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## The Pope speaks with journalists on the return flight from Sweden

As is his custom, Pope Francis held a press conference for the journalists who accompanied him on the papal flight following his seventeenth apostolic trip. He began by thanking them for their work, and went on to answer questions on themes such as refugees, ecumenism, his meeting with the president of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro, and secularisation.

The Swedish journalist Elin Svedenmark asked the first question. “Yesterday, Holy Father, you spoke of the revolution of tenderness. At the same time, we see increasing numbers of people from nations like Syria or Iraq who seek refuge in European nations but some react with fear, and there are even those who think that the arrival of these refugees might threaten the culture of Christianity in Europe. What is the message for the people who fear this development of the situation? And what is your message to Sweden, which after a long tradition of receiving refugees is now beginning to close its borders?”

Pope Francis: “First of all, as an Argentine and South American, I thank Sweden for this hospitality ... because so many Argentines, Chileans and Uruguayans were welcomed in Sweden at time of the military dictatorships. Sweden has a long tradition of welcoming ... not only receiving, but integrating, immediately seeking a home, school, work, integrating a people. I’ve been given the statistic, maybe I’m wrong, I’m not sure ... what I remember, but I could be wrong...how many inhabitants does Sweden have? Nine million... of these nine million, I am told, 850,000 would be ‘new Swedes’, or rather, immigrants or refugees and their children. This is the first point. Secondly, one must distinguish between migrant and refugee. The migrant must be treated with certain rules, because to emigrate is a right, but it is a very regulated right. On the other hand, being a refugee means coming from a situation of war, anguish or hunger... from a terrible situation. The status of the refugee needs more care, more work... and also in this, Sweden has always provided an example in settling, in teaching the language and the culture, also integrating into the culture. Regarding this issue of integration into the host culture, we should not be afraid. Europe was made through a continuous integration of cultures, many cultures. I believe that the fact that today in Iceland, practically in the Icelandic language of today, they can read their classics from 1,000 years ago without difficulty means that it is a nation with little migration or few waves, unlike in the rest of Europe. Europe was formed from migrations. ...Then, what do I think of the countries that close their borders? I think that theoretically, one cannot close their heart to a refugee. But also the prudence of those who administrate must be very open to receiving them, but also to making calculations as to how to settle them, because not only must a refugee be received, but he must be integrated. And, if a country has a ‘living capacity’

— let's call it that — of integration, it must be done up to that limit. But always with an open heart, it's not human to close doors. It is not human to close the heart, and in the long term, one pays for this. Here, we pay politically, too: just as also one can pay politically for imprudence in calculations, in receiving more of those who can be integrated. Because what is the danger when a refugee or a migrant - this applies to both - is not integrated? If I may permit myself the word - perhaps it is a neologism - one is "ghettoised," one enters into a ghetto. It is a culture that does not develop in relation to the other culture. This is dangerous. I think that the worst counsel for countries that tend to close their borders is fear. And the best counsel is prudence. I spoke with an official of the Swedish government in these days and they told me of some difficulties in this moment - and this relates to your last question —because so many come that there isn't time to sort them out and find school, home, work, learn the language. This must be calculated with prudence. But, Sweden ... I think that if Sweden is diminishing its capacity for welcome, it is not doing so out of selfishness or because it has lost that capacity; if there is something of that sort it is likely to be due to the other reason I gave: that so many today look to Sweden because its welcome is well-known, but there isn't the time necessary to assist everyone.

Another journalist from Swedish television, Anna Cristina Kappelin, said, "Sweden, which hosted this important ecumenical encounter, has a woman as the head of its Church. Is it realistic to think of women priests also in the Catholic Church in the coming decades? And if not, why? Are Catholic priests afraid of competition?"

Pope Francis: "Reading something of the history of the area where we were, I saw that there was a queen who was widowed three times, and I said: 'This woman is strong!'. They told me, 'Swedish women are very strong, very good. This is why some Swedish men look for women of another nationality'. I don't know if it's true, but ... on the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the clear final word was given by St. John Paul II and this stands. On competition, I don't know ...".

"If we read well the declaration made by St. John Paul II, it goes along this line. But women can do so many things better than men, even in the dogmatic field: to clarify, to perhaps give some clarity, not merely to refer to a document. In Catholic ecclesiology there are two dimensions to consider: the Petrine dimension, from the apostle Peter, and the apostolic college, which is the pastoral activity of the bishops; and the Marian dimension, which is the feminine dimension of the Church, and this I have said more than once. I ask myself: who is most important in theology and in the mystic of the Church: the apostles or Mary on the day of Pentecost? It is Mary! The Church is a woman. She is "la Chiesa" (in Italian), not "il Chiesa"... and the Church is the spouse of Christ. It is a spousal mystery. And in light of this mystery you will understand the reason for these two dimensions. The Petrine dimension, which is the bishops, and the Marian dimension, which is the maternity of the Church ... but in the most profound sense. A Church does not exist without this feminine dimension, because she herself is feminine.

