



# The Holy See

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VISIT TO "VILLA NAZARETH"

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS**

*Saturday, 18 June 2016*

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## **[Multimedia]**

### **Prepared speech inspired by the parable of the Good Samaritan:**

There are many people involved in this Gospel passage: the one who asks the question “who is my neighbour?”; Jesus; and also, in the parable, the robbers, the poor man who was left half dead in the street, the priest, the doctor of the law, perhaps a lawyer [the “Levite”]; and then the landlord, the innkeeper.

In the parable, perhaps neither the priest, nor the doctor of the law, nor the Samaritan nor the innkeeper knew how to respond to the question “who is my neighbour?”; perhaps they did not even know what a “neighbour” was, who a “neighbour” was. The priest was in a hurry, like all priests, because he looked at his watch: “I have to say Mass”, or, many times: “I left the church open, I have to close it, because it’s that time and I cannot stay here”. The doctor of the law, a practical man, said: “If I meddle in this, tomorrow I will have to go to court and be a witness, I will have to tell what I did, and I will lose two or three days of work.... No, no, it’s better...”. He acts like Pontius Pilate and leaves.

Whereas the other sinner [the Samaritan], the foreigner who was not part of the people of God, was moved: “he had compassion”, and he stopped. All three — the priest, the lawyer and the Samaritan — knew well, they knew well what they ought to do. And each one of them made his own decision. I like to think of the innkeeper: he is anonymous. He watched all of this, he saw and he did not understand anything. “This is crazy! A Samaritan who helps a Jew! He is crazy! Then he tends to his wounds with his hands and brings him here to the inn and says to me: ‘Take care of him, I will pay you if there is anything else...’. I have never seen such a thing, this man is

crazy!”. That man received the Word of God: in the testimony. From whom? Not from the priest, no, because he had not even seen him; nor, likewise, from the lawyer. It was from the sinner, a sinner who had compassion.

“Did you hear that? A sinner, yes, he was not faithful to God’s people, but he had compassion”. And [the innkeeper] did not understand anything, he was left with doubt, perhaps with curiosity: “What has happened here, how strange...”. With unease inside; and this is what bears the testimony. The testimony of this sinner sowed unrest in the heart of this innkeeper; and the Gospel does not say what happens to him, not even his name. But surely this man... — surely, because when the Holy Spirit sows, he grows — his curiosity certainly grew, his unease, he let it grow in his heart and received the message of the testimony. Then, days later, the Samaritan passed by that area again; surely he paid something. Or perhaps [the innkeeper told him]: “No, leave it, leave it: this goes on my account”. Perhaps this was his first reaction to the testimony.

Why am I reflecting on this character today, on this person? Because our testimony cannot account for — how might I put it — testimony means living in a way in which others “see your good works, and give glory to the Father who is in heaven” (cf. Mt 5:16), in other words, that they encounter the Father, that they go to him.... These are Jesus’ words. I heard about Villa Nazareth: “There is this Work...”, but I did not know it well. Then Msgr Celli told me something about it.... It is a Work, a job that favours testimony. People come here not to “climb”, not to earn money, no, they come to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to bear witness to Jesus and to sow testimony. In silence, without explanation, with gestures....

Return to the language of gestures. And surely this innkeeper is in heaven, surely! Because that seed certainly grew, it sprouted. He saw something that he never, ever would have imagined seeing. And this is testimony. Testimony passes by and leaves. You leave it there and you go. Only the Lord protects it, makes it grow, as he makes a seed grow: while the master sleeps, the plant grows.

I hope that this Work continues to be a Work of testimony, a house of testimony; of witness to everyone, to everyone. Testimony to the people who draw near, or who hear about it... a testimony. This is my hope. And may the Lord free us from robbers — there are so many! — may He free us from priests who rush or are always in haste, they have no time to listen, to see, because they have their things to do...; may He free us from the lawyers who want to present the faith of Jesus Christ with mathematical rigidity; and may He teach us to stop and teach us the wisdom of the Gospel: “getting one’s hands dirty”. May the Lord give us this grace. Thank you.

