

PERSPECTIVES 02

POPE FRANCIS
FRATERNAL AND
SPONTANEOUS





LA CIVILTÀ
CATTOLICA

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BEATUS POPULUS, CUIUS DOMINUS DEUS EIUS

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News

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INTRODUCTION

Immediately, directly, intuitively: this is how the message of Pope Francis touches people. His ability to communicate is rooted in a pastoral experience that naturally tends to create authentic relationships. His authority is never expressed rigidly, as if spoken by a statue. Rather, his personality flows into the people with whom he is speaking.

This volume gathers some of the conversations that Francis has had with Jesuits during his apostolic journeys. It is clear how the pope tunes into the appropriate wavelength for each group. You can see it in his approach, in his greeting and body position. Francis relaxes with the Jesuits; he feels at home. Ever since his very first papal trip to Brazil, whenever possible, Francis has enjoyed meeting the Jesuits of the country he is visiting. That encounter can take various forms: a mass, a personal greeting for a group, a dialogue... Obviously, these are “private” words, not meant for widespread circulation. Following the pontiff on his apostolic trips, I have always joined in these meetings. I record his words with my smartphone, transcribe them and then hand them to Francis so that he can read them. If he thinks it opportune, he approves them for publication in *La Civiltà Cattolica*.

His manner of speech here is very relaxed, fraternal and spontaneous. Personal experience shows me that these conversations are always an echo of the ongoing visit. Sometimes they even provide a key to interpret each visit through the pope’s own experience. In fact, apostolic voyages follow strict timetables without space for reflection. So these encounters with the Jesuits are often a time for the pope to say what he perceives about the journey, his first reflections and emotions.

His teaching is very powerful and his words allow us to better understand things that can still be deduced from other aspects of his pontificate: Bergoglio is to be understood on a voyage. You have to consider the path he follows while he is progressing. And what is wonderful about these conversations is that they are documents in a state of development. They

do not have the (necessary) rigidity of a concluding text. In this sense, the conversation is a form of expression that is particularly in line with the dynamic forms of this pontificate. In some way or other there is always the “background noise” of life. Doubt is not deposed by cold clarity; it requires a message that is effectively understandable.

We should also highlight the fact that, in such a free manner, the pope has given, or reemphasized, specific missions for the Society of Jesus. In particular, the task of teaching “discernment.”

If I had to give as a witness my own account of these conversations, I would have trouble summarizing them. I have always felt a great sense of normality, of things being natural, and yet also of observing an erupting volcano. These are two contrasting emotions that cannot be separated in journeying with Francis. I trust that the reader will be pulled into this dynamic, generative “calm chaos.”

Fr. Antonio Spadaro, SJ
Editor-in-chief, *La Civiltà Cattolica*

Grace is not an ideology

Pope Francis

From September 6-11, 2017, Pope Francis was in Colombia, so completing his 20th apostolic voyage. The voyage included a visit on September 10 to the city of Cartagena de Indias, the capital of the region of Bolívar that looks onto the Caribbean Sea to the north of Colombia.

The pope went first to the St. Francis of Assisi Square, and then he went on to the sanctuary of St. Peter Claver, greeting people along the way. After reciting the Angelus in the piazza, he entered the sanctuary and remained in silence some moments before the altar that contains the relics of the saint, laying some flowers that had been given to him by two children.

Some 300 representatives of the Afro-Colombian community served by the Jesuits were in the church. The pope gave a gift to the rector of the sanctuary. Afterwards he went into the inner courtyard where he met privately with representatives of the community of the Society of Jesus made up of 65 religious.

Francis was welcomed with song and applause.

Then he sat down and gave thanks for the meeting. Referring to the Society of Jesus he said playfully, "I like meeting with the sect," prompting laughter all round. "Thank you for what you are doing in Colombia," he said, and continued: "Yesterday I was very happy to meet Álvaro Restrepo in Medellín. He was the provincial in Argentina. He used to come to my residence to talk... He's a great man, very good, very good. Well, I am here for you. I don't want to make a speech, so if you have some questions or something you want to know, ask me now, that's best: provoke and inspire me!" Somebody immediately asked for a blessing but the pope replied: "At the end. When I give my concluding blessing, I'll bless you all."

Fr. Carlos Eduardo Correa, SJ, the Jesuit provincial in Colombia, declared: “Dear Pope Francis, we are very happy because your message in these days in Colombia has encouraged us in the commitment to reconciliation and peace. We want to say to you that in all our work we want to continue taking these processes forward, so that in this country we can live the fellowship of the Gospel, and for this we want to thank you from our hearts for encouraging us and confirming us in the faith and in hope. Sincere thanks and may God continue to bless your ministry.” Francis thanked him for his words.

After the provincial comes the rector of the Pontifical University “Javeriana,” Fr. Jorge Humberto Peláez, SJ: “Your Holiness, this has been a marvelous gift because Colombia has sunk into a state of despair. With this visit we will take not just one step forward but many. You can count on the Javeriana University and the entire educational and pastoral work of the Jesuits for the work of reconciliation. Thank you for this visit. It gives us hope, Your Holiness.”

Fr. Jorge Iván Moreno asks the first question: “Dear Francis, I’m pastor of the parish of St. Rita. The people there love you and appreciate you, and we wrote you a letter a few days ago. I want to know: when you were in San Francisco at those communities at Pie de la Popa, what struck you most? I think it’s the first time you’ve come to Cartagena and I’d like to know: as pontiff, what have you seen while passing through this “other” Cartagena, as we call it?” His Holiness replied:

Let’s stop at the question, as I think it gives me an opportunity to say something very dear to me. What I noticed and what touched me most was the spontaneity. The people of God there placed no limits on their joyful enthusiasm. Scholars could give a thousand different interpretations, but it was simply the people of God going out to be welcoming.

For me there was a clear indicator that this wasn’t something prepared beforehand with ready-made slogans: the very culture of these different parts of the people of God, these areas I passed through, expressed itself in complete freedom, praising God. It’s unusual.

Sadly, we are often tempted to evangelize *for* the people, *toward* the people, but *without* the people of God. Everything

for the people, but nothing with the people. This way of being, in the final analysis, is due to a liberal and illuminist vision of evangelization. Surely, the first rejection of such a vision comes in *Lumen Gentium*: the Church is the holy people of God. So, if we want to hear the Church, we have to hear the people of God. People... Today we need to be careful when we speak of people! For someone might say: “you’ll end up being populists,” and they’ll start concocting theories.

But we need to understand that this “people” is not a category of logic. If you want to speak of people with logical schemes you end up falling into an illuminist and liberal ideology, or a “populist” one, right... anyway you end up closing the people into an ideological schema. ‘People’, however, refers to a *mythical* category. And to understand the people we need to immerse ourselves in them, we need to accompany them from within.

To be Church, the holy pilgrim people, faithful to God, requires pastors who let themselves be carried by the reality of the people, which is not a mere ideology: it is vital, it is alive. The grace of God that is present in the life of the people is not an ideology. Certainly, many theologians could explain several important things that need to be known about the theme. But I want to say that grace is not an ideology: it is an embrace, it is something bigger.

When I come to places like Cartagena where people express themselves freely, I see they are expressing themselves as the people of God. Certainly, it is true that some affirm that the people are superstitious.

So I tell them to go and read Paul VI who in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 48 highlighted the risks involved but also the virtues of the people. He said that popular piety is, yes, open to the penetration of superstition. But he also said that, if it is well-ordered then it is full of values and shows a thirst for God that only the simple and the poor can know. The people of God have a good sense of smell. Perhaps the people struggle to communicate well, and sometimes people get it wrong... But can any of us say, “Thank you, Lord, for I have never been wrong?” No.

The people of God have a good sense of smell. And sometimes our task as pastors is to be behind the people. A pastor has to take up all three positions: in front to mark out the road, in the middle, to know it, and at the back to ensure nobody falls behind and to let the flock seek the road... and the sheep smell a good pasture. A pastor has to move continually between these three positions. See, this is what your question has prompted me to say.

“Good evening, your Holiness, I am Rodolfo Abello, responsible for youth work in the province. I want to ask something along these lines toward which horizon should we be motivating our young people with Ignatian spirituality?”

What comes to me is to say something a bit intellectual: put them into the spirituality of the Exercises. What do I mean? I mean, put them in movement, into action. Youth work as pure reflection in small groups no longer works today. This pastoral approach to inactive youth gets no traction. You have to make them move: whether they are practicing or non-practicing, you need to get them up and active.

If they are believers, leading them will be easy. If they are non-believers, you need to let life itself make demands of them, but in action and with accompaniment. Impose nothing, accompany them... in volunteering, working with the elderly, in teaching basic literacy... all appropriate ways for the youth. If we put a young person into action, we facilitate a dynamic where the Lord starts to speak and move the heart of that person. It won't be for us to stir the heart with our wisdom, at most we can help by using our minds once the heart moves.

Yesterday at Medellin I recalled an event that was very important to me because it came from the heart. At Krakow during lunch with the archbishop and 15 young people from around the world – in every World Youth Day there is such a lunch – they started to ask questions and a dialogue opened up.

A university student asked me: “Some of my companions are atheists, what do I have to say to persuade them?” I noticed a sense of ecclesial militancy in the young man. The response came to me clearly: “The last thing to do is to use words, really,

speaking is the very last thing. Start by acting, invite him along, and when he sees what you do and how you do it, then he will ask you, and then you can start to speak.”

What I am saying is to get the youth moving, invent things that make them feel as though they are the protagonists and then lead them to ask themselves: “What is happening, what has changed my heart, why does this make me happy?” Just as in the Exercises when considering interior movements. Obviously though, don’t ask the young people what movements they have experienced because they won’t understand your language.

But let them tell you how they feel, and from there engage with them bit by bit. To do this – and here’s a tip I received from the much loved Fr. Furlong when they made me provincial – you need to have the patience to sit and listen to those who come asking questions, and you need to know how to handle people who want to push you into endless discussions. The youth are tiring, the youth are discussing, so you need this continual mortification of being among them to listen, always and in any way. But for me the key point is the movement.

Jesuit scholastic Jefferson Chaverra put this request to the pope: “Your Holiness, firstly, I want to thank you for coming to visit us and for coming to Colombia. Secondly, I don’t want to ask a real question but to make a request in the name of all Afro-Colombians, of all the black people of Colombia. I want to thank you for the many priests and bishops committed to our causes and at the same time tell you, and in your name tell the whole Church, that we blacks in Colombia need greater accompaniment by and engagement with the Church, for our pain and our suffering as black people continues to be enormous, and the workers are still few. Your Holiness, the harvest is great but the laborers are few. Many thanks.”

What you say is true. I spoke of this matter you touch on in my talk to the bishops. There is a basic charism for the Colombian Jesuit: a person whose name is Peter Claver. I believe that God has spoken to us through this man. This impresses me. He was just a weak boy, a young Jesuit in formation, yet he spoke so much to the old porter. And the old man nourished his aspirations. How good it would be if the elderly in our Society

were to step forward and the youth follow them: this would fulfil the words of Joel: “the elderly will dream and the young will prophesy.” And so there is a need to prophesy, and to speak with the elderly.

Fr. Jorge Alberto Camacho, pastor of the St. Peter Claver parish, says to the pope: “Holiness, real thanks to you for being here with us. You have made a present to the sanctuary and we from the sanctuary want to reciprocate with some small tokens. One is the process of canonization of St. Peter Claver. It contains everything that made him a saint, his actions that enable us to work, like you. Fr. Tulio Aristizábal, the eldest member of our community in Cartagena, is 96 and an expert on St. Peter Claver. He will give you the book.

Fr. Tulio Aristizábal stands up and, with great emotion, says: “My father superior has asked me to give you as a gift the book of the process of canonization of St. Peter Claver. It contains a most interesting section: the sworn declaration of more than 30 slaves who tell us about St. Peter. In my mind, this is the best biography of the saint. I place it in your hands.” Pope Francis thanks him.

*Fr. Jorge Alberto Camacho continues: “Holiness, the other present we have prepared for you is a program we have been promoting these past three months. We have called it the Pope Francis Ruta Verde or Green Way. It takes the encyclical *Laudato Si’* into the popular districts. As a sign of this way, we want to gift you the booklet that we have used with the youngsters in the streets and the t-shirt of the Ruta Verde. At the end we will ask Your Holiness to bless these objects and the saplings of the Ruta Verde, local fruit trees that we have planted in the city.”*

Fr. Vicente Durán Casas stands to ask another question: “Holy Father, again thank you for your visit. I teach philosophy and I would like to know, and I speak for my teaching colleagues in theology too, what do you expect from philosophical and theological reflection in a country such as ours and in the Church generally?”

