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POPE



## Pope Francis' in-flight press conference: full text

*Press conference on the flight back from his Apostolic Journey in Southern Africa: Pope Francis recalls the joy of the children he met and affirms that the State has the duty to take care of families. He says that xenophobia is "a disease" and asks that people's identities be preserved from ideological colonization. He speaks of the criticisms he receives and replies to a question on schismatic temptations with: "I pray that schisms do not happen, but I am not afraid of them."*

From the flight Antananarivo-Rome

Two and a half hours after the Air Madagascar flight to Rome took off from  Antananarivo; Pope Francis met the journalists accompanying him and spoke, answering their questions, for about an hour and a half.

*Julio Mateus Manjate (Noticias, Mozambique)*

During your visit to Mozambique, you met with the President of the Republic and with the Presidents of the two parties present in Parliament. I would like to know what your expectations are concerning the peace process, and what message you would like to leave for Mozambique. Also, two quick comments on two phenomena: the xenophobia present in Africa and the impact of social network in the education of young people.

The first point, regarding the peace process: a long peace process, which has had its highs and lows, but that in the end ended with an historic embrace, identifies Mozambique today.

I hope that this will continue, and I pray that it does so. I invite everyone to make an effort to ensure that this peace process is carried forward – because, as a Pope before me said, everything is lost through war, and everything is won through peace. (Pius XII) This is clear, and it must not be forgotten. It is a long peace process, with a first stage that was interrupted, then another stage. ... And the effort made by the leaders of the opposing parties, not to say enemies, is to go towards each other. It is also a dangerous effort, some risked their lives, but in the end, a conclusion was reached. I would like to thank all those who helped in this peace process. Starting with the first, with a cup of coffee...

There were many people present; there was a priest from the Community of Saint Egidio - who will be made Cardinal on October 5 (Archbishop Matteo Zuppi of Bologna). Then, with the help of many people, including the Community of Saint Egidio, this result was achieved. We must not be triumphalistic in these areas. Triumph is peace. We do not have the right to be triumphalistic because peace is still fragile in your country, just as it is fragile in the world. It needs to be treated in the same way that newly born things are treated, like children, with much, much tenderness, with delicacy, with forgiveness, with patience, in order to make it grow and make it strong.

It is the triumph of the country: peace, peace is the victory of the country, we must understand that... and that goes for all countries, that are being destroyed by war .

Wars destroy, they make us lose everything. I am dwelling a bit on the theme of peace because I have it at heart. It is true that, a few months ago, when the landing in Normandy was celebrated, there were heads of States there to remember what was the beginning of the end of a cruel war, and also of anti-human and cruel dictatorships such as Nazism and Fascism... but, 46,000 soldiers died on that shore – that is the price of war. I confess that when I went to Redipuglia for the commemoration of the First World War, I cried out “please, never again, war!” When I went to Anzio to celebrate All Soul’s Day, in my heart I felt that a conscience must be built: wars do not solve anything; on the other

hand, they make those who do not want peace for humanity richer.

Forgive me for this appendix but I had to say it before a peace process, for which I pray and will do all that I can so that it goes forward – and I hope that it grows with strength.

The second point, the problem of youth. Africa is a young continent, it has young life, if we compare it to Europe. I will repeat what I said in Strasburg: mother Europe has almost become “grandmother Europe”. She has grown old, we are experiencing a very serious demographic winter in Europe.

I read of a government statistic that states that in the country, though I do not remember which country, in 2050, there will be more pensioners than working people, this is tragic. What is the origin of this ageing of Europe?

I think – this is a personal opinion of mine - that well-being is at the root. Being attached to wellbeing – “We are comfortable, I am not having children because I need to buy a villa, I want to go on holiday, I’m fine like this, a child is a risk, you never know...” But this wellbeing and tranquility is something that will age you. Instead, Africa is full of life. I found in Africa a gesture that I had come across in the Philippines, and in Cartagena, in Columbia.