### Questions and answers

*[Valentina Piras] Holy Father, before teachers, we young people need credible witnesses.*

*Sometimes we are “at a standstill” in life, prey to the illusion of success and to the worship of our*

*own ego, and unable to give of ourselves. How can we reawaken the greatness and the courage of comprehensive choices, of the impulses of the heart in order to face academic and emotional challenges?*

Thank you. A key phrase is: “We young people need credible witnesses”. And this is precisely the logic of the Gospel: to bear witness. With our lives, the way we live, the choices made.... But witnesses to what? To various things. We Christians witness to Jesus Christ who lives, who has accompanied us: he has accompanied us in pain, he died for us, but he lives. Spoken in this way, it seems too clerical. But I understand the witness that young people seek: it is the witness of the “slap”. The slap is a beautiful daily witness! The one that wakes you up, and says to you: “Look, don’t delude yourself with ideas, with promises...”. Even the illusions that are closest to us. The illusion of success: “No, I am taking this road, and I will be successful”. The worship of one’s ego.

Today, as we all know, the mirror is in fashion! Look at yourself. One’s ego, the narcissism that today’s culture offers us. And when we have no witnesses, perhaps life goes on fine for us, we earn well, we have a profession, a nice workplace, a family... but you used a very powerful phrase: “We are men and women who are *at a standstill* in life”, in other words, people who do not walk, who do not move. Like conformists: everything is habit, a habit that leaves us calm, we have what is necessary, we lack nothing, thanks be to God.... How do we reawaken the greatness and the courage of comprehensive choices, of the impulses of the heart in order to face academic and emotional challenges?”. The phrase I use very often is: take a risk! Take a risk. Whoever does not risk does not walk. “But what if I make a mistake?”.

Blessed be the Lord! You will make more mistakes if you remain still, stagnant: that is the mistake, a bad mistake, closure. Take risks. Risks for noble ideals, risks that soil your hands, as the Samaritan risked in the parable. When we are more or less calm in life, there is always the temptation of paralysis, to avoid taking risks: to be calm and quiet.... “How can we reawaken the greatness and the courage of comprehensive choices”, you asked, “the impulses of the heart in order to face academic and emotional challenges?”. Approach the problems, go out of yourself and take risks, take risks. Otherwise your life will slowly become a paralyzed life; happy, content, with the family, but *at a standstill* there — to use the phrase you used. It is very sad to see a life that is at a standstill; it is very sad to see people who seem more like mummies in a museum than living beings. Take a risk! Take a risk. And if you make a mistake, bless the Lord. Take a risk. Move forward! I don’t know, this is what came to mind to say to you.

*[Gabriele Giuliano] In the newspapers we often see accounts of the tragedy that is affecting Christian communities around the world: these events lead us to a deep reflection on the extent to which the faith can be witnessed to and lived, even to the point of death. This courage of true faith calls us all into question. How can we be credible witnesses to the Gospel, how can we proclaim Christ’s message to the world? Many of us try but we are easily discouraged. Does this happen to you? Have you ever found yourself in a crisis of faith? Where and how did you find a way to*

*bounce back, to avoid growing weary, and to continue in your duties, first as a layman, and then as a consecrated man?*

You have asked such a personal question! And I have to make a choice.... Either to respond with the truth, or create a soap opera that might be beautiful and go on.... The tragedy of Christian communities spread throughout the world: this is real. But it is the destiny of Christians: witnesses — I again use the word *witness* — to the point of difficult situations. I do not like, and I want to say it clearly, I do not like it when one speaks of the genocide of Christians, in the Middle East for example: this is reductionism, it is reductionism. The truth is a persecution that leads Christians to fidelity, to coherence in their faith. Let us not sociologically reduce what is a mystery of the faith: martyrdom.

