



The Holy See

VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

IN-FLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FROM STRASBOURG TO ROME

*Papal Flight
Tuesday, 25 November 2014*

[Multimedia]

Renaud Bernard: This morning, before the European Parliament, you delivered an address with pastoral words, but with words that can be heard as political words, and which may — in my opinion — be compared to a socio-democratic sentiment. I can draw a brief example: when you say that expressions of the true strength of the people must not be allowed to collapse under the pressure of multinational interests. Can we say that you could be a Socio-Democratic Pope?

This is reductionism, my dear man! There, I feel like I'm part of a bug collection: "This one is a socio-democratic insect...". No, I would say not: I don't know whether I am a Socio-Democratic Pope or not.... I wouldn't dare to qualify myself as being on one side or another. I dare say that this comes from the Gospel: this is the message of the Gospel, taken from the Social Doctrine of the Church. Concretely, I have never moved away from the Church in her Social Doctrine no matter what social or political comments I may have made. The Social Doctrine of the Church comes from the Gospel and from Christian Tradition. What I've said, the identity of peoples, is a Gospel value, is it not? I was referring to this sense. But you've made me laugh, thank you!

Jean-Marie Guénois: Your Holiness, there was practically no one on the streets of Strasbourg this morning. The people said they were disappointed. Do you regret not going to the Cathedral of Strasbourg, which is celebrating its millennium this year? And when will you make your first visit to France, and where? Lisieux, perhaps?

No, it's not been planned yet, but certainly one should go to Paris, no? Then, there is a proposal to go to Lourdes.... I've asked for a city no pope has ever visited, to meet those citizens. But no plans have been made yet. No, regarding Strasbourg, this was considered, but going to the Cathedral would have been considered a visit to France. This was the problem.

Giacomo Galeazzi: I was struck, in your speech to the Council of Europe, by the concept of transversality, to which you referred, and in particular, you made reference to meetings you have had with young politicians from various countries, and you also spoke of the need for a sort of pact among the generations, an intergenerational accord in addition to this transversality. Then, if I may, I am curious: is it true that you are devoted to St Joseph? And that you have a statue in your room?

Yes! Always, whenever I've asked St Joseph for something, it's been given to me. This fact of "transversality" is important. I've noticed in dialogues with young politicians, in the Vatican, especially from different parties and nations, that they speak with a different music which is inclined toward transversality: it is a value! Without denying it, they aren't afraid to step outside of their own ideology in order to dialogue. They are brave! I think we have to imitate this; and intergenerational dialogue too. This going out in order to find people of other ideologies and dialoguing: Europe needs this, today.

Alonso Martínez Javier Maria: In your second address, the one to the Council of Europe, you spoke of the sins of the sons and daughters of the Church. I would like to know how you reacted to the news of this event in Granada, which you have in some way brought to light....

I received the letter sent to me, I read it, called the person and said: "Tomorrow, go to the bishop"; and I wrote to the bishop to begin the work, to investigate and to move forward. How did I react to it? With great sorrow, with the greatest sorrow. But the truth is the truth, and we must never hide it.

Andreas Englisch: In the speeches in Strasbourg you spoke often of both the terrorist threat and the threat of slavery: these are also typical attitudes of the Islamic State, which threatens most of the Mediterranean, they also threaten Rome and even you, personally. Do you think it is possible to engage in dialogue with these extremists, or do you think this is a lost cause?

I never consider something a lost cause, never. Perhaps it's not possible to have a dialogue, but never close this door. It's difficult, you can say "nearly impossible", but the door is always open. You used the word "threat" twice. It's true, terrorism is a reality that threatens.... But slavery is a reality woven into the social fabric today, and for a long time! Slave labour, human trafficking, the trade of children... it's a tragedy! Let's not close our eyes to this! Slavery, today, is a reality, the exploitation of people.... Then there is the threat of these terrorists. But there is another threat, too, State terrorism. When such things arise, they escalate and escalate and every State on its own behalf feels it has the right to massacre terrorists, and with the terrorists so many die who are

innocent. This is a high level of anarchy which is very dangerous. With terrorism one must fight, but I repeat what I said in my previous trip: when an unjust aggressor must be stopped, it must be done with an international consensus.

Caroline Pigozzi: I wanted to know when traveling to Strasbourg whether in your heart you were traveling as Peter's Successor, as the Bishop of Rome, or as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires....

Caroline's very sharp.... I don't know, truly, I don't know. Well... I travel, I think, with all three things. I've never asked myself that question. You're making me think a little! But no, really.... My memory is that of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, but this is no longer the case. Now I'm the Bishop of Rome and Peter's Successor, and I think I travel with that memory but with this reality: I travel with these things. I am concerned about Europe, at this time; it's good to help me move forward, and to do so as the Bishop of Rome and Peter's Successor: there I'm a Roman.

Thank you so much for your work! It has truly been a meaningful day. Thank you, thank you so much. Don't forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Thank you. Enjoy your lunch.