



The Holy See

ECUMENICAL PILGRIMAGE OF HIS HOLINESS FRANCIS TO GENEVA
TO MARK THE 70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE RETURN FLIGHT FROM GENEVA

Papal flight
Thursday, 21 June 2018

[[Multimedia](#)]

Papa Francesco:

Thank you for your work! It was a rather challenging day, at least for me. But I am satisfied. I am content because the different things we did, including the prayer at the beginning, then the dialogue during lunch, which was beautiful, and then the Mass, are things that made me happy. Tiring, but they are good things. Thank you very much. And now I am at your disposal.

Arnaud Bédât, della rivista “L’Illustré”:

Holy Father, you were in Geneva, but also Switzerland. What images, important or powerful moments struck you the most during this day?

Papa Francesco:

Thank you. I think — I would say — there is an ordinary word: *encounter*. It was a day of encounters. Multifaceted. The right word for the day is encounter, and when a person encounters another and feels pleased with the encounter, this always touches the heart. They were positive, also beautiful encounters, beginning with the dialogue with the President [of the Swiss

Confederation], at the beginning, which was not only a courteous, ordinary dialogue, but a profound dialogue, on profound global topics and with an intelligence I found striking. Starting with this. Then, the encounters that you all saw... And what you did not see is the encounter during lunch, which was very profound in the way it touched upon many subjects. Perhaps the topic we spent the most time on is that of young people, because all the Confessions are also concerned, in the good sense, for young people. And the pre-Synod that was held from 19 March onward, attracted quite a bit of attention, because there were young people of all Confessions, even agnostics, and from all countries. Just think: 315 young people present and 15,000 connected online who “came and went”. Perhaps this awakened special interest. But for me the word that encompasses perhaps the whole journey is that it was a journey of *encounter*. The experience of encounter. Not merely courtesy, nothing purely formal, but human encounter. And this, among Protestants and Catholics, says it all... Thank you.

Roland Juchem, dell'agenzia cattolica tedesca CIC:

Thank you, Holy Father. You speak often of concrete steps to take in ecumenism. Today, for example, you referred to it again, saying: “Let us see what we can do concretely, rather than grow discouraged about what we cannot”. The German Bishops, recently, have decided to take a step [on so-called “inter-Communion”], and so we wonder why Archbishop Ladaria [Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith] had written a letter that seems somewhat of an emergency brake. After the meeting last 3 May it was stated that the German Bishops should have found a solution, possibly unanimously. What will the next steps be? Will an intervention by the Vatican be necessary in order to clarify, or do the German Bishops have to reach an agreement?

Papa Francesco:

Well. This is nothing new, because the Code of Canon Law provides for what the German Bishops were talking about: Communion in special cases. They were looking at the issue of mixed marriage: whether or not it is possible. However, the Code says that the Bishop of the particular Church — this word is important: *particular*, if it is a diocese — has to manage this matter: it is in its hands. This is in the Code. The German Bishops, since they had seen that the case was not clear, and also that several priests were doing things that the bishop did not agree with, wanted to study this issue and conducted this study which — I do not want to exaggerate — was more than a year-long study, I do not know for sure but more than a year, well done, well done. And the study was restrictive: what the bishops wanted was to state clearly what is in the Code. And I too, having read it, say: this is a restrictive document. It was not “open to everyone”. No. It was a matter well thought out, with ecclesial spirit. And they wanted to do so for the local Church, not the particular Church [the individual diocese]. They did not want to do that. The matter has drifted to that point, that is, to stating that it is for the German Episcopal Conference. And at that point there is a problem, because the Code does not provide for this. It considers the competence of the diocesan bishop, but not of the Episcopal Conference. Why? Because something approved in an Episcopal

Conference, immediately becomes universal. And this was the difficulty with the discussion: not so much the content, but this. They sent the document: then there were two or three meetings for dialogue and clarification; and Archbishop Ladaria sent that letter, but with my permission; he did not do so on his own. I told him: “It is better to take a step forward and say that the document is not yet mature — the letter said this — and that the matter had to be studied further.” Then there was another meeting, and ultimately they will study the matter. I think that this will be an *explanatory* document, so that each of the diocesan bishops can manage what Canon Law already permits. There was no brake, no. It was directing the matter so it would take the right track. When I visited the Lutheran Church in Rome, this type of question was asked and I responded according to the spirit of the Code of Canon Law, that spirit that they [the Bishops] are seeking now. Perhaps the right information was not there at the right moments; there is a bit of confusion, but this is the matter. In the *particular* Church, the Code permits it; in the *local* Church, it cannot be, because it would be universal. This is it.

Roland Juchem:

Is the local Church the Conference?

Papa Francesco:

... it is the Conference. But the Conference can study and provide guidelines to help the bishops manage in particular cases. Thank you.

Eva Fernández della Cope, la Radio spagnola:

Thank you, Holy Father. We saw that the Secretary General of the Ecumenical Council of Churches spoke about helping refugees. Recently we saw the “Aquarius” incident and other cases, as well as the separation of families in the United States. Do you think some governments will exploit the tragedy of the refugees? Thank you.