Those 13 — I believe they were Egyptian Coptic Christians, now saints, canonized by the Coptic Church — slaughtered on the Libyan beach: they all died saying: “Jesus, help me!”. Jesus. I am sure that the majority of them did not even know how to read. They were not doctors of theology, no, no. They were people who were, one might say, uneducated, but they were doctors of Christian coherence, that is to say, they were witnesses of faith. And the faith makes us witness to so many difficult things in life; we also witness to the faith with our lives. Let us not delude ourselves: martyrdom of blood is not the only way to witness to Jesus Christ. It is the utmost, we can say, it is heroic. It is also true that today there are more martyrs than in the first centuries of the Church, it is true. But there is everyday martyrdom: the martyrdom of honesty, the martyrdom of patience in raising children; the martyrdom of fidelity to love, when it is easier to take another, more hidden path: the martyrdom of honesty, in this world that could be called “the paradise of bribes”, it is so easy: “Say *this* and you will have *this*”, where one lacks the courage to throw away dirty money, in a world where so many parents feed their children bread that has been contaminated by bribes, the bread they buy with the bribes that they are paid.... There is Christian witness, there is martyrdom: “No, I do not want this!” — “If you do not want it, you will not have that position, you will not be able to climb any higher”. The martyrdom of silence in the face of the temptation of gossip.

For the Christian — Jesus says — it is unacceptable to gossip. Jesus says that one who calls his brother “stupid” must go to hell. You know that gossip is like the bomb of a terrorist, of a kamikaze — not of a kamikaze, but of a terrorist, because at least the suicide bomber has the courage to also die himself — no, gossip is when I throw a “bomb”, I destroy someone, and I remain happy. But the Christian witness is the martyrdom of every day, a silent martyrdom, and we must speak this way. “But we are martyred men and women, we must have a sad face, a long face”. No. There is joy in the word *Jesus*, like those men on the beach in Libya.

It takes courage, and courage is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Martyrdom, the Christian life of martyrdom, Christian witness, cannot live without the courage of Christian life. St Paul uses two words to indicate the martyrial Christian life, the everyday life: *courage* and *patience*. Two words.

The courage to move forward and not be ashamed of being Christian, of being seen as a Christian, and the patience to bear on one's shoulders the burden of each day, even the pain, even one's sins, one's inconsistencies. "But, can you be a Christian with sins?". Yes. We are all sinners, everyone. A Christian is not a man or a woman who has the asepsis of laboratories, he is not like distilled water! A Christian is a man or woman who is capable of betraying their ideal with sin, they are weak men and women. But we have to reconcile ourselves with our weakness. And in this way the nose [the appearance] becomes a bit more humble. More humble.

The truth is not in appearances. "I am not a sinner", as the Pharisee who prayed before the Lord: "I thank you that I am not like this one, like that one, like that other"; He tarnished everyone, but he was clean. He strutted about. Allow me to say, it is a bit... it is not quite correct, it's not quite lawful what I will tell you now, but the image will help us. Christian coherence with the truth is feeling that we are sinners and in need of forgiveness; instead, one who struts about as if a perfect Christian, is like a peacock: peacocks are so beautiful! You see, it is a beautiful reality.... Excuse me, but turn around: that is also the truth of the peacock! And Christ's message to the world is like this: we are sinners, and Jesus loved us, healed us, and we are on the mend, always. And he loves us. And these limits that are intrinsic to us — and also the extrinsic limits that we see, for example, the hypocrisy in the Church, the hypocrisy of Christians: these limits discourage us, and this is how faith enters into crisis. And here is the bold question: "Have you ever found yourself in a crisis of faith?". This is the question you ask the Pope! You have courage! "Where and how did you find a way to bounce back, to avoid growing weary, and to continue in your duties, first as a layman, then as a consecrated man, and after?". Many times I have found myself in a crisis of faith and sometimes I have even had the nerve to reproach Jesus: "But why do You allow this?", and even to doubt: "But is this the truth, or is it a dream?". And this has been the case as a boy, a seminarian, a priest, a religious, a bishop and as Pope. "But why is the world like this, if You gave Your life? But is this not an illusion, a pretext to console us?". A Christian who has not felt this, at times, whose faith has not faced a crisis, is missing something: he is a Christian who is content with a little mundanity and in this way moves on in life. I've been told — because I do not know Chinese, I have so much difficulty with languages, you see... — I do not know Chinese, but I've been told that the word *crisis*, in Chinese, is made with two ideograms: one is the ideogram for *risk* and the other is the ideogram for *opportunity*. It's true. When one faces a crisis — like when Jesus told Peter that the devil would put him in crisis ["sift"] as is done with wheat, and many times the devil, life, a neighbour, many people make us "jump" like the wheat, they put us in crisis — there is always a danger, a risk, risk in a bad sense, and an opportunity.

