The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO SRI LANKA AND THE PHILIPPINES
(12-19 JANUARY 2015)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS ONBOARD THE FLIGHT FROM COLOMBO TO MANILA

Papal Flight
Thursday, 15 January 2015

[Multimedia]

(Father Lombardi)

On this transfer flight, as you see, we are all ready to listen to what you have to say. Congratulations for the first part of the journey which has been so successful. So now, as usual, we will ask you a number of questions. When you are tired and want to stop, just tell us, and please feel free to leave... You are already tired? ... Well, to begin, since I know that there is something close to your heart which you wish to tell us about this trip, namely, the importance of the canonization of Saint Joseph Vaz. I would ask you to begin by speaking to us about it, so that we can hear your important message. Then we will pass to the questions. We have various people here who have asked to speak. Let's begin, then.

(Pope Francis)

First of all, *Good Morning!* Just a word for Carolina: I did get the picture of Our Lady of Lujan, thank you so much. These canonizations have been done using a method – provided for in Church law – called "equivalent canonization". This is used whenever a man or a woman has long been venerated as a "Blessed" by the People of God. In effect, they are venerated as saints, but no investigation of a miracle is carried out. There are persons who have been in this situation for centuries. The process of Angela of Foligno was carried out in this way; she was the first. Then I chose to do the same for persons who were great evangelizers. First of all Peter Faber, who was an evangelizer of Europe: he died, we can say, on the street, at the age of forty, preaching the

Gospel. And then the others. The evangelizers of Canada, François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation: these two were practically the founders of the Church in Canada, he as a bishop and she as a religious sister, with the great apostolate which they carried out there. Another was José de Anchieta, from Brazil, founder of São Paolo, who was long a Blessed and is now Saint. And here, Joseph Vaz, as the evangelizer of Sri Lanka. In September, God willing, I will canonize Junipero Serra in the United States, since he was the evangelizer of the western United States. These are figures who were impressive evangelizers along the lines of *Evangelii Gaudium*. That is why I chose them. That was the reason.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, now we move on to the questions which our colleagues have signed up to ask you. The first is Jerry O'Connell of *America* magazione, whom you know well. He will now speak.

(Jerry O'Connell)

First of all, Holy Father, I agree with Father Lombardi, congratulations for the successful outcome of the visit to Sri Lanka. I have a question from the English-speaking group. We agreed to ask a bridge question, one connecting the visits to Sri Lanka and the Philippines. In Sri Lanka we saw the beauty of nature but also how vulnerable that island is: from climate changes to the sea, etc. We are going to the Philippines and you will visit the area which has been hardest hit. For over a year now you been studying the issue of ecology and care for creation. My question has to do with three aspects of this. First, is climate change mostly the effect of human causes, to our failure to care of nature? Second, when will your encyclical be issued? Third, you insist greatly, as we saw in Sri Lanka, on interreligious cooperation; do you intend to ask other religions to join in facing this problem? Thank you.

(Pope Francis)

The first question. You said a word – "mostly" – which saves me from going into a lot of details. I don't know about entirely, but mainly, for the most part, it is human beings who abuse nature, constantly. We have in some sense begun to lord it over nature, sister earth, mother earth. I remember, you have already heard this, what an old farmer once told me: "God always forgives, we men and women sometimes forgive, but nature never forgives". If you abuse her, she gives it back to you. I believe that we have overly exploited nature; the deforestations, for example. I remember at Aparecida… at the time I did not really understand this problem when I would listen to the Brazilian bishops talk about the deforestation of Amazonia. I didn't quite understand. Amazonia is one of the world's lungs. Then, five years later, together with a committee for human rights, I petitioned the Supreme Court of Argentina to halt, at least temporarily, a terrible deforestation taking place in the north of the country, in the zone north of Salta, Tartagal. This is one aspect. Another is monoculture. Small farmers, for example, know that if you cultivate corn for

three years, then you have to stop and plant something else for a couple off years in order to replenish nitrogen in the soil. For example, in our parts only soy is cultivated and you grow soy until the soil is exhausted. Not everybody does this, but it is one example, and there are many others. I believe that man has gone too far. Thanks be to God, today many, many voices speak out about this: here I would mention my dear brother Bartholomaios, who has preached on this issue for years, for years. I have read many of his writings in preparing this encyclical. I can come back to this but I want to be brief. Guardini – I will say this – says something which is quite expressive. He says, the second way of non-cultivation is the bad one. The first form is the non-cultivation which comes with creation, which we then cultivate, but when you go beyond this and become domineering, the resulting culture works against you; here we think of Hiroshima. You create a non-cultivation, a second one.

