



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

to CANADA

(24 - 30 JULY 2022)

PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE RETURN FLIGHT TO ROME

Papal flight

Friday, 29 July 2022

[Multimedia]

Good evening everyone. Your Holiness, these were days of pilgrimage and penance in various stages and with many encounters and gestures — this last one in Iqaluit was touching. These days — you said it yourself — do not end with our departure from this land, and in this sense too, we come to this meeting with journalists. But maybe you would like to say something before we begin...

Good evening and thank you for your company and for your work here. I know you worked a lot, I've been told. And thank you also for your company. Thank you.

[Jessica Ka'nhehsíio Deer (CBC Radio — Canada Indigenous)] As a descendant of a residential school survivor, I know that survivors and their families want to see concrete actions following your apology, including the rejection of the "doctrine of discovery". Considering that this is still enshrined in the Constitution and legal systems in Canada and the United States, where indigenous peoples continue to be defrauded of their lands and deprived of their power, was it not a missed opportunity to make a statement to this effect during your trip to Canada?

On the last point, I don't understand the problem...

[Jessica Ka'nhehsíio Deer] It's a fact that Indigenous populations still today are deprived of land

and power, in accordance with those papal bulls and this concept of “doctrine of discovery”. When I talk to Indigenous people, they say that when people came to colonize the Americas, there was this “doctrine of discovery” that somehow promoted the idea that the Indigenous peoples of the new lands were “inferior” to Catholics. This is how Canada and the United States became “countries”.

Thank you for the question. I think this is a problem of all colonialism. Even to this day: today’s ideological colonizations have the same pattern. Whoever doesn’t enter its path is inferior. But I want to expand on this. They were considered not only inferior: some somewhat crazy theologian even wondered if they had a soul. When [John Paul II went to Africa](#), to the port where the slaves were boarded [Gorée Island, the Door of No Return], he offered a sign so that we would come to understand the drama, the criminal drama: those people were thrown into the ship, in dire conditions, and then they became slaves in America. It is true that there were voices that spoke out, like Bartolomé de las Casas, for example, or Peter Claver, but they were the minority. The consciousness of human equality came slowly. And I say *consciousness*, because in the unconscious there is still something... We always have — allow me to say it — a somewhat colonialist attitude of reducing their culture to ours. It is something that comes to us from a developed way of life, our own, and we sometimes lose values that they have.

For example: indigenous peoples have a great value, which is harmony with Creation, and at least some people I know express that in the term *Bien vivir* [living well]. That does not mean, as we westerners understand, to spend it well or to live *la dolce vita* [the good life]: no. “Living well” means to cherish harmony, and that to me, is the great value of the original peoples. Harmony. We are used to reducing everything to the mind. Instead, the indigenous peoples — I am speaking generally — know how to express themselves in three languages: that of the head, that of the heart and that of the hands. But all together, and they know how to have this language with Creation.

Then, this accelerated progressivism of the somewhat exaggerated, somewhat neurotic development that we have, right? I’m not speaking against development; development is good. What is not good is the anxiety over development, development, development... You see, one of the things that our overdeveloped, commercial civilization has lost is the capacity for poetry: indigenous peoples have that poetic capacity. I’m not idealizing.

Then, this *doctrine of colonization*. It’s true: it’s bad, it’s unjust, and it’s still used today; the same, with silk gloves maybe, but it is still used today. For example, some bishops from some countries have said to me, “Our country, when it asks for credit from an international organization, they put conditions on us, even legislative, colonialist conditions. To give you credit they make you change your way of life a little bit”. Going back to the colonization of America — that of the British, the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese: there are four [colonial powers] for which there has always been that danger, or rather, that mentality of “we are superior and these indigenous people don’t

matter”, and this is serious. That’s why we have to work on what you say: go back and *heal* — let’s put it that way — what was done wrong, in the knowledge that even today the same colonialism exists. Think, for example, about one case, which is universal, and allow me to say so. I am thinking about the case of the Rohingya, in Myanmar: they have no right to citizenship. They are on an inferior level. Even today. Thank you very much.

[Brittany Hobson (The Canadian Press)] Good evening, Pope Francis. My name is Brittany Hobson, from the Canadian Press. You often say that it is necessary to speak clearly, honestly, directly and with parrhesia [boldly]. You know that the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission described the residential school system as ‘cultural genocide’, and then this was amended to just “genocide”. The people who heard your words of apology this past week expressed their disappointment because the word genocide was not used. Would you use that term to say that members of the Church participated in genocide?

