable of judging whether it is good or not, it is an opinion I heard — that perhaps the United Nations should take a step forward and give up the security council’s veto powers. I am not a technical expert in this, but I heard that it is a possibility. I do not know what to say, but it would be beautiful if everyone had the same right. There are topics regarding the global balance which I am unable to judge right now. But everything that can be done to stop the production of weapons, to stop wars, negotiating even through the aid of facilitators, this should always, always be done. And it produces results; some say these are few, but let us begin with the few, and then we can go beyond with the results of the negotiations in an attempt to solve some problems. For example, in the Ukraine-Russia case: arms were never

mentioned, it was a negotiation to exchange prisoners, this is positive. It is still one step for peace. In Donbass, they are debating a plan for a different government regime and they are discussing: this is a step forward for peace.

A beautiful and bad thing happened recently. The bad thing is — I have to say —”arms trade” hypocrisy. Christian countries — at least with a Christian culture —, European countries — so-called “Europa culta” — that speak of peace and live off arms. This is called hypocrisy. It is a Gospel word. Jesus says it many times in Chapter 23 of Matthew. We must stop with this hypocrisy. May a nation have the courage to say: “I cannot talk of peace because my economy earns a lot from the manufacture of weapons”. Without insulting and without soiling this country, but speaking like brothers and sisters, human fraternity: let us stop, people, let us stop because it is an ugly thing! In a port — I cannot now remember which one — A ship filled with arms that had to be delivered to a larger ship headed for Yemen, arrived in a port. We know what happens in Yemen. And the port employees said “no”. They were good! And the ship returned back to its home. It is one case, but it teaches us how one must behave on this matter. Peace today is very weak, very weak, but one should not be discouraged. And we foster this weakness with weapons.

**Jean Marie Guenoi, Le Figaro:**

And what about legitimate defence with weapons?

**Pope Francis:**

The idea of legitimate defence always stands. It is a hypothesis that is contemplated also in moral theology, but as a *last resort*. The *last resort*, with weapons. Legitimate defence should be undertaken with diplomacy, with mediation. *Last resort*, legitimate defence with arms. But I underscore: the *last resort!* We are moving forward in an ethical progress, in questioning all these things, which I like. This is beautiful. It says that humanity moves forward also for the good, not just the bad. Thank you.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The next question is from Cristiana Caricato, TV 2000.

**Cristiana Caricatao, TV2000:**

People read in newspapers that the Holy See has purchased properties worth hundreds of millions in the centre of London, and they are a somewhat baffled by this use of Vatican finances, in particular when Peter’s Pence is involved. Were you aware of these financial operations? And above all, in your opinion, is the way Peter’s Pence is being used correct? You have often said that one should not make money with money. You have often condemned this unscrupulous use

of finances, but then we see that these operations also involve the Holy See and this is scandalous. How do you feel about this whole affair?

**Pope Francis:**

Thank you. Firstly, normal good administration. When the money from Peter's Pence arrives, what do I do? I put it in a drawer? No. This is bad administration. I try to make an investment and when I need to give, when there is a need, throughout the year, the money is taken and that capital does not devalue, it stays the same or it increases a bit. This *is good* administration. Instead "drawer administration" is bad. But *good* administration has to be sought, a good investment: is this clear? Even investments ... what we call in Argentina "widows' investment", like widows do: two eggs here, three here, five there. If one falls, there is the other one and they are not ruined. It is always in something certain. It is always in something moral. If you make a Peter's Pence investment on an arms factory, the offering is no longer Peter's Pence. If you make an investment and you do not touch the capital for years, it is no good. Peter's Pence [one year's worth] must be spent throughout the year, one and a half year, until the next collection arrives, the one that takes place on a global level. This is good administration: a safe one. And yes, one can also purchase a property, rent it and then sell it but on a sure thing, with all the safety measures for the good of the people and of Peter's Pence. This is one aspect.

Then what happened, happened: a scandal. They did things which appear not to be clean. But the accusation did not come from outside. That economic methodology reform that Benedict XVI had already introduced, continued and it was the *internal auditor* who said there was something bad here; something is not working. He came to me and I told him "But are you sure?" — "Yes", he replied. He showed me the figures: "What should I do?" — "There is the Vatican Justice [system]: go and report it to the Promoter of Justice". And I was pleased about this because it shows that Vatican administration now has the resources to clear up the bad things that happen inside, as with this case, which despite it not being the London property case — because this is not clear yet —, nevertheless there were cases of corruption there. The Promoter of Justice has examined it, conducted its consultations, and found that there was an imbalance in the budget. Then he asked me permission to conduct searches. I said: "Is your review clear?" — "Yes, there is a presumption of corruption and in these cases I have to conduct searches in this office, in this office ...". And I signed the permission. Five offices were searched and to date — although there is the presumption of innocence — there is capital that is not well administered, even corrupt. I think that in less than a month from now, the questioning of the five people suspended due to corruption evidence, will begin. You might ask me: "were these five corrupt? No the presumption of innocence is a guarantee, a human right. But there is corruption. It can be seen. The searches will reveal whether they are guilty or not. It is a bad thing. It is not nice that this should happen in the Vatican. But it is clear that the *internal* mechanisms that were introduced by Pope Benedict, are beginning to work. I thank God for this. I do not thank God that there is corruption but I thank God that the Vatican control systems work well.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The next question is from Philip Pullela, Reuters