The people who raised their children in the air, as if to say, “this is my treasure, this is my victory, my pride”. Children are the treasure of the poor. But they are the treasure of a homeland, of a country. I saw the same gesture in Eastern Europe, in Iași, especially that grandmother showing the child: this is my triumph... You have the task of educating these young people and of making laws for these young people. Education is the priority in your country at the moment. It is a priority that one grows, having laws on formation.

The Prime Minister of Mauritius spoke to me about this. He said he had in mind the challenge of developing a free education system for all. The gratuitousness of the educational system: it is important because there are high quality educational centres, but at a fee. There are educational centres in all countries, but they need to be multiplied so that education reaches everyone. At the moment, the laws on education and health are the priority there.

The third point, on xenophobia. I read on the newspapers of this xenophobia, but it is not only an African problem. It is a human disease, like measles... It is a disease that enters a country, enters a continent, and we build walls. But walls leave only those who built them. Yes, they leave out many people, but those who remain inside the walls will be left alone, and in the end, they will be defeated by great invasions. Xenophobia is a disease. It is a disease that is “justifiable”, for example, to maintain the purity of the race – just to mention a form of xenophobia from the last century. And very often, xenophobia rides the waves of political populism. I said last week, or the one before, that sometimes in some places I hear speeches being given that sound similar to those made by Hitler in

'34. It's as if they wanted to return to the past in Europe.

But in Africa, you, too, have a cultural problem that you have to solve. I remember speaking about it in Kenya: tribalism. There you must educate, in order to bring together different tribes, to create a nation. Not long ago, we commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rwandan genocide: that is an effect of tribalism. I remember in Kenya, in the stadium, when I asked everyone to stand up, shake hands, and say "no to tribalism... no to tribalism..." We have to say no. It is about closure. There is also domestic xenophobia, but a xenophobia nonetheless. We must fight against this: both the xenophobia of one country towards another, and internal xenophobia, which in the case of some places in Africa and along with tribalism, leads to tragedies such as that of Rwanda.

*Marie Fredeline Ratovoarivelo (Radio Don Bosco, Madagascar)*

You spoke about the future of young people during your Apostolic visit. I think that the foundation of the family is very important for the future. Young people in Madagascar, young people live in very complex family situations because of poverty. How can the Church accompany young people in light of the fact that her teachings are considered outdated and in light of today's sexual revolution?

The family is certainly responsible for its children's education. The young people of Madagascar's way of expressing themselves was very touching, and we also saw it in Mauritius and with the young people of Mozambique from the interreligious meeting for peace.

Giving values to young people, making them grow. In Madagascar the problem of family is linked to the problem of poverty, to the lack of employment and, often, also to the labour exploitation. For example, in the granite quarry, workers earn a dollar and a half a day. Laws protecting work and families are fundamental. Also family values, that are there, but that are so often destroyed by poverty: not the values, but the ability to pass them on, and to improve the education of the youth.

In Madagascar we saw the Akamasoa Association, the work being done there with the youngest so that they may grow in a family that is not their birth one, yes, but it is the only possibility. Yesterday in Mauritius, after Mass, I found Msgr Rueda with a policeman, tall, big, who was holding a little girl's hand, she was about two years old. She had got lost, and was crying because she couldn't find her parents. The announcement had been made and meanwhile, the policeman was comforting her. And there, I saw (understood) the drama faced by many children and young people who happen to lose family ties, despite them living in a family – in this case it was simply an accident. Also, the role of the State in protecting them and sustaining their development. The State needs to take care of the family and of young people. It's the States duty, a duty to sustain them. Then, I repeat, for a family, having a child is a treasure. And you have this

awareness, you have awareness of treasure. But now it is necessary that all of society have the awareness to make this treasure grow, to make the country grow, to make the homeland grow, to make the values that give sovereignty to the country grow. One thing that struck me about the children in all the countries, is that they were greeting me. There were even little ones greeting me, and they were joyful. But I would like to talk about joy later.