To start, I’d say let’s not have laboratory reflection. We’ve seen what damage occurred when the great and brilliant Thomist scholastics deteriorated, falling down, down, down to a manualistic scholasticism without life, mere ideas that transformed into a casuistic pastoral approach. At least, in our

day we were formed that way... I'd say it was quite ridiculous how, to explain metaphysical continuity, the philosopher Losada spoke of *puncta inflata*... To demonstrate some ideas, things got ridiculous. He was a good philosopher, but decadent, he didn't become famous...

So, philosophy not in a laboratory, but in life, in dialogue with reality. In dialogue with reality, philosophers will find the three transcendentals that constitute unity, but they will have a real name. Recall the words of our great writer Dostoyevsky. Like him we must reflect on which beauty will save us, on goodness, on truth. Benedict XVI spoke of truth as an encounter, that is to say no longer a classification, but a road. Always in dialogue with reality, for you cannot do philosophy with a logarithmic table. Besides, nobody uses them anymore.

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The same is true for theology, but this does not mean to corrupt theology, depriving it of its purity. Quite the opposite. The theology of Jesus was the most real thing of all; it began with reality and rose up to the Father. It began with a seed, a parable, a fact... and explained them. Jesus wanted to make a deep theology and the great reality is the Lord. I like to repeat that to be a good theologian, together with study you have to be dedicated, awake and seize hold of reality; and you need to reflect on all of this on your knees.

A man who does not pray, a woman who does not pray, cannot be a theologian. They might be a living form of Denzinger, they might know every possible existing doctrine, but they'll not be doing theology. They'll be a compendium or a manual containing everything. But today it is a matter of how you express God, how you tell who God is, how you show the Spirit, the wounds of Christ, the mystery of Christ, starting with the Letter to the Philippians 2:7... How you explain these mysteries and keep explaining them, and how you are teaching the encounter that is grace. As when you read Paul in the Letter to the Romans where there's the entire mystery of grace and you want to explain it.

I'll use this question to say something else that I believe should be said out of justice, and also out of charity. In fact I hear many comments – they are respectable for they come

from children of God, but wrong – concerning the post-synod apostolic exhortation. To understand *Amoris Laetitia* you need to read it from the start to the end. Beginning with the first chapter, and to continue to the second and then on ... and reflect. And read what was said in the Synod.

A second thing: some maintain that there is no Catholic morality underlying *Amoris Laetitia*, or at least, no sure morality. I want to repeat clearly that the morality of *Amoris Laetitia* is Thomist, the morality of the great Thomas. You can speak of it with a great theologian, one of the best today and one of the most mature, Cardinal Schönborn.

I want to say this so that you can help those who believe that morality is purely casuistic. Help them understand that the great Thomas possesses the greatest richness, which is still able to inspire us today. But on your knees, always on your knees...

Before leaving, the Holy Father blessed the Jesuits asking them not to forget to pray for him. Then, after some photos and greetings, he headed for the Monastero di Santo where he lunched with the papal entourage.

Where have our people been creative? Conversations with Jesuits in Chile and Peru

Pope Francis

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On Tuesday, January 16, 2018, at 7 p.m., on his first full day of an apostolic journey to Chile and Peru, Pope Francis met with 90 Chilean Jesuits in the Centro Hurtado of Santiago. On arrival he was shown a reproduction of the green Ford van that St. Alberto Hurtado would use to bring aid to the city's marginalized: it is a true symbol of apostolic passion. The pope was accompanied by the provincial, Fr. Cristián del Campo, into the chapel where the remains of the Jesuit saint are kept. Inaugurated in 1995, the sanctuary houses the tomb of the saint, a stone sarcophagus containing clumps of earth from each region of Chile which together symbolize the embrace of the country's faithful. The provincial greeted the pope in the name of all the Jesuits – including notably many young ones – and asked him: “How are things going in Chile and have you felt welcomed to our country?” The meeting quickly became warm and familial. Fr. Del Campo presented two of those present, Frs. Carlos and José Aldunate, blood brothers, ages 101 and 100 years.

The following transcript of the conversations has been approved for publication in this form by the pope himself.

Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Francis began with these words:

I am so pleased to see Fr. Carlos! He was my spiritual director in 1960 for my juniorate. José was the master of novices, and then they made him provincial. Carlos was the caretaker and was...the king of common sense! He could give spiritual advice with really good sense. I recall one time I went to him because I was very angry with someone. I wanted to face up to that person and tell him off. Carlos advised me: “Calm down! Do you really

want to break off with him immediately? Try other ways...” I have never forgotten that counsel, and I thank him for it now. Yes, in Chile I immediately felt very welcome. I came yesterday. Today I have been very well received. I have seen many gestures of dear affection. Now ask me whatever you want.

A Jesuit steps forward: “I would like to ask what have been the great joys and disappointments that you have experienced during your pontificate.”

This time of the pontificate is a quite peaceful time. As soon as I realized during the conclave what was about to happen – a complete surprise for me – I felt great peace. And up to today that peace has never left me. It is a gift of the Lord and I am grateful for it. And I really hope he won’t take it away from me. It is a peace that I feel as a pure gift, a pure gift. There is something that does not take peace away from me, but which does hurt me, and that is gossip. I don’t like gossip, it makes me sad. It often spreads in closed-off worlds. When it happens in a world of priests and religious I want to ask: how is this possible? You left everything, you decided not to have a wife next to you, you didn’t marry, you had no children... Do you want to finish as a gossiping old bachelor? Oh, my God, what a sad life!

A Jesuit from the Argentine-Uruguayan province asks: “What resistance have you encountered during your pontificate and how have you faced it? Have you made discernment?”

I never call a difficulty a “resistance” for to do so would be to renounce discernment. I prefer to discern. It is easy to say there is resistance and not realize that a moment of conflict is actually bringing out some crumbs of truth. So I think that such conflicts can help me. I often ask a person: “What do you think?” This would help me to relativize many things that at first sight might seem like resistances but are actually a reaction that comes from a misunderstanding, from the fact that some things need to be repeated, better explained... This might be my defect, the fact that sometimes I take things for granted and make a logical jump without explaining the process clearly, for I am convinced that the person I am

talking to has quickly understood my reasoning. I am aware that, if I go back and explain things better, then at that point the other will say, "Ah, yes, agreed..." All in all, it is very helpful for me to examine the meaning of conflicts carefully. But when I am aware that there is true resistance, certainly, I am displeased. Some say to me that it is normal that there is resistance when someone wants to make changes. The famous "this has always been done this way" reigns everywhere: "It has always been done this way, why should we change? If things are the way they are, they have always been done this way, so why change?" This a great temptation that we all faced in the period after the Second Vatican Council. The resistances are still present and try to tell us to relativize the Council, to water it down. I am even sadder when someone joins a campaign of resistance. And alas I see this too. You asked me about resistances, and I cannot deny that there are some, then. I see them and I know them.

There are doctrinal resistances that you know about better than I. For my own good I do not read the content of internet sites of this so-called "resistance." I know who they are, I know the groups, but I do not read them for my own mental health. If there is something very serious, they tell me about it so that I know. You know them... It is displeasing, but you have to go on. Historians tell us that it takes a century for a Council to put down its roots. We are halfway there.

Sometimes we ask: but that man, that woman, have they read the Council? And there are people who have not read the Council. And if they have read it, they have not understood it. Fifty years on! We studied philosophy before the Council, but we had the advantage of studying theology after it. We lived through the change of perspective, and the Council documents were already there.

When I perceive resistance, I seek dialogue whenever it is possible; but some resistance comes from people who believe they possess the true doctrine and accuse you of being a heretic. When I cannot see spiritual goodness in what these people say or write, I simply pray for them. I find it sad, but I won't settle on this sentiment for the sake of my own mental well-being.

Then came a question from a novice: “Many people identify the Church with the bishops and priests. And they are very critical of them for the way they live out their poverty, for the restrictions on the participation of women and limited space given to minorities... Faced with this opinion, what would you propose to bring the Church hierarchy, of which we are a part, closer to the people?”

I have just said to the bishops what I think of the relationship between the bishop and the people of God. And so what I think about bishops you will find in that talk. It was short, for we had two long meetings last year during their *ad limina* visits. Clericalism is the most serious damage endured by the Church in Latin America today, that is, the failure to be aware that the Church is the entire holy and faithful people of God, who are infallible *in credendo*, all together. I speak of Latin America for I know it best.

Some time ago I wrote a letter to the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and today I came back to the theme. We need to be aware that the grace of being a missionary comes from baptism, not from sacred orders or religious vows.

It is a consolation to see many priests and religious men and women putting their entire lives at stake, that is, with the conciliar option of placing themselves at the service of the people of God. But some still behave like princes. The people of God must be given its own space.

And the same can be said about the theme of women. I had a special experience when I was a diocesan bishop: we needed to look at a specific theme, and a consultation process began – obviously just between priests and bishops – and we had completed our reflection that led us to a number of questions on which a decision needed to be taken. But the same issue, treated during a combined meeting of men and women, led to much richer conclusions, much more practical, much more fruitful. It is that simple experience that comes to mind now, but it makes me reflect. Women need to give the Church all the richness that von Balthasar called “the Marian dimension.” Without this dimension the Church limps or uses crutches, and so walks badly. And I believe that the road is long... And, I repeat, as I said today to the bishops: “unprincify,” be near to the people...

Fr. Juan Díaz speaks up and the pope recognizes him...

Juanito!

After a warm personal greeting, Fr. Díaz continues: "Francis, on different occasions and in Evangelii Gaudium you have warned about the dangers of worldliness. Which aspects of our life should we Jesuits be careful about so as not to fall into the temptation of worldliness?"

The alarm about worldliness came to me from the final chapter of the *Meditations on the Church* by Henri de Lubac. He quotes a Benedictine, Dom Anscar Vonier, who speaks of worldliness as the worst evil that can befall the Church. This stirred in me the desire to better understand worldliness. Certainly, St. Ignatius wrote about it in his *Spiritual Exercises*, in the third exercise of the first week, where he asks to discover the deceits of the world. The three graces we ask for in that meditation are repentance of sins, that is, the pain of sins, shame and the awareness of the world, from the devil and his things. So, in our spirituality, worldliness should be remembered and considered as a temptation.

It would be superficial to state that worldliness is to lead a life that is too relaxed and frivolous. These are just consequences. Worldliness is the use of criteria of the world and following the criteria of the world and choosing to use the criteria of the world. It means making a discernment and preferring the criteria of the world. So what we must be asking ourselves is which are these criteria of the world. And this is precisely what St. Ignatius makes us ask in this third exercise. He has us make three supplications: to the Father, to the Lord and to the Virgin. May they help us discover these criteria! Each of us then must set about discovering what is worldly in our own lives. A simple and general response will not suffice. In what way am I worldly? This is the true question. It is not enough to say what worldliness is in general. For example, a theology professor can become worldly if he goes in search of the latest thoughts so as to be fashionable: this is worldliness. And there can be a thousand other examples. We should ask the Lord not to be deceived in seeking to discern what is our own worldliness.

Another question follows: “Holy Father, you have always been a man of reforms. Besides those of the Curia and the Church, in which reforms can we Jesuits support you the most?”

I think that one of the things that the Church most needs today is discernment. This is put very clearly in the pastoral perspectives and objectives of *Amoris Laetitia*. We are used to a “yes you can or no you can’t” mentality. The morality used in *Amoris Laetitia* is the more classic Thomist morals, that is, the one from St. Thomas himself not the decadent version of later Thomism that some have studied. I too received a formation in the way of thinking of “yes you can or no you can’t,” or “up to this point you can, up to here you can’t.” I wonder if you remember [and here the pope looks at one of those present] that Colombian Jesuit who came to teach morals at the *Collegio Massimo*? When he taught the sixth commandment someone dared to ask: “Can a man and a woman who are engaged to be married kiss each other?” If they could they kiss each other! Do you get it? And he replied: “Yes they can! No problem! They just have to put a tissue between them.” This is a *forma mentis* (a way of thinking) for doing theology generally. It is a *forma mentis* that is based on a limit. And we bear the consequences.