The encyclical: Cardinal Turkson and his team prepared the first draft. Then, with some help, I took it and worked on it, then with a few theologians I made a third draft and sent a copy to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to the second section of the Secretariat of State, and to the Theologian of the Papal Household to take a look at it, so that I would not say anything “silly”! Three weeks ago I got their responses back, some of them this thick, but all of them constructive. Now I will take a week of March, an entire week, to complete it. I believe that by the end of March it will be finished and sent out for translation. I think that if the work of translation goes well – Archbishop Becciu is listening, and he has to help for this – if it goes well, then it can come out in June or July. The important thing is that there be a bit of time between the issuing of the encyclical and the meeting in Paris, so that it can make a contribution. The meeting in Peru was nothing great. I was disappointed by the lack of courage; things came to a stop at a certain point. Let’s hope that in Paris the delegates will be more courageous and will move forward with this.

As to the third question, I believe that dialogue between the religions is important. On this point the other religions have a good approach. Here too there is an agreement that we should have one vision. Not yet in the encyclical. I spoke to some of the other religions on the theme and I know that Cardinal Turkson has also done so, as well as at least two theologians. This is where we are at. There will not be a common statement. The meetings will come later.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Holy Father. And now we hear from Pia from the Philippines group.

(Pia)

Holy Father, the Philippines are very, very happy to welcome you a few hours from now. My question is: what is your message for those many thousands of people who were not able to meet you, who won’t be able to meet you personally, even though they may have wanted to. I'm sorry I don’t speak Italian.

(Pope Francis)

In answering this, I run the risk of being too simple, but I will say one thing. The center, the core of the message, will be the poor. The poor who want to move forward, the poor who suffered because of Typhoon Yolanda and still suffer form its effects, the poor who have faith and hope during in this commemoration of the fifth centenary of the preaching of the Gospel in the Philippines, the people of God in the Philippines. The poor, including the poor who are exploited, exploited by those who perpetrate so many social, spiritual and existential injustices. I think of them. As we go to the Philippines, I think of them. The other day at our home, Santa Marta, on 7 January, it was the feast of Christmas in the Eastern Churches: We have three Ethiopian nationals and some Filipinos who work there. The Ethiopians had a party: they invited all the people who work there, about fifty in all, to lunch. I joined them and I looked around at the people from the Philippines who work there, who left their country to seek a better life, leaving father, mother, children behind, to go… The poor… I don't know. The core will be this.

(Father Lombardi)

Juan Vicente Boo is coming forward and has a question from the Spanish group.

(Juan Vicente Boo)

Holy Father, first of all I must say that for being tired, you look pretty well! I wanted to ask you, on behalf of the Spanish group, about Sri Lanka's history, and its recent history. During the civil war, in Sri Lanka, there were more than three hundred kamikaze attacks, carried out by men, women and young people. Now we are seeing suicide attacks from young people and children. What do you think of this way of waging war? Thank you.

(Pope Francis):

Perhaps what I am about to say may sound somewhat disrespectful, but it is what comes to mind. I believe that behind every suicide attack there is a certain imbalance, a lack of normal human equilibrium. I do not know if it is mental or not, but it is a human imbalance. Something is not right in that person. He or she is unbalanced with regard to the meaning of life, his or her own life and the life of others. They are fighting… they give their lives, but they do not give them well. So many people, so many people – I am thinking here of missionaries, for example – who work, who give their lives for the sake of building up. Here people are giving their lives, destroying themselves, for the sake of destruction. This is not acceptable, it is not right. I once helped a pilot for Alitalia who was writing a Master's thesis on Japanese kamikaze. I learned something from him, but it is hard to understand this reality. When I offered my corrections, these were more concerned with methodology. But it was hard to understand… This is not only something that happens in the Orient. Studies have been made about an idea which arose during the Second World War in Italy,

with Italian Fascism. There are no proofs, but it is being researched. There is something here that has to do with dictatorships and totalitarian systems. Totalitarian systems. It is closely linked. Totalitarian systems kill; if they do not kill life, they kill the future, they kill many things. Including lives. So it is. But it is not a one-time problem. It is not only an Oriental phenomenon. This is important. That is about all I can say.