**Philip Pullela:**

If you will allow me, I wanted to continue some more on this question raised by Cristiana, with a few more details. In recent weeks there is much concern over what is happening to Vatican finances, and according to some, there is an internal struggle over who should control the money. The majority of the members of the administrative council of the AIF has resigned. The Egmont Group which is the association of these financial authorities, has suspended the Vatican from its secure communications after the raid of 1 October. The AIF director is still suspended, as you have said and there still is no General Auditor. What can you say or do to guarantee the international financial community and the faithful in general who are called to contribute to Peter's Pence, that the Vatican will not return to being seen as a "*pariah*" to be excluded, to be mistrusted, and that the reforms will continue and there will not be a return to past habits?

**Pope Francis:**

Thank you for the question. The Vatican has taken steps forward in its administration. For example, the IOR today is accepted by all banks and can act normally like Italian banks, something that was not possible one year ago, hence there has been progress. Then, regarding the Egmont Group. The Egmont Group is an unofficial, international group. It is a group to which AIF belongs. And the international supervision does not depend on the Egmont group. The Egmont Group is an important private group but it is a private group. Moneyval will carry out the inspection. It is planned for the early months of next year and it will conduct it. The AIF Director has been suspended because there were suspicions of poor administration. The AIF President put pressure on the Egmont Group to retrieve the documentation and justice cannot do this. Faced with this, I consulted with a high level Italian magistrate: what should I do?. Justice before an accusation of corruption is sovereign to a country, it is sovereign. No one can meddle in it, no one can give the Egmont Group the papers [and say] "Here are your papers". No. There has to be an examination of the papers that [reveal] what appears to be bad administration in the sense of bad supervision: it was AIF — it seems — who did not check the crimes of others. Its duty was to check. I hope that it can prove that it was not so because there is still the presumption of innocence; but at the moment the magistrate is sovereign and has to examine how it occurred; because otherwise, a country would have a higher administration that would damage the country's sovereignty. The mandate of the AIF president expired on 19 [November]. I called him a few days earlier and he did not realize that I was calling him — so he told me. And I announced that he was leaving on the 19th. I have already found his successor: a highly esteemed magistrate on the juridical and national and international economic level. On my return, he will lead the AIF and will continue there. It would have been a contradiction if the supervising authority had sovereignty over



the state. It is not an easy thing to understand. But it was the Egmont Group which caused some worrying. It is a private group: it helps a great deal but it does not have the authority to supervise Moneyval. Moneyval will study the figures, it will study the procedures, it will study how the Promoter of Justice acted and how the judge and the judges considered the matter. I know that in these days questioning of some of the five who were suspended will begin — or has begun. It is not easy but we should not be naive, we should not be slaves. Someone told me — but I don't believe it —: “Yes, with this fact that we have touched the Egmont Group, the people are afraid ...”. And some [psychological] terrorism is underway. But let us set that aside. We move forward with the law, with Moneyval, with the new AIF President. And the Director has been suspended, but I hope he is innocent. I would like that because it is a nice thing for a person to be innocent rather than guilty. But some noise was made with this group which wanted to touch the papers that pertain to the group.

**Philip Pulella:**

Is it to guarantee to the faithful that things are going well?

**Pope Francis:**

It is to guarantee this! Look, it is the first time in the Vatican that the “pot has been uncovered” from the inside, not from the outside. From the outside [it has happened] many times. They said to us: “Look ...” and with great shame, we ....But Pope Benedict was wise in this; he began a process which has ripened, it ripened and now there are institutions. That the Auditor had the courage to make a written accusation against five people ...” . The Auditor is working. I really do not want to offend the Egmont Group because it has done much good, it helps, but in this case, the sovereignty of the state is justice. Justice is even more sovereign than the executive power. More sovereign. It is not easy to understand, but I ask you to understand this difficulty. Thank you.

**Matteo Bruni:**

The next question is from Roland Juchem from the German press.

**Roland Juchem, CIC:**

Holy Father, on the flight from Bangkok to Tokyo, you sent a telegram to Ms Carrie Lam of Hong Kong. What do you think about the situation there, with the demonstrations and after the municipal elections? And when will we be able to accompany you to Beijing?

