



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
TO POLAND  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXXI WORLD YOUTH DAY  
(27-31 JULY 2016)

**MEETING WITH THE POLISH BISHOPS**

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS***

*Cathedral of Kraków*  
*Wednesday, 27 July 2016*

**[Multimedia]**

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**Pope Francis:**

Before beginning our dialogue, with the questions that you prepared, I would like to perform a work of mercy with all of you and to suggest another. I know that these days, with World Youth Day, many of you have been busy and so you couldn't go to the funeral of Archbishop Zimowski. It is a work of charity to bury the dead, so I would like us all together to say a prayer for Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski as a genuine sign of fraternal charity, that of burying a dead brother. *Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be... Requiem aeternam...*

Then, the other work of mercy I would suggest. I know that you are concerned about this: our dear Cardinal Macharski is very sick. At least stop by, because I think that you cannot see him, since he is unconscious. But at least stop by the hospital and touch the walls, as if to say: "Brother, I am close to you". Visiting the sick is another work of mercy. I myself plan to go. Thank you.

Now, someone has prepared the questions or at least sent them to me. I am ready.

## **Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski (Łódź)**

Holy Father, it seems that the faithful of the Catholic Church, and more generally all Christians in Western Europe, increasingly find themselves a minority in the midst of a modern, godless, liberal culture. In Poland, we are witnessing a profound clash, an enormous struggle, between faith in God on the one hand, and on the other a way of thinking and acting as if God did not exist. According to you, Holy Father, what kind of pastoral activity should the Catholic Church in our country undertake, so that the Polish people can remain faithful to its more than 1000-year-old Christian tradition? Thank you.

**Pope Francis:**

You are the Bishop of...?

**Archbishop Jędraszewski:**

Łódź, where Saint Faustina began her journey, because there she heard Christ telling her to go to Warsaw to become a nun. The story of her life began in my city.

**Pope Francis:**

You are very privileged!

True, the dechristianization, the secularization of the modern world is powerful, very powerful. But there are also those who say that while it is powerful, there are also clear indications of religiosity, of a reawakening of the religious sense. This too can be dangerous. I believe that in this highly secularized world we have also the other danger, that of a gnostic spiritualization. Secularization makes it possible for us to indulge in a spiritual life which is a little gnostic. We remember that this was the first heresy in the Church – the apostle John went after the gnostics, relentlessly! – it consists in a subjective spirituality, without Christ. For me the bigger problem with secularization is dechristianization: removing Christ, removing the Son. I pray, I feel... and that is all.

This is gnosticism. There is another heresy fashionable nowadays, pelagianism, but let us for the moment disregard it and return to what I was saying [about dechristianization]. To find God without Christ. God but not Christ, people but not Church. Why? Because the Church is a Mother, who gives you life, and Christ is our older brother, the Son of the Father, completely oriented to the Father, who reveals the Father's name. A Church of orphans: today's gnosticism, inasmuch as it is a dechristianization, lacking Christ, leads to a Church, or better, to Christians, becoming a people of orphans. We have to make our people see this.

What would I advise? I would say – but I believe it is in the Gospel, where there is precisely the

Lord's own teaching – *closeness*. Today we, the Lord's servants – bishops, priests, consecrated persons and committed laypeople – need to be close to God's people. Without closeness, there are only disembodied words. Let us think – I like to reflect on this – of the two pillars of the Gospel. What are the two pillars of the Gospel? The Beatitudes and Matthew 25, the "criteria" on which all of us will be judged. Concreteness, closeness, touching, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

"But you are saying all this because it is fashionable to speak about mercy this year!" No! This is the Gospel! The Gospel, the works of mercy. It shows us the Samaritan heretic who is moved, does what he has to do, and even risks his money! To touch. Then there is Jesus, who was always with people, with the disciples, or alone with the Father in prayer. Closeness. Touching. This is Jesus's life... And when he was moved, at the gates of the city of Nain (cf. *Lk 7:11-17*), he went over to touch the bier saying: "Do not weep..." Closeness. It is closeness to touch the suffering flesh of Christ. The Church, the glory of the Church, is of course the martyrs, but also all those men and women who left everything to spend their lives in hospitals and schools, with children and with the sick...