As for the use of children. What I just said is generally true for everyone, but leaving that aside, let us take the case of children. Children are used all of the world for many things: they are exploited as laborers, they are exploited as slaves, they are even exploited sexually. Several years ago, a group of Argentinean senators and I wanted to approach some of the more important hotels to state publicly that tourists should not sexually exploit children there. We were not able to do so. There are hidden but powerful forms of resistance. I don't know whether or not children were exploited in these hotels; our efforts were primarily preventative. On a few occasions in Germany I came across magazines promoting tourism, particularly in South-East Asia, including "erotic tourism", with pictures of children. Children are exploited, but the enslavement of children is something terrible. They are exploited even for the sex trade. More than this I dare not say.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Your Holiness. We turn now to Ignazio Ingrao, representing the Italian pool.

(Ignazio Ingrao)

Good morning. I am from the weekly *Panorama* and *Il Mio Papa*. Your Holiness, there is much concern throughout the world for your safety. According to the American and Israeli secret services, the Vatican is a target for certain Islamic terrorists. On fundamentalist websites there are pictures of the ISIS flag flying over Saint Peter's Basilica. There are fears for your safety on foreign trips. We know that you do not want to give up direct contact with people, but at this point do you think there is a need to change some of the things you do and the trips you make? There are also concerns for the safety of the faithful who take part in the events, should there be an attack. Are you concerned about this? And, more generally, what are your thoughts on the best way to respond to the threats of Islamic fundamentalists? Thank you.

(Pope Francis)

For me, the best way to respond is always with gentleness. To be gentle, simple – like bread – without being aggressive. I am like this, but there are some who do not understand this. About the concerns you raised: I am worried about the faithful, it is true; this does worry me. And I have spoken about this to the Vatican security forces. On board this flight with us is Mr Giani who is responsible for this, and he is well-informed about the problem. It is a concern for me, a big concern. Am I afraid? You know, I have a shortcoming: a healthy dose of recklessness. I am not

bothered by these things. Every now and then I have asked myself: Could it happen to me? And I said to the Lord: “Lord, I ask only for the grace that I don’t feel pain”. Because I am not brave in the face of pain, I get scared, but not about God. But I also know that suitable measures are being taken for my security, prudent yet secure measures. So we will see.

(Fr Lombardi)

Thank you, Your Holiness. We too would like to have the same serenity, always. We now turn to Christoph Schmidt, representing the German pool, who is making his way forward. I would ask Sébastien Maillard to get his question ready. Then we will ask the Holy Father if he want to continue or if he prefers to conclude.

(Christoph Schmidt)

Holy Father, good morning. Would you be so kind as to tell us something about your visit to the Buddhist temple yesterday, which was a big surprise. What was the reason for such an apparently spontaneous visit? Are you impressed by that religion? We know that Christian missionaries believed right up to the Twentieth Century that Buddhism was a fraud, a diabolical religion. Third, what relevance does Buddhism have for the future of Asia?

(Pope Francis)

How was the visit, and why did I go? The head of that temple was invited by the government to the airport for my arrival and there – he is a great friend of Cardinal Ranjith – when he greeted me he invited me to the temple – and he asked Cardinal Ranjith to bring me there. So I spoke with the Cardinal, but there wasn’t time, since once I arrived I had to cancel the meeting with the Bishops because I wasn’t feeling well. I was tired – that twenty-nine kilometer ride from the airport and greeting all the people had worn me out completely – and so there was no time. But yesterday, returning from Madhu, there was a chance to do it; he called and so we went. In that temple are relics of two of the Buddha’s disciples. For them these are very important. These relics were in England and the temple authorities managed to get them back: good. So he came to greet me at the airport and I went to visit him. That first.