If you take a look at the panorama of reactions to *Amoris Laetitia* you will see that the strongest criticisms of the exhortation are against the eighth chapter: “Can a divorced person receive communion, or not?” But *Amoris Laetitia* goes in a completely different direction; it does not enter into these distinctions. It raises the issue of discernment. This was already at the heart of truly great classic Thomist morals. So the contribution that I want from the Society is to help the Church to grow in discernment. Today, the Church needs to grow in discernment. And to us the Lord has given this family grace to discern. I do not know if you know this, but I have said it during other similar meetings with Jesuits: at the end of Fr. Ledóchowski’s time as superior general, the highest work of the spirituality of the Society was the *Epitome*. Everything you had to do was all regulated in an enormous mix of the *Formula of the Institution*, the *Constitutions* and the rules. There were even rules for the cook. And it was all mixed, without following a hierarchy. Fr. Ledóchowski was

a great friend of the abbot general of the Benedictines and once he went to visit him bringing along this volume. Shortly after, the abbot sought him out and said: “Father General, with this you have killed the Society of Jesus.” And he was right, for the *Epitome* took away any room for discernment.

Then came the Second World War. Fr. Janssens had to guide the Society after the war, and he did it as well as he could, for it was not easy. And then came the grace of the Generalate of Fr. Pedro Arrupe with his *Ignatian Spirituality Center*, the journal *Christus* and the impulse given to the *Spiritual Exercises*. He renewed this family grace of discernment. He overcame the *Epitome*, he went back to the lesson of the fathers, to Faber and Ignatius. Here we should recognize the role of the life of the journal *Christus* for that period. And then also the role of Fr. Luis González with his center of spirituality: he went around to the entire Society to give the *Spiritual Exercises*. He went about opening doors, refreshing this aspect that today we see has grown greatly in the Society. I would say, recalling this family history, that there has been a moment in which we had lost – or I do not know if we had lost it, let’s say we did not use it much – the sense of discernment. Today, give it – let’s give it! – to the Church that is crying out for it.

The last question is from a theologian of the province of Peru: “A question on collaboration: What help has the Society been giving to you during your pontificate? How has there been collaboration? What relationship do you have with the Society?”

Since the second day after the election! Fr. Adolfo Nicolás came into my room at Santa Marta... That’s how the collaboration began. He came to greet me. I was still living in the small room that I had been given for the Conclave, not the one I have now, and we conversed there. And the superior generals, both Adolfo and now Arturo, have concentrated much on this. I think that on this point... Fr. Spadaro is here...

Spadaro: “I’m here!”

There he is in the gallery... I think he has been the witness of this relationship with the Society since the first moment. The availability is total. And with intelligence too, as for example

on the doctrine of the faith: there has been great support. But nobody could accuse the current pontificate of “Jesuitism.” I say it and I believe I am being sincere in saying so. It is a matter of ecclesial collaboration, in the ecclesial spirit. It is a (*sentire*) listening and feeling with the Church and in the Church, respecting the charism of the Society. And the documents of the last General Congregation did not need pontifical approval. I have not thought it necessary at all, for the Society is an adult. And if it makes a mistake...complaints will arrive and then we'll see. I think this is the way we collaborate.

All right, thank you very much...but I want to say one more very important thing to you, a recommendation: the account of conscience! For Jesuits this is a gem, a family grace... Please, don't overlook it!

The private meeting naturally spilled over into the open space of the sanctuary. A group of people had gathered there who have benefitted from the programs of solidarity run by the Church: representatives of workers, students, the elderly, the homeless and migrants. In his greeting, Jesuit Fr. Pablo Walker, the general chaplain of “Hogar de Cristo,” said, “Dear Pope Francis, the table is ready and we give you a warm welcome. Years ago we invited you to come and drink with us, and now that day has arrived.” Recalling that “to eat is a miracle,” the chaplain asked the pope to bless the “sopaipillas” that had been prepared by Mrs. Sonia Castro and her daughter Isabella Reinal. The pope pronounced the prayer of blessing: “May the Lord bless this food that we are sharing, that has been made by you; may he bless the hands that made it, the hands that distribute it and the hands that receive it. May the Lord bless the hearts of all of us, and may this sharing teach us also to share the way, to share life, and then to share paradise. Amen.” After receiving the Bible of the People of God as a gift and having offered a painting of Jesus the Merciful by Terezia Sedlakova as a gift to the Sanctuary, the pope recited the Our Father with all the participants. Then he imparted his blessing.

At the end of his first complete day in Peru, January 19, 2018, and after making a courtesy visit to President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, the pope went to the Jesuit church of St. Peter. The Society of Jesus

started building it in the 16th century and it is now considered one of the most important religious complexes in the historical center of Lima. It is also the national Sanctuary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Its layout echoes that of the Gesù Church in Rome. The façade is in a neoclassical style and there are three entry doors. There is a dominating neoclassical bell tower. Inside the furnishings are in a rich baroque style that is well-lit by sunlight. Off the three naves are found ten chapels. St. Peter's is considered one of the most beautiful churches in Peru.

At the entrance to the penitentiary chapel, Francis was welcomed by the provincial, Fr. Juan Carlos Morante, and by the local superior, Fr. José Enrique Rodríguez. Crossing the left nave of the church, the pope reached the sacristy where about 100 Jesuits were gathered. Fr. Morante thanked Francis for his visit and spoke of the work of the Society in the evangelization of indigenous peoples in the field of education, remembering Frs. Alonso de Barzana (1528-1598), Francisco del Castillo (1615-1673), Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585-1652) and others. He spoke of the new perspectives from the Second Vatican Council and of the new challenges: the preferential option for the poor, the Spiritual Exercises, the collaboration with the laity, and the new apostolic challenges that require a new apostolic discernment. Then the pope spoke. The text of the conversation transcribed here has been approved for publication in this form by the pontiff.

Francis greeted those present in this way:

Good evening... Thank you. Let's begin to converse without losing time. You've prepared some questions...ask away...

The first question: "We Peruvian Jesuits have always been engaged with the themes of reconciliation and justice, especially in recent years. Now it seems that the political forces have suddenly reached an agreement, and reconciliation seems to be an appeal for all. Reconciliation is being proposed without there having been a process. My question is: what stance should we take, what should we bear in mind when we want reconciliation? We feel that the word "reconciliation" is being manipulated and we feel that justice is being proposed that has not been sufficiently elaborated. What are your thoughts?"

Thank you. The word “reconciliation” is not only manipulated, it is demolished. Today – not just here for this applies in other Latin American countries too – the word “reconciliation” has been emptied of its power. When St. Paul describes the reconciliation of all with God, in Christ, he delivers a strong word. Today, however, “reconciliation” has become wrapping paper. It’s been emptied out. It’s been weakened not only of its religious content but also of its human content, that is, what we share when we look each other in the eye. Instead, today, it is being done under the counter.

I would say that these stunts should not be accepted, nor should we struggle against them. We must say to those who adopt it in its weaker form: use it, but we won’t use it, for the concept has been demolished. We do need to continue to work, however, seeking to reconcile people. From below, from the sides, with a good word, with a visit, with a course to help understanding, with the weapon of prayer that will give us strength and make miracles, but especially with the human weapon of persuasion, which is humility. Persuasion acts through humility.

I propose this path: go and find the adversary, put yourselves before them, if there is the opportunity... persuasion! Considering the reconciliation that is being proposed today, I don’t want to speak about the detail of what is happening in Peru because I don’t know the situation, but I do trust your words, and given that, as I said, this happens in other Latin American countries, I could say to you that this is not so much a true and profound reconciliation, but a negotiation. OK, the art of political leadership implies knowing how to negotiate. The issue is what can be negotiated in an agreement. If among the pile of things you bring to the negotiating table there is stuff regarding your own private interests, then it won’t work... We are not speaking of an agreement. This is something else.

So, instead of “reconciliation” it is better to speak of “hope.” Seek out a word that is not a shortsighted pet project, being used without its full meaning. I want to repeat this: I am not an expert on the details of the situation in Peru, I trust your words, but it is a phenomenon across Latin American countries, this is why I can say what I say.

This question follows: “Holy Father, our province is losing numbers, people are getting old, young people are taking on new responsibilities...We still have many institutions. The situation is not one of the easiest...How can you encourage us, how can you invite us to continue to strengthen our vocation to follow Jesus, to live in the Society of Jesus in these circumstances that can sometimes seem to be discouraging? How can we not become bitter and resentful, but instead seek to live these circumstances joyfully? What should we say to those who are growing old and see behind them fewer people who won’t be able to continue what was done in the past with the same strength? What should we say to the youngest today who find difficult situations all around them?”

You said that we have many “institutions.” Let me correct a word: we have many “works.” We need to distinguish between works and institutions. The institutional aspect of the Society is essential. But not all the works are institutions. Perhaps they were, but time has ensured that they stopped being institutions. We need to discern between what today is an institution – that attracts, gives you strength, that is prophetic – and what instead is a work that, yes, has been an institution in its time, but seems now to have stopped being so. And what has always been done must be done again: a pastoral and community discernment.

Fr. Arrupe insisted on this. We need to choose the works with this criterion: that they are institutions, in the Ignatian sense of the word, that is to say, they attract people and give answers to the needs of today. And this demands a community that places itself into a state of discernment. And perhaps this is your challenge... Considering this decrease of young people and energy, institutional desolation can take over. No, don’t allow it! The Society went through a period of institutional desolation during the Generalate of Fr. Ricci who ended up a prisoner in Castel Sant’Angelo.¹ The letters that Fr. Ricci wrote to the

1.Fr. Lorenzo Ricci (1703-1775) carried out the role of superior general of the Society of Jesus at a delicate moment in the history of the Society due to tensions with European governments. In his time the Order was expelled first from countries like Portugal, France and Spain. It was only with Clement XIV that the Society was suppressed and, while Jesuits were integrated into diocesan and religious clergy, Fr. Ricci was imprisoned in Castel Sant’Angelo. He lived

Society in that period are a marvel of criteria of discernment, criteria of action to not allow ourselves to be dragged down by institutional desolation. Desolation pulls you down, it is a wet blanket they throw at you to see how you cope, bringing you to bitterness, to disillusionment. This is the post-triumphalist discourse of Emmaus: “We had hoped...” We do this ourselves, for example, when we use expressions like “the glorious Society was something else,” “the light cavalry of the Church...but now...” And so on.

The Spirit of desolation leaves deep marks. I advise you to read the letters of Fr. Ricci. Later, Fr. Roothaan² went through another period of desolation for the Society due to the Freemasons, but it was not as strong as that of Fr. Ricci which culminated in the suppression. And there have been other periods like it in the history of the Society.

On the other hand, we need to look to the fathers, the fathers of the institutionalization of the Society: obviously Ignatius and Faber... Here we can speak of Fr. Barzana.³ I am fascinated by the figure of Barzana who spoke 12 indigenous languages when he was at Santiago del Estero in Argentina. They called him “the Francis Xavier of the West.” And there, that man planted the seed of faith in the desert, he established the faith. They say

there alone and was the victim of all sorts of humiliations, maintaining that the Society had given no cause for its suppression until his death two years later.

2.Fr. Jan Philippe Roothaan (Amsterdam, November 23, 1783/1785 – Rome, May 8, 1853) was a Dutch Jesuit and superior general of the Order (the second after its restoration) from July 9, 1829 until his death. His work as superior general was very fruitful for the newly restored Order. His chief attention was given to maintaining and strengthening the spirit of the Society. Nine of his 11 general letters were dedicated to this theme. He enlarged the work in the missions. The Order doubled the number of its members, reaching 5,000 professions. But the Society had to suffer expulsion from many countries, especially in 1848, the year of revolution.

3.Fr. Alonso de Barzana (Cuenca, 1530 – Cuzco, 1597) was assigned the mission of Juli on the banks of Lake Titicaca, today southeast Peru. He remained in the central zone of what is now Bolivia for 11 years until he was sent to Tucumán. He carried out missionary work among the Indians of the Valley of Calchaquies and then in Gran Chaco until 1593. He continued his work among the many tribes of that region and those of Paraguay until 1589. He knew many indigenous languages and wrote grammars, dictionaries and catechisms for most of these languages.

he was of Jewish origin and that his name was Bar Shana. It is good to look to these men who were able to institutionalize and didn't let themselves become discouraged. I ask if Xavier was desolate in his failure to see China without being able to enter. No. I imagine that he turned to the Lord, saying: "You do not want it, so goodbye, that's OK." He followed the road that was proposed to him, and in this case it was death!... but that's OK!