Papa Francesco:

I have spoken a great deal about refugees and the criteria are in what I have said: “welcome, protect, promote, integrate”. They are criteria for all refugees. Then I have said that every country must do this with the virtue of government which is prudence, because a country must welcome as many refugees as it can *integrate*: integrate, that is, educate, provide work... This, I would say, is the calm, peaceful plan for refugees. Here we are experiencing a wave of refugees who are fleeing war and hunger. War and hunger is so many countries in Africa, war and persecution in the Middle East. Italy and Greece have been extremely generous in welcoming. For the Middle East — regarding Syria — Turkey has received many of them; Lebanon, many: Lebanon has as many Syrians as there are Lebanese; and then Jordan, and other countries. Spain too has welcomed

them. There is the problem of trafficking migrants. And there is also the problem of cases in which they return, because they have to return. There is this case... I do not know the terms of the agreement very well, but if they are in Libyan waters, they have to go back... And there I saw the photographs of the prisons of the traffickers. Traffickers immediately separate women from men: women and children go God knows where... This is what traffickers do. There is also a case, that I know, in which traffickers have approached a ship that had welcomed refugees from the boats and said: "Give us the women and children and take away the men". The traffickers do this. And the prisons of the traffickers, for those who have returned, are terrible; they are terrible. These things were seen in the gulags of World War II. Also mutilations, torture... And then they throw them into mass graves, the men. For this reason governments are concerned that they not return and not fall into these people's hands. There is worldwide concern. I know that governments speak about this and want to find an agreement, also to modify the Dublin Regulation. In Spain you have had the case of this ship that landed in Valencia. But this whole phenomenon is a disorder. The problem of war is difficult to resolve; the problem of the persecution of Christians too, in the Middle East and in Nigeria. But the issue of hunger can be resolved. And many European governments are considering an emergency plan to invest in those countries, to invest intelligently, to provide work and education, these two things. In the countries from which these people come from. Because — no offense, but it is the truth — in the collective subconscious there is an awful motto: "Africa is for exploiting" — *Africa es para ser explotada*. This is in the subconscious: "Eh, they are Africans...". Land of slaves. And this has to change with this plan for investment, education, development, because the African people have so many cultural treasures, so many. And they have great intelligence: the children are very intelligent and can, with a good education, go beyond. This will be the path in the medium term. But at the moment they must reach an agreement with the governments in order to move forward with this emergency. This, here in Europe.

Let us turn to America. In America, there is big migration issue, in Latin America; and there is also the issue of internal migration. In my country there is a migration issue from north to south. The people leave the countryside because there is no work and they go to the big cities, and there are these megalopolises, the shanty towns, and all these things... But there is also external migration toward other countries that provide work. Practically speaking, toward the United States. I agree with what the Bishops of that country say. I side with them. Thank you.

Deborah Castellano Lubov, dell'agenzia Zenit:

Thank you, your Holiness. Holiness, in your address today at the Ecumenical Meeting you made reference to the Gospel's enormous strength. We know that some Churches of the World Council of Churches are so-called "Churches of peace", which believe that a Christian cannot use violence. We remember that two years ago in the Vatican, there was a conference organized to reconsider the doctrine of the "just war". So, Holiness, the question is whether you think it is the case for the Catholic Church to unite with these so-called "Churches of peace" and set aside the

theory of the “just war”. Thank you.

Papa Francesco:

A clarification: why do you say there are “Churches of peace”?

Deborah Castellano Lubov:

They are considered “Churches of peace” because they have this view that a person who uses violence cannot be considered Christian.

Papa Francesco:

Thank you, I understand. You have put your finger in the wound.... Today, at lunch, a Pastor said that perhaps the first human right is the right to hope, and I liked this, and it applies somewhat to this theme. We spoke about the crisis of human rights today. I think that I must begin from this point in order to get to your question. The crisis of human rights seems clear. Human rights are spoken about a little, but many groups or some countries distance themselves. Yes, we have human rights but ... there is no energy, enthusiasm, the conviction of I don't say 70 years ago, but of 20 years ago. And this is serious, because we have to look at things. What are the causes that brought us to this point? That today human rights are *relative*. The right to peace is also relative. It is a human rights crisis. I think we have to consider this thoroughly.

Then, the so-called “Churches of peace”. I think that all Churches that have this spirit of peace must gather and work together, as we said in the speeches today, both myself and the other people who spoke, and at lunch we spoke about it. Unity for peace. Today peace is a necessity, because there is a risk of war.... Someone said: this third world war, if waged, we know what weapons will be used, but, if there were a fourth, it will be fought with clubs, because humanity will be destroyed. The commitment to peace is a serious matter. When one thinks of the money being spent on weapons! For this reason, the “Churches of peace”: but it is God's mandate! Peace, fraternity, mankind united.... And all the conflicts, need not be resolved like Cain, but resolved through negotiation, through dialogue, through mediation. For example, we are in a crisis of mediations! Mediation, which is a very valuable legal term, is in crisis today. A crisis of hope, crisis of human rights, crisis of mediations, crisis of peace. But then, if you say that there are “Churches of peace”, I wonder: but are there “Churches of war”? It is difficult to understand this; it is difficult, but there are certainly some groups — and I would say in almost all religions — small groups, simplifying a bit I will say “fundamentalists”, who seek war. Even we Catholics have a few of them, who always seek destruction. And it is very important to keep an eye on this. I don't know if I have answered.... They tell me that people are asking for dinner, that there is enough time to get there with a full stomach....

I would just like to say one word clearly: that today was an *ecumenical* day, truly ecumenical. And at lunch we said something wonderful, which I will leave you with so you may think and reflect and give some good consideration to this: in the ecumenical movement we have to remove one word from the dictionary: *proselytism*. Is that clear? There can be no ecumenism with proselytism; one has to choose: either you have an ecumenical spirit or you are a “proselytist”.

Thank you. I would carry on speaking because I enjoy it, but.... And now, let us have the Substitute [of the Secretariat of State] come because it is the last journey he will take with us, because he is now about to “change colours” [becoming a Cardinal]: but not to embarrass him! We would like to congratulate him and there will be a Sardinian cake to celebrate.

[Thanksgiving of H.E. Msgr Angelo Becciu]

Papa Francesco:

Bon appetit, enjoy your dinner, and thank you very much. And pray for me, please. Thank you.