*Jean Luc Mootoosamy (Radio One, Mauritius)*

The Prime Minister of Mauritius thanked you for your concern regarding the suffering of our fellow citizens who have been forced to abandon their own Archipelago by the United Kingdom after the illicit separation of this part of our territory before independence. Today on the island of Diego Garcia, there is an American military base. Holy Father, the Chagossians who have been in forced exile for fifty years want to return to their land. The United States and the United Kingdom will not allow this to happen, notwithstanding a United Nations resolution from last May. How can you support the Chagossians' will and help the people of Chagos to go home?

I would like to repeat what the Doctrine of the Church says about this: When we acknowledge international organisations and we recognise their capacity to give judgment, on a global scale – for example **the international tribunal in The Hague, or the United Nations. If we consider ourselves humanity, when they make statements, our duty is to obey.** It is true that not all things that appear just for the whole of humanity will also be so for our pockets, **but we must obey international institutions. That is why the United Nations were created. That's why international courts were created.** Then there is also another phenomenon which, however, I say it clearly, I do know whether it is relevant here. When the liberation of a people comes about (a people obtains independence) and the occupying State has to leave – many independence processes have taken place in Africa – from France, from Great Britain, from Belgium, from Italy – all of them had to leave, some [of the countries] have matured well – but there is always the temptation to leave with something in the pocket: Yes, I give freedom to this people but I take some crumbs with me... I give freedom to the country but from the ground up, what's underneath remains mine. This is an example, I do not know if it is true, but I want to say: there is always the temptation... I believe that international organizations need to propose a process of accompaniment, recognizing the predominant potentials, what they were able to accomplish in the country, recognizing the good will to go away and helping them to leave totally, in freedom, with a brotherly spirit. It is a slow cultural process for humanity and these international institutions help us a lot, always, and we need to go forward strengthening the international institutions: the United Nations, that they might take in hand once again their role; that the European Union might become

stronger, not in the sense of domination, but in the sense of justice, of fraternity, of unity for all. I believe this to be one of the important things. And there is another thing that I would like to take the opportunity to say after his intervention. Today geographical colonialization does not exist – at least not many.... But there are ideological colonializations that want to enter into the popular culture and change those cultures and homogenize humanity. It is the image of globalization like a sphere, all of the points being equidistant from the centre. Instead, true globalization is not a sphere, it is a polyhedron where each people preserves their own identity but it united to all of humanity. Instead, ideological colonization seeks to cancel the identity of others to make them equal and they come at you with ideological proposals that are contrary to the nature of that people, the history of that people, against the values of that people. And we must respect the identity of peoples, this is a premise to defend always. The identity of the people's needs to be respected and thus all types of colonialization will be cast out.

Before giving the word to EFE – which is a privilege, it is “old”, it is 80 years old – I would like to say something more that struck me about the visit. **What struck me about your country is the capacity for religious unity, for interreligious dialogue.** Differences between the religions are not to be cancelled out, that we are all brothers is to be underlined, that everyone needs to speak. This is a sign of the maturity of your country. Speaking yesterday with the prime ministry, I remained surprised at how they, you, have worked at this reality and live it as necessary in order to live together. There is an intercultural commission that gathers together... The first thing that I found yesterday when I went into the bishop's resident – this is anecdote – was a bouquet of beautiful flowers. Who sent them? The Grand Imam. We are brothers, human brotherhood is the foundation and respects all beliefs. Respect for other religions is important. This is why I tell missionaries not to proselytize. Proselytizing is valid for the world of politics, of sport – I root for my team, for yours – not for a faith. But, Holy Father, what does evangelization mean to you? There is a phrase of St Francis that has greatly enlightened me. Francis of Assisi used to say to his brothers: “Bring the Gospel, if it is necessary also with words”. That is, to evangelize is what we read about in the book of the Acts of the Apostles: testifying. And that testimony provokes the question: ‘But why do you live like this? Why do you do this?’ And then I explain: ‘Because of the Gospel’. Proclamation comes before testifying. First live like a Christian and if they ask you, speak. Testifying is the first step and the protagonist of evangelization is not the missionary but the Holy Spirit who leads Christians and missionaries to bear witness. Then questions will come or won't come, but what counts is the witness of life. This is the first step. It is important to avoid proselytism. When you see religious proposals that follow the path of

