



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

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دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسى الرسولي BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIE

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Press Conference of the Holy Father on the return flight from his Apostolic Trip to Ireland for the Ninth World Meeting of Families (25-26 August 2018)

Yesterday, during the return flight from Dublin to Rome, at the end of his apostolic trip to Ireland for the Ninth World Meeting of Families, the Holy Father Francis met with journalists on board the aircraft in a press conference, the full text of which follows:

Greg Burke:

Good evening, Holy Father.

Pope Francis:

Good evening.

Greg Burke:

Thank you for this time that you are dedicating to us, after two very intense days. There have certainly been difficult moments in Ireland – there is always the abuse question – but also very beautiful moments: the festival of families, the testimonies of the families, the meeting with young couples and also the visit to the Capuchins, who are helping the poor so much.

May we give the microphone to the journalists, beginning with the Irish... But perhaps you would like to say something first...

Pope Francis:

[I would like] to say thank-you, because if I am tired, then I think about you, who have work, work, work... I thank you very much for your efforts, for your work. Thank you so much.

Greg Burke:

The first question, as is our custom, comes from a journalist from the country [you visited]; he is Tony Connelly, from RTÉ - Irish Radio and Television.

Tony Connelly, RTÉ:

Your Holiness, on Saturday you spoke about the meeting you had with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs; you said how you were touched by what she told you about the homes for mothers and children. What exactly did she say to you? And were you so moved because it was the first time you heard of these homes?

Pope Francis:

The Minister first said something to me not so much about mothers and children; she said – briefly – “Holy Father, we have found mass graves of children, of children interred. We are looking into this. Does the Church have any role in this?”, but she said it very politely indeed, with great respect. I thanked her; this touched my heart, so much so that I wanted to mention it in my speech. It was not at the airport – I was mistaken – it was at the meeting with the President. At the airport, there was another lady – a government minister, I think – and I got confused. But she said to me: “I will send you a memo”. She sent me the memo, but I wasn’t able to read it. I saw that she had did send me a memo. She was very balanced in what she said to me: there is a problem, and even though the investigation is not yet completed, she made me feel that the Church too had some involvement in the matter. In my opinion, this was an example of constructive cooperation, prior to... I don’t want to use the “protest”, but [before] lamenting, lamenting about what the Church may have favoured in the past. That lady had a great dignity which touched my heart. And now I have that memo, which I shall study when I return home. Thank you.

Greg Burke:

Now to another Irishman, Paddy Agnew, from the *Sunday Independent*, living in Rome but an Irish journalist.

Pope Francis:

Not the only Irishman in Rome!

Paddy Agnew, of the *Sunday Independent*:

Holy Father, thank you and good evening. Yesterday, Marie Collins, the victim Marie Collins, whom you know well, indicated that you are not favourable to setting up new Vatican courts of enquiry concerning the problem of sexual abuse, and in particular, so-called courts of enquiry concerning bishops and bishop accountability. Why do you feel that these are not needed?

Pope Francis:

No, no, that isn’t it. That isn’t it. Marie Collins puts much emphasis on the idea... I have great respect for Marie Collins, sometimes in the Vatican we call her to give a presentation – she emphasizes the idea of the [2016 Motu Proprio] *As a Loving Mother*, in which it was said that to judge bishops, it would be good to set up a special tribunal. It was subsequently seen neither to be feasible nor suitable for the different cultures of the bishops who should be judged. We are taking the recommendation of *As a Loving Mother* and setting up a jury for each bishop, but that is not the same thing. A particular bishop has to be judged and so the Pope sets up a jury more capable of taking that case. It is something that works better, also because, for a group of bishops to leave their dioceses... for this reason it is not possible. So the tribunals and the juries change.