A Christian — this I have learned — should not be afraid to face a crisis: it is a sign that he is moving forward, that he is not anchored to the shore of a river or the sea, that he has set sail and is moving forward. And there are problems, crises, inconsistencies, and the crisis of one's own sin, which make us so ashamed. How does one avoid growing weary? It is a grace. Ask it of the Lord: "Lord, let me not grow weary. Give me the grace of patience, to move forward, to wait for peace to come". I don't know: this is my response.

[Giacomo Guarini] *Today, everything is directed towards the affirmation of the individual, and it seems people have lost the ability to give and receive love. In particular, we do not hide the difficulties that concern us young graduates, often disheartened by the lack of real prospects for our future and unable to fulfil our professional and emotional vocations. How can we make work a place of vocation in a world that is governed by unrestrained individualism? How can we live relationships as a mirror of God's love, also in engagement, in a context in which all desire for gratuity seems to be lacking?*

You used a word that I like very much: *gratuity*. We often forget this meaning of gratuitousness, and we forget that gratuity is the language of God. He freely created us; He has recreated us freely in Jesus; and Jesus himself admonishes us: "That which you have received freely, give freely". Gratuity. In this civilization of "*do ut des*", where I give you this and this, and everything is negotiated, gratuity is in danger of disappearing. At times, many times — I think it is one of the most common habits — Christianity becomes Pelagian: everything is bought. "I do this and I am more holy", "I do this and I am more perfect", "I do this and I am more Christian", "I don't do this and my Christianity is not...". Even with God we have this attitude of "*do ut des*". But the Lord, already told us in the Old Testament: "I do not need your sacrifices. Look around you, and help others. Be just in salary". And what you have called "the affirmation of the individual", this individualism leads us to grave injustices. Human injustices. I would not say, "social" because someone might say, "This priest is a socialist". No, no: *human*! It is the individual gratification that has nothing to do with the gratuity that Jesus Christ offers us, that God teaches us, which is precisely the language of God: *gratuity*. We have to place ourselves on this wavelength of gratuitousness. Individual gratification, hedonism: this is also a hedonistic culture. One seeks personal satisfaction. And today it even takes a lot of work to distinguish the saints from those who make themselves up to look like saints! There are many make-up wearing Christians who are not Christians, because they do not know about gratuity. They live otherwise.

"How can we make work a place of vocation?". Go to the first call, the call that each one of us receives, which is the same that mankind received in Adam: go, cultivate the Earth, multiply, subdue the land, work.... "How can we make work a place of vocation?". Perhaps the strongest word here is *work*. It is one thing to work and another thing to take advantage of and even exploit others. The culture of work. In many underdeveloped countries there is a culture of support: you help, but you do not teach people how to work. It does me a lot of good to think about Don Bosco, at the end of the 19th century, in that poor Masonic Turin, which was devoured priests, where the youth were on the street.... What did he do? Did he go with holy water? No. He offered an emergency education, he helped them study in order to learn simple crafts, and thus to enter the culture of work. He saw in that *risk* an *opportunity*, in that religious crisis an opportunity; and he opened a human and religious horizon, to those people. *Work*. It is not the same thing as "doing things". The vocation of work, creative work. Work makes us resemble God, who is Creator and also an Artisan. And work is a place of vocation, it is not a place of gridlock, a parking lot. My vocation leads me to move forward in work, in creativity.