Desolation: we should not let this become part of our lives. Instead we should seek out the Jesuits who are consoled. I don't know. I don't want to give a counsel, but... always seek consolation. Seek it always. As a touchstone for your own spiritual lives.

As with Xavier on the border of China, look forward always... God knows! But the smile of the heart should not be left to wither. I don't know. I can't give you any recipes. In a climate of consolation what is needed is discernment of the ministries and the institutional aspect. So read the letters of Fr. Lorenzo Ricci. It is marvelous how he wanted to choose consolation at the moment of the greatest desolation that the Society has ever known, when he knew that the European Courts were about to give the Society its *coup de grâce*.

"I would like you to say something about a theme that leads to a lot of desolation in the Church, and particularly among religious men and women and the clergy: the theme of sexual abuse. We are very disturbed by these scandals. What can you say to us about them? A word of encouragement..."

Yesterday I spoke to the priests and religious men and women of Chile in the cathedral of Santiago. This is the greatest desolation that the Church is suffering. It brings shame, but we need to remember that shame is also a very Ignatian grace, a grace that St. Ignatius asks us to make in the three colloquies of the first week. And so let us take it as a grace and be fully ashamed. We have to love the Church with her wounds. Many wounds...

Let me tell you something. On March 24 Argentina remembers the military coup d'état, the dictatorship, the *desaparecidos* (the disappeared)... and every March 24 the *Plaza de Mayo* fills to remember it. One year, on March 24, I left

the archbishop's house and went to serve as confessor for the Carmelite sisters. On my return I took the subway and got out six blocks away from *Plaza de Mayo*. The *Plaza* was full ... and I walked those six blocks to enter by the side. When I was about to cross a road, there was a couple with a child of two or three years, and the child ran ahead. The father said to him: "Come, come, come here... Be careful of the pedophiles!" How shameful I felt! What shame! They didn't realize that I was the archbishop, I was a priest and... what shame!

Occasionally there are "consolation prizes," and someone might even say: "OK. Look at the statistics ... I don't know ... 70 percent of pedophiles are in the family setting, people known to the family. Then at the gyms and in the swimming pools. The percentage of pedophiles who are Catholic priests does not reach 2 percent, it's 1.6 percent. It is not that much." But it is terrible even if only one of our brothers is such! For God anointed him to sanctify children and adults, and instead of making them holy he has destroyed them. It's horrible! We need to listen to what someone who has been abused feels. On Fridays – sometimes this is known and sometimes it is not known – I normally meet some of them. In Chile I also had such a meeting. As their process is very hard, they remain annihilated. Annihilated!

For the Church this is a great humiliation. It shows not only our fragility, but also, let us say so clearly, our level of hypocrisy. In cases of corruption, in the sense of abuse of an institutional type, it is notable that there are some newer Congregations whose founders have fallen into these abuses. These cases are public. Pope Benedict had to suppress a large male Congregation. The founder had spread such habits. He abused young and immature religious men. It was a Congregation that had a female branch, and the female founder had also spread such habits. Benedict had started the process on the women's branch. I had to suppress it. You here have many painful cases. But it is curious that the phenomenon of abuse touched some new, prosperous Congregations.

Abuse in these Congregations is always the fruit of a mentality tied to power that has to be healed in its malicious

roots. And I will add: there are three levels of abuse that come together: abuse of authority (mixing the internal forum with the external forum), sexual abuse and an economic mess.

There is always money involved. The devil enters through the wallet. Ignatius places the first step of the devil's temptations in riches...then come vanity and pride, but first of all, it's riches. The three levels come together very often in the new Congregations that have fallen into this problem of abuse.

Forgive my lack of humility in suggesting that you read what I said to the Chileans. That material is more carefully articulated and reasoned than what comes to me now spontaneously.

“Help us in this process of discernment of the universal Society. Fr. Sosa asks us to reflect on where the Society should go today, considering our strengths and weaknesses. You have a universal vision, you know us well, you know what our contribution to the universal Church could be. You could help us by saying, for example, how you see that the Spirit is moving the Church today toward the future. In which direction should we be following the paths of the Spirit, as Jesuits, in the places we already are – and not just in the province of Peru – to be at the service of the Spirit? Some guidance that could partially transform our program...”

Thank you. I'll reply with just one word. It might seem that I say nothing, but instead I say everything. And the word is “Council.” Pick up again the Second Vatican Council, and read *Lumen Gentium*. Yesterday, with the bishops of Chile – or was it the day before, I don't even know what day it is! – I encouraged them to declericalize. If there is something that is very clear, it is the awareness of the faithful holy people of God, infallible *in credendo*, as the Council teaches us. This brings the Church forward. The grace of being missionary and proclaiming Jesus Christ comes to us in baptism. From there we can move forward...

We should never forget that evangelization is done by the Church as a people of God. The Lord wants an evangelizing Church, I see that clearly. This came from my heart, in simplicity, in the few minutes I spoke during the general congregations before the conclave. A Church that goes out, a Church that

goes out proclaiming Jesus Christ. After or in that very moment when she adores and fills herself with him. I always use an example tied to the Book of Revelation where we read: “I am at the door and knock. If someone opens I will enter” (cf. *Rev* 3:20). The Lord is outside and wants to come in. Sometimes the Lord is inside and is knocking because he wants us to let him out! The Lord is asking us to be a Church outside, a Church that goes out. Church as a field hospital... Ah, the wounds of the people of God! Sometimes the people of God is wounded by a rigid, moralist catechism, of the “you can or you can’t” variety, or by a lack of testimony.

A poor Church for the poor! The poor are not a theoretical formula of the communist party. The poor are the heart of the Gospel. They are the center of the Gospel. We cannot preach the Gospel without the poor. So I say to you: it is along this line that I feel the Spirit is leading us. And there are strong resistances. But I must also say that for me the fact that resistances arise is a good sign. It is a sign that we are on the right road, this is the road. Otherwise the devil would not bother to resist.

I would say these are the criteria: poverty, being missionaries, the conscience of the faithful people of God... In Latin America, particularly, you should ask: “But where have our people been creative?” With some deviations, yes, but it has been creative in its popular piety. And why have our people been able to be creative in popular piety? Because the clergy weren’t interested, and so they let them do it... the people went on ahead...

And then, yes, what the Church is asking today of the Society – this I have said often, and Spadaro, who publishes these things, has grown tired of writing it – is to teach discernment with humility. Yes, as pontiff I ask this of you officially. Generally, above all, we who are part of the religious setting of life as priests and bishops often show little ability to discern, we don’t know how to do it for we have been educated with another theology that is more formal. We go as far as “you can or you can’t,” as I said to the Chilean Jesuits concerning the resistances to *Amoris Laetitia*. Some people are reducing the entire fruit of two synods – all the work that has been done – to “you can or can’t.” Help us to discern then. Certainly, someone who is not

discerning cannot teach others to discern. And to be discerning you have to enter into practice, you have to examine yourself. You have to start with yourself.

This is how the meeting concluded. The rector of the church then illustrated to the pope the significance of the chair that had been prepared for him. In 1992 there was an attack by the “Sendero Luminoso”⁴ and a part of the church was damaged. In the restoration work, the walls were strengthened and an architrave dating from 1672 was removed. It had been used to make the chair for this visit, and it was cut using Lima-style baroque. The pope thanked him, smiling, and made a joke: “I sat on 1672. I’ll play this number in the lottery!” At the end, the provincial thanked the pope before asking for a group photo. The pope replied to the thanksgiving with these words:

I thank you very much. Pray for me! I share with you a great grace: as soon as I realized that I was going to be elected pope I felt a great peace that has never yet abandoned me. Pray that the Lord will keep it for me!

At the end of the encounter, the pope gave the Jesuits a silver cross made by the Italian goldsmith Antonio Vedele in 1981. It is inscribed with the stations of the Via Crucis. It does not portray just 14 stations but 15. This is because the artist wanted to place between the two arms the representation of the resurrection of Christ. Vedele is the same goldsmith who designed the pectoral cross used by Pope Francis. In 1998 it was cast in silver by his student Giuseppe Albrizzi, the artist of the crosier used by the then cardinal of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

Finally, the pope posed for a group photograph. Then he crossed the church of St. Peter and, before going out the main door, he stopped before the tomb of the venerable Fr. Francisco del Castillo, the apostle of Lima.

4.The “Communist Party of Peru of the Shining Path of Mariátegui” is a Peruvian guerrilla organization inspired by Maoism, set up between 1969 and 1970 by Abimael Guzmán following a split from the *Partido Comunista del Peru - Bandera Roja* (PCP-BR). *Sendero Luminoso* (the Shining Path) seeks to subvert the Peruvian political system and set up socialism through armed fighting.

At the Crossroads of History

Conversations with the Jesuits in Myanmar and Bangladesh

Pope Francis

From November 26 to December 2, Pope Francis traveled to Myanmar and Bangladesh on his 21st international apostolic voyage. On Wednesday, November 29, following his encounter with the bishops of Myanmar, Francis left the small room that had hosted the meeting and found himself before 300 seminarians who were waiting for a photo opportunity. He also greeted a small group of Chinese people proudly waving the flag of the People's Republic. Their words: "Come to our country soon!"

After walking among these joyful gatherings, the pope entered the chapel on the ground floor of the archbishop's house to meet 31 Jesuits based in the country: 13 were from Myanmar (three priests, five novices and five scholastics); the others were from Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Australia and China. Another 21 Myanmar Jesuits were not present because they are studying in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

Collectively, those present represented all the institutions of the Society of Jesus in the country: educational institutions that are open to all, regardless of ethnic or religious background; a parish in a border diocese serving the Kachin and Shan people; a school in a slum area in Yangon, where Jesuits also help the poor to rebuild their homes and have a small microcredit service; the Jesuit Refugee Service that mostly works with hundreds of thousands of displaced people in the Kachin and Kaya States and on the border with Thailand and China.

Upon entering, Francis was welcomed with applause and then he proceeded to greet everyone individually. As is typical of a chapel, the room was narrow and long, but the atmosphere was that of a spontaneous embrace breaking through the chairs set in rows. The

faces of those present made it clear that the pope was in a company of people with many different roots and backgrounds. A Jesuit student placed around his shoulders a shawl typical of the Chin ethnic group, of Chinese origin.

Francis sat down and said he needed an English translator, promptly presenting Msgr. Mark Miles. Jokingly, the pope added, "He is a good man and will not reveal any of the Jesuit secrets we will talk about here." And then he spontaneously thanked those present.

What follows is a transcript of the two conversations I attended, the publication of which has been approved by the Holy Father. Accompanying the text are some background notes to contextualize the conversation and a final consideration.

Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Thank you for coming. I see many young faces, and I'm glad. It's a good thing, because it's a promise. Young people have a future if they have roots. If they do not have roots, they will be at the will of the wind. To begin with, I would like to ask a question. Everyone should ask it in their examination of conscience: Where are my roots? Do I have roots? Are my roots tenacious or weak? It is a question that does us good. St. Ignatius began the Spiritual Exercises speaking of a root: "Man is created to praise." And he concluded with another root: the root of love. And he proposed a contemplation to grow in love. There is no true love if it does not take root. There it is, that was my initial sermon! But now I would like you to ask a few questions.

Thank you, Holy Father, for being with us. We all live in Myanmar and you understand the situation in our country. We share the same spirituality, that of the Spiritual Exercises. Our spirituality contemplates the Incarnation which pushes us forward; it moves us to mission. We are here, and therefore we are on a mission. Contemplating the actual situation in Myanmar, what do you expect from us?

I believe we cannot think of a mission – I say this not only as a Jesuit but as a Christian – without the mystery of the Incarnation. The mystery of the Incarnation illuminates our approach to reality and the world completely, all our closeness

to people, to culture. Christian closeness is always incarnated. It is a closeness like that of the Word, who comes to be with us. I remind you of the *synkatabasis*, the being with ... The Jesuit is one who must always get closer, as the Word made flesh came close. To look, to listen without prejudices, but mystically. To look without fear and look mystically: this is fundamental for the way we look at reality.

Inculturation begins with this way of looking. Inculturation is not a fashion, no. It is the very essence of the Word which became flesh, took our culture, our language, our flesh, our life, and died. Inculturation is to take on board the culture of the people I am sent to.