This is the way we have done things up to now. A number of bishops have been judged this way: the latest was the archbishop of Guam, who appealed his sentence and I decided – because it was a very, very complex case – to make use of the right that I have, hear his appeal on my own, and not to send him to the appeal court that carries out its work with priests. I took it up personally. I set up a commission of canon lawyers to help me, and they told me that, in a short time, a month at most, they would offer a “recommendation” so that I could make a judgement. It is a complicated case on the one hand, but not difficult, because the evidence is extremely clear; from the standpoint of evidence, it is clear. But I cannot pre-judge. I am waiting for the report and then I will pass judgement. I say that the evidence is clear because that is what led the court of the first instance to its verdict. This was the most recent case. Now there is another in progress; we will see how it ends. But it's clear, and I said this to Marie: the spirit and the recommendation of *As a Loving Mother* are being put into effect: a bishop must be judged by a tribunal, but not always the same tribunal, because that is not possible. She [Marie Collins] didn't understand this entirely, but when I see her – because she comes to the Vatican sometimes, we call her – I will explain it to her more clearly. I like her.

Greg Burke:

And now the Italian group, Holy Father: here is Stefania Falasca from *Avvenire*.

Stefania Falasca, Avvenire:

Good evening, Holy Father. You said, today even, that it is always a challenge to welcome the migrant and the outsider. Just yesterday a painful episode was resolved, that of the “Diciotti” ship. Is your “paw” behind this resolution? Were you involved, are you part of it?

Pope Francis:

The paw is the devil's, not mine! (*laughter*). The paw is the devil's...

Stefania Falasca:

Then too, many people see Europe being blackmailed and these people having to pay the price. What do you think?

Pope Francis:

Welcoming migrants is as ancient as the Bible. In Deuteronomy, God commands this in the commandments: welcome the migrant, the “stranger”. This is ancient and in the spirit of divine revelation and the spirit of Christianity. It is a moral principle. I spoke about this, and then I saw that I needed to make it a little clearer, because this is not just about welcoming [migrants] willy-nilly, but in a reasonable way. And this is true for all of Europe. When did I realize what this reasonable welcoming has to be like? It was after the attack in Zaventem [Belgium]: the young men, the fighters who carried out the attack on Zaventem were Belgian, but were sons of immigrants who were not integrated; they were “ghettoized”. That is, they had been received by the country, but left there, and had become a ghetto: they were not integrated. That is why I emphasized this; it is important.

Then, I remembered my trip to Sweden – and Franca [Giansoldati] made mention of this in an article, and of how I developed my thinking; when I went to Sweden I spoke about integration, and I knew about this, because during the dictatorship in Argentina, from 1976 to 1983, a great number of Argentinians and Uruguayans fled to Sweden. And there the government took them in immediately, made them study the language and gave them work, integrated them. To such a point that – and this is an interesting anecdote – the Minister who came to bid me farewell at Lund airport was the daughter of a Swede and an African migrant; and this African migrant had been integrated to the extent that his daughter became a minister of the country. Sweden was a model. But, at that moment [the time of my visit], Sweden was beginning to have difficulties: not because it did not have good intentions, but because it did not have the capacity for integration. This was the reason why Sweden stopped

somewhat, [why] it took this step. Integration.

Then too, I spoke here, at a press conference with you, of the virtue of prudence which is the virtue of governance, and I spoke of the prudence of peoples concerning numbers or possibilities: a people that can accept but does not have the possibility of integrating, [is] better not accepting. There is an issue of prudence here. That I think is really the painful note with today's dialogue in the European Union. We have to keep on speaking: solutions can be found...

What happened with the "Diciotti"? I did not put my "paw" there. The one who did the work with the Ministry of the Interior was Father Aldo, good Father Aldo, who is the one who follows the organization of Father Benzi, which the Italians know well, and work at freeing prostitutes, those who experience exploitation and so many things... And the Italian Bishops' Conference got involved, Cardinal Bassetti, who was here but followed all the mediation on the telephone, and it was one of the two undersecretaries, Monsignor Maffei, who negotiated with the Ministry. And I think Albania got involved... Albania, Ireland and Montenegro took a certain number of migrants, I think, but I'm not sure. The Bishops' Conference took responsibility for the others; I don't know whether under the umbrella of the Vatican or not... I don't know how the matter was negotiated; but they are going to *Mondo Migliore* Centre in Rocca di Papa; they will be accommodated there. I think there are more than a hundred of them. And there they will start to learn the language and do the work done with migrants already integrated.