And also in engagement. There is gratuitousness in engagement, there is also a commitment to go together, to understand one another, to listen to each other, to overcome difficulties and to maintain fidelity; it is also a *gratuitous* commitment. Gratitude is learned in engagement. But on this point, I would like to make a reflection. Quite often, work, in the sense of “doing things”, allows family to become less important, marriage to become less important. I get excited about politics, for example, and I go here and there and there and then I do not look after my wife or husband or children. I have made it a custom, in confession, when married men or women tell me that they have kids and perhaps lose patience..., I ask them this question: “How many children do you have?”. Often they are afraid: what will his next question be? And the second question is: “And tell me: do you play with them? Do you take the time to play with your children, to listen to them, to have a space for communication with them?” — “But, Father”, one might respond, “when I go out to work in the morning, the children are asleep, and when I come back, they are asleep”. This enslaving work does not allow them to live the gratuitousness of the gift of love, the gift of God, and maybe this man or woman is not to blame: the situation is to blame, the injustice, the moral injustice that we experience in this society. But I say this: look after your family, look after your husband, look after your wife, look after your children; and allow me to say something that I take very much to heart: look after your grandparents! Look after your grandparents. They are our memory! In this throw-away culture, it is so easy to discard grandparents: either at home or in a nursing home, and to not go and visit them. Now it has changed a bit since there is not much work, and they have a pension, so we go to our grandparents! Look after your grandparents. The prophecy of the prophet Joel in Chapter 3 touches my heart: “Grandparents shall dream”, and it will be that dream, the ability to dream great things, that will make the youth, the young people, move forward”. I will stop here, otherwise I will never finish.

*[Maria Elena Tagliaboschi] The economic crisis, migratory flows, demographic changes, the incompatibility of working hours with those of childcare, are phenomena that are impacting social development in industrialized nations, fostering the emergence of new forms of poverty: lonely elderly people; people who are unemployed or who have precarious employment; young couples drowning in debt. With what spirit can we address these situations?*

Excuse me, I went on too long. With regard to this question, for the most part, I have responded to many things. But I will go to perhaps the core of the problem. What we have to review is the style of today's economy. Today — and I say this because I wrote it in the *Evangelii Gaudium* — there is an economy that kills. In the world, in the global economy, at the centre there is not man, woman: there is the money god. And this kills us. You can find, on a winter morning, a homeless person who has frozen to death in the Piazza del Risorgimento, or so many children on the street who have nothing to eat, or even drug addicts.... This does not make the headlines, this does not make the news. But if the stock exchanges of Tokyo, London, Frankfurt, New York fall by two or three points, it's a great international tragedy! We are slaves to this economic system that kills, slaves and victims. Today it is common to work illicitly, because if you do not work illicitly you do not have work. It is common. Today it is common that they give you an employment contract from

September to June, and then July and August? You eat air! Then they give you another contract in September. Without healthcare assistance, without the opportunity for a pension. This is called “slave labour”, and most of us live in this system of slave labour.

