



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO GENOA

**ENCOUNTER WITH THE BISHOPS OF LIGURIA, CLERGY, SEMINARIANS AND RELIGIOUS
OF THE REGION, LAY CURIAL COLLABORATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER
RELIGIOUS CONFESSIONS**

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS*

*Cathedral of Genoa
Saturday, 27 May 2017*

[Multimedia]

Prayer for the victims of the attack in Egypt

Brothers and sisters, I invite you to pray together for our brothers and sisters, Egyptian Copts, who were killed because they did not want to deny their faith. Together with them, their bishops, and my brother Tawadros, I invite you to pray together in silence, and then a Hail Mary.

[Silence – Hail Mary]

And let us not forget that today there are more Christian martyrs than in ancient times, than in the first times of the Church. There are more of them.

Holy Father's answers to questions

1. Question from Don Andrea Carcasole

Holy Father, my name is Don Andrea Carcasole, and I am deputy pastor of the parish of San Bartolomeo della Certosa here in Genoa, which is a parish of twelve thousand inhabitants. We ask you today, what are the criteria for living an intense spiritual life in our ministry that, in the

complexity of modern life and also of administrative tasks, tends to make us live dispersed and crushed.

Pope Francis: Thank you Don Andrea for the question. I will say that the more we imitate the style of Jesus, the better we will accomplish our pastoral work. This is the fundamental criterion: the *style* of Jesus. What was Jesus' style as a shepherd? Jesus was always walking. The Gospels, each one with its characteristic nuances, all show us Jesus walking, amid the people, the "crowd" as the Gospel says. The disciples, the crowd, the doctors of the law, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees are well distinguished by the Gospel: it is interesting. And Jesus was in the midst of the crowd. If we imagine how Jesus' day was, reading the Gospels we can say that He spent most of His time passing through the street. This means closeness to people, proximity to problems. He did not hide. Then, in the evening, He often hid away to pray, to be with the Father. And these two things, this way of seeing Jesus, in the street and in prayer, are helpful for our daily life, which is not spent in the street, but *in a rush*. They are different things. It is said that Jesus was perhaps in something of a hurry when He went towards the Passion: he went "decisively" to Jerusalem. But this habit, this "crazy" way of living always watching the clock – "I must do this, this, this ..." – this is not a pastoral way, Jesus did not do this. Jesus never stopped. And, like all those who walk, Jesus was exposed to being dispersed, to being "crushed". That's why I like the question because we can see that it was born of a man who *walks* and who is not static. We must not be afraid of movement and the dispersion of our time. But the greatest fear that we have to think about, that we can imagine, is a static life: the life of a priest who has everything well-resolved, all in order, structured, everything in its place, the timetables – what time the Secretariat opens, the church closes at this time.... I'm afraid of the static priest. I'm afraid. Even when he is static in prayer: I pray from this hour to that hour. But do you not feel like spending an hour more with the Lord to watch him and let yourself be looked at by Him? This is the question I would ask the *static* priest, who has everything perfectly organized ... I would say that such a structured life is not a Christian life. Maybe that pastor is a good businessman, but I'm wondering, is he a Christian? Or at least, does he live like a Christian? Yes, he celebrates Mass, but is his style a Christian style? Or maybe he is a believer, a good man, he lives in the grace of God, but with a businessman's style. Jesus was always a man of the road, a man of the path, a man open to the surprises of God. Instead, the priest who has everything planned, everything structured, is generally closed to the surprises of God and loses that joy of the surprise of the encounter. The Lord takes you when you do not expect it, but when you are open. A first criterion is *not to be afraid of this tension* that we have to live: we are on the road, the world is like this. It is a sign of life, of vitality: a dad, a mum, an educator is always exposed to this and lives this tension. A heart that loves, that gives itself, will always live like this: exposed to this tension. And some may even have the fantasy of saying, "Ah, I'll make myself a cloistered priest, a cloistered nun, and so I will not have this tension". But even the fathers of the desert went to the wilderness to *fight* more. That fight, that tension.