Secondly, yesterday at Madhu I saw something which I would never have expected: not everyone there was Catholic, not even the majority! There were Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and each one came to pray; they go and they say they receive graces there. There is in the people – and the people are never wrong – they sense that there is something there that unites them. And if they are so naturally united in going together to pray at that shrine – which is Christian but not only Christian, because all want [to go there], then why shouldn’t I go to a Buddhist temple to greet them? What happened yesterday at Madhu is very important. It helps us to understand the meaning of the interreligious experience in Sri Lanka: there is respect for one another. There are

small fundamentalist groups, but these are not with the people: they are ideological elites, but they are not with the people.

Now, as for their going to hell! Even the Protestants… when I was a child, some seventy years ago, all Protestants were going to hell, all of them. That's what we were told. And I remember my first experience of ecumenism. I told it a little while ago to the leaders of the Salvation Army. I was four or five years old, but I can still remember it clearly. I was walking down the street with my grandmother, she was holding my hand. On the other sidewalk there were two ladies from the Salvation Army, with those hats with the bow they used to wear. And I asked my grandmother: "Grandma, are they nuns?" And she said to me: "No, they are Protestants, but they are good people". This was the first time that I had ever heard someone say something good about a person of another religion, about a Protestant. At that time, in catechesis, they told us that everyone was going to hell! But I believe that the Church has become much more respectful – as I said during the interreligious meeting in Colombo – and appreciative. When we read what the Second Vatican Council said about the values to be found in other religions, the Church has grown greatly in this regard. And yes, there are dark periods in the history of the Church, we must admit, without being ashamed, because we too are on a path of constant conversion: always moving from sin to grace. And this interreligious experience of fraternity, each always respecting the other, is a grace. I do not know if there is something I have forgotten. Is that all? *Vielen Danke.*

(Father Lombardi)

Sébastien Maillard for the French journalists.

(Sébastien Maillard)

Holy Father, during Mass yesterday morning you spoke of religious freedom as a fundamental human right. But in showing respect for the various religions, how far can freedom of expression go, [that freedom of expression] which is itself a fundamental human right?

(Pope Francis)

Thank you for the question, which is an intelligent one. I believe that freedom of religion and freedom of speech are both fundamental human rights. One can not… we think… You are French, so let's go to Paris! Let's be frank. There is a truth that we cannot overlook, namely, that everyone has the right to practice his or her religion freely, without offending others. That is what we do, what we all want to do. Second, we cannot offend others, make war or kill in the name of one's own religion, that is, in God's name. What is happening now makes us a little… it astounds us. But we always think of our history: how many wars of religion have we had! You may think of the Saint Bartholomew's day massacre… How do we make sense of this? We too have sinned in this regard. But we cannot kill in God's name. This is an aberration. To kill in the name of God is an

aberration. I believe that this is the most important thing about religious freedom: to exercise it in freedom, without offending, but also without imposing it or killing for it.

Freedom of expression. Everyone not only has the freedom, the right, but also the obligation, to say what they think in order to promote the common good. The obligation. Think of a elected official, a senator: unless they say what they think is right, they are not working for the common good. Not only these people, but so many others. We have the obligation to speak openly, to enjoy this freedom, but without offending others. It is true one cannot respond violently, but if my good friend Dr Gasbarri here insults my mother, he'll get punched for it! This is normal! It is normal. We cannot provoke others, we cannot insult their faith, we cannot mock their faith. In one of his speeches, I don't recall where, Pope Benedict spoke of this post-positivistic mentality, post-positivistic metaphysics, which ultimately led to the idea that religions or expressions of religion are a sort of subculture which are tolerated but insignificant; they are not part of our enlightened culture. This is one legacy of the Enlightenment. All those people who belittle religions, who mock them, who "toy with" other people's religion, they antagonize others and what happens to Dr Gasbarri if he says something against my mother can happen to them. There is a limit. Every religion has dignity, every religion which respects human life, the human person. I cannot mock it. This is a limit. I used this example of the limit, in order to say that in freedom of expression there are limits like those regarding my mother. I don't know if it succeeded in responding to your question. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Your Holiness. We have been together already for more than half an hour and everyone has had a turn. You also said that you were a bit tired. We give you the freedom. Would you like to continue? Really, you tell us and we will end whenever you want. Joshua McElwee of the National Catholic Reporter is next.