The migratory flows: some flee due to hunger, because their country has been exploited and they are starving. Some flee from war, which is actually the business at this time that is making the most money: arms dealers. And the same person who sells, who trafficks arms to this country that is at war with that one, is the same person who sells to that country that is at war with this one! And enabling humanitarian aid to reach war-torn countries or those immersed in guerilla warfare is a problem: many times the Red Cross has not succeeded. But the weapons always arrive, customs does not stop them! Why? Because it is actually the deal that pays the most. The money god. We are slaves. A young lady said, last year, a girl: she read in the newspaper, she went, and there was a line of people who had gone for these jobs. And the employer saw her résumé and said to her: “Yes, yes, this could work, yes, you can work. Your job will be 10 to 11 hours per day, more or less, not more than 11, the wage 650 euros per month”. And the young woman said: “But this is not fair!” — “If you like it, take it; if you don’t like it, look at the line behind you.... Goodbye!”. This is our daily bread, and from these injustices come many new forms of poverty. I once went to a shantytown in Buenos Aires, and there were new people. I went to visit them in that little house that they had made partly of wood, partly of metal sheeting, but the furniture was good. I had the courage to ask: “Why, I don’t understand...?”. And he told me: “Father, until last month we were able to pay the rent; now, we can’t”. And thus the shantytowns grow. It is a great injustice. We must speak clearly: this is a mortal sin. It causes me indignation, it pains me, when — for example, something that is timely — they come to baptize a child and they [as godparents] bring you a child, and they are told: “But you were not married in the Church, you cannot be a godparent, because the marriage, getting married in the Church is important”. But then they bring you another who is a crook, an exploiter of people, a trafficker of children, but is a “good Catholic”, gives alms to the Church.... “Ah, yes, you can be a godfather”. We have turned values upside down! The economic world, today, as it is organized in the world, is *immoral*. I am speaking in general, but there are exceptions. There are good people, there are countries that are trying to change this, there are institutions that are working against this. But the global atmosphere is that man and woman have been displaced from the centre of the economy, and the money god is there. I think that with this I have answered your question.

*[Tonino Casamassimi] Considering the founding values of this Community should lead us to ask ourselves about the seriousness of our service to our neighbour. In what ways and with what spirit can we strengthen our commitment in the world so as to seriously live that encounter with the existential peripheries to which you exhort?*

Make talents bear fruit. We will be judged on this: what have I done with my talents, with what I have received, with what the Lord has *freely* given me? It is a question that we must ask ourselves. Can I do more? Can I give more? Can I share more? Talents, not just money, but



talents! And what is one of the most important talents of Christianity, and also one of the great talents of Villa Nazareth from the time of its founding? You said a word: *welcome*. We are living in a culture of closed doors, of closed hearts. We protect ourselves, we protect ourselves from one another: “This is mine; this is mine”. Afraid to welcome. Afraid to welcome. I am not speaking only about welcoming migrants, which is a big problem, and also a global political problem. But also the daily welcoming, the welcoming of one who seeks me out to *beleaguer me* with his complaints, with his problems, who looks for a word of comfort from me and also the chance to throw open a “window” in order to come out. This pains me, it hurts when I see churches with closed doors, it hurts. There might be justifiable reasons, but a church with closed doors means that that Christian community has a closed heart, it is closed off within itself. We must reclaim the sense of welcome, to be welcomed. This is very simple, it is what happens in Rome every day: I think that one of the jobs, or if you would like to put it in apostolic terms, that which we are most in need of is *the apostolate of listening*. We do not have time to listen, we have lost this capacity: “No, I don’t have time to go and listen to these complaints, no, they sadden me; it would be better if I did something else more useful, not to waste time...”. If we do not do this, we do not welcome others. If we do not welcome, we are not Christians and we will not be welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is mathematical. That’s how it is, this is the logic of the Gospel. That is how it is. You who have had the experience of welcoming here, in this House, you have a great social and ecclesial responsibility: to teach, to make it understood that this is the door to the Christian path. When we were baptized, we were *welcomed* by the Christian community. A beautiful liturgical ceremony where the parish priest explained things well, everything.... But this sacramental welcoming, with the sign of the Trinity, am I capable of bringing it forth in my way of living the faith? Or do I prefer to look the other way? Better to say: “I didn’t understand”, “I didn’t hear”, “I didn’t know”.... But instead this [welcome] bears fruit, it bears fruit. A welcome that makes talents bear fruit. There is the great welcome of those who come from faraway lands, and there is the small welcome, when you — dad or mom — come home from work and there is your adolescent son or daughter who is in difficulty and wants to tell you something or at least needs you to hear something.... “I am too busy, let’s do it tomorrow...”. This is the moment of grace: welcome. “But, Father, this is torture!”. No, it is a mortification, it is a mortification. It is the everyday cross. Jesus told us: “those who would follow me, take up your own cross”. He did not say “take your morphine to sleep better”; “take up your cross and follow me”. Welcoming is a cross, but a beautiful cross, because it reminds us of the welcome that the Good God had and has with us, each time we go to Him to be reconciled to ask counsel, to ask forgiveness..... Welcome.