I had a very gratifying experience. When I went to the *Roma III* University, there were students who wanted to ask me questions and I saw a female student... [I thought:] "I know that face": she had come with me as one of the thirteen people I brought back with me from Lesvos. That young woman at the university! How? Because the Sant'Egidio Community, from the day she arrived, took her to school to learn: go, keep going... And they integrated her at university level. This is what it is to work with migrants. [First] there is an openness of heart to all [those who] suffer; then there is integration, as a condition for being welcomed; and then prudence on the part of government leaders to do this. I saw... I have secret footage, what happens to those who get sent back and who are taken again by traffickers: it is horrible, the things they do to these men, to women and children... they sell them, but they inflict more sophisticated tortures on the men. There was one there, a spy, who was able to make that film, which I sent to my two undersecretaries for migration. For this reason, before sending them back, one has to think very, very, very carefully...

And one last thing. There are these migrants who come; but there are others who are tricked when they arrive: "We will give you work..." They give them all papers, and they end up on the sidewalk as slaves, threatened by traffickers in women... This is it.

Greg Burke:

Thank you, Holy Father. The next question is from the English-speaking group: Anna Matranga, from the American television network NBC.

Anna Matranga, NBC:

Good evening, Holy Father! I would like to return to the topic of "abuse" about which you have already spoken. In a document issued early this morning, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò says that in 2013 he had a personal conversation with you at the Vatican, and that in this meeting he spoke explicitly with you about the sexual abuse by former Cardinal McCarrick. I wanted to ask you if this is true. Another question I wanted to ask of you: the Archbishop also said that Pope Benedict XVI had imposed sanctions on McCarrick, telling him not to live in the seminary, not to celebrate Masses in public and not to travel; the Church imposed sanctions on him. Can I ask you if these two things are true?

Pope Francis:

Just one thing, I would prefer – even though I will answer your question – that we speak about the trip [to Ireland] and then move on to other topics... but I will answer your question. I read the statement this morning. I read it and sincerely I must tell you, and all those who are interested: read it yourselves carefully and make your own judgment. I will not say a single word on this. I believe the memo speaks for itself, and you are capable enough as journalists to draw your own conclusions. This is an act of trust: when some time has passed and you have drawn conclusions, perhaps I will speak. But I ask that you use your professional maturity in doing this: it will do you good, really. That is enough for now.

Anna Matranga, NBC:

Marie Collins said, after you met her during your meeting with victims, that she spoke directly with you about former Cardinal McCarrick. She said that you were very harsh in your condemnation of McCarrick. I wanted to ask you: when did you first hear about the abuses committed by the former cardinal?

Pope Francis:

This is part of the statement on McCarrick: study it and then I will say something. But since I had not read it yesterday, I did want to speak clearly with Marie Collins and the group [of victims] in the meeting that lasted for a good hour and a half, and which I found very painful. But I think it was necessary to listen to those eight people; from this meeting emerged the proposal – which I made, and which they accepted and helped me to carry out – to ask forgiveness today in the Mass, but for concrete things. For example, the last, which I had never heard: those mothers – in what was called the women's laundry – when a woman became pregnant out of wedlock, she would be sent to a hospital or an institution, I forget what it was called ... but it was run by sisters and then they gave the children up for adoption. And there were children at that time, who tried to find their mothers to know if they were alive, they did not know... and they told them it was a mortal sin to do this; and also to mothers who were looking for their children; they also told them that it was a mortal sin. So I ended today by saying that it is not a mortal sin; it is [about] the fourth commandment. And some of the things I have said today I did not know beforehand, and it was painful for me, but with the consolation of being able to help clarify these things. And I am waiting for your comment on that document; I would like to hear it! Thank you.