The English journalist and writer Austen Ivereigh commented that "this autumn has been very rich in ecumenical encounters with the traditional churches - the Orthodox, the Anglican and now the Lutheran - but the majority of Protestants in the world today are from the Evangelical or Pentecostal tradition. I have understood that on the vigil of Pentecost this coming year, there will be an event in Circus Maximus celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Charismatic Renewal. You have held many initiatives, perhaps the first for a Pope, with evangelical leaders. What do you think of these initiatives, and what do you hope to achieve from the meeting next year? Many thanks".

Pope Francis: "With these initiatives, I would say that there have been two types of initiatives. One was when I went to Caserta, to the charismatic church, and along this same line I went to the Waldensian Church in Turin. An initiative of reparation and of forgiveness because Catholics, part of the Catholic Church, did not behave in a Christian way with them. It was necessary to ask for forgiveness and to heal a wound.

"The other initiative was dialogue, since my time in Buenos Aires. In Buenos Aires, for example, we held three meetings in the Buenos Aires 'Luna Park', which is able to hold seven thousand people: three meetings of evangelical and Catholic faithful in the line of the charismatic renewal, but also open to all. And the meeting lasted the whole day. A pastor and an evangelical bishop preached, as did a Catholic priest and a Catholic bishop preached, or two and two, they were varied. In two of these encounters, if not in all three, but in two for

sure, Father Cantalamessa, Preacher for the Papal Household, spoke.

This began in previous papacies, since I was in Buenos Aires, and it was good for us. We also held two three-day spiritual retreats of pastors and priests together. Pastors and priests, and a bishop, preached together and this helped a lot with dialogue, understanding the approach, closeness, and work – above all work with those most in need, together, and with respect, great respect. These are the initiatives which took place when I was in Buenos Aires. Here in Rome I have had some meetings with pastors, with two or three already. Some are from the United States and some from here in Europe.

“What you mentioned is the celebration organised by the ICCRS (International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services), the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the charismatic renewal, which was born ecumenical and will therefore continue to be ecumenical in that sense, and will take place at the Circus Maximus. I have planned, if God gives me life, to go and give a talk there. With respect to the charismatic renewal and with respect to the Pentecostals, the word ‘pentecostal’, the name ‘pentecostal’ is ambiguous nowadays, as it refers to many things, many associations and many ecclesial communities that not all the same; indeed, some are even opposed. So, we need to be more precise. The term has become so widespread that it has become misleading. In Brazil, it’s typical, the charismatic renewal has proliferated a lot.

“The Charismatic Renewal was born, and I was one of its first opponents in Argentina, as I was provincial of the Jesuits at the time, when it began in Argentina, and I forbid the Jesuits to get involved. I said publicly that a liturgical celebration had to be a liturgical celebration and not a Samba lesson. I said this. And, today, I think the opposite, when it is done well.

“Indeed, in Buenos Aires, every year, once a year, we held in the cathedral a Mass for the Charismatic Renewal movement, attended by everyone. So I too went through the process of recognising the good that the renewal had brought to the Church. Here we must not forget the great figure of Cardinal Suenens, who had that prophetic and ecumenical vision”.

The Spanish journalist Eva Fernandez then asked about the Holy Father’s recent meeting with Nicolás Maduro, president of Venezuela. “What impression did this meeting give you, and what is your opinion on the beginning of discussions? Many thanks”.

Pope Francis: “The president of Venezuela asked for a meeting and an appointment as he was travelling from the Middle East, from Qatar and from the Emirates, and had to make a technical stop in Rome. He had already asked for a meeting in 2013, then he asked for another appointment, but could not come due to illness, and then he asked for this meeting. If a president asks, I receive him, and in any case he was in Rome for a stop. I listened to him for half an hour, I asked him some questions and I heard his opinion. It is always good to listen to all viewpoints. I listened to his opinion.

“With reference to the second aspect, dialogue, it is the only sure path for all conflicts! For all conflicts. Either one enters into dialogue or one shouts: there is no way. With all my heart I count on dialogue, and I believe that we must go forward on this path. I do not know how it will end as it is very complex, but the people engaged in dialogue are of important political standing. Zapatero, twice president of the Spanish government and Restrepo [Colombian politician] and all the parties asked the Holy See to be present in the dialogue. And the Holy See assigned the nuncio to Argentina, Archbishop Tscherrig, who I think was at the negotiating table. But dialogue that promotes negotiation is the only way out of conflict. There is no other. If this had been done in the Middle East, how many lives might have been spared! (In the first meeting Archbishop Tscherrig substituted Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, appointed to accompany the negotiations. – Ed.)