*[Massimo Moretti with his wife, Giorgia Lagattola] The family today is challenged by the culture of the provisional. The couple is undermined by the temptation to seek the greatest happiness possible in a dimension that borders on individualism. How can we keep the flame of our love alive, and what value does the promise of eternity we have exchanged have for the world today?*

I said something about families today, but I will take one or two of your words. That of the culture of the provisional: this is something that I always reiterate. Part of the people who marry do not

know what they are doing. They get married.... “But do you know that this is a sacrament?” — Yes, yes, and to do this I must confess first, yes, yes, I will do it, and I will receive communion as well” — “And do you know that this is for all your life?” — “Yes, yes, I know, I know”. But they don’t know, because this culture of the provisional is so deeply instilled in us, in our values, in our judgments, which then means — so to speak, simply — it means: “Yes, yes, I’ll marry for as long as love lasts, and when love doesn’t last, the marriage is over”. It isn’t said, but the culture of the provisional leads you to this. I think that the Church must work a lot on this point with the preparation course for marriage. In the *Amoris Laetitia* there is a chapter, a chapter dedicated to this. A woman — I said this at [the Basilica of] St John Lateran the other evening — a woman once told me: “You priests are clever: to become a priest you study for eight years, then you go on well; and if things don’t work out, and you find a girl that you like and you no longer feel like [being a priest], after a while you follow a procedure, go to the Holy See and they give you a dispensation, you get married and have a family. But when we receive a sacrament which is indissoluble for our whole life, it is the mystery of Christ and of the Church and it lasts a lifetime, they prepare us with three or four conferences?”. It’s true: the preparation for marriage. It is better not to get married, not to receive the sacrament if you are not certain of the fact that there is a sacramental mystery there, it is truly the embrace of Christ with the Church; if you are not well prepared.

Then there is the cultural and social dimension. It is true, getting married is a social event, it has always been a social event, always, because it is beautiful to get married, in all cultures: there are so many beautiful, beautiful cultural rituals... when the young man takes the young woman and carries her... so many beautiful things, which indicate this beauty of marriage. But this social aspect, in the culture of consumerism, of worldliness, at times favours a provisional nature and does not help you to take [marriage] seriously. I said the other evening that I had called a young man that I had met; I telephoned him, because his mother told me that he was getting married, and I had met him when I went to say Mass here in Ciampino. I said to him: “They told me that you are getting married...” — “Yes, yes” — “Will you do it in that Church?” — “We really don’t know, because it depends on my fiancée’s dress, that it goes well with the Church, for beauty...” — “Ah, how nice, how nice.... When?” — “In a few weeks” — “Ah, okay, okay. Are you preparing well?” — “Yes, yes, now we are going, we are looking for a restaurant that isn’t too far, and the wedding favours, and this, that and the other thing...”. What sense does this marriage have? It is purely a social event, a social event. I ask myself: these engaged couples — good people — are they free from this worldly, consumerist, hedonistic culture, or does the social event cause them to fall into this lack of freedom? Because the sacrament of marriage can be received only with freedom. If you are not free, you do not receive it.