I remember in Central Africa, an elderly Sister with a little girl came to greet me. "I'm not from here, but from the other part of the river, from Congo, but once a week I come here to shop because it is easier". She told me that she was 83 or 84 years old. "I've been here for 23 years, I'm an obstetric nurse and I have delivered two or three thousand babies..." "And you come here alone?" "Yes, we take the canoe..." At 83 years of age! With the canoe, it took her about an hour to get there. This woman – and many others like her – left home (she was an Italian, from Brescia) to touch the flesh of Christ. If we go to the mission countries in the Amazon region and Latin America, in the cemeteries we see the tombs of so many men and women religious who died young because they lacked antibodies for the diseases in those countries, and died young.

The works of mercy: to touch, to teach, to console, to "waste time". To waste time. I was very pleased once: a man who went to confession was in a situation where he couldn't receive absolution. He had gone with a certain apprehension, because he had been sent away several times before: "No, no, go away". The priest listened to him, explained the man's situation, and told him: "But you keep praying. God loves you. I will give you my blessing. Do you promise to come back?" This priest "wasted time" in order to draw that man towards the sacraments. That is what closeness means.

Since I am talking to bishops about closeness, I think I have to talk about the most important kind of closeness: your closeness to your priests. A bishop must be available to his priests. When I was in Argentina and I would give the Exercises (I love to give the Exercises), I would say to priests: "Go talk to your bishop about this!" "But no, I called him but his secretary tells me that he is very busy right now, but he can receive you three months from now". Priests treated like this feel orphaned, without a father, without closeness, and they begin to lose heart. When a bishop sees that a priest has called him, he should call him right back, either that evening or the next day.

“Sure, I am busy, but is this important? Let’s see if we can work something out”. The priest can then sense that he has a father. If we don’t show our fatherhood to our priests, how can we ask them to be fathers to others? Thus the sense of God’s fatherhood begins to fade. The work of the Son is to touch human weakness: spiritual and corporal. Closeness. The work of the Father: to be a father, a bishop and a father.

Then too, young people. Because we have to talk about young people during these days. The young are “a bother”! Because they always come and say the same things. “Here is what I think...” or, “the Church should do this or that...” We need to be patient with young people. I knew a few priests when I was young. Those were the days when people went to confession more frequently than now. Those priests spent hours listening to the young, or received them in the parish office to hear the same things over and over, but they did so patiently. And then, to take young people out into the country, to the mountains... Think of Saint John Paul II. What did he do with the university students? Yes, he gave them classes, but he also went with them to the mountains! Closeness. He listened to young people, he spent time with them...

There is one last thing I would emphasize, because I believe that the Lord asks it of me: grandparents, the elderly. You suffered under communism, atheism. You know that it was the elderly who preserved and passed on the faith. The elderly possess the memory of a people; they preserve the memory of the faith, the memory of the Church. Don’t waste the elderly! In this throwaway culture, dechristianized as it is, we discard whatever is not useful or helpful. No! The elderly are the memory of a people; they are the memory of the faith. To connect young people with the elderly: this too is closeness. To be close and to build closeness.

That is how I would respond to the question. There are no easy answers, but we have to get our hands dirty. If we wait for the doorbell to ring, or for people to knock on the door... No, we have to *go out and seek*, like the shepherd who goes out to seek the lost sheep. Anyway, that’s what I think...

#### **Archbishop Sławoj Leszek Głódź (Danzig):**

Dear Pope Francis, before all else we are most grateful that you have deepened the teaching of mercy inaugurated by Saint John Paul II right here in Kraków. We all know that we are living in a world dominated by injustice: the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer. There is terrorism, and godless liberal ethics and morality... My question is this: How do we apply the teaching of mercy, and above all, to whom? The Pope has been promoting a medicine called “*miser cordina*”, which I have brought along with me: thanks for promoting this...

#### **Pope Francis:**

... now there is “*miser cordina plus*”: even stronger!

### Archbishop Glóź:

..., yes, and thank you for this “plus”. We too have a “plus” programme promoted by the Government for large families. “Plus” is fashionable. To whom, and how above all? In the first place, to whom should our teaching on mercy be addressed? Thanks.

### Pope Francis:

Thank you. This idea of mercy is not something I came up with. It is a *process*. We can see that Blessed Paul VI had spoken about mercy. Then Saint John Paul II was the giant of mercy, with his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, the canonization of Saint Faustina and then the Octave of Easter: he died on the eve of that day. It is a process going on for years in the Church. It is clear that the Lord asked for a renewal in the Church of this attitude of mercy among the faithful. He is the Merciful One who forgives everything.