proselytism, they are not Christian. They are looking for converts, not worshippers of God in truth. I want to take this opportunity to emphasize your interreligious experience which is extremely beautiful. Your prime ministry also told me that when someone asks for help, we give the same hope to everyone, and no one is offended because we feel like we are brothers. This unifies the country. It is very, very important. At the events, there were not only Catholics, there were Christians from other confessions, and there were Muslims, Hindus, and all of them were brothers. I saw this even in Madagascar and also in the interreligious meeting for peace of the young people, with young people of different religions who wanted to express how they live their desire for peace. Peace, brotherhood, interreligious co-existence, no proselytism, these are things that we must learn to foster peace. This is something that I must say. Then another thing that struck me – I saw it in three countries but I now refer to Madagascar, we left from there – the people on the streets, there were people there of their own accord. At the Mass in the stadium under the rain there were people who were dancing under the rain, they were happy... And also the nocturnal vigil, the Mass – they way there were more than a million, I don't know, the official statistic says so, I would say there were less, let's say 800 thousand. But the number is not important, what is important is the people, the people who went on foot the evening before, were there for the vigil, who slept there – I thought of Rio de Janeiro in 2013 [World Youth Day], they were sleeping on the beach – they were people who wanted to be with the Pope. I felt humbled, very small before the greatness of a people. What is the sign that a group of persons is a people? Joy. There were poor people, there were people who had not eaten that afternoon in order to be there, they were joyful. Instead, when persons or groups separate themselves from that popular sense of joy, they lose it. It is one of the first signs, the sadness of those who are alone, the sadness of those who have forgotten their cultural roots. Having the awareness of being a people is to be aware of having an identity, of having a conscience, of having a way of understanding reality and this unifies the people. The sign that you belong to a people, and not to an elite, is joy, common joy. I wanted to emphasize this. Because of this, the children were waving that way, because their parents joy had rubbed off on them."

*Cristina Cabrejas (from the Spanish Agency EFE which celebrates its 80th anniversary of foundation)*

First of all, we take it for granted that one of your plans for the future is that of coming to Spain. We hope this will be possible. The first question I would like to ask you: in view of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of EFE we have asked various persons, world leaders: what do you think the information of the future will be?

"I would need a crystal ball... I will go to Spain, if I am alive, but my priority regarding my journeys in Europe is for the smaller countries, then the larger ones.

I do not know what communication in the future will be like. I think, for example, of what communication was like when I was a boy, before TV, with radio, with newspapers, even illegal ones, that were persecuted by whoever was in power at the time, volunteers would sell them during the night... even orally. If we make a comparison with today's, it was precarious information, and that of today might be precarious in respect to that of the future. What remains as a constant in communication is the capacity to transmit a fact, and to distinguish it from the story, from the report. One of the things that harms communication, from the past, from the present, and for the future, is what gets reported. There's a very good study that was released three years ago, done by Simone Paganini, a linguist from Aachen University, which speaks of the movement of communication between the writer, what is written, and the reader. Communication always risks passing from the fact to what is reported, and this ruins communication. The fact is important, and always to be close to the fact. Even in the Curia, I see it: there is a fact and then everyone embellishes it with something that is their own, without bad intentions, this is the dynamic. So, the communicator's discipline is always to return to the fact, to report the fact, and then to give my interpretation is this, they told me this, distinguishing the fact from what is reported. Some time ago, they told me the story of Little Red Riding Hood but based on what was reported, and it ended with Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother putting the wolf in a pot and eating it. The narrative changed things. Whatever the means of communications, the guarantee is fidelity: 'it says that'—can it be used? Yes, it can be used in communication, but always attentive to ascertain the objectivity of 'it's said that...'. It is one of the values that needs to be followed in communications. Secondly, communication needs to be human, and by saying human, I mean constructive, that is, it needs to be beneficial to the other. A message cannot be used as a means of war because it is anti-human, it destroys. A little while ago, I gave Msgr Rueda an article that I found in a magazine entitled, 'Drops of arsenic on the tongue'. Communication needs to remain at the service of building, not that of destruction. When is communication at the service of destruction? When it defends inhuman projects. Let's think of the propaganda of the dictators of the last century. They were dictators who knew how to communicate well, but they instigated war, division and destruction. I don't know how to say it technically because I am not well-versed on the subject. What I wanted to do was to underline the values that any means of communication must always maintain so as to remain consistent."

