



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO RIO DE JANEIRO  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XXVIII WORLD YOUTH DAY

***MEETING OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS  
WITH THE JOURNALISTS DURING THE FLIGHT TO BRAZIL***

*Papal Flight*  
*Monday, 22 July 2013*

**Father Lombardi:**

Pope Francis, welcome among this community of journalists and communications workers on board the aeroplane. We are very moved to be accompanying you on your first intercontinental, indeed your first international journey, having followed you to Lampedusa with great emotion. Apart from anything else, it is the first journey to your own continent, to the end of the world. It is a journey with the young. So there is great interest. As you see, we have filled up all the available places for journalists on this flight. There are over 70 of us, and the group is very varied in its composition; there are representatives of television – both producers and cameramen – there are representatives of the print media, press agencies, radio, internet ... So for all practical purposes, all the media have expert representation. And different cultures, different languages are also represented. On this flight we have a sizeable group of Italians, then of course there are the Brazilians, some of whom have travelled from Brazil in order to come on the flight with you. There are ten Brazilians who have come for this very purpose. Then there are ten from the United States of America, nine from France, six from Spain, there are British, Mexicans and Germans; Japan is also represented, along with Argentina naturally, Poland, Portugal and Russia. So it is a very varied community. Many of those present are frequent followers of Papal trips abroad, so it is not their first experience – on the contrary, some are very well travelled and know these journeys much better than you do. Others, though, are here for the first time, because some, like the Brazilians, are following this journey specifically.

Very well, we thought we would welcome you to this group through the voice of one of our members, indeed one of our female members, who has been chosen – I think without any risk of

competition – because she is certainly the one who has been on the greatest number of Papal journeys abroad: she vies with Dr Gasbarri for the number of journeys she has made. Moreover, she comes from your own continent, and can therefore speak to you in Spanish, your own language: and apart from anything else, she is a woman, so it is right and proper that we give her a platform. I will pass the microphone straight away, then, to Valentina Alazraki, who has been the correspondent for *Televisa* for many years, and so she is always youthful, as you see, and apart from anything else we are pleased to have her here with us because a few weeks ago she broke her foot and then we were afraid she would be unable to come. Thankfully, she has recovered in time, the plaster was removed two or three days ago and now she is with us on the aeroplane. So it is she who will express to you the sentiments of the community on board.

**Valentina Alazraki:**

Pope Francis, good morning! The one qualification I possess for having the privilege of welcoming you is a very large number of flying hours. I took part in Pope [John Paul II's first flight to Mexico](#), my own country. Then I was the “mascot”, now I am the “dean”, 34 and a half years later! That is why I have the privilege of welcoming you. We know from your friends and collaborators in Argentina that journalists are not exactly “saints to whom you have a devotion”. Perhaps you thought that Father Lombardi had thrown you into the lions’ den ... but the truth is that we are not particularly fierce and we are very glad to be able to accompany you on the journey. We would be pleased if you saw us that way, as travelling companions in this and in many other journeys to come. Obviously we are journalists, and if today, tomorrow, or over the next few days you wish to respond to questions, we will not say no, because we are journalists. We have seen that you entrusted this journey to Mary, by going to Santa Maria Maggiore, and soon you will go to Aparecida, so I thought of making you a small gift of a little pilgrim Virgin, so that she may accompany you on this pilgrimage and on many more to come. It happens to be the Virgin of Guadalupe, not because she is Queen of Mexico, but rather because she is the Patron of America, so that no Virgin might take offence, neither the Virgin from Argentina, nor Aparecida, nor any other. I present her to you with great affection on the part of all of us here, in the hope that she will protect you during this journey and many more in the future.

**Father Lombardi:**

And now, naturally, we invite the Holy Father to speak, so that he may offer at least a few words of introduction to this journey.

**Pope Francis:**

Good morning. Good morning to all of you. I heard you say something a little strange: “You are not saints to whom I have a devotion”, “I am here among the lions”, but not particularly fierce ones, is that right? Thank you. It is true that I do not give interviews, but why, I do not know, I can’t, it’s just

like that. For me it is quite an effort to do so, but I thank all of you here. This first journey is about meeting the young people, but not in isolation from their lives – I would rather meet them within their social context, in society. Because when we isolate the young, we do them an injustice; we take away their “belonging”. The young do belong, they belong to a family, to a homeland, to a culture, to a faith .. They belong in all sorts of ways, and we must not isolate them! But in particular, we must not isolate them from the whole of society! They really are the future of a people: it is true. But not only they: they are the future because they have the strength, they are young, they will go forward. But at the other end of life, the elderly, they too are the future of a people. A people has a future if it goes forward with both elements: with the young, who have the strength, and things move forward because they do the carrying; and with the elderly because they are the ones who give life’s wisdom. And I have often thought that we do the elderly an injustice, we set them aside as if they had nothing to offer us; they have wisdom, life’s wisdom, history’s wisdom, the homeland’s wisdom, the family’s wisdom. And we need all this! That is why I say that I am going to meet the young, but within their social context, principally with the elderly. It is true that the global crisis harms the young. I read last week the percentage of the young without work. Just think that we risk having a generation that has never worked, and yet it is through work that a person acquires dignity by earning bread. The young, at this moment, are in crisis. We have become somewhat accustomed to this throwaway culture: too often the elderly are discarded! But now we have all these young people with no work, they too are suffering the effects of the throwaway culture. We must rid ourselves of this habit of throwing away. No! The culture of inclusion, the culture of encounter, making an effort to bring everyone into society! This is the meaning I want to give to this visit among the young, the young within society.

Thank you very much, my dear friends, “saints without devotion”, and “not particularly fierce lions”. But thank you very much. And I should like to greet you, each one of you. Thank you.

**Father Lombardi:**

Thank you very much, Your Holiness, for this most engaging introduction. And now everyone will pass by to greet you. Please come this way, so that all of you can have a chance to meet the Holy Father and to introduce yourselves. Could each of you say which agency, which television company, which newspaper you come from. In that way the Pope can greet you and know who you are...

**Pope Francis:**

We have ten hours ...

*The journalists pass one by one to meet the Holy Father*

**Father Lombardi:**

Has everyone finished now? Yes? Excellent! We truly and sincerely thank Pope Francis because for all of us, I think, it has been an unforgettable moment and I think it is a very good introduction to this journey. Holy Father, I think you have rather won the hearts of these “lions”, so that during the journey they will assist you, they will understand your message and spread it most effectively. Thank you, Your Holiness.

**Pope Francis:**

I thank you indeed, and I ask you to help me and to assist in this journey, for the good, for the good; the good of society, the good of the young people and the good of the elderly; both together, don't forget! And like the Prophet Daniel, I am just a little sad, because I have seen that the lions were not all that fierce! Thank you very much indeed. I embrace all of you! Thank you!