I have always been struck by a medieval capital in the Basilica of Saint Mary Magdalen in Vézelay, France, where the Camino of Saint James begins. On that capital, one side shows Judas hanged, his eyes open, his tongue sticking out, while the other side shows the Good Shepherd who carries him. If we look carefully at the face of the Good Shepherd, the lips on one side are sad but on the other they are smiling. Mercy is a mystery. It is a mystery. It is the mystery of God. I did an interview that later became a book called *The Name of God is Mercy*, but that is a journalistic expression. I think it can be said that God is the Father of mercy. At least Jesus, in the Gospel, makes us see him that way. God punishes in order to convert. And then there are the parables of mercy, and the way he chose to save us. In the fullness of time, he sent his Son to be born of a woman: in the flesh he saves us, in the flesh. Not on the basis of fear, but in the flesh. In this process which has taken place in the Church we receive so many graces.

You see this world reeling from injustice, lack of love, and corruption. True enough. Today, on the airplane, speaking of that priest in his 80s who was killed in France... for some time I have been saying that the world is at war, that we are in a third world war fought piecemeal. We think of Nigeria... Ideologies, yes. But what is the central ideology of today, the one that is the mother of corruption and war? It is the idolatry of money. Men and women are no longer at the apex of creation, replaced by the idol of money, and everything is bought and sold for money. Money at the centre. People exploited. And the way people are being treated today? The same as ever: with cruelty!

I was speaking about this with a government leader, and he told me: “There is always been cruelty. The problem is that today we watch it on television; it has become part of our lives”. Cruelty. Killing for money. Exploiting people, exploiting creation. A newly-elected government leader from Africa came to see me and told me: “My first official act was to re-forest the country, which had been deforested and destroyed”. We don’t care for creation! And this means more poor

people, more corruption. What are we thinking, when 80% – more or less, look up statistics and if it's not 80%, it is 82 or 75% – of the world's wealth is in the hands of less than 20% of its people. "Please, Father, don't talk that way, you are talking like a communist!" Far from it, these are the statistics! And who is paying for it? People are paying, the people of God: exploited girls, young people without employment. In Italy, 40% of young people under 25 are unemployed; it is 50% in Spain and in Croatia 47%... And why? Because of a liquid economy that encourages corruption. A good Catholic told me of his scandal when he went to see a business friend of his: "I'll show you how I can earn \$20,000 without leaving home". And with the computer, from California, he bought something or other and then sold it in China. In twenty minutes, or even less, he had earned \$20,000. Everything is liquid! Young people do not have a culture of work because they have no jobs. The earth is dying, because it has been exploited without wisdom. And so we go on. The world is warming, why? Because we have to make money. Profit. "We have succumbed to the idolatry of money": so an ambassador told me when he came to present his credentials. It is a form of idolatry.

Divine mercy is the witness, the witness of so many people, so many men and women, lay people, young people: in Italy, for example, cooperatives. Sure, there are always a few people too clever for their own good, but so many good things get done. Then there are the institutions to care for the sick: solid organizations. That is another way to do things, to foster human dignity. But what you are saying is true. We are suffering from religious illiteracy to the point that, in some shrines around the world, things get confused: people go there to pray. There are shops that sell objects of devotion like rosaries. But there are others that sell objects of superstition because people seek salvation in superstition. Religious illiteracy and a relativism that confuses one thing with another. And that is where catechesis is needed, lifelong catechesis, a catechesis that not only imparts ideas but accompanies people on their journey. Accompaniment is one of the most important attitudes, being ready to accompany people's growth in faith.

This takes a lot of effort, but young people are looking for this! Young people are waiting... "If I start to talk, they'll be bored!" But give them some work to do. Tell them to go, during their holidays, for two weeks, to help build modest homes for the poor or to do something else. They begin to feel that they are useful. And there let God's seed fall. Slowly. With words alone, nothing happens! Today's religious illiteracy has to be countered with three languages, with three tongues: the language of the mind, the language of the heart and the language of the hands. All three together, harmoniously.

Anyway... I am talking too much! These are ideas I'm offering. You, in your good judgment, will know what to do. But we must always be a Church that goes forth. Once I dared to talk about that verse in the Book of Revelation: "I am standing at the door, knocking" (3:20). God is knocking at our door. I asked how many times the Lord knocks on our door from within, asking us to open it and let him go out with us, bringing the Gospel. Not staying inside, but going out. Going out! Thank you.