And I believe that we must think about some aspects of this. If we look at Jesus, the Gospels show us two moments, which are powerful, which are the foundation. I said this at the beginning and I

return to it now: *the encounter with the Father is the encounter with the people*. The majority of people Jesus met were people in need, needy people – the sick, the possessed, sinners – and also marginalized people, lepers. The encounter with the Father. In the encounter with the Father and with brothers, there we find that tension: everything must be lived through this *encounter*. You, a priest, encounter God and Jesus in the Eucharist, with the faithful: you *encounter*. There is no wall that obstructs the encounter; there is no formality so rigid that it obstructs the encounter. For example, *prayer*: you can stay for an hour in front of the Tabernacle, but without encountering the Lord, praying like a parrot. But you waste time in this way! Prayer: if you pray, pray and encounter the Lord, stay in silence, let yourself be looked at by the Lord; offer a word to the Lord, ask something. Stay in silence, listen to what He says, what He makes you feel... *encounter*. And it is the same with people. We priests know how much people suffer when they come to ask us for advice or for something. “What is it? ... Yes, yes, but I don’t have time now, no”. In a rush, not on the path, in a rush, this is the difference. Those who are still and those who are in a hurry never meet. I knew a good priest who was truly genial: he was a professor of literature at the highest level, because he too was a poet and he knew literature well. And when he retired – he was a religious – he asked his provincial to send him to a parish in a slum, with the very poor. To have this service, a man of such culture, he went there truly with the desire to encounter – he was a man of prayer – to continue to encounter Jesus and to encounter a people whom he did not know: the poor, and he went with such generosity. This man belonged to the community where I was, the religious community. And the provincial had said to him, “one day a week, come to the community”. And he came often, he spoke with all of us, he confessed, and returned. One day he said to me, “But these theologians ... they are missing something”. I said to him, “What are they missing?” “For example, the professor of ecclesiology, he has to make two new theses”. “Ah yes, what are they?” “And he said, “The people of God, the people of the parish, are ontologically tiresome, that is, they are tiring, and metaphysically, essentially *olympic*”. “What do you mean by *olympic*?” “They do what they want. You can give advice, but then you see... And when you work with the people, people tire you, and at times you get a bit fed up of them too”. But they are the People of God! Think of Jesus, who drew them in from one side and another. Think of Jesus, of that time He was on the street and said, “But who touched me?” “But Master, what are you saying? Look how many people there are around you”. “Someone touched me”. “But look...”. People always tire. Let yourselves be tired by people; do not defend your own tranquillity too much. I go to the confessional: and there is a line of people there, and I was thinking of leaving... Not Mass, but something you can do or not, I had this in mind, I look at the clock and what do I do? It is a choice: I can stay in the confessional and continue to confess until it ends, or I can say to people, “I have another commitment, I am sorry, goodbye”. Always encounter the people. But this encounter with the people is so mortifying, it is a cross! Encountering people is a cross, because perhaps there will be in the parish one, two, ten people – old ladies – who will make you a cake and bring it to you, good people – but how many dramas you have to see! And this tires the soul and leads you to the prayer of intercession.

I would say these two things in this tension. Is very important. And one of the signs that things are

not going in the right direction is when the priest speaks about himself too much, too much: about the things he does, what he likes to do ... it is self-referential. It is a sign that this man is not a man of encounter, at best he is a man of the mirror, he likes to look at his own reflection; he needs to fill the void in his heart by talking about himself. Instead, the priest who leads a life of encounter, with the Lord in prayer and with people until the end of the day, is “worn”, as St. Luigi Orione said “like a rag”. And one can say, “But, Lord, I need other things ...”. Are you tired? Go ahead. That tiredness is holiness, as long as there is prayer. Otherwise, it may also be a tiredness of self-centredness. As priests, you must ask yourself this: am I a man of encounter? Am I a man of the tabernacle? Am I a man of the road? Am I a man “of the ear”, who knows how to listen? Or when people start to tell me things, do I immediately reply: “Yes, yes, this is how things are...”. Do I get tired of people? This was Jesus. There are no formulas. Jesus had the clear awareness that his life was for others: for the Father and for the people, not for Himself. He gave Himself, He gave Himself: He gave Himself to the people, gave Himself to the Father in prayer. And He lived His life in the form of mission: “I was sent by the Father to say these things ...”.