Greg Burke:

Thank you, Holy Father. Now Cecile Chamraud of "Le Monde"

Cecile Chamraud, "Le Monde":

Good evening, Holy Father. I hope you don't mind if I ask my question in Spanish but I ask that you answer in Italian for all my colleagues. In your address to the Irish authorities, you referred to your recent Letter to the People of God. In that Letter, you invited all Catholics to take part in the fight against abuse in the Church. Can you explain to us concretely what Catholics can do, each in their own way, to fight against abuse? In this regard, in France, a priest has written a petition calling for the resignation of Cardinal Barbarin, accused by victims. Do you think this initiative is adequate or not?

Pope Francis:

If there are suspicions, or proofs or even half-proofs, I see no problem in conducting an investigation, but always based on the fundamental legal principle: *Nemo malus nisi probetur*, one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Frequently there is the temptation not only to investigate, but to publish that an investigation was carried out and the reason..., and so some media – not yours, I don't think – begin to create a climate of guilt. And I would like to mention something that happened recently, which will help in this, because for me it is important how one proceeds and how the media can help. Three years ago, more or less, the issue of so-called paedophile priests came up in Granada – a small group of seven, eight or ten priests, who were accused of abuse of minors and of holding parties, orgies and such things. I received the accusation directly in a letter sent

by a twenty-three year old man, who claimed to have been abused; he gave names and details. He was a young man who was working in a very prestigious religious school in Granada; the letter was perfectly written... And he asked me what he should do to report it. I replied: "Go to the Archbishop, the Archbishop will know what you should do". The Archbishop did everything he was supposed to do, the matter even went to the civil court. There were two trials. The local media began to talk, and talk... Three days later the words "paedophile priests", and similar expressions, appeared all over the parish, and so there was a sense that these priests were criminals. Seven of them were interviewed, and nothing was found; in three cases the investigation went ahead, they remained in custody for five days, two days, and one day – Father Roman, who was the parish priest – for seven days. For almost three years they suffered the hatred and insults of everyone: they were criminalized, they weren't able to go out, and they suffered humiliations during the jury's attempt to prove the young man's accusations, which I do not dare to repeat here. After three years and more, the jury declared the priests innocent, all of them innocent, but above all these three – the others were already out of the case – and the accuser guilty. Because they had seen that that young man had quite an imagination; he was very intelligent and was working in a Catholic school, and thus had a certain prestige which gave the impression that he was telling the truth. He was sentenced to pay the costs and all that, and they were innocent. These men were condemned by the media rather than by the justice system. For this reason, your work is very sensitive: you have to follow things; you have to speak about things, but always with this legal presumption of innocence, and not the legal presumption of guilt! And there is a difference between a reporter, who provides information about a case without deciding the matter beforehand, and the detective, who plays Sherlock Holmes, with the presumption that everyone is guilty. When we look at Hercule Poirot's method, we see that, for him, everyone was guilty. But that is the job of a detective. They are two different roles. But reporters must always start from the presumption of innocence, stating their own impressions, doubts..., but without condemning. This case that occurred in Granada is, for me, an example that will do us all good, in our [respective] professions.

Greg Burke:

In the first part [of the preceding question], she asked what the people of God could do in this regard...

Pope Francis:

Yes. When you see something, speak up at once. I will say something else, a bit unpleasant. Sometimes it is the parents who cover up the abuse by a priest. Often you see this in the sentences. [They say,] "But no..." They don't believe it, or they convince themselves that it is not true, and the boy or girl is left like that. I usually speak to one or two persons a week, by and large, and I spoke to one person, a lady, who had suffered from this scourge of silence for forty years because her parents had not believed her. She had been abused when she was eight years old. Speaking out, this is important. True, for a mother, to see this..., It would be better that it were not true, and so she thinks that maybe the child has imagined it... [But there is a need] to speak up. To speak with the right persons, speak with those who can begin a judgment, at least a prior investigation. To speak with the judge or the bishop, or if the parish priest is good, to speak with the parish priest. This is the first thing that the people of God can do. These things must not be covered up. A psychiatrist told me some time ago – but I don't want this to be offensive to women – that out of their maternal sense women are inclined to cover up matters affecting the child than men. I don't know if it's true or not... But this is: to speak up. Thank you.