And for this reason the Jesuit prayer – I mean mainly in relation to inculturation – is the prayer of intercession. It is necessary to pray to the Lord precisely for those realities in which I am immersed.

There have been many failures in the Society's life of prayer. At first some people gave St. Ignatius a headache because they wanted the Jesuits to remain closed away and to dedicate two or three hours to prayer ... And St. Ignatius said: "No, contemplate in action!" And in 1974 it was my turn to experience this. There was – as you know – a movement of the so-called "True Jesuits," who wanted a rigid, almost cloistered observance of the rules. A contrary reform, against the spirit of St. Ignatius. True prayer and true Jesuit observance do not follow that route. It is not a restorationist observance. Our observance is always to look forward with the inspiration of the past, but always looking forward. The challenges are not behind, they lie ahead.

For this, Blessed Pope Paul VI helped the Society greatly, and on December 3, 1974, he addressed us with a speech that remains entirely relevant. I recommend you read it. He says, for example, a phrase: "The Jesuits are at every crossroads of history." Paul VI said it! He did not say, "Be locked up in a convent," but he tells the Jesuits, "Go to the crossroads!" And to go to the crossroads of history, my dear friends, we must pray! We must be men of prayer alive in the crossroads of history!

I would like to reflect for a moment on our people. Some here have walked three days to see you, others have put money aside for six months. I can testify that they were happy to see you. Thank you! My question is this: many in the media have said that your visit to Myanmar is one of your most difficult and is full of challenges. Is it as they suggest?

You said two things. First you talked about the People of God. When I heard that these people had traveled and walked a lot, that they had saved money to come here, I confess that I felt a great sense of shame. The People of God teaches us heroic virtues. And I feel ashamed at being a shepherd of a people who overtake me in their virtue, in their thirst for God, their sense of belonging to the Church, their desire to come to see Peter. I felt it, and I thank God for letting me feel it. And incidentally I tell you that, if there is a grace that the Jesuit must ask, it is shame, great shame. St. Ignatius tells us to ask for it in the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises before the Crucified Christ. Ask for the grace of shame, for you and for me. It is a grace!

Let me now turn to your second question. This is a very difficult journey, yes. Perhaps it even risked being canceled at some point. So it is a difficult journey. But precisely because it is difficult, I had to make it! In fact, a short time ago we read in the Office of Readings what the prophet Ezekiel says of the pastors who take advantage of their people, who live off their people. They live to suck their milk, they are shepherds who take the milk from the sheep and shear their wool. Here are two symbols. Food stands for riches, and wool for vanity. A pastor who becomes accustomed to riches and vanity ends up, as Saint Ignatius says, suffering great pride. Hence St. Augustine takes up this theme of the prophet Ezekiel in a famous treatise – *De pastoribus* – and shows that if the bad shepherd clings to wealth, if he clings to vanity, he ends up becoming full of pride. So, what makes the good shepherd healthy is poverty. St. Ignatius called poverty the mother and the wall of religious life. The People of God are a poor people, a humble people, and a people who thirst for God. We pastors must learn from the people. So, if this journey seemed difficult, I came because we have to be at the crossroads of history.

When we heard about your visit, we began to feel and think that we were at the crossroads, as you just said. Your visit for us is a push forward in this sense. The key is, as you often say, to have the smell of the sheep upon us. We come here from different places in Myanmar, where we perceive this smell as priests. Some of us smell the refugees. How can we feel and think with the Church, as St. Ignatius asks us, sensing this smell of the People of God so intensely? How can we feel the presence of the pope?

I recently spoke to the bishops about two smells: the smell of the sheep and the smell of God. We must know the smell of sheep, to acknowledge, understand and accompany, and the sheep must perceive that we emanate the smell of God. And this is the testimony. Today, the missionary activity, thanks to God, is not a matter of proselytism. Pope Benedict XVI made it clear: the Church does not grow by proselytism, but by attraction, by witness. How can you feel the presence of the pope, you who work there? How can refugees feel it? Answering is not easy. I have visited four refugee camps so far. Three huge ones in Lampedusa, Lesbos and Bologna, which is in Northern Italy. There our work is of closeness. Sometimes it is not possible to distinguish well between a place one person expects to leave and a prison under another name. And sometimes the camps are nothing other than concentration camps, prisons.

In Italy, the presence of refugees from Africa is strongly felt, because they are there, so close, and real tragedies happen. A refugee I spoke to told me that it took him three years to get from his house to Lampedusa. And in those three years he was sold five times. On the trafficking of young women, girls who are deceived and sold to traffickers in Rome, an elderly priest once told me with a certain irony, that he was not sure if there were more priests in Rome or young women enslaved in prostitution. And they are girls who have been kidnapped, deceived, carried from one place to another. The diocesan Church of Rome works a lot on this issue. It is a work of liberation.

Then we think about the exploitation of children forced into child labor. We think of children who have forgotten how to

play. They have to work. Here is our Third Week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: to see them is to see Christ suffering and crucified. How do I approach all this? Yes, I try to visit, I speak clearly, especially with countries that have closed their borders. Unfortunately, in Europe there are countries that have chosen to close their borders. The most painful thing is that to take such a decision they had to close their hearts. And our missionary work must also reach those hearts that are closed to the reception of others.

I do not know what else to say on this subject, except that it is a serious issue. Tonight we will have dinner. Many of these refugees have a piece of bread for dinner. Maybe we will have a cake. This brings back to me an image of Lesbos. I was there with Patriarch Bartholomew and the Orthodox Archbishop of Athens, Ieronymos. They were all seated in rows, very neat – there were many thousands – and I was walking in front; behind me came Patriarch Bartholomew, and then Archbishop Ieronymos. I was saying goodbye, and at a certain moment I realized that the children were holding my hand but looking back. I asked myself: “What’s up?” I turned around and saw that Patriarch Bartholomew had pockets full of candy and gave it to the children. With one hand they greeted me, with the other they grabbed the candy. I thought maybe it was the only sweet they had eaten for days.

And there is another image from Lesbos that helped me to cry a lot before God: a man of about thirty with three little children told me: “I am a Muslim. My wife was a Christian. We loved each other very much. The terrorists came one day. They saw her cross. They told her to take it off. She said no and they slit her throat before my very eyes. I continue to love my wife and my children.”

These things must be seen and must be told. These things do not come to the living rooms of our big cities. We are obliged to report and make public these human tragedies that some try to silence.

Many Jesuits here are involved in formation and as trainers we try to better understand what the Jesuit figure is today. You are a good Jesuit, committed to the mission entrusted to you. What can you tell us about that? What is your advice to young Jesuits in Myanmar to become a good Jesuit?

Don't teach them to be like me! (*And here the pope bursts out laughing*) I will say two things. Among my formators there was an elderly Jesuit who had been at the existential frontiers. He was a great Jesuit scientist, and he once gave me some advice: if you want to persevere in the Society, think clearly and speak obscurely. He was a great scientist, but he was a bad formator. Do you understand? (*And here he laughs together with the other Jesuits*). The second thing I want to mention concerns another man: and I want to mention him here in Myanmar, because I believe he never imagined that his name would be pronounced here. He is an Argentine Jesuit and his name was Miguel Angel Fiorito. He made a critical edition of the *Memoriale* by St. Peter Favre, but he was a philosopher and had written his thesis on St. Thomas and the natural human desire to find God. He was a professor of philosophy, dean of the Faculty, but he loved spirituality. And he taught us students the spirituality of St. Ignatius. It was he who taught us the path of discernment. You who are a formator, if you meet a Jesuit who is in formation but cannot discern, who has not learned discernment and who shows little intention to learn it, even if he is an excellent boy, tell him to look for another path. The Jesuit must be a master of discernment, for himself and for others. St. Ignatius did not ask us to do two examinations of conscience a day to get rid of lice or fleas. No: he did it because we would like to see what happens in our heart. In my opinion, the vocational criterion for the Society is this: can the candidate discern? will he learn to discern? If he knows how to discern, he knows how to recognize what comes from God and what comes from the bad spirit, then this is enough for him to go on. Even if he does not understand much, even if they fail him at the exams ... it is okay, as long as he knows spiritual discernment. Think of St. Peter Claver. He knew how to discern and knew that

God wanted him to spend his life among the black slaves. Meanwhile some esteemed theologians were discussing whether or not they had a soul.

My formation lasted 14 years from novitiate to priestly ordination. Along the way other companions in formation left. We local Jesuit priests are now only 3. What are your words of encouragement for those in formation?

One of the things the Lord respects is liberty. Including the liberty to get away from him, the freedom to sin. He is silent and suffers. He doesn't say anything. This is the extreme. Between that extreme and here, there are many situations that are not a sin, but are historical situations that weaken the person or make it clear that this was not his path ... The abandonment of the religious life, the abandonment of a priest, is a mystery. And we must respect him, help him if he asks for help, remain available and pray for him. In fact, the Lord awaits him at the most opportune moment. And we must never despair, because the Lord is good and even sly, if you will pardon the word.

I would like to add something about God's slyness: I want to tell you about a work of art that strikes me. It is a capital located in the church of St. Mary Magdalene in Vézelay, in the center of France, where the Way of St. James begins. On one side of the capital there is Judah hanged, with his tongue out, his eyes open, dead. And next to him the devil is ready to take him away. On the other side of the capital is the figure of the Good Shepherd, who has grabbed him, put him on his shoulders and taken him away. That thirteenth century sculptor was an artist, but in his heart he was also a theologian. He was a mystic. And he was brave. He took leave to say something that none of us, no theologian, would dare to say officially: God is smart. God is sly. And he is special. If we look carefully at the Good Shepherd's lips, we see that he wears a joking smile as if he were saying to the devil: "I fooled you."

This teaches me a lot. Always to hope ... it is the same sentence that the Curé d'Ars told the widow of someone who committed suicide, anguished because her husband had gone to

hell: “Madam, between the bridge from which your husband threw himself and the river there is the mercy of God.” Never forget the word mercy.

I am a Jesuit in formation as a “teacher” and I work in a slum. People are very poor, but people there want to help each other. A girl asked me: how can I help those in need if I need help myself. I tried to give her an intellectual answer, but it did not convince me. Then someone advised me to ask the Holy Father the question.

Intellectual answers don’t help. I am not an anti-intellectual, be clear! We need to study a lot, but the intellectual and abstract response in this case does not help. For a mother who has lost her son, for a man who has lost his wife, a child, a sick man... what can words do. Just a look ... a smile, shaking hands, arms, touch ... and perhaps at that point the Lord will inspire a word in us. But do not give explanations. And the question the girl asked was an existential question: how can I, who have nothing, help others? Come closer! And think about how that person can help you. Come closer. Accompany. Stay close. And the Holy Spirit – let us not forget that we have it inside – will inspire in you what you can do, what you can say. Because to speak is the last thing. First, do. Be silent, accompany, stay close. Proximity, nearness. It is the mystery of the Word made flesh. Nearness. Maybe you can tell the girl: “Be closer!” She needs closeness. And you need closeness too. And let God do the rest.

Holy Father, I wonder why you always find time to visit the Jesuits during your travels. And another question: What are the three important things that a Jesuit can do for the people of this country, for the Church in Myanmar?

The reason why I always meet the Jesuits is to not forget that I am a missionary and that I must convert sinners! (The pope thus provoked those present to laugh). As for the question, I like your use of the word “Church.” Ignatius cared deeply for feeling with the Church, for feeling in the Church. And this also requires discernment. But we must be close to the hierarchy. And if I do not agree with what the bishop says, I must have the parrhesia to go and talk to him with courage and dialogue. And

eventually obey. Remember St. Ignatius when Pope Gian Pietro Carafa, Paul IV was elected. When he was asked what would happen to him if the pope were to dissolve the Society, I believe St. Ignatius replied that with a little prayer he would have fixed everything. And he would have remained in peace. But one cannot think of the Society of Jesus as a parallel Church, or a sub-Church. We all belong to the holy and sinful Church. We belong to the Church in joy and sadness. We have examples of great Jesuits who felt crucified by the Church of their time and kept their mouths shut. Let's think of Cardinal De Lubac, to name one. And to many others. I would say: to be men of the Church. When the Society gets into the orbit of self-sufficiency, it stops being the Society of Jesus.

