

## Communication Lessons from Pope Francis

- Introduction
  - It's great to be among you for the Catholic New Media Conference.
  - I've been asked to speak about Communications Lessons from Pope Francis. It's clear that in the 221 days of his papacy, people have been paying close attention to what he's been trying to communicate. Many, including long-time critics of the Church, have been listening with interest and intrigue. Great numbers of fallen away Catholics have in general been observing him with fascination and through him have been reconsidering their practice in the Church. The vast majority of practicing Catholics have been tuning in with a mixture of pride and wonder as he does things that Popes are not accustomed to doing, from calling ordinary people on the phone, drinks *mate* given by anonymous people in crowds, regularly departing from written texts, and more. Some Catholics, on the other hand, are expressing concerns about the prudence of some of the ways he is choosing to communicate, typified in the interview that caught even his own press department off guard with Eugenio Scalfari of *La Repubblica*, when he allowed an 89 year old man without a recording device or even a notebook to write a lengthy interview all from memory, something that clearly opens the door to some imprecise phrases that could and have led to confusion. And some in the greater Catholic orbit, like the schismatic Bishop Bernard Fellay of the Society of Pope St. Pius X, have condemned Pope Francis' efforts almost altogether, saying acerbically last week in Kansas City that "The situation of the Church is a real disaster and the present Pope is making it 10,000 times worse." But no matter where one stands with regard to what Pope Francis is actually communicating, it's incontestable that he's clearly got everyone's attention. And there's a reason why, because the how and the what of his communications are by-and-large connecting with all types of people where they're at and provoking a response of continued interest.
  - What I'd like to do in this talk is break it down into two parts. We'll spend the first half on Pope Francis' communications *style*. The second part we'll dedicate to his communications *substance*. There are many lessons contained in both that we can ponder, both as Catholic disciples as well as social media apostles. To keep it manageable and organized, however, I'd like to focus on an apostolic dozen lessons from both.
- Twelve Lessons about Pope Francis' Communications Style
  - First, Pope Francis is authentic
    - He seeks to communicate what he really believes. He's not surrounded by spin-meisters and consultants putting expressions before focus-groups and the like. There seems, in some ways, to be no real detailed communications strategy. This has a down-side, as happened on July 5, when he released his first encyclical (*Lumen Fidei*) on the same day it was drowned out by his announcing the upcoming canonization of John Paul II and John XXIII as well as by his first public appearance with his predecessor Pope Benedict in the Vatican gardens to bless a statue of St. Michael. Any basic and logical communications would have spaced the three events out because each deserved attention. But the flip side of the lack of a public relations master plan is that it accentuates all the more his authenticity, his totally being himself, as he communicates.
    - Pope Francis clearly prizes authenticity. In a July 6 address to seminarians and novices, he said: "To be joyful witnesses of the Gospel it is necessary to be authentic and consistent. And this is another word that I want to say to you: "authenticity"". Jesus severely reprimanded the hypocrites: hypocrites, those who think within themselves something other than what they say: those who — to say it clearly — are two-faced. To speak of authenticity to young people costs nothing because the young — all of them — have this wish to be

authentic, to be consistent. And you are all disgusted when you find in us priests who we are not authentic, or sisters who are not authentic!”

- He went on to say to them: “I always say what St Francis of Assisi stated: Christ has sent us to proclaim the Gospel with words too. The sentence goes like this: “Always proclaim the Gospel. And if necessary, with words”. What does this mean? Proclaiming the Gospel with an authentic life, with a consistent life. ... It is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel!
- That leads to the second point.
- Second, Pope Francis primarily tries to *show* the faith, to give witness, rather than merely describe it in words.
  - Rather than talking about the dignity of every human being, he goes out into the crowd and embraces handicapped children and adults. Rather than deliver a homily on poverty he embraces it in his own lifestyle. Rather than merely say that the whole Church needs to go to the peripheries to meet Christ’s lost sheep, he goes to the peripheries himself, to jails full of incarcerated teens, to forgotten *favelas* and *villas de miseria*, and even though his ability physically to get to the outskirts has been somewhat curtailed as pope, he continues to use his phone to call cobblers and paperboys, pregnant women and rape victims, young parents worried about sick children and teens preoccupied whether they’ll get a job.
  - He talked about the importance of proclaiming the Gospel with body language in a May 18 talk to 200,000 members of new movements assembled in St. Peter’s Square: “Faith can only be communicated through witness, and that means love. Not with our own ideas but with the Gospel, lived out in our own lives and brought to life within us by the Holy Spirit. There is, as it were, a synergy between us and the Holy Spirit, and this leads to witness.”
  - The day after his election, I was doing a morning with the BBC at the top of the Via della Conciliazione. The reporter asked me about the “symbolism” of Pope Francis’ going to St. Mary Major later that day to consecrate the papacy to Our Lady, to returning to the place he stayed before the conclave to pay his bill personally, and to returning to the Sistine Chapel to celebrate his first Mass as pope with the Cardinals who had elected him. I asked permission with a smile to be a “brash American,” and got a trepidatious consent. I said that there is a huge difference between a “symbol” and a “sign.” A symbol has no inherent connection to what it is pointing to, as a red octagonal sign with the letters S-T-O-P has no intrinsic connection to putting on the breaks. A “sign,” on the other hand, is related to what it’s signifying, like smoke points to a fire. I told her that when Prime Minister Cameron of Great Britain or President Obama goes into a crowd and kisses babies, very likely we’re dealing with a symbolic photo op, but when Pope Francis goes to Mary, or is personally accountable, or heads to the altar to pray with brother cardinals to focus on our task to confess Jesus, walk together, and be built into the Church, that’s a sign of what is truly present in his character. His deeds are in a sense a sacrament of his heart.
- Third, Pope Francis is available and personable.
  - In his Sept. 19 interview with Jesuit journals, when asked who is favorite Jesuit was, he replied Blessed Peter Faber, the great apostle of Germany in the decades immediately after the Protestant Reformation. When he was asked why, he gave a description that is basically, I believe, a self-portrait: “[His] dialogue with all,” the pope said, “even the most remote and even with his opponents; his simple piety, a certain naïveté perhaps, his being available straightaway, his careful interior discernment, the fact that he was a man capable of great and strong decisions but also capable of being so gentle and loving.”
  - When he visited the shanty town of Varginha on the outskirts of Rio on July 25, his amiability really radiated: “I would have liked to knock on every door,” he said, to say ‘good morning,’ to ask for a glass of cold water, to take a cafezinho, - not a glass of cachaça! (moonshine) – to speak as one would to family friends, to listen to each person pouring out his or her heart – parents, children, grandparents ...”
  - He’s likewise calling us all to draw near to others with congeniality.
- Fourth, he’s unmediated and direct

- He eliminates most middle men, including his own communications department, as we saw in the *La Repubblica* article, in many of his phone calls (including imposter phone calls), etc.
    - We see it perhaps most in his daily Mass homilies, which drive the news each day, and which are not looked at by the papal theologian or anyone in the secretary of state. In each of these, he not only is not handled by anyone but his speech is as direct as the one-to-one contact.
  - Fifth, he's free, spontaneous and uninhibited
    - