



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

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## The Pope meets with his diocese: we are called to support imbalance

The Holy Father Francis, bishop of Rome, met with members of the diocese in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran at the end of the pastoral year dedicated to the themes of memory and reconciliation. The meeting was attended by the cardinal vicar, Angelo De Donatis, the auxiliary bishops, priests, men and women religious, and many lay faithful. It began with the words of a priest who explained the state of the Church in the city, defining it as a “mission land”, followed by interventions from a girl, a couple and the director of Caritas, who emphasized the poverty that grips half the Roman population.

The Pope gave an improvised address, in which, referring to the difficult situation in Rome, he affirmed that it was necessary to resist the temptation simply to “rearrange” things. “No no, we must rearrange the city, rearrange the diocese, put everything in its place, put everything in order”. It is not a question of “rearranging”. We heard [in the preceding interventions] about the imbalances in the city, the imbalance of young people, the elderly, families ... The imbalance of relations with children... Today we are called to *support imbalance*. We cannot do anything good, evangelical, if we are afraid of imbalance. We must grasp imbalance in our hands: this is what the Lord tells us, because the Gospel – I think you understand – is an ‘imbalanced’ doctrine. Think of the Beatitudes. They deserve a Nobel prize in imbalance! The Gospel is like this”.

“Keep clearly in your mind and in your heart that, when the Lord wants to convert His Church, that is, make her closer to Him, more Christian, He always does this: He takes the smallest and places him in the centre, inviting all to become small and to “humiliate” themselves – the Gospel text says literally – to become small, just as He, Jesus, did. The reform of the Church begins with humility, and humility is born and grows with humiliations. In this way He neutralizes our claims to greatness”.

The Holy Father then went on to talk about the three sentiments or traits that should be the engine of the diocesan mission. “The first sentiment to have in the heart, to know how to listen, is humility and being careful not to disdain the small, whoever they may be, young people who are orphaned or who find themselves in the tunnel of drugs, families tried by everyday life or with broken relationships, sinners, the poor, foreigners, people who have lost their faith, people who have never had faith, the elderly, the disabled, young people who look for bread among the rubbish, as we have heard... Woe to those who look down from above and disdain the little. Only in one case is it legitimate to look down at a person from above: to help him get up on his feet again”.

“The second trait necessary – the first is humility: to listen, you must bring yourself down – the second trait necessary to hear the cry is to be unbiased. The Lord has heard the cry of men He has met and has made Himself close to them, because they had nothing to defend and nothing to lose... He leaves the ninety-nine in safety and goes to seek out those who are lost. We, instead, as I have said on other occasions, are often obsessed with the few sheep who stay in the enclosure. And many cease to be shepherds, and instead settle for grooming exquisite sheep... We never find the courage to seek out the others, those who are lost, who set out on paths we have never trodden. Please, let us convince ourselves that everything deserves to be left and sacrificed for the good of the mission”.

“The last feature of the heart, necessary to hear the cry and to evangelize, is having experienced the Beatitudes... The Beatitudes are a Christian message, but are also human. It is the message that makes you live, the message of newness... The Beatitudes are theocentric, that look at life, that take you ahead, that denude you but make it lighter for you to follow Jesus”.

Finally, the Pope reiterated to the members his diocese that to face the challenges of evangelization, and of urban culture, they should refer to *Evangelii gaudium*, especially the second chapter which talks about the crisis of community, and he recommended two tasks to them in view of the path they will take next year.

“First: Exercise a contemplative view of the life of the people who inhabit the city. Look. And to do this, in every parish let us seek to understand how the people live, how they think, what the inhabitants feel in our quarter, adults and young people; let us try to gather life stories”.

“The second task is to exercise a contemplative view on the new cultures that are generated in the city. In *Evangelii gaudium* I emphasized that there are indeed urban contexts where a new culture is produced: new stories, new symbols, new paradigms, new languages, new messages... It is necessary to understand them; to find them and to understand them. And all this produces good and evil. Evil is often beneath the eyes of all: “non-citizens’, ‘half-citizens’, ‘urban remnants’” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium.*, 74), because there are people who do not have access to the same life opportunities as others and who are set aside. In this way, unbearable tensions are generated. Be careful, because the global – or let us say at least European – cultural phenomenon of populism is growing, sowing fear. But in the city there is also much that is good, because there are positive places, fruitful places: there, where the citizens meet up and engage in constructive dialogue, in solidarity, here ‘a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities”.

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