One thing that does not help us is weakness in diocesan life. But I'll speak about this in answer to another question.

It will do us good, it will be good for all priests to remember that only Jesus is the Saviour, and that there are no other saviours. And perhaps to think that Jesus was never, ever, linked to the structures, but always tied to relationships. If a priest sees that in his life his conduct is too tied to structures, then something is wrong. And Jesus did not do this, Jesus was bound to relationships. I once heard a man of God – I believe they will introduce the cause of beatification of this man – who used to say: “In the Church we must live according to that saying: “Minimal structures for the maximum life, never the maximum of structures for the minimum of life”. Without relationships with God and neighbour, nothing makes sense in a priest's life. You will have a career, you will go to that place or another, in that parish you like or in a group of three in line to be bishop. You will have a career. But the heart? It will remain empty because your heart is linked to structures and not to relationships, the essential relationships: with the Father, with God, with Jesus, and with the people. This is a part of the answer on the criteria I want to give you. “But, Father, you are not modern... These criteria are old-fashioned...”. This is how life is, son! They are the old Church criteria that are modern, ultramodern!”

2. Question from Don Pasquale Revello

I am Don Pasquale Revello, parish priest. I work in Recco, a beautiful town on the sea, in the parish of *San Giovanni Battista*: seven thousand inhabitants. Holy Father, we would like to live better the sacerdotal fraternity recommended to us by our cardinal archbishop and promoted by diocesan and vicariate meetings, pilgrimages, retreats and spiritual exercises, and community weeks. Can you give us some advice?

Pope Francis: Thank you, Don Pasquale. How old are you?

Don Pasquale: 81.

Pope Francis: We are peers! But I make a confession: hearing you speak in this way, I would have imagined you twenty years younger!

Fraternity: It's a nice word, but it does not have much "stock" in terms of values. It's a word that is not part of the value chain. It's so difficult, fraternity, between us. It is a daily task, presbyteral fraternity. Perhaps without realizing it, we run the risk of creating that image of the priest who knows everything, who doesn't need anything else to be said to him: "I know everything, I know everything". Today, kids would say, "This is a *Google* or *Wikipedia* priest!". He knows it all. And this is so bad for priestly life: self-sufficiency. This kind of priest says, "Why waste time in meetings? ... and how many times am I in meetings and talking to the brother priest, but I am 'in orbit' in my thoughts, thinking of the things I have to do tomorrow...". I leave the question: but if the bishop were to say, "Do you know that next year the "Otto per mille" contribution for priests will increase?" Then he comes out of orbit immediately, because there is something that touched the heart! Are you interested in this? And what that young priest, or that old priest, or that middle-aged priest was saying, doesn't interest you? A nice question to ask: in meetings, when I feel a bit far from what the other person is saying or I do not care, to ask myself: "But why is this not interesting to me? What is it that interests me? Where is the door to get to the heart of that brother priest who is talking about his life, which is a wealth for me?" It is a true asceticism, that of priestly fraternity!

Fraternity. Listening and praying together ... and then a good lunch together, to celebrate together ... for the young priests, a football match together ... That's good! It is good for us. Brothers.

Fraternity, very human. To do with the priests of the presbytery what I would do with my brothers: this is the secret. But there is selfishness; we have to recover the sense of fraternity that ... yes, we speak about it but it has not yet entered into the heart of presbyteries, it has not entered deeply. In some a little, in others less, but it must enter more. What happens to the other, affects me; what this confrere says may also help me to solve a problem I have. "But he thinks in a different way to me..." Listen to him! And take what you need. The brothers are wealth for each other. And this is what opens the heart: recovering the sense of fraternity. It's a very serious thing. We priests, we bishops, we are not the Lord. No. The Lord is He. We are the disciples of the Lord, and we must help each other. Also by arguing: how the disciples argued when they wondered who was the greatest among them! Even by arguing. It is also good to hear discussions in priestly meetings, because if there are discussions there is freedom, there is love, there is trust, there is fraternity! Do not be afraid. Rather, you have to be afraid of the opposite: not saying things, but then, behind the other's back: "Did you hear what that poor kid said? Did you hear that extravagant idea?" The murmuring, taking each other down, rivalry ... I'll tell you something ... I thought three times about whether or not I can say it. Yes, I can say it. I do not know if I should, but I can say it. You know that for the appointment of a bishop, they ask for information from priests and even from the faithful and from consecrated persons, about this priest, and there, in