A serious problem here is fundamentalism. I come from a region where there are many tensions with Muslims. I wonder how you can take care of people who have this tendency toward fundamentalism. What do you feel about this, visiting our country?

Look, there are fundamentalisms everywhere. And we Catholics have “the honor” of having fundamentalists among the baptized. I think it would be interesting if some of you who are preparing for graduation were to study the roots of fundamentalism. It is an attitude of the soul that stands as a judge of others and of those who share their religion. It is a going to the essential – a claim to going to the essential – of religion, but to such an extent as to forget what is existential. It forgets the consequences. Fundamentalist attitudes take different forms, but they have the common background of underlining the essential so much that they deny the existential. The fundamentalist denies history, denies the person. And Christian fundamentalism denies the Incarnation.

The meeting concluded in a festive atmosphere with the “Salve Regina” and then with personal greetings and photographs.

On the afternoon of December 1, during his visit to Bangladesh, the pope met five religious representatives for an ecumenical and interreligious meeting: a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Catholic

and a representative of civil society. The final prayer was recited by an Anglican bishop. Then a group of Rohingya came up onto the stage. The pope welcomed them, listened to their stories, and asked one of them to pray. At the end he went to the Apostolic Nunciature of Dhaka, where 13 Jesuits who carry out their mission in that country were waiting for him in a room, seated in a circle.

The superior of the Mission expressed the joy of the Jesuits at having the pope there with them: "We are a group of Jesuits working in Bangladesh. Nine of us are from here, three from India and one from Belgium. God has blessed us and we work here in Bangladesh in three dioceses. The Mission has another 14 scholastics, three juniors and three novices. We work in a house for Spiritual Exercises and in formation, in parish ministries, in the educational apostolate, and in the service of refugees. The first presence of the Jesuits in this land dates back to the end of the 16th century. In 1600 a church was built, but the following year it was destroyed. After various events we have been back in Bangladesh since 1994, when we were invited by the local Church. Today, you give us the privilege of meeting you. We all feel proud to be Jesuits and we ask for your blessing. Today, I had considered giving a speech, but then I thought better of it: better to have an open conversation." The pope replied to the greeting by saying:

The two dates you mentioned have attracted my attention: 1600 and 1994. So for centuries the Jesuits have lived alternating vicissitudes without a stable presence. And that's okay: the Jesuits live like that too. Fr. Hugo Rahner said that a Jesuit must be a man who is capable of moving while practicing discernment, both in the field of God and in the field of the devil. Your years have been a little like this: a move without stability and a move forward in the light of discernment.

Holy Father, thank you for talking about the Rohingya people. They are our brothers and sisters, and you spoke of them in these terms: as brothers and sisters. Our provincial sent two of us to help them ...

Jesus Christ today is called Rohingya. You talk about them as brothers and sisters: they are. I think of St. Peter Claver, who is very dear to me. He worked with the slaves of his time ... and

to think that some theologians of the time – not so many, thank God – discussed if the slaves had a soul or not! His life was a prophecy, and he helped his brothers and sisters who lived in shameful conditions. But this shame today is not over. Today there is much discussion about how to save the banks. The problem is the salvation of the banks. But who saves the dignity of men and women today? Nobody cares about people in ruins any longer. The devil manages to do this in today's world. If we had a little sense of reality, this should scandalize us. The media scandal today concerns the banks and not the people. In front of all this we must ask for a grace: to cry. The world has lost the gift of tears. St. Ignatius – who had this experience – asked for the gift of tears. Saint Peter Favre did so too. Once we used to ask for the gift of tears during the Mass. The prayer was: “Lord, you made water flow from the rock, make tears flow from my sinful heart.” The impudence of our world is such that the only solution is to pray and ask for the grace of tears. But this evening, in front of those poor people I met, I felt ashamed! I felt ashamed of myself, for the whole world! Sorry, I'm just trying to share my feelings with you

How can the Society of Jesus respond today to the needs of Bangladesh?

Honestly, I know little of the activities of the Society of Jesus in Bangladesh. But the fact that the provincial charged two Jesuits with the responsibility to work in the refugee camps makes me understand that the Jesuits are moving! And this is precisely our vocation, and it is well said in one word of the “Formula of the Institute of the Society”: *discurrir*, that is ... move forward, move ... go around ... try the spirits ... This is beautiful and it is right for our vocation.

We feel blessed that you came to Bangladesh, that is, “in a nation” where there is such a small Christian community. And you created cardinal the archbishop of our capital. Why such attention for us?

I have to say that Bangladesh was a surprise for me too: there's so much wealth! Naming the cardinals, I tried to look at small Churches, those that grow in the peripheries, at the edges.

Not to give consolation to those Churches, but to launch a clear message: the small Churches that grow in the periphery and are without ancient Catholic traditions today must speak to the universal Church, to the whole Church. I clearly feel that they have something to teach us.

How do you feel today after celebrating Mass with Catholics? Did you manage to greet children as you usually do?

Yes. I greeted some of them. And tonight I greeted the two Rohingya girls. Children give me tenderness. Tenderness is good in this cruel world: we need it. I want to add something about it: St. Ignatius was mystical. His true figure has been rediscovered recently. We had a rigid image of him. But he was a mother to the sick people! He was capable of a deep tenderness, which he manifested on many occasions. It was Father Arrupe, who as General of the Society, repeated these things to us and showed us Ignatius' profound soul. He founded the Ignatian Spirituality Center and the *Christus* magazine to further refine our spirituality. For me, he is a prophetic figure. Your question makes me think of how important it is to have a heart capable of tenderness and compassion for those who are weak or poor or small.

And remember that it was Father Arrupe who founded the Jesuit Refugee Service. In Bangkok, before taking the plane on which he had a stroke, he said: "Pray, pray, pray." This was the sense of the discourse that he addressed there to the Jesuits who are working with the refugees: not to neglect prayer. This was his "swan song." This was precisely his last legacy left to the Society. Do you understand? Sociology is important, yes, but prayer matters more, much more.

Our thoughts went immediately to the fact that shortly before, in his meeting with the Rohingya, the pope had concluded not with a sociological discourse but asking one of them to raise a prayer, and to pray together. At this point the pope asked if there were any further questions, but one of them replied: "No. Your presence here among us is more than many answers!" The encounter ended with the blessing of rosaries and some group photos.

In meditating on the words used by the pontiff in these conversations it is always necessary to remember what he himself wrote in the preface to a volume that contains, inter alia, his earlier conversations with Jesuits during his trips: “I must say that I felt these moments as being very free, especially when they happen during my journeys: this is the occasion to make my first thoughts on that trip. I feel at home and I speak our family’s language, and I do not fear misunderstandings. So what I say can sometimes be a little risky.” And he added: “Sometimes what I feel I have to say I say to myself, it is important for me too. In the conversations some important things are born in me, upon which I can then reflect.”¹

1. Pope Francis, *Adesso fate le vostre domande. Conversazioni sulla Chiesa e sul mondo di domani*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2017, 8.

It is not enough to turn the page.
Life must be given anew
Pope Francis and the Jesuits in Ireland

Pope Francis

On August 25, during his visit to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis met a large group of Jesuits of Ireland. The meeting was due to take place at 6:20 p.m., but the pope chose to lengthen his private meeting with a group of eight victims of sexual abuse, a meeting that lasted an hour and a half. At around 6:40 p.m., Francis entered a room of the Nunciature where 63 Jesuits were gathered. Among them were two bishops: Alan McGuckian, bishop of Raphoe (Ireland), and Terrence Prendergast, archbishop of Ottawa. Fr. John Dardis, General Counsellor of the Society of Jesus for discernment and apostolic planning, was also there. Three Irish Jesuits are now members of the province of Zambia–Malawi and one is living in South Sudan. Three Jesuits in formation came from the United States, Canada and Cameroon.

Provincial Fr. Leonard A. Moloney spoke first, giving a welcome on behalf of all: “Holy Father, our brother Francis, on behalf of the Irish Jesuits I say to you ‘Céad míle fáilte!’ This is the customary Irish expression of welcome and means ‘a hundred thousand welcomes.’ We welcome you as a brother in Christ and son of St. Ignatius.” Fr. Moloney continued and gave thanks for this “intimate and informal” encounter, despite the pope’s busy agenda. In particular, he said, “we thank you for your deep faith in Jesus Christ, as the merciful and loving face of God our Father. You present the faith as something attractive at a difficult time.”

Fr. Moloney spoke about the commitment to “promote the understanding of freedom, discernment and spiritual accompaniment.” Francis has requested this commitment from Jesuits many times during his apostolic voyages, as La Civiltà Cattolica has always reported. The provincial, referring to those present, said: “As you

can see, we are not so young – you are one of the youngest in this group! – and we ask you to pray for vocations. This province has great courage and a desire to serve and to love in all things. We have listened this week to your call for prayer and fasting and to do everything possible to eradicate the evil of abuse within the Church.”

The provincial then concluded his welcome: “Once again, Holy Father, a thousand thanks for being here, for accompanying us along this path, and especially for the joy, the humor and the serenity with which you carry the burden of your leadership. Be assured of our prayers and know that we are here to support you in all your needs so that you can carry out your mission in peace and with courage!”

Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Then Francis began to speak:

Many thanks! I am sorry that our meeting is so rushed. I am late and shortly I have to go to the meeting of families. There is a precise schedule that I have to respect. Firstly, I am sorry to have forgotten all the English that I learned at Milltown Park so many years ago, when I came to Ireland for the first time. I am not at ease speaking in English. It must be a psychological limit! But many thanks.

Why am I late? Because I had a meeting with eight survivors of sexual abuse. I didn't know that in Ireland there were also cases where unmarried women had their children taken away from them. Hearing this particularly touched my heart. Today the minister for children and young people spoke to me about this issue, and then sent me a *memorandum*. I want to ask you a special help: help the Church in Ireland to put an end to this. And what do I mean by put an end to it? I don't mean simply turn the page, but seek out a cure, reparation, all that is necessary to heal the wounds and give life back to so many people. The letter I wrote recently to the people of God speaks of shame for the abuses. I wish to repeat it here and share it with you today.

There is something I have understood with great clarity: this drama of abuse, especially when it is widespread and gives great scandal – think of Chile, here in Ireland or in the United States – has behind it a Church that is elitist and clericalist, an inability to be near to the people of God. Elitism, clericalism fosters every

form of abuse. And sexual abuse is not the first. The first abuse is of power and conscience. I ask you to help with this. Courage! Be courageous! I really was unable to believe the stories that I have seen well documented. I heard them now in the other room and was deeply upset. This is a special mission for you: clean this up, change consciences, do not be afraid to call things by their name.

Another thing. The provincial told me that I am making the faith joyful. Really? As long as it is not a circus! [*Here the pope and everyone laughed out loud*]. No, this is the joy of Gospel, its freshness moving you forward, not losing peace. We need to work so that the freshness of the Gospel and its joy are understood. Jesus came to bring joy, not moral casuistry. To bring openness, mercy. Jesus loved sinners. But now I am preaching ... I didn't intend to! Jesus loved sinners ... he loved them! He had a strong dislike of the corrupt! The Gospel of Matthew in chapter 23 is an example of what Jesus says to the corrupt.

To have the freshness of the Gospel is to love sinners. I know one confessor. When sinners come to confess, he welcomes them in such a way that they feel free, renewed ... And when the penitent has something difficult to say, he does not insist but says, "I understand, I understand," freeing that person of embarrassment. He makes of that confession an encounter with Jesus Christ, not a torture room or a psychiatrist's couch. We need to be the reflection of merciful Jesus. And what did Jesus ask of the adulteress? "How many times and who with?" No! He simply said, "Go and sin no more." The joy of the Gospel is the mercy of Jesus, indeed, the tenderness of Jesus. And Jesus liked the crowd, the simple, ordinary people. The poor are at the heart of the Gospel. The poor follow Jesus to be healed, to be fed. This is what came to my mind when you [*turning to the provincial*] spoke of joy.

Then you spoke of freedom, freedom of discernment. I believe in discernment, and we need to be able to do it. It needs to be done in prayer, seeking the will of God ... and – this might sound heretical but it is certainly not – as Jesus is present in the Eucharist, so in discernment the Holy Spirit is present. It is the Spirit who acts in me. And so you go on and find a

road you hadn't thought of ... This is the spirit of freedom, the spirit that always works in us. And we should not lose this when speaking of freedom.

The pope asks the provincial:

And how many novices have you?