It’s true, I didn’t use the word because it didn’t come to my mind, but I described the genocide and asked for forgiveness, pardon for this activity that is genocidal. For example, I condemned this too: taking away children, changing culture, changing mentality, changing traditions, changing a race, let’s put it that way, an entire culture. Yes, genocide is a technical word. I didn’t use it because it didn’t come to my mind. But I described it as true, yes, it was genocide, yes, yes, no problem. You go ahead and say that I said yes, it was genocide. Thank you.

[Maria Valentina Alazraki Crastich (Televisa)] Pope Francis, good evening. We assume that this trip to Canada was also a test, a test regarding your health, for what you called this morning “physical limitations”. So we would like to know: after this week, what can you tell us about your future travels? Do you want to continue travelling like this? Will there be any trips you cannot take because of these limitations or, after a week, do you think that knee surgery might resolve the situation even more and permit you to travel as before?

Thank you. I don’t know... I don’t think I can continue with the same pace of the trips as before. I think that at my age and with this limitation, I have to spare myself a bit, to be able to serve the Church, or, on the other hand, to think about the possibility of stepping aside. This with all honesty. It is not a catastrophe. It is possible to change Pope, it is possible to change, there is no problem! But I think I have to limit myself a bit with these exertions. Knee surgery is not an option, not an option in my case. The experts say yes, but there is the whole problem of anaesthesia. Ten months ago, I underwent more than six hours of anaesthesia, and there are still traces. You don’t play around, you don’t mess around, with anaesthesia. And that’s why it does not seem entirely suitable. But I will continue to make trips and be close to the people, because I think closeness is a way to serve. Beyond that, I do not have anything else to say. Let’s hope... A visit to Mexico is not foreseen... yet!

[Maria Valentina Alazraki] What about Kazakhstan? And if you go to Kazakhstan, shouldn’t you go

to Ukraine as well, maybe, if you go to Kazakhstan?

I have said that I would like to go to Ukraine. Let's see now what I find when I get home. For the moment, I would like to go to Kazakhstan. That would be a calm trip, without a lot of movement. There is a congress of religions. But for the moment, everything remains as is. I also need to go to South Sudan before Congo, because that's a trip with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of the Church of Scotland, since the three of us participated in the retreat two years ago. Then Congo, but that will have to be next year, because of the rainy season... We will see. I have all the good will in the world, but let's see what my leg says.

[Carolina Pigozzi (Paris Match)] Good evening, Holy Father. You met with local members of the Society of Jesus, your family, in the archbishopric this morning, as you always do during your travels. Nine years ago returning from Brazil, on 28 July 2013, I asked you if you still felt like a Jesuit. You answered affirmatively. Last 4 December, after seeing the Jesuits in Athens, Greece, you said that "when someone begins a process, they need to let it develop, let it mature, let it grow, and then they need to step aside. Every Jesuit must do this, no 'work' belongs to him because it belongs to the Lord". Holy Father, could this statement one day apply to a Jesuit Pope?

I think so, yes.

[Pigozzi] Does that mean you could step aside like the Jesuits?

Yes. Yes. It's a vocation.

[Pigozzi] From being Pope or being a Jesuit?

Let the Lord say. The Jesuit tries, tries — he doesn't always do it, but he tries — to do the Lord's will. The Jesuit Pope must also do the same. When the Lord speaks, if the Lord says "go ahead", then you go ahead. If the Lord says, "go to the corner", you go to the corner. It's the Lord who...

[Carolina Pigozzi] What you're saying means that at that point death is expected...

We're all waiting for death!

[Pigozzi] What I mean is: would you not retire first?

Whatever the Lord says. The Lord might say, "Resign". The Lord is in charge. One thing that is important about Saint Ignatius. When someone was sick, Saint Ignatius would dispense him from prayer, but would never dispense anyone from the examination of conscience. Twice a day, to look at what has happened... It's not a matter of sins or non-sins, no, but of which spirit moved me today. Our vocation, he would say: search for what happened today. If I — this is a hypothesis —

see that the Lord is telling me something, that I have an inspiration about this or that, then I have to discern to see what the Lord is asking. It may also be that the Lord wants to send me to the corner. That's up to him. He is in charge. This, I think, is the religious way of life of a Jesuit, to be in spiritual discernment to make decisions, to choose paths of work, and also to choose commitments. Discernment is key in the Jesuit's vocation. This is important. In this area, Saint Ignatius was really firm, because it was his own experience of spiritual discernment that led him to conversion. And the spiritual exercises are truly a school of discernment. So the Jesuit, by vocation, must be a man of discernment: discerning situations, discerning his own conscience, discerning the decisions to be made. For this reason, he must be open to whatever the Lord asks of him. This is more or less our spirituality.

[Carolina Pigozzi] But do you feel more like a Pope or more like a Jesuit now?