*Cristina Cabrejas (second question)*

Let's move on to the trip. One of the themes of this visit was the protection of the environment, of the trees, threatened by deforestation and by fires. In this moment this is happening in the Amazon. Do you think that the governments in



that area are doing enough to protect this lung of the world?

“Regarding Africa. I already said on another trip, within the collective unconscious, there is a motto: Africa can be exploited. We would never think: Europe can be exploited. We must free humanity from this collective unconsciousness. The area where the exploitation is strongest is on the environment, with deforestation, the destruction of biodiversity. A couple of months ago, I met with port chaplains and at the audience there were seven young fishermen who fished with a vessel that was no longer than this airplane. They fished with mechanical devices as is done today. They told me: in a few months, we caught 6 tons of plastic.... We have banned plastic in the Vatican, we’re working on it. This is a reality affecting only the oceans. The prayer intention for this month is specifically for the protection of the oceans, that give us the oxygen we breathe. Then there are the great lungs, in Central Africa, the entire Pan-Amazonic basin, and then there are other smaller ones. We need to defend ecology, biodiversity, that is our life; to defend the oxygen, that is our life. It comforts me that carrying this struggle forward are young people who are, who have a tremendous conscience and who say: the future is ours, do what you want with yours, but not with ours! I believe that the Paris Agreement was a good step forward, and then the others as well... These are meetings that help raise awareness. But last year during summer, when I saw that photo of the ship navigating the North Pole like nothing, I felt anguish, and just a little while ago all of us saw the photograph symbolizing a funeral for the glacier in Greenland that no longer exists. ...All of this is happening quickly, we must become aware beginning with the little things. Are government leaders doing everything? Some more, others less. It is true that there is a word that I must say which is at the basis of environmental exploitation. I was moved by the article in the *Messaggero* by Franca [Giansoldati], which did not mince words and which spoke about the destructive, rapacious operations, and this not only in Africa but also in our cities, in our civilisations. And the horrible word is corruption: I need to do this and in order to do it I need to cut down trees in the forest and I need the government’s or the state’s permission. I go to the people responsible – and here I am literally repeating what a Spanish entrepreneur told me – and the question that we hear when we want a project approved is: “How much am I getting out of it?” said brazenly. This happens in Africa, in Latin America and also in Europe. Above all, when someone takes on social or political responsibility for personal gain, values, nature, people are exploited. Africa can be exploited.... But do we think of the many laborers who are exploited in our societies; we have people who recruit and benefit from cheap labor in Europe, the Africans did not invent it. The maid who is paid a third of what she is due was not invented by the Africans. Women deceived and exploited for prostitution in the centers of our cities was not invented by the

Africans. Here too there is this type of exploitation, not only environmental, but also human. And this is corrupt. And when corruption is within the heart, get ready, because anything is possible.”

*Jason Drew Horowitz (The New York Times, United States)*

On the flight to Maputo you acknowledged being under attack by a segment of the American Church. Obviously, there is strong criticism from some bishops and cardinals, there are Catholic Television stations and American websites that are very critical. And there are even some of your closest allies who have spoken of a plot against you. Is there something that these critics do not understand about your pontificate? Is there something that you have learned from your critics? Are you afraid of a schism in the American Church? And if so, is there something that you could do – a dialogue – to keep it from happening?