The provincial replies that there are three in the same novitiate: one from Ireland and two from Great Britain. Then Francis goes on:

This is something that worries me: vocations. What happens if people no longer become enthusiastic for our life? We have to look again at our life to be blessed with future generations. Or are we already sterile? When we discover our sterility, if we put ourselves in prayer with the desire to be fruitful, the Lord will give us fecundity. Have faith. Each one of us should show tenderness to children and speak with grandchildren. And we (Jesuits) almost no longer have "children" and "grandchildren"! And after so many saints that we have had in the Society over the ages ... We have to think and ask ourselves: What is happening? With so many young people that there are ... I suggest you pray.

Then the pope asks if there are any questions ... Fr. Michael Bingham gets up to say: "This is not a question. I just want to thank you for the example of solidarity that you offer, especially to those in prison." The pope replies:

Please, say hello from me to those you know. I love those who are in prison. I have a special place for them in my heart.

Fr. Brendan McManus asks what can be done concretely against the abuses. The pope replies:

We have to denounce the cases we know about. And sexual abuse is the consequence of abuse of power and of conscience as I said before. The abuse of power exists. Who among us does not know an authoritarian bishop? Forever in the Church there have been authoritarian bishops and religious superiors. And authoritarianism is clericalism. Sometimes the sending in mission decisively and with authority is confused with authoritarianism. Instead they are two different things. We need to defeat authoritarianism and rediscover the obedience of the sending in mission.

Fr. John Callanan takes his turn and asks: "But how do you manage to keep your heart happy with all that is happening to you?"

It is a grace. Every morning for 40 years, after morning prayer, I recite the prayer of St. Thomas More, asking for a sense of humor. It seems the Lord has given it to me! But generally, we should have this sense. Fr. Nicolás used to say that we should give Fr. Kolvenbach the Nobel Prize for Humor, because he was able to laugh at everything, about himself and even his own shadow. This is a grace to ask for. I don't know if the one I have is the right one, perhaps it is only foolishness... *[and here all laugh]*. Having a sense of humor is a fruit of the consolation of the Spirit. I insist on something that helps me: A Jesuit must always seek consolation, he must always seek to be consoled. When he is desolate, he is arid. Consolation is the balm of the Spirit. It can be strong or minimal. The minimum of consolation is interior peace. We have to live with this peace. A Jesuit who does not live in peace, lives desolate.

Fr. Michael O'Sullivan gets up and says: "I don't know if you remember, but we met in the 1980s here at Milltown." The pope asks his name and remembers, and also the name of another Jesuit he knew. Fr. O'Sullivan carries on to ask about responsibility for abuse cases. Francis begins to respond saying that of course people must take up their responsibilities and do so following the very structure of the Church, that is of the local Churches. But at this point a person enters the room to ask the pope to conclude the meeting, as he was falling behind schedule. An elderly Jesuit brother, George Fallon, in the name of all, offers Francis a small pyx to bring communion to the sick and says: "I ask the Lord to give you the gift of the Holy Spirit and also Wisdom to help you during your visit." Sadly, there was not time for a group photo, nor to greet all one by one, as usually occurs. The pope asks all to pray together a Hail Mary. All stand up. After the prayer and before exiting, Francis does not fail to greet some of the elderly Jesuits in wheelchairs in the front row.

I believe the Lord wants a change in the Church A private dialogue with the Jesuits in the Baltics

Pope Francis

The pope enters the room of the Nunciature and greets the Jesuits one by one, starting with the provincial, Fr. Vidmantas Šimkūna. In all, 28 Jesuits are present: 22 from the province of Lithuania and Latvia, two from the United States with close links to Lithuania, and four Jesuit bishops: Lionginas Virbalas, Archbishop of Kaunas; his predecessor Sigitas Tamkevičius who had been imprisoned by the KGB; Jonas Boruta, bishop emeritus of Telšiai; and Joseph Werth, bishop of Novosibirsk, in Russia, who did his novitiate in Lithuania. The pope speaks in Italian and his words are translated into Lithuanian by Archbishop Virbalas.

Antonio Spadaro, SJ

Thank you for the visit! I'm reminded of the saying *Si cum Iesuitis itis, non cum Iesu itis...* (If you go with the Jesuits, you won't go with Jesus...) [here they all laugh]. Thank you! Today has been a busy day, but I think it has been for the good of the Church. Now, for our meeting, I think the best way is for you to ask questions and I'll respond. OK?

Archbishop Virbalas proposes: "If he wants, the provincial could say some words to start things off." And the pope replies: "Yes, of course. Let's do things hierarchically!" And laughter breaks out again. The provincial rises and presents the situation of the Society of Jesus in Lithuania and Latvia. "We are delighted with your visit. We all appreciated what you said to the priests and religious. For us Jesuits this is inspiring. Ours is a small province. I have one particular concern: the Jesuits will burn themselves out. In fact, all of us have three or four different jobs and we are certainly not lazy. I feel I should say thank you for having brought us joy and strength. Before

the suppression of the Society the Lithuanian province had more than a thousand members. Now we are just 34, and soon we will join in a single province with Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Hungary. We have three schools in Lithuania and four churches. Recently we opened a house in Riga, the city you will visit tomorrow. We work to spread Ignatian spirituality. In this work we have the good experience of a beautiful ecumenical collaboration with the Lutherans. I must say that I am particularly grateful to the elderly of our province. During the Soviet era they maintained the novitiate and also the seminary for diocesan priests. Things were done in secret, obviously. One part of the Lithuanian Jesuits was outside the province, in the United States. A vice-province was created there. Then freedom came and some of the Jesuits who had been in America came home and helped us to live the spirit of Vatican II. At that time we knew how to live the situation of a lack of liberty. But now we have to learn to live liberty well. We ask your blessing on us and on our mission. Many thanks. Many, many thanks.”

I don't think it's hard for a Jesuit to work in secret, as a clandestine. Fr. Hugo Rahner used to say that Jesuits have to be able to discern both in the field of God and in that of the devil. I think discernment gives us this ability, this sense of the supernatural: the sense of the divine and of the diabolic in the moments of human life and in history. We need to ask to know both the intentions of the Lord and those of the enemy of human nature and his deceptions. The Jesuit needs to know how to walk even in the ugliest moments. Something else the provincial said that I liked is the fact of being concerned about some Jesuits having three or four different jobs. There is the danger of burnout. So discernment is needed. The evil spirit does lead us to a sort of “not-working-enough complex.” Sometimes we feel guilty just because with prudence we take a little bit of care of our own health! This is a temptation. Jesuits must work without losing peace, without losing the encounter with the Lord, and without losing rest. This is important. The first law of work for a Jesuit is above all to do what others don't do or can't do. The second is that the work should not get in the way of familiarity with the Lord. The third is that it should not remove peace. The fourth is not to do what you can delegate to

others. This is what comes to mind in response to your concern. But you do well to be worried about these things.

Next to speak is Archbishop Tamkevičius: "If I had imagined 35 years ago when I was imprisoned by the KGB that one day a pope would have visited those cells, then it would have been much easier to put up with the suffering. Thank you, Holy Father! For me this is a dream. You came to visit our Lithuanian Golgotha!"

Let me say this to you: we say that Jesus descended into hell, and I advise you not to be afraid of descending into the hell of the people. Sometimes, this means entering the field of the devil. But suffering, be it human, social, that of the conscience... we need to go down into hell, we need to be there. Touch the wounds. And touching people's wounds, you touch the wounds of Christ. The Jesuit should never be afraid of this. It is a grace that we receive from the hand of the Lord. And these wounds have not only been opened at Vilnius and they concern not just the past. The same thing happens today in many sociopolitical situations around the world. I am thinking of a film that witnesses to the situations of some prisons in North Africa built by human traffickers. When governments send back those who have survived, the traffickers put them in these prisons where the most horrible torture takes place. This is why it is important that you speak about your time in prison. People need to know what it means. It is good that this be talked about. Today we beat our breasts for what the Communists, Nazis and Fascists did... but today? Does this not happen today? Certainly! And it is done with white silk gloves! When Ignatius offers us the third week, there is something that might seem too voluntarist, but it is not. It is just very human. You know, St. Ignatius asks us to force ourselves to experience pain, to cry for Christ who suffers the passion. This is not Pelagianism, no. Ignatius knew our resistance to welcoming the pain of others inside our own hearts. This is why he asks us to force ourselves. This is why meditating on the Lord's Passion is important. I have to share something with you. I always carry in my pocket this *via crucis* to recall the Lord's passion [and he pulls it out of his pocket]. It is the passion of so many people today, who are tortured, in prison. It's good for me to meditate on the *via crucis*. Thank you, Father! Thank you for your witness!

Archbishop Tamkevičius adds: "In 1994, at the Synod on religious life, I was present and there was a young Jesuit bishop from Argentina. It was you!"

Yes, I'd been a bishop for two years. They'd elected me because the first two chosen were diocesan and for that Synod they wanted a religious. And they chose me. In 1994. We were together!

One of those present asks another question: "I want to ask a favor for the new residence of the Jesuits in Riga. It is a house of the Spiritual Exercises. St. Peter Faber is its patron. A brother Jesuit from Warsaw has painted a portrait. I'd ask you to bless it and to give your blessing to our work, which is so important ecumenically. In fact, as the provincial said, the Lutherans in Latvia are interested in the Exercises. The Lutheran archbishop of Riga completed the entire Ignatian month in England and has done the Exercises in Spain, at Manresa. For him, the Exercises are very important. And this is a good ecumenical sign during a secular period such as ours.

Yes, I too know a Jesuit who does the Exercises with Lutherans. It's good that Faber is the protector of the house: he is the man of dialogue, of listening, nearness, of journey. He was different from Canisius. He was not the man of opposition, of debate. He had that spiritual sweetness that you can well understand by reading his Memoriale. And he worked with the help of the angels. He prayed for his angel to speak to the angels of those who had appointments with him. A great mafia of angels! Cardinal Arborelius of Stockholm gives retreats to Lutheran pastors. Let's remember: dialogue adds, it doesn't take away. I wish your work in the Exercises well. The young people with a desire to do the Exercises have a beautiful experience. Go forward then!

Another Jesuit rises and says: "I see you have a special love for the youth and for the apostolate of the young. You have great attention for those who do not seem important, for the lost, the abandoned..."

I'm glad that an elderly Jesuit can speak so nicely of the young. This is very important: the encounter of the young and the old. For it is the grandparents who transmit to their grandchildren the memory of a people, its experience and religion. Parents are halfway there, they give something, but

the roots are in the elderly. And young people need to make an effort to listen to the elderly, just as you make an effort to listen to the young. Thank you!

Another Jesuit speaks to Francis: "Holy Father, I was very touched this afternoon when we were in the cathedral and you put an accent on nearness. I think this is what is missing in our countries. Sometimes we create distance out of fear of meeting people. Then I think what you said about confession was particularly strong. The confessional is the place where the ministry of mercy lives. I am still a deacon and do not yet have this experience. But what you said struck me as being very strong. And also when you said that you need to be welcoming even in cases where absolution can't be given."

Nearness is God's oldest stance. He himself comes to us this way: in nearness. In Deuteronomy, God says: "Which great nation has a divinity so near to it, as the Lord our God is near to us each time we call on him?" He presents himself as the God who is near. And then he came closer: he became one of us. *Synkatabasis*: God became down-with-us, near in the flesh. All pastoral activity has to remember this or otherwise fail. God became near to the marginalized, to the dead – whom he raised – and to the sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes... The pure, the religious professionals were scandalized. If a priest ungraciously chases away a penitent, the bishop needs to ask himself if he should take away that priest's license to hear confessions, for the confessor should be paternal. The confessor is there to embrace the prodigal son, the lost child. And always, always, if you are a father, you will always find a way to forgive. A cardinal from the Curia who confesses regularly in a Roman church once said to me: "I don't understand how some confessors send people away. I always try and ensure that the penitent can feel at ease, can speak well. I never ask strange things. And if I can't give that person absolution and the penitent begs forgiveness, tell me: what father does not forgive a child?" His testimony touched me. It's clear that I am not saying that we have to be indulgent. It is true that one thing is mercy and another thing is being indulgent. We have to be fathers, merciful fathers. In Buenos Aires there is a great Capuchin confessor. There is always a long line outside his confessional. All sorts of people go to him: lay

people, priests, sisters, the rich, the poor... He's a great forgiver. To be a good confessor, you have to be a great forgiver... or be deaf! Sometimes this confessor feels the scruple of being too fatherly, too forgiving. And so he goes before the tabernacle and says: "Lord, sorry, forgive me. I forgave too much. But you gave me the bad example!" This confessor is not indulgent, but he is a truly a father.