I have never made that comparison! Never! I consider myself a servant of the Lord with the style of the Jesuits, because there is no papal spirituality. That doesn't exist. Each Pope carries forth his own spirituality. Think of Saint John Paul II with that beautiful Marian spirituality he had. He had it before, and he had it as Pope. Think of the many popes who have carried on their own spirituality.

The papacy is not a spirituality; it is a role, a function, a service. Each one carries it out with his own spirituality, his own graces, his own faithfulness, and also his own sins. But there is no papal spirituality. That is why there is no comparison between Jesuit spirituality and papal spirituality, because the latter does not exist. Is that clear? Thank you, thank you.

[Severina Elisabeth Bartonitschek (CIC)] Holy Father, yesterday you also spoke of the fraternity of the Church, a community that knows how to listen and enter into dialogue, that promotes a good quality of relationships. But a few days ago, the Holy See released a statement on Germany's Synodal Way, an unsigned text. Do you think this way of communication contributes, or is it an obstacle, to dialogue?

First of all, that statement was issued by the Secretariat of State... it was a mistake not to say that... I think it said [it was] "A communiqué of the Secretariat of State", but I'm not sure. But it was a mistake not to sign it as Secretariat of State. It was an administrative error, not of ill will. This on the last point. And regarding the *sogenannter synodaler Weg*, the Synodal Way, I wrote a letter. I did it on my own: a month of prayer, reflection, consultation. And I said everything I had to say about the Synodal Way. I will not say more than that. That letter I wrote two [three] years ago is the Papal Magisterium on the Synodal Way. I bypassed the Curia, since I didn't carry out consultations [in the Curia], nothing. I did it as my own journey, as a pastor [on behalf of] a Church that is seeking the way, as a brother, as a father, and as a believer. That's what I did. And this is my message. I know it's not easy, but everything is in that letter. Thank you.

[Ignazio Ingrao (RAI - TG1)] Italy is going through a difficult time that also causes concern

internationally. There is the economic crisis, the pandemic, the war, and now we are also without a government. You are the Primate of Italy: in your telegram to President Mattarella for his birthday, you spoke of a country marked by not a few difficulties and called for crucial choices. What do you make of Draghi's fall?

First of all, I do not want to meddle in internal Italian politics. Secondly, no one can say that President Draghi was not a man of high international quality. He was president of the European Central Bank, a good career let's say. I only asked one of my collaborators one question: "Tell me, how many governments has Italy had this century?". He told me "20". This is my response.

[Ignazio Ingrao] What appeal would you make to the political forces in view of these difficult elections?

Responsibility. Civic responsibility.

[Claire Giangrave (Religion News Service)] Hello, Holy Father, good evening. Many Catholics, but also many theologians, think that development is needed in the Church's doctrine regarding contraceptives. It would seem that even your predecessor, John Paul I, thought that a total ban perhaps needed to be reconsidered. What are your thoughts on this: Are you open, in short, to a reevaluation in this regard? Or does the possibility exist for a couple to consider contraceptives?

I understand. This is something very timely. Know that dogma, morality, is always on a path of development, but always developing in the same direction. To use something that is clear, I think I've said it other times here: for the theological development of a moral or dogmatic issue, there is a rule that is very clear and illuminating. I've said it on other occasions. It's more or less what Vincent of Lérins did in the 5th century. He was French. He says that true doctrine, in order to move forward, to develop, must not be still, it develops *ut annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*. That is, it is consolidated over time, it expands and consolidates, and becomes always more solid, but always progressing. That is why the duty of theologians is research, theological reflection. You cannot do theology with a "no" in front. Then it is up to the Magisterium to say, "No, you've gone too far, come back". But theological development must be open, that's what theologians are for. And the Magisterium must help to understand the limits. On the issue of contraception, I know there is a publication out on this and other marital issues. These are the Acts of a congress, and in the congress, there are "hypotheses", then they discuss among themselves and make proposals. We have to be clear: those who participated in this congress did their duty, because they have sought to move forward in doctrine, but in an ecclesial sense, not outside of it, as I said with that rule of Saint Vincent of Lérins. Then the Magisterium will say, "yes, it is good" or "it is not good".

But many things are called into question. Think for example about atomic weapons: today I officially declared that the use and possession of atomic weapons is immoral. Think about the

death penalty; first the death penalty, yes... Now I can say that we are close to immorality there, because the moral conscience is not well developed...