the questionnaire that the nuncio sends, they say, “this is secret”. You can not tell anyone, but this priest is a possible candidate to become a bishop. And they ask for information. Sometimes you find real slander or opinions that, without being serious slander, devalue the person of the priest; and you realize immediately that behind this there is rivalry, jealousy, envy... When there is no priestly fraternity, there is – and the word is hard – there is betrayal: the brother betrays. He sells his brother in order to get ahead. You “flay” your brother. Think, examine your conscience on this. Ask yourselves: how many times have I spoken well, have I listened well in a meeting, to brother priests who think differently or whom I do not like? How many times, as soon as they started talking, have I closed my ears? And how many times have I criticized them, slandered or “flayed” them secretly? The great enemy against the priestly brotherhood is this: the murmur of envy, jealousy, because he is not good, or because he thinks in a different way. And so the ideology of fraternity is more important; the ideology of doctrine is more important ... but where have we arrived? Think about it. Gossip or harsh judgement of our brethren is an evil of seclusion: the more wrapped up we are in our own interests, the more we criticize others. And never have the urge to say the last word: the last word will be what comes out by itself, or what the bishop will say; but I say what I have to say and listen to what others have to say too.

Then when there are sick priests, physically ill, we go to visit them, we help them ... But it is worse when there are those who are psychically ill; or morally ill. Do I do penance for them? Do I pray for them? Do I try to get closer to lend a hand, to show them the Father’s merciful gaze? Or do I immediately go to my other friend to say to him: “You know what? I’ve found out that this one or that one does this, that or the other...”. And in this way we “soil” him even more. But if that poor man has fallen victim to Satan, do you want to crush him too? These things are not fairy tales: this happens, this happens.

And another thing that can help is to know that none of us is everything. We are all part of a body, of the body of Christ, of the Church, of this particular Church. And whoever claims to be everything, to always be right or to have that place or another, is wrong. But this is learned from the seminary. I know that here there are the superiors of seminaries, formators, spiritual fathers. This is very important. A good archbishop of yours, Cardinal Canestri, said that the Church is like a river: the important thing is to be *in* the river. If you are in the centre or more to the right or left to the left, but *inside* the river, this is a legitimate variety. The important thing is to be *in* the river. Many times we want the river to narrow down only to our side and we condemn the others ... this is not fraternity. Everyone inside the river. All of us. This is what you learn in the seminary. And I advise formators: if you see a good, intelligent seminarian, who seems good, who is good but is a gossip, send him away. Because afterwards this it will be a debt on the priestly fraternity. If he cannot be corrected, send him away. From the beginning. There is a saying, I do not know how it is said in Italian: “Raise crows and they will eat your eyes”. If in the seminary you raise crows who chatter, they will destroy any presbytery, any fraternity in the presbytery.

And then there are so many trials: the parish priest and vice-parish priest, for example. Naturally

they sometimes agree, they are of the same temperament; but very often they are different, very different, because in the river one is on this side and the other is on the other side, but all within the river. Make an effort to understand, to love each other, to talk to each other... The important thing is to be in the river. And the important thing is to not gossip about the other, but to seek unity. And we must take the bright spots, the riches, the gifts, the charisms of each one. This is important. The Fathers of the Desert teach us so much about this: about fraternity, forgiveness, and help. Once, some monks went to Abba Pafnuzio: they were worried about the sin that one of their brothers had committed, and they went to him for help. But before they went, they had gossiped among themselves a lot. And Abba Pafnuzio, having heard them, said, "Yes, I saw on the river bank a man who was in the mud up to his knees. And some brothers wanted to give him a hand, and they made him go down up to his neck". There are some "helpers" who seek to destroy rather than help: they are only disguised as helpers. In the murmuration, this always happens. One thing that will help us a lot, when we are faced with sins or bad aspects of our brothers, things that try to break the fraternity, is to ask ourselves the question: "How many times have I been forgiven?" This helps.