Greg Burke:

From the Spanish group there is Javier Romero of "Rome Reports TV".

Javier Romero:

Holiness, I would like to ask you two questions. The first is that the Prime Minister of Ireland, who was very pointed in his speech, is proud of a new model of family that differs from the one that the Church has traditionally proposed up to now: I am speaking of homosexual marriage. And this is perhaps one of the models that generates the most tension, especially in the case of Catholic families when one of the members of the family declares that he or she is homosexual. Holiness, the first question I would like to ask you is: what do you think,

what would you like to say to a father whose son says he is homosexual and wants to go to live with his companion? This is the first question. The second, and you also spoke about in this in your address with the Prime Minister, is abortion; we have seen how Ireland has changed greatly in recent years and it seems that the Minister was satisfied with these changes, one of which was abortion. We have seen that in recent months, in recent years, the question of abortion has been raised in many countries, including Argentina, your own country. How do you feel when you see that this is a subject on which you speak out often, and there are many countries where it is allowed...

Pope Francis:

I see. I'll begin with the second, but there are two points – thank you for this – because they are tied to the questions we are discussing. On abortion, you know what the Church thinks. The issue of abortion is not a religious issue: we are not opposed to abortion for religious reasons. No. It is a human issue and has to be addressed as such. To consider abortion starting from religion is to step over [that realm of] thought. The abortion question has to be studied from an anthropological standpoint. There is always the anthropological question of how ethical it is to eliminate a living being in order to resolve a problem. This is the real issue. I would only emphasize this: I never allow the issue of abortion to be discussed starting with religion. No. It is an anthropological problem, a human problem. This is my thinking.

Second. There have always been homosexuals and persons with homosexual tendencies. Always. The sociologists say, but I don't know if it's true, that at times of epochal change certain social and ethical phenomena increase, and that this would be one of them. This is the opinion of some sociologists. Your question is clear: what would I say to a father who sees his son or daughter has that tendency. I would tell him first of all to pray. Pray. Don't condemn, [but] dialogue, understand, make room for his son or daughter. Make room for them to say what they have to say. Then too, at what age does this concern of the child become evident? This is important. It is one thing when it shows up in childhood when there are so many things that one can do to see how the matter stands; it is another when it shows up at twenty years of age or so. But I would never say that silence is the answer; to ignore a son or daughter with a homosexual tendency is not good parenthood. You are my son, you are my daughter, just as you are. I am your father or your mother, let's talk about this. And if you, as a father or mother, can't deal with this on your own, ask for help, but always in dialogue, always in dialogue. Because that son and daughter has a right to family, and their family is this family, just as it is. Do not throw them out of family. This is a serious challenge for parenthood. Thank you for the question.

Greg Burke:

Thank you, Holy Father.

Pope Francis:

Now, I would like to say something for the Irish who are with us. I found great faith in Ireland. Great faith. True, the Irish people have suffered greatly because of the scandals. But there is faith in Ireland, and strong faith. Also, the Irish people know how to distinguish, and here I would repeat something I heard today from a bishop. "The Irish people know how to distinguish between truths and half-truths: deep down they have this ability". True, they are in a process of working things out, of healing from this scandal. True, some are becoming open to positions that seem increasingly distant from the faith. But the Irish people have a deeply rooted and strong faith. I want to say this, because it is what I saw, what I heard and what I learned in these two days.

Thank you for your work, thank you very much! And please pray for me.

Greg Burke:

Thank you. Have a good dinner and a good rest.