To be clear: it's okay when dogma or morality develops, but in that direction, with the three rules of Vincent of Lérins. I think this is very clear: a Church that does not develop its thinking in an ecclesial sense, is a Church that is going backward. This is today's problem, of many who call themselves "traditional". No, they are not traditional. They are "indietristi" people who look to the past, going backward, without roots. "It has always been done that way, that's how it was done last century". And looking "backward" is a sin because it does not progress with the Church. Tradition, instead, someone said — I think I said it in one of the speeches —, tradition is the living faith of those who have died. Instead, for those people who are looking backward, who call themselves traditionalists, it is the dead faith of the living. Tradition is precisely the root of the inspiration to go forward in the Church. And this is always vertical. And "backwardness" is going backward, it is always closed. It is important to understand well the role of tradition, which is always open, like the roots of the tree, and the tree grows like that... A musician used a very beautiful phrase. Gustav Mahler used to say that tradition in this sense is the guarantee of the future; it is the guarantee, not a museum piece. If you conceive tradition as closed, that is not Christian tradition. It is always the sap of the root that carries you forward, forward, forward... So for that reason, regarding what you are saying, we must think and carry forward faith and morals. As long as it is going in the direction of the roots, of the sap, it's good. With these three rules of Vincent of Lérins that I mentioned.

[Eva Fernandez (Cadena Cope)] Holy Father, at the end of August, there is a Consistory. Recently, many people have asked you if you have thought about resigning. Don't worry, we won't ask you that this time. But we are curious, have you ever thought about what characteristics you would like your successor to have?

This is a work of the Holy Spirit, you know? I would never dare to think [about that]... The Holy Spirit knows how to do this better than me; he is better than all of us. Because He inspires the Pope's decisions, He always inspires. Because He is alive in the Church. The Church cannot be conceived without the Holy Spirit, He is the One who makes a difference. He also makes noise — think of the morning of Pentecost — but then, comes harmony. It is important to talk about "harmony", rather than "unity". Unity yes, but harmony, not as a fixed thing. The Holy Spirit gives you a progressive harmony, which goes on. I like what Saint Basil says about the Holy Spirit: "*Ipse armonia est*", "He is harmony". He is harmony because He first makes a racket through the difference of charisms. So let us leave this work to the Holy Spirit. Regarding my resignation, I would like to say I am grateful for the beautiful article that one of you wrote [including] all the signs that could lead to a resignation, and all those that are appearing. This is a job well done by a journalist who then eventually gives an opinion, but [who in the meantime] goes in search of all the signals, not just the statements, with that subtle language that also gives signs. Knowing how to read the signs or at least making the effort to interpret them — it could be this or that — that is beautiful work and I thank you for that.

[Phoebe Natanson (ABC News)] Sorry, Holy Father, I know you've had a lot of questions like this, but I wanted to ask, at this time, with your health difficulties and everything, has it occurred to you that it may be time to retire? Have you had any problems that have made you think about that? Have there been any difficult moments that made you think about this?

The door is open, it's a natural option, but until today I haven't knocked on that door. I haven't said: "I'm going into this room". I haven't felt the need to think about this possibility. But maybe that doesn't mean that the day after tomorrow, I won't start thinking about it, right? But right now, sincerely, I am not. This trip has also been a bit of a test... It is true that trips shouldn't be taken in this condition, the style may have to be changed a bit, lessen them, pay off the debts of the trips that still have to be made, rearrange... But it will be the Lord who says it. The door is open, this is true.

And before I take my leave, I would like to talk about something very important to me: the trip here to Canada was very much linked to the figure of Saint Anne. I said some things about women, but especially about older women, mothers and grandmothers. And I emphasized one thing that is clear: faith must be transmitted "in dialect", and — I said it clearly — in the maternal dialect, the dialect of grandmothers. We received the faith in that female dialect form, and this is very important: the role of the woman in the transmission of faith and the development of faith. It is the mother or grandmother who teaches how to pray. It is the mother or grandmother who explains the first things that the child does not understand about the faith. And I dare say that this dialectal transmission of faith is feminine. Someone may say to me: but theologically how do you explain it? Because, I would say, the one who transmits the faith is the Church, and the Church is a woman, the Church is bride; the Church is not male, the Church is woman. And we have to enter into that train of thought of the woman Church, the Mother Church, which is more important than any masculine ministerial fantasy or any masculine power. The *Mater* Church, the motherhood of the Church, which is the image of the Mother of the Lord. In that sense, it is important to emphasize the importance of this maternal dialect in the transmission of the faith. I discovered this, for example, by reading the martyrdom of the Maccabees (cf. 2 *Mac* 7). Two or three times it says that the mother encouraged them in her maternal dialect. Faith must be transmitted in dialect. And that dialect is spoken by women. This is the great joy of the Church, because the Church is woman, the Church is bride. I wanted to say this clearly, with Saint Anne in mind. Thank you. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for listening. Rest and have a good trip. Thank you!

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