Thank you, Don Pasquale. And thank you for your youthfulness.

3. Question from Mother Rosangela Sala, president of USMI Ligure

Holy Father, thank you. I am Sister Rosangela Sala of the Institute of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, and I represent the female side of Ligurian consecrated life. We know that you have a long experience of consecration, lived in different situations and with different roles. What can you tell us so that we can live our life with growing intensity with regard to our charism, to the apostolate of our diocese, which is the Church?

Pope Francis: Thank you, Mother. I have known Mother Rosangela for years... She is a good woman but has one flaw. May I say it? She drives at 140 kilometres an hour! She likes to go fast, but she is good.

She used a word I like very much, very much: the diocese. More than just a word, it's a dimension that I'd like to connect with previous questions. A dimension of our Church life, because the diocese is what saves us from abstraction, nominalism, a somewhat gnostic or "fly-by-night" faith. The diocese is that portion of the people of God that has a face. In the diocese there is the face of the people of God. The diocese has made, makes and will continue to make history. We are all included in the diocese. And this helps us to ensure our faith is not theoretical, but practical. And you, consecrated men and women, you are a gift to the Church, because every charism, each charism, is a gift for the Church, for the universal Church. But it is always interesting to see how each of the charisms, all the charisms are born in a concrete place and very closely related to the life of that specific diocese. Charisms do not arise from nothing, but in a concrete place. Then the charism grows, grows and grows, and takes on a very universal character; but at the origin, it

always has a concreteness. It is good to remember how there is no charism without a concrete foundation. And it is not usually related to a universal mission, but to a diocese, to a concrete place. Then it becomes universal, but at the beginning, at the roots ... Let us think of the Franciscans. If one says, “I am a Franciscan”, what is the place that comes to mind? Assisi! Immediately! “But we are universal!” Yes, you are everywhere, it is true, but there is that concrete origin. And intensely living the charism is to wish to incarnate it in a concrete place.

The charism must be incarnate: it is born in a concrete place and then grows and continues to embody itself in concrete places. But we must always look for where it was born, how the charism was born, in which city, in what district, with which founder, how he or she was formed ... And this teaches us to love people in specific places, to love real people, to have solid ideals: concreteness is given by the diocesan. The concreteness of the Church is given to her by diocesan life. And that does not mean killing the charism, no. This helps the charism to become more real, more visible, closer. And then, every now and again – every six years, normally – consecrated persons come together in the Chapter, and come from different “concrete” realities, and this makes the institute grow. But always with the root in diocesan life: in the various dioceses, where this charism was born and where it went. This is concreteness. When we neglect to integrate the universality of a religious institution, which grows and goes on and on, in concrete places, in concrete dioceses, the religious order eventually forgets where it was born, it forgets its founding charism. It is universalized in the manner of the United Nations. “Yes, let’s have a universal meeting, all together ...”. But there is not that concreteness of diocesan life: where the charism was born and where it then went and entered into those particular Churches. Flying religious institutes do not exist! And if someone lays a claim to this, it will end badly. It always has its roots in the diocese. And here is the uneasy relationship between consecrated religious and bishops. Now we are working on a new project to renew document *Mutuae relationes*, which is 40 years old, and it is time to revise it. Because there are always conflicts, including conflicts of growth, good conflicts, and also some that are not so good. But this is important: a charism which does not take seriously the aspect of diocesan life, and which takes refuge only in *ad intra* aspects, will be led towards a self-referential spirituality, not universal, as is the Church of Jesus Christ.

I like this phrase very much, Mother: diocesan life. Where the charism is born and where it is integrated in its growth.