**Bishop Leszek Leszkiewicz (Auxiliary of Tarnow):**

Holy Father, our pastoral work is based largely on the traditional model of the parish community, centred on the sacramental life. It is a model that is still effective. Nonetheless, we are aware that, in our situation too, the circumstances of daily life are changing rapidly and challenge the Church to come up with new pastoral models. Pastors and faithful are a bit like those disciples who are attentive and active, but do not always know how best to exploit the missionary dynamism, interior and exterior, of the ecclesial communities. Holy Father, in *Evangelii Gaudium* you speak of missionary disciples who enthusiastically bring the Good News to today's world. What do you suggest to us? Is there a specific way you can encourage us to build up the Church community in our world fruitfully, joyfully and with a missionary spirit?

**Pope Francis:**

Thank you! I would like to stress one thing: the parish remains valid! The parish must remain. It is a structure that we must not discard; it is the home of God's People. The problem is how the parish is organized! There are parishes with ungodly parish secretaries who scare people off. Parishes with closed doors. But there are also parishes with open doors, parishes where when someone comes to ask a question, they are told: "Come in, make yourself at home, what can we do for you?" And someone listens to them patiently, because caring for the people of God requires patience; it takes effort! A fine university professor, a Jesuit whom I knew in Buenos Aires, asked the provincial when he retired to be assigned as a parish priest in a city neighbourhood, in order to have that experience. Once a week he would come back to the university – he was a member of that community – and one day he told me: "Tell your professor of ecclesiology that there are two things missing in his course". "What?" First, the holy people of God essentially wear you out. And second, the holy people of God naturally do whatever they think best. And this wears you out! Today being a parish priest is exhausting: managing a parish takes effort nowadays, with so many problems. The Lord has asked us to get a little tired, to work and not to rest.

A parish is exhausting if it is well organized. The renewal of the parish has to be a constant concern of bishops. How is this parish doing? What is it doing? What is its religious education programme like? How well is catechesis being presented? Is the church open? So many things... I think of one parish in Buenos Aires. Whenever an engaged couple arrived to get married, the secretary would immediately begin by saying: "Here are the prices". This is wrong, parishes like this are wrong. How do we greet people? How attentive are we to them? Is someone always in the confessional? In parishes – not those in the country but in city parishes and those on the highways – if there is a confessional with the light on, people always come. Always! A welcoming parish. These are the questions we bishops should be asking our priests. "How is your parish doing. Do you go out? Do you visit the imprisoned, the sick, the elderly? What about the children? Do you have a place for them to play? What about the oratory? The oratory is one of the great parish institutions, at least in Italy. There kids play and learn a little catechesis. They come home tired,

happy, and a good seed has been sown.

So the parish is important! There are those who say that the parish is no longer relevant because this is the hour of the movements. That is not true! The movements help, but the movements must not be an alternative to the parish. They must help in the parish, contribute to the parish, like the confraternities, Catholic Action and so many other groups. To want to innovate and change the parish structure? What I am saying may seem heretical, but it is how I see things. I believe the parish structure is analogous to the episcopal structure, different but analogous. The parish cannot be touched; it has to remain as a place of creativity, a reference point, a mother, all these things. It is where that inventiveness has to find expression.

When a parish does all this, it becomes – with regard to missionary disciples – what I call a “parish that goes forth”. For example, I think about one parish – a good example that was later imitated by many – in a town where children tended not to be baptized because people didn’t have a lot of money. But they would prepare for the patronal feast three or four months beforehand by visiting homes and seeing how many children were unbaptized. They would then prepare the families and as part of the patronal feast they would baptize thirty or forty children who otherwise would not have been baptized.

Coming up with things of this kind... People don’t get married in Church. I think of a priests meeting where someone got up and said: “Have you considered why?” And he gave all those reasons we know about: the present culture, etc. But there are lots of people who do not get married because it is expensive! It costs money. Everything costs money... the party... it is a big social event. And that priest, who was quite creative, said: “If anyone wants to get married, I will wait for you”. Because in Argentina, we have two weddings: first you get married civilly and then you go to your place of worship and get married. Some – many! – do not come [to the Church] to get married because they don’t have the money for a big party... But the priests who are smart say: “Don’t worry, I’ll wait for you!” “On the days that the civil marriage office is open – from 11 to 12 and from 1-2 – I won’t take my siesta!” So after the civil marriage the couples come to the Church, get married and leave in peace.