**Pope Francis:**

Telegrams are sent to all Heads of State. It is an automatic thing. They are greetings and also a

polite way to ask permission to fly over their territory. They do not have any significance of condemnation or support. They are a mechanical thing that all airplanes do: when they technically enter, they inform that they are entering and we do so with politeness. We greet. It has no value at all in the sense that you are asking, only a courtesy value.

The other thing that you are asking me is what I think [of the situation] in Hong Kong. But is it not just Hong Kong. Think about Chile, think about France, democratic France: one year of “yellow vests”. Think about Nicaragua, think of other Latin American countries, Brazil which has similar problems and also some European countries. It is a general thing. What does the Holy See do about this? It calls for dialogue, peace ... But it is not just Hong Kong. There are various situations with problems that I am unable to evaluate at the moment. I respect peace and I ask for peace for all these countries that have problems. Similar problems exist also in Spain ... It is better to put things into perspective and call for dialogue, peace so that problems can be resolved.

**Roland Juchem, CIC:**

And when will you go to Beijing?

**Pope Francis:**

Ah, I would like to go to Beijing! I love China ...

**Matteo Bruni:**

Thank you Roland. There is a question by Valentina Alazraki.

**Valentina Alazraki, Televisa:**

Pope Francis, Latin America is on fire. We have seen that after Venezuela and Chile, images we never thought we would see after Pinochet. We have seen the situation in Bolivia, Nicaragua and other countries: uprisings, violence in the streets, dead, injured, even churches burned and violated. What is your analysis of what is happening in these countries? Is the Church and you personally, as a Latin American Pope, doing something?

**Pope Francis:**

Someone told me this: “An analysis should be done”. The situation today in Latin America is similar to that of 1974-1980, where in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay with Strössner, and I think also Bolivia with Lidia Gueiler, there was Operation Condor at that time. A situation in flames but I do not know if it is a similar problem or another kind. Truly, I am not able to do a complete analysis of this at this time. It is true that there are some statements that are not

precisely peaceful. What is happening in Chile frightens me because Chile is emerging from a problem of abuse which has caused so much suffering and now it has a problem of a kind that we do not understand well. But it is on fire, as you have said, and dialogue and also an analysis must be sought. I have not yet found a well done analysis on the situation in Latin America. And [there are] also weak governments, very weak that were unable to “tidy up” and bring peace internally. This is why this situation has been reached.

**Valentina Alazraki, Televisa:**

Evo Morales asked for your mediation for example. Something concrete...

**Pope Francis:**

Yes, something concrete. Venezuela asked for mediation and the Holy See was always available. There are good relations. We are present there to help when necessary. Bolivia did something similar. I am unsure about which path, I have to see but it also made a request to the United Nations who have sent delegates and also some European Union countries. I am not sure if Chile has made any international mediation requests. Brazil, definitively did not, but there are big problems there too. It is a bit strange. I do not want to say one more word because I am not competent because I did not study well and I honestly do not understand the problem well.

But I will take advantage of your question: you did not speak much about Thailand, and Thailand is a different thing from Japan, another culture, completely different, a culture of transcendence, a culture of beauty too, different from Japan's beauty: a culture with a lot of poverty and spiritual riches. But there is also a problem that wounds the heart and that makes us think about “Greece and the Others” [a book by Valentina Alazraki]. She is an expert in this problem of exploitation. She studied it well and her book has done so much good. And Thailand, some places in Thailand are hard, they are difficult in this. But there is southern Thailand. There is also beautiful northern Thailand, where I was not able to go, tribal Thailand like tribal northeastern India which has a completely different culture. I received about 20 people from that area, the first Christians, the first to be baptized, who came to Rome, with another, different culture, those tribal cultures in India which are well known, but [those in] Thailand are not well known. it is in the North. And Bangkok, we have seen, is a very modern city, it is a strong city, great, but it has problems that are different from those of Japan and has riches that are different from those of Japan. This is important. But I wanted to emphasize the problem of exploitation and I thank you for your book. I also wish to thank the “green book” [*the Green Alphabet of Pope Francis*] by Franca Giansoldati, where is she? Ah there she is. Two women who are on the flight and who have each written a book that addresses today's problems: the ecological problem, the problem of the destruction of mother earth, of the environment; and the problem of human exploitation, which she addressed. It seems that women work more than men and they are capable: thank you. Thank you. Thanks to both of you for this contribution. Thank you. And I still carry in my heart Rocio's shirt [a reference to the

shirt donated to the Pope by Valentina Alazraki in a recent interview, that belonged to a young Mexican woman who was assassinated].

And to all of you, thank you for asking direct questions, thank you. This is good, it is always good. Pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. Thank you.