(Joshua McElwee)

Holy Father, thank you again for your time. You have frequently spoken out against religious extremism. Do you have any concrete ideas of how to involve other religious leaders in combatting this problem? Perhaps a meeting in Assisi, like those Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI had?

(Pope Francis)

Thank you. This suggestion has also been made. I know that some people are working on it. I spoke with Cardinal Tauran, who is involved in interreligious dialogue, and he is aware of it. I know that we are not the only ones who would like this, but the idea has come even more from others, other religions, and it is in the air. I don't know if there anything is presently being organized, but

the desire for it is out there. Thank you.

(Father Lombardi)

Now, one last question from the Filipino group. We have Lynda Jumilla Abalos, who will ask another question and then afterward we will let the Pope go.

(Lynda Jumilla Abalos)

Good morning Holy Father, I am sorry that my Italian is not very good. Your Holiness, you called for truth and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. I would like to ask if you would support a fact-finding commission in Sri Lanka and in other countries for internal conflicts…

(Pope Francis)

I don't know much about these commissions. I knew about the one in Argentina in the period after the military dictatorship. I supported that one because it was set up well. I can't speak in practical terms about these commissions, because I do not really know about them. Yes, I support all efforts at arriving at the truth and also balanced efforts, not vendettas, but balanced attempts to help come to an agreement. I did hear something from the President of Sri Lanka – I would not want this to be interpreted as a political comment – I am repeating what I heard and what I agree with. He told me that he wants to move forward with the work of *peace* – first word – of *reconciliation*, before all else. Then, he continued with another word, he said that *harmony* must be created in the people. Harmony is more than peace and reconciliation. It is more. It is even more beautiful. Harmony is musical. He then added that this harmony will give us *happiness* and *joy*. Peace, reconciliation, harmony, happiness and joy. I was impressed and said: "I am happy to hear this, but it is not something easy". And then a fifth word: we must go to the *heart* of the people. This last word, so profound, makes me think, to respond to your question: it is only by arriving at the heart of the people, who know what suffering is, who know what injustices are, who suffered so much from war and dictatorship, so many things!... only by arriving there – the people also know about forgiveness – that we can find the right ways, without compromising, the right ways for moving forward in this area you raised. Fact-finding commissions are one of the elements which can be helpful, at least I think of those in Argentina: something which helped. One thing, but there are other things we have to do in order to achieve peace, reconciliation, harmony, happiness and arrive at the heart of the people. This is what comes to my mind, and I use the words of the President which I thought were well spoken.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Holy Father. I believe that you have given us more than sufficient material for the work on for the next hours of this trip.

One last small thing. Just today, Ansa, the principal Italian news agency, celebrates its seventieth anniversary. We have always had someone from Ansa accompany us faithfully and here now is Giovanna Chirri. Would you please offer a word of congratulations to Ansa for these seventy years…

(Pope Francis)

I came to know Ansa for the first time when I met Francesca Ambrogetti in Buenos Aires. Francesca was the leader of the group, the team of foreign journalists in Buenos Aires. Through her I got to know Ansa, and she represented Ansa well in Buenos Aires. I wish you all the best. Seventy years are no joke! To persevere in this service for seventy years is a great credit. I offer you my best wishes, always. I have the habit, when I do not know how things are going, of asking Saint Therese of the Child Jesus that if she takes care of some problem, anything at all, to send me a rose. At times she does, but in odd ways. In the same way, I asked her watch over this journey and to send me a rose. Instead of a rose, but you yourself came to greet me. Thanks to Carolina, many thanks to Therese and to all of you. Thank you and have a good day.

(Father Lombardi)

Thank you, Your Holiness, and have a good flight. May you rest a little now, to prepare yourself for the next three days. Thank you all.

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