Then, there is something that we must take care of. I enjoy meeting, whether at the Masses at Santa Marta or at the General Audiences, spouses who are celebrating their 50th and 60th [anniversaries] because I always speak with them, they tell me things... they are happy. Once I heard one of these couples say what everyone would like to say, but they managed to say it. [I

asked them:] “Who has the most patience?” — “Both of us!” — they always say the same thing! — And then: “Have you argued?” — “Almost every day. But there’s no problem” — “Are you happy?” — and I was moved, because they looked into each other’s eyes: “Father, we are in love”. This is great! After 60 years, this is great. And this is one of the fruits of the Sacrament of Marriage. If only everyone could understand this! There is something else I would like to say. In marriage you argue, we all know it; sometimes dishes fly; they are everyday matters. But the advice that I always give is this: never end the day without making peace, because I fear the “cold war” of the following day. Yes, it is extremely dangerous! When you get angry and end [the day] angry and do not make peace that day, it gets worse, and worse, and worse. “But how do I make peace, Father? Must I make a speech, on my knees?” — “No, do this [he mimes a caress] and that’s enough. It is a gesture, it is the language of gestures. With gestures — please — do not forget to caress each other: the caress is one of the most sacred languages in marriage. Caresses: I love you so much.... Caresses.... Spouses who are able to caress each other, to love each other this way, but also with the body, with everything, always.... Caresses. I think that this can sustain the strength of the sacrament, because even the Lord caresses his spouse, the Church, with great tenderness. Let us go forth like this.

*[Luca Monteferrante] We are a community that wants to remain faithful to the special charism received from the founder and to the mission entrusted to it by the Church as an association of lay faithful. We ask you to help us to understand the meaning of the invitation that Jesus gave to Nicodemus to “be born anew”, as a community that is challenged by the devaluation of the culture as an instrument of the promotion of man; to the organization of work which endangers the dimensions personal and family life; to the professional world that asks us to give up degrees of personal freedom in order to attain positions of responsibility; to the crisis of the communitary dimensions and of the value of fraternity affected by rhythms of life that are incompatible with shared experiences.*

The response comes to mind from the word that St Paul said when he was in the middle of the storm, before arriving in Malta: “Let us save each other, all or none”. This is the communitary aspect, this is also you, your charism, your association: either all are saved or none are saved. Either all or none. Do not allow divisions among you. And if there are some divisions, meet, argue, speak the truth to one another, but from there unity will always emerge stronger. Always preserve unity. Do not be afraid to argue, to debate..., but in order to preserve unity. Always within, always within. And this is an important instrument for preserving unity: either we all save each other or no one is saved. Particularism, here, is bad, bad.

There are [in the question] the “discernment of the signs of the times”, the “seeds of novelty”, such as “how to give up certain degrees of freedom in order to reach positions of responsibility”.... Three things: the first I have said: either everyone or no one. Second: have children, form disciples with this “mystique” [inner attitude], and leave them the torch, so that they may carry it forward. There are no eternal managers: the only eternal one is the Eternal Father. All of us must pass the

torch to our children so that they may carry it forward. Making disciples, forming disciples means surrendering, but it is a surrendering to wisdom.

Take a step “aside” so that your children may take things forward. Help them, look after them, but do not overly protect them: let them be free. And the One who did this work of maintaining unity, creativity, new challenges, new children, is the Holy Spirit. It is praying to the Holy Spirit. We need to ask Him, because He is the One who consoles us in difficulties, it is He who is joy: the Holy Spirit is the joy of the Church. It is He who helps us, who gives us joy. The Holy Spirit is harmony, it is He who from the differences that He himself creates, makes harmony of all the Church. The Holy Spirit is beauty. Let us remember the time that Paul went to a new Christian community and asked them: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit? — “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit” (cf. Acts 19:2). How many institutions end badly, or lose their original charism, because they have forgotten the Holy Spirit, who is the One who consoles in difficulty, who is joy, who is harmony, who is beauty?

Thus, I thank you for the patience that you had in listening to the “Lenten Sermons”, of which there were seven: like the “sermons on the seven words” which in Argentina lasts three hours! Thank you very much. Thank you for what you do, thank you for your witness. And please, I ask you to pray for me, because this work is not easy. Pray for me. Thank you.