A second aspect I would like to emphasize is *willingness*. A to go where there is more risk, where there is more need, where there is more necessity. Not to care for oneself: to go to give the charism and to enter where there is the greatest need. A word I use often is “peripheries”, but I mean all the peripheries, not just those of poverty, all of them. Even those of thought, all of them. Enter into them. And these peripheries are the reflection of the places where the primal charism was born. And when I say willingness, I also mean a review of works. It is true, sometimes reviews are carried out because there is no staff and it must be done. But even when there is staff, when there are people, ask: is our charism necessary in this diocese, or in this part of the diocese? Or

will it be more necessary elsewhere, and in this place can another charism come to help? Being willing to go further, always further: “*Deus semper maior*”. Always go beyond, beyond ... Being willing and not being afraid of risks; with the prudence of governance, but ... This is important, these two things, I would say: diocesan life and willingness. Diocesan life as a reference to birth, and also the willingness to grow and integrate in the dioceses. I would say this, referring to your word, *diocese*. Thank you.

4. Question from Fr. Andrea Caruso, O.F.M. Cap.

Your Holiness, I am Brother Andrea Caruso, priest of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin in Liguria. This is my question: how should we live and face the general decline in vocations to priestly life and consecrated life?

Pope Francis: Thank you. It is said that Franciscans always meet, and that “when they are not in the chapter, they are in the verse”. They are always in one meeting or another, they are united.

So, the decline [in vocations]. There is a demographic problem: the demographic decline in Italy. Growth is below zero, and if there are no boys or girls, there will be no vocations. It was easier in times of larger families to have vocations. There is a decline that is also a consequence of the demographic decline. It is not the only reason, but we must keep it in mind. It is easier to live with a cat or a dog than with your children. Because I can assure myself of guaranteed love, because they are not free, I raise them up to a certain point, there is a relationship, I have companionship with a cat, with a dog, and not with children. One of my assistants who has three [children] tells me so [laughs]. Yes, it's true. At every age, we must see the things that happen as a passage of the Lord: Today the Lord passes among us and asks us this question: “What is happening?” What is happening? The decline is real. But I am asking another question: what is the Lord asking or saying to us now? The vocational crisis is a crisis that affects the whole Church, all vocations: priestly, religious, lay, matrimonial... Think of the vocation to marriage, which is so beautiful. They do not marry, young people; they live together, they prefer that. It is a transversal crisis, and we have to think of these things as such. It is a crisis that affects everyone, even the vocation to marriage. A transversal crisis. And as such it is time to ask, to ask the Lord and to ask ourselves: what must we do? What should we change? Addressing problems is necessary; and learning from problems is compulsory. And we also have to learn from problems. Look for an answer that is not a reductive response, that is not simply a “winning” response.

A bad thing that happened in the Church here in Italy – I am talking about the nineties, more or less – some congregations that did not have homes in the Philippines, went and brought girls here, they “spoiled” them and the girls came. They were good girls, good ... Then the majority left. I remember in the Synod of 1994 there was a pastoral letter from the bishops of the Philippines who forbade this, and congregations without homes in the Philippines cannot do this. First. Secondly, initial training must be done in the country [of origin], then you can go to another country, but the

initial training must be in your own country. And I remember as if it were today, I think it was the “Corriere della Sera”, ran a headline with block capitals: “Trafficking in novices”. It was a scandal. Also in some Latin American countries. I'm thinking of a congregation ... They took the bus and went to some poor places, and they convinced the girls to come to Buenos Aires and become novices, and they came. And then things did not go well. And here, in Italy - in Rome – this is a fact from fifteen years ago, I knew of some congregations that went to the former communist countries of Central Europe in search of vocations, girls, in poor countries ... They came but did not have a vocation; however, they did not want to return. Some found work, and others, poor things, they ended up on the sidewalk.