To be creative, to try to go out and meet people, to put yourself in people’s shoes. Nowadays parishes that are “offices” don’t work, because people are not disciplined. Your people are disciplined, and this is a grace of God. But people in general are not disciplined – I think of my own country: if you don’t go out to find them, if you don’t approach them, they do not come. This is what it means to be a missionary disciple, a parish that goes forth. To go out and look for people, as God did, when he sent his Son to find us.

I don’t know if this is a simplistic answer, but I don’t have any other. I’m not a brilliant pastoral theologian, I just say whatever comes to mind.

**Bishop Krzysztof Zadarko (Auxiliary of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg):**

Holy Father, one of the most troubling problems facing Europe today is the question of refugees. How can we help them, since they are so numerous? And what can we do to counter fears of an invasion or aggression on their part, which would paralyze society as a whole?

**Pope Francis:**

Thank you! The problem of refugees... It wasn't always like this. Let's speak of migrants and refugees, considering the two together. My father was a migrant. I told the President [of Poland] that in the factory where my father worked, there were many Polish immigrants, in the period after the war. I was a child and I knew many of them. My country is a country of immigrants, everybody... And there were no problems. Other times, really...

Why is there so much migration today? I am not talking about emigration from one's own country to another. This is due to lack of work; it is clear that people leave to seek employment abroad. This is a domestic problem, which you yourselves have to some extent... Here I am speaking of those who come to us, fleeing from wars, from hunger. The problem is back there. Why is the problem there? Because in those countries people are exploited, the earth is being exploited, there is exploitation for the sake of making more money. In talking with world economists who see this problem, they say: "We need to invest in these countries. Investments will lead to employment and then there will be no need to emigrate". But there is war! There is tribal warfare, ideological wars or other artificial wars created by arms traffickers who make a living from this. They give weapons to you, who are against them, and to them, who are against you. That is how they make a living!

Corruption is really at the origin of migration. What can be done? I believe that every country has to look at times and means. Not all countries are alike; not all countries have the same possibilities. But they do have the possibility of being generous! Generous as Christians. We cannot invest there, but for those who come here...

How many and how? There is no one answer that fits every case. For acceptance depends on the situation of each country and culture. But certainly many things can be done. For example, weekly prayer to the Blessed Sacrament, prayer for those who knock at Europe's door and are unable to enter. Some do, but others don't... Then one does enter and takes a path that generates fear. We have countries that for years have done a good job of integrating migrants. They have integrated them well. In others, unfortunately, certain ghettos have formed. A whole reform has to take place, on a worldwide level, with regard to this commitment and acceptance. But that is something relative: what is absolute is a welcoming heart. That is absolute! With prayer and intercession, by doing what I can. What is relative is the way I am able to do it. Not everyone can do it the same way. The problem is worldwide! The exploitation of creation, and the exploitation of persons. We

are experiencing a moment of the annihilation of man as the image of God.

I would like to conclude with this aspect, since behind all this there are ideologies. In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these - I will call it clearly by its name - is [the ideology of] "gender". Today children - children! - are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this terrible!

In a conversation with Pope Benedict, who is in good health and very perceptive, he said to me: "Holiness, this is the age of sin against God the Creator". He is very perceptive. God created man and woman; God created the world in a certain way... and we are doing the exact opposite. God gave us things in a "raw" state, so that we could shape a culture; and then with this culture, we are shaping things that bring us back to the "raw" state! Pope Benedict's observation should make us think. "This is the age of sin against God the Creator". That will help us.

But you will say to me: "What does this have to do with migrants?" It has to do with the overall situation, no? As for migrants, I would say: the problem is there in their native lands... But how do we welcome them? Everyone has to determine how. But all of us can have an open heart and think of spending an hour in the parishes, an hour of adoration and prayer for migrants. Prayer moves mountains!

These are the four questions. Anyway... Pardon me if I've talked too much, but my Italian blood betrays me...

Thank you very much for your welcome, and let us hope these days will fill us with great joy. Let us now pray to Our Lady, who is our Mother and who always takes us by the hand.

*Salve Regina...*

And don't forget the elderly, who are the memory of a people.