A young Lithuanian Jesuit who did his theological training in Africa asks: "When you were elected pope I was studying theology. Three years ago when I was ordained priest, you became a source of inspiration for my life as a Jesuit priest. You have given so much to the Church. I want to ask you how we can help you."

Thank you! I don't know what to ask from you specifically. But what needs to be done today is to accompany the Church in a deep spiritual renewal. I believe the Lord wants a change in the Church. I have said many times that a perversion of the Church today is clericalism. But 50 years ago the Second Vatican Council said this clearly: the Church is the People of God. Read number 12 of *Lumen Gentium*. I know that the Lord wants the Council to make headway in the Church. Historians tell us that it takes 100 years for a Council to be applied. We are halfway there. So, if you want to help me, do whatever it takes to move the Council forward in the Church. And help me with your prayer. I need so many prayers.

Another Jesuit asks: "Education is a priority in our province. We have two schools with 220 teachers and 1,500 students. What message would you transmit to our teachers and students?"

I would like to say something about education that might help the teachers and the Jesuits working in education. We need to move on from the negative heritage of the Enlightenment that is seen in the vision of education as filling heads with ideas. Today, there are schools and universities that have the sole goal of preparing students for so-called "success." And they do it by filling their heads with notions. Education engages the whole person, not only the head. I've said this many times and I'll repeat it: there is a language of the head, but there is also the language of the heart, of sentiment. You need to educate

the heart. There's a need for an education of the sentiments or feelings. And there is also the language of the hands. These are three languages that go together. The young people are called on to think about what they feel and do, and to feel what they think and do, and to do what they feel and think. Ours is a human unit, and everything is found therein, including concern for others, engagement. Let us not forget feeling and sentiments. Ignatius was a great educator of the sentiments. And this has to be the road of education. Clearly, the task of the Jesuits who work in schools is also that of training capable educators. They have to build an educational community able to discern situations and learn to bring education in these three languages of heart, head and hands. And please, don't let the Jesuits abandon education. The Society should never abandon this mission, as it is a strong road.

An elderly Jesuit asks: "Can we add to the Marian litany the intercession "Regina Lithuaniae, ora pro nobis?"

Of course! Here you can do that among yourselves, as we Jesuits say "Regina Societatis Iesu, ora pro nobis." Do it!

The pope says there is just time for one more question. A young Jesuit gets up and asks: "Holy Father, you said that we have to go out onto the road, where the people are. You have said that the Church is a field hospital. You've said we shouldn't be scared of chaos. And the world seems to be in chaos. How can we face this without being afraid?"

Look, if you go into chaos by yourself, you're right to be afraid, for it will finish badly. But if you enter it with the grace of spiritual counsel from your provincial, from your community, if you do it as a mission and with the Lord, then the fear you feel comes from the evil spirit. You're right, today there is chaos. And there is the chair of fire and smoke of which St. Ignatius speaks in his meditation on the Two Standards. But with the Lord there is no need to be afraid. With the Lord, though, not with your own desires. God is strong. God is the strongest! I said this before, recalling Hugo Rahner: you need to be able to enter two fields, even that of our enemy, in chaos. Let me make the most of your question, for it allows me to say something I wanted to raise with you today. I said to enter chaos and the

difficult situations. But not alone, rather enter with the Lord, and in dialogue with your superiors and the community. And here comes the topic of the “account of conscience.” Do not be afraid! The provincial is a brother. Perhaps tomorrow it will be his turn to give an account of his conscience to you. The grace of this opening up is that the superior and the subject are both brothers sharing so as to better serve the Lord. It is not a question-and-answer session. The provincial must enter into the life of the brother he is listening to. And the Jesuit who is opening his heart must engage in the life of his superior. This is a dialogue of interaction where all conflict with the superiors comes undone. And the Society becomes a body to counter chaos. Let us go forward in community and brotherhood.

Coming to the end, the pope says:

Thank you! Thank you for coming to visit me and thank you for what you do for the Church! Pray! I’ll advise you read two things, as I often do with Jesuits. Read the talk that Paul VI gave on December 3, 1974, to the fathers gathered in the 32nd General Congregation. For me this is the best thing a pope has ever said to the Jesuits. It is a treasure. Take it, reflect on it. And I recommend that you also read the last thing that Fr. Arrupe said: his talk to the Jesuits working in the refugee camps in Thailand. It was his swansong. Then, during his return flight to Rome, he had a stroke. The talk he had given to the Jesuits working with the refugees was: do not overlook your prayer lives! Read these two documents. They are more substantial and rewarding than the things I could say. Pray for me! Thank you. Now, let us pray with the Madonna, *Regina Societatis Iesu*...

With prayer and some more personal greetings the meeting concluded, just over an hour after it had begun.

The Church needs to grow in discernment Pope Francis meets Polish Jesuits in Krakow

Pope Francis

During his Apostolic Trip in Poland on the occasion of the 31st World Youth Day, July 30, 2016 — first vespers of St Ignatius of Loyola — at 5 p.m., Pope Francis met with a group of 28 Polish Jesuits belonging to two Provinces of the Society of Jesus of the country and two lay collaborators, accompanied by the two Father Provincials, Fr. Tomasz Ortman and Fr. Jakub Kolacz.

Attended also the meeting other three Jesuits: Fr. Andrzej Majewski, Vatican Radio's director of programs, Fr. Federico Lombardi, at that time director of the Press Office of the Holy See, and Fr. Antonio Spadaro, editor in chief of La Civiltà Cattolica.

The encounter occurred at the Archbishopric of Krakow in a climate of great simplicity, spontaneity and cordiality, and though it was not devoid of meaningful content to the Order, it also held meaning for the Church more in general. Francis greeted everyone present, one by one, and he focused in particular on those he had known in the past. When he was seated and began the dialogue, listening to the questions posed and answering in Italian, Fr. Kolacz translated his words into Polish, even though the majority of those present understood Italian well.

Then the Pontiff received some gifts. Before concluding the encounter, lasting a total of 40 minutes, the Pope wanted to add a recommendation easily understandable in connection with his recent Magisterium. With the Holy Father's approval, we report here the dialogue, in its immediacy, just as it happened, even preserving some personal memories. It is intended as a witnessing that—as you will read—even gathers some impressions of the Pontiff's experience with the young people of WYD and also provides meaningful pastoral lines.

Antonio Spadaro S.J.

Your message gets to the heart of the young people. How do you speak to them so effectively? Could you give us some advice for working with youth?

When I speak, I must look people in the eyes. It isn't possible to look in the eyes of all of them, but I look into the eyes of this one, of this one, of this one....and everyone feels I look at them. It is something that comes to me spontaneously. This is how I do it with the young people. But, then the young people, when you speak with them, ask questions.....Today at lunch they asked some questions....They even asked me how I go to confession! They have no discretion. They ask direct questions. And you always need to answer a young person with the truth. A young man asked me: "How do you confess?" And I began to talk about myself. He said to me: "In my country there were scandals tied to priests and we do not have the courage to go to confession with these priests who have lived these scandals. I cannot do it."

You see: they tell you the truth, at times they reprimand you...Young people speak directly. They want the truth or at least a clear "I don't know how to answer you." You never find subterfuges with young people. So with prayer. They asked me: "How do you pray?" If you answer with a theory they remain disappointed. Young people are generous. But the work with them also requires patience, a lot of patience. One of them asked me today: "What should I say to a friend who does not believe in God so that they can become a believer?" Here, you see that at times young people need "recipes." Then you must be ready to correct this attitude that requires recipes and ready answers. I answered: "See that the last thing that you must do is to say something. Begin to do something. Then he or she will ask you explanations on how you live and why." Here, you must be direct, direct with the truth.

What is the role of the Jesuit universities?

A university as a straight line from the Jesuits must point to a global formation, not only intellectual, a formation of the whole human person. In fact if the university becomes simply an academy of ideas or a 'factory' of professionals or a mentality

centered on business prevails in its structure then it is truly off the path. We have the Spiritual Exercises in hand. Here's the challenge: take the university on the path of the Exercises. This means risking on the truth, and not on the 'closed truth' that no one discusses.

The truth of the encounter with people is open and requires that we let ourselves make enquiries truly from reality. And the Jesuit university must be involved with the real life of the Church and the Nation: also this is reality, in fact.

Particular attention must always be given to the marginalized, to the defense of those more in need of protection. And this — it is clear — is not being a Communist: it is simply being truly involved with reality. In this case, in particular a Jesuit university must be fully involved with reality expressing the social thought of the Church. The free-market thought that removes man and woman from the center and puts money at the center is not ours. The doctrine of the Church is clear and it must move forward in this sense.

Why did you become a Jesuit?

When I entered the seminary, I already had a religious vocation. But at that time my confessor was anti-Jesuit. I also liked the Dominicans and their intellectual life. Then I got sick and had to undergo lung surgery. Later another priest helped me spiritually. I remember when I then told the first priest that I had entered the Jesuits, he truly did not take it well. But here the irony of the Lord moved. In fact, at that time they were receiving minor orders. The tonsure is done in the first year of theology.

The rector told me to go to Buenos Aires to the auxiliary bishop, Msgr. Oscar Villena, to look for him to do the tonsure ceremony. I went to the House of Clergy, but they told me that Msgr. Villena was sick. There was in his place another monsignor who was precisely that first priest who had then become a Bishop! And I received the tonsure precisely from him! And we have made peace after many years.... But, yes, I can say, my choice of the Society matured by itself...

There are some recently ordained priests in this group. Do you have advice for their future?

You know: the future is from God. The most that we can do is the feasible. And the feasible are all of the bad spirit! An advice: the priesthood is truly a great grace: your priesthood as a Jesuit is soaked in the spirituality that you have lived up to now: the spirituality of the Suscipe of St Ignatius.

At this time the encounter seems to be ending with the presentation to the Pontiff of gifts from Jesuits accompanying some young people, attracted to Ignatian spirituality, who came from all over the world to WYD.

Francis then wants to add a recommendation, and everyone sits down again.

I want to add something now. I ask you to work with seminarians. Above all, give them what you have received from the Exercises: the wisdom of discernment. The Church today needs to grow in the ability of spiritual discernment. Some priestly formation programs run the risk of educating in the light of overly clear and distinct ideas, and therefore to act within limits and criteria that are rigidly defined *a priori*, and that set aside concrete situations: “you must do this, you must not do this.” And then the seminarians, when they become priests, find themselves in difficulty in accompanying the life of so many young people and adults. Because many are asking: “can you do this or can you not?” That’s all. And many people leave the confessional disappointed. Not because the priest is bad, but because the priest doesn’t have the ability to discern situations, to accompany them in authentic discernment. They don’t have the needed formation.

Today the Church needs to grow in discernment, in the ability to discern. And priests above all really need it for their ministry. This is why we need to teach it to seminarians and priests in formation: they are the ones usually entrusted with the confidences of the conscience of the faithful. Spiritual direction is not solely a priestly charism, but also lay, it is true. But, I repeat, you must teach this above all to priests, helping them in

the light of the Exercises in the dynamic of pastoral discernment, which respects the law but knows how to go beyond. This is an important task for the Society.

A thought of Fr. Hugo Rahner has often struck me. He thought clearly and wrote clearly! Hugo said that the Jesuit must be a man with the nose for the supernatural, that is he must be a man gifted with a sense of the divine and of the diabolical relative to the events of human life and history. The Jesuit must therefore be capable of discerning both in the field of God and in the field of the devil.

This is why in the Exercises St Ignatius asks to be introduced both to the intentions of the Lord of life and to those of the enemy of human nature and to his lies. What he has written is bold, it is truly bold, but discernment is precisely this! We need to form future priests not to general and abstract ideas, which are clear and distinct, but to this keen discernment of spirits so that they can help people in their concrete life. We need to truly understand this: in life not all is black on white or white on black. No! The shades of grey prevail in life. We must then teach to discern in this grey area.

The encounter ends here above all by the necessity to continue on the day's program brought to the attention of the Holy Father by his collaborators. Before taking his leave, however, Francis wanted once more to greet the Jesuits one by one concluding with a final blessing.