The French journalist Mathilde Imberty: “Your Holiness, we are returning from Sweden where secularisation is very strong; it is a phenomenon that affects Europe in general. In a country such as France, it is estimated that in coming years, a majority of citizens will be without religion. In your view, is secularisation a question of fate? Who are responsible for this: secular governments or the Church that is perhaps too timid?”

Pope Francis: "Fate, no. I do not believe in fate. Who is responsible? I would not be able to say, 'You are responsible'. I don't know. It is a process... But before this, I'd like to say something: Pope Benedict XVI spoke of this often, and clearly. When faith becomes lukewarm it is because, as you say, the Church has become weaker. ... Let us think of France, for example: the times of the 'worldliness' of the court, the times when the priests were the abbots of the court, a clerical functionalism. ... The strength of evangelisation was lacking, the strength of the Gospel. Whenever there is secularisation, there is some weakness in evangelisation, that is true. But, there is another process, a cultural process, a process of – I think that I spoke of it once – of the second form of 'inculturation'. when man receives the world from God and to give it culture, to make it grow, to dominate it, at a certain point man feels that he is the master of that culture. Let us think of the myth of the Tower of Babel. He thinks he is the master of that culture to the extent that he begins to make himself the creator of another culture, his own, which takes the place of God the Creator. And in secularisation, I believe that sooner or later we sin against God the Creator. The self-sufficient man. It is not a problem of secularism, because we need a healthy secularism: the autonomy of things, the healthy autonomy of things, the healthy autonomy of the sciences, of thought, of politics, a healthy secularism is needed. No, it is another thing, a laicism rather like the legacy of the Enlightenment. I think that there are these two things: something of the self-importance of the man, creator of culture, but who goes beyond the limits and thinks he is God, and something of a weakness in evangelisation, which becomes lukewarm, and Christians too become lukewarm. We are saved somewhat by taking up again the healthy autonomy of the development of culture and the sciences also with the dependence of being a creature, and not God, and also by taking up again the strength of evangelisation. Today, I think that this secularisation is very strong in certain cultures and also very strong in different forms of worldliness, spiritual worldliness. When it enters into the Church, spiritual worldliness is the worst. These are not my words, that I am about to say, they are the words of Cardinal de Lubac, one of the great theologians of the Council. He said that when spiritual worldliness enters into the Church, it is the worst thing that can happen, even worse than that what happened in the age of the corrupt Popes. He mentions some forms of corruption of the Popes, which I do not remember well, but there were many. Worldliness: this to me is dangerous. And at risk of sounding as if I am giving a sermon or a homily, I will say: Jesus, when He prays for us all in the Last Supper, asks the Father for one thing for us, that He does not take us from the world but rather defends us from the world, from worldliness. It is very dangerous, it is secularisation in disguise, in the life of the Church. I don't know if I have answered your question.

Finally, the German Jürgen Erbacher: "Holiness, a few days ago you met with the Santa Martha Group that is engaged in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking, topics that I think are very close to your heart; not only as Pope, but previously in Buenos Aires you were occupied with these issues. Why? Do you have a special or perhaps also personal experience? And, as a German at the beginning of the year of commemoration of the Reformation, I must also ask if you are coming to the country where the Reformation began five hundred years ago".

Pope Francis: "I will begin with the second question: the schedule of trips for next year is not yet finished. The only thing we know is that it is almost certain I will go to India and Bangladesh, but it has not been decided: it remains a hypothesis.

With regard to the first question, yes, from my time in Buenos Aires, since I was a priest, I have always had this restlessness of the flesh of Christ. The fact that Christ continues to suffer and is crucified continuously in His weakest brothers, has always moved me. I worked as a priest, little things with the poor, but not exclusively, I also worked with university students ... then, as bishop of Buenos Aires, we worked together with non-Catholic and non-believing groups against slave labour, especially Latin American migrants who arrived in Argentina. They took away their passports and made them do slave labour in the factories, closed up inside. Once, one of them burned down the children were all on the rooftop, all dead, and others who were unable to escape. They were truly slaves, and I was affected by this. Human trafficking ... I even worked with two congregations of sisters who were working women who had been enslaved in prostitution. I don't like to say 'prostitutes', they were slaves to prostitution. Then once a year all these slaves of the system held a Mass in Constitution Square, a large rail terminal, like Termini, and they had a Mass there with everyone and this Mass was attended by all the organisations, the sisters who worked and even groups of non-believers, who all worked together. Here in Italy there are many volunteer groups who work against every form of slavery, whether it is in terms of work or women. Some months ago I visited one of these organisations and the people. Here in Italy volunteer work is

done well, I never thought that it happened like this. It's a beautiful thing that Italy, the voluntary sector. This is due to work of parish priests ... oratory and volunteering are two things that were born from the apostolic zeal of Italian parish priest. I don't know if I have responded".

Pope Francis answered by thanking those present and asking them to pray for him.

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