Vocation work is difficult, but it must be done. It is a challenge. We must be creative in vocational work. The other day they were in a meeting – before your chapter in the province of the Marches, they came to me. Almost all of them. To have a sort of pre-chapter with the Pope. So many young people! “How come you have so many vocations?” – “I do not know, we try to live life as St. Francis wanted”. Fidelity to the foundational charism. And when there are congregations that are faithful to the foundational charism, but with that love that shows the current nature of that charism, its beauty, this attracts. And then there is witness. If we want consecrated men and women, priests, we must bear witness that we are happy, that we are happy. And that we come to the end of our life happy with the choice Jesus made of us. The witness of joy, even in the way of life. There are consecrated men and women, priests, and Christian bishops, who live as pagans. A young man or woman today looks and says, “No, I do not want that!”. And that drives people out. Then, pastoral and missionary conversion are important. One of the things young people today are looking for is the missionary dimension. Apostolic zeal: to see in witness also a great apostolic zeal, that one does not live for himself, that he lives for others, that he gives life, he gives life. Once – I found out when I had just become a bishop, around 1992 – I found out that a congregation of nuns at the place where I was, in the neighbourhood in Buenos Aires where I was auxiliary bishop, was restoring the nuns’ home. They had a very wealthy college. They had the money. And they were right: the nuns’ home needed to be restored a bit. They did it well: even with private bathrooms. It is fine, I thought, if it is something austere, today even a modern commodity is important, there is no problem... But in the end they made it into a luxury palace, for nuns. And even – I am speaking about 1992, today it would be more understandable, I don’t know, it wouldn’t be good but it wouldn’t scandalize us so much – in each of the nuns’ rooms there was a TV. What was the result? From two to four in the afternoon, you never found a nun in the college: each one was in her room, watching the soaps on the TV. Worldliness. Spiritual worldliness. And the people, the young people, ask for testimony of authenticity, apostolic zeal, harmony with the charism. And we too must take account of the fact that with these forms of behaviour we ourselves provoke certain vocational crises. We do so ourselves. There is a need for pastoral conversion, for missionary conversion. I invite you to take the passages from *Evangelii gaudium* that refer to this, to the need for missionary conversion, and this is a witness that will attract vocations.

Then, there are vocations, God gives them. But if you – a priest or a consecrated person or a nun

– are always occupied, if you do not have time to listen to the young people who come, who do not come ... “Yes, yes, tomorrow...”. Why? Because the young are boring, they always come with the same questions. ... If you do not have time, go and find another person who can listen. Listen to them. And then, the young are always on the move: you must place them on a missionary path. Four days of holiday: I invite you, let’s go on a little mission in that place, in that village, or let’s go and whitewash that village school, that is all dirty... And the young go straight away. And doing these things, the Lord speaks to them. Witness. This is the key. This is the key.

What does a young person think when he or she sees a priest, or a consecrated man or woman? The first thing he or she thinks, if there is some movement of the Spirit: “I would like to be like her, like him”. There is the seed. It is born of witness. “I would never want to be like him!” And there is the counter-testimony. Witness is given without words.

I will finish with an anecdote. In the area of Buenos Aires, where I was auxiliary bishop, there are many hospitals, but in all of them there are nuns. And in one of them, near the vicariate, there were three nuns, German, very elderly, sick, from a congregation that did not have people to send. And the Mother general, with good sense, recalled them: it was a prudent decision, taken with prayer, speaking about it with the bishop... something done well. And a priest said, “I know the Mother general of a South Korean institute in Seoul, of the Holy Family of Seoul. I can write to them”. He wrote. “Good, good”. In the end, after four months, three Korean sisters arrived. They arrived Monday, so to speak, on Tuesday they sorted out their affairs a bit, and by Wednesday they were on the wards. Koreans, without knowing a word of Spanish. After a few days, the patients were happy: “But what good nuns! How nice, what they say!” “But how is it possible”, I said, “what they say, if they do not speak a word of Spanish?” “No, no, but it is their smile, they take you by the hand, they give you a caress” – the language of gestures! But above all the witness of love. Look, even without words, you can attract people. Witness is decisive in vocations, it is decisive.

Thank you for what you do! Many thanks.

I ask you to pray for me. I thank you for your consecrated life, for your priestly life. And go ahead, ahead, the Lord is great and will give children and grandchildren for our congregations and our dioceses.

Thank you.

And now I will give you my blessing, and continue with courage! And I would like to greet the four who have had the courage to ask the questions.

[Blessing]

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