“First of all, criticism always helps, always. When someone receives criticism, that person needs to do a self-critique right away and say: is this true or not? To what point? And I always benefit from criticism. Sometimes it makes you angry.... But there are advantages. Traveling to Maputo, one of you gave me that book in French on how the Americans want to change the Pope. I knew about that book, but I had not read it. Criticisms are not coming only from the Americans, they are coming a bit from everywhere, even from the Curia. At least those that say them have the benefit of the honesty of having said them. I do not like it when criticism stays under the table: they smile at you letting you see their teeth and then they stab you in the back. That is not fair, it is not human. Criticism is a component in construction, and if your criticism is unjust, be prepared to receive a response, and get into dialogue, and arrive to the right conclusion. This is the dynamic of true criticism. The criticism of the arsenic pills, instead, of which we were speaking regarding the article that I gave to Msgr Rueda, it's like throwing the stone and then hiding your hand... This is not beneficial, it is no help. It helps small cliques, who do not want to hear the response to their criticism. Instead, fair criticism – I think thus and so – is open to a response. This is constructive. Regarding the case of the Pope: I don't like this aspect of the Pope, I criticize him, I speak about him, I write an article and ask him to respond, this is fair. To criticize without wanting to hear a response and without getting into dialogue is not to have the good of the Church at heart, it is chasing after a fixed idea, to change the Pope or to create a schism. This is clear: a fair criticism is always well received, at least by me. Secondly, the problem of the schism: within the Church there have been many schisms. After the First Vatican Council, for example, the last vote, the one on infallibility, a well-sized group left and founded the Old Catholic Church so as to remain “true” to the tradition of the Church. Then they developed differently and now they ordain women. But in that moment they were rigid, they rallied behind orthodoxy and thought that the council had erred.

Another group left very, very quietly, but they did not want to vote. Vatican II had these things among its consequences. Perhaps the most well-known post-conciliar split is that of Lefebvre. In the Church there is always the option for schism, always. But it is an option that the Lord leaves to human freedom. I am not afraid of schisms, I pray that there will be none, because what is at stake is people's spiritual health. Let there be dialogue, let there be correction if there is an error, but the schismatic path is not Christian. Let's think about the beginnings of the Church, how it began with many schisms, one after the other: Arians, Gnostics, Monophysites... An anecdote is coming to mind that I would like to recount: it was the people of God who saved [the Church] from the schisms. The schismatics always have one thing in common: they separate themselves from the people, from the faith of the people of God. And when there was a discussion in the council of Ephesus regarding Mary's divine maternity, the people – this is history – were at the entrance of the cathedral while the bishops entered to take part in the council. They were there with clubs. They made the bishops see them as they shouted, "Mother of God! Mother of God!", as if to say: if you do not do this, this is what you can expect... The people of God always correct and help. A schism is always an elitist separation stemming from an ideology detached from doctrine. It is an ideology, perhaps correct, but that engages doctrine and detaches it... And so I pray that schisms do not happen, but I am not afraid of them. This is one of the results of Vatican II, not because of this or that Pope. For example, the social things that I say are the same things that John Paul II said, the same things! I copy him. But they say: the Pope is a communist... Ideologies enter into doctrine and when doctrine slips into ideology that's where there's the possibility of a schism. There's the ideology of the primacy of a sterile morality regarding the morality of the people of God. The pastors must lead their flock between grace and sin, because this is evangelical morality. Instead, a morality based on such a pelagian ideology leads you to rigidity, and today we have many schools of rigidity within the Church, which are not schisms, but pseudo-schismatic Christian developments that will end badly. When you see rigid Christians, bishops, priests, there are problems behind that, not Gospel holiness. So, we need to be gentle with those who are tempted by these attacks, they are going through a tough time, we must accompany them gently."

*Aura Vistas Miguel (Radio Renascença, Portugal)*

We know that you do not like visiting countries during the electoral campaign process, yet you did it in Mozambique, one month away from elections, the president who invited you being one of the candidates. How come?

"Yes. It was not a mistake, it was a freely decided choice, because the campaign process that begins in these days took second place in respect to the peace process. What was important was helping to consolidate this process. And

this is more important than a campaign that had not yet begun. Weighing out the two things, the peace process needed to be consolidated. What's more, I also met with the two political rivals, to underline that this is what was important, and not to rally for the president but to emphasize the unity of the country. What you are saying is true, however: we must separate ourselves a bit from electoral campaigns.

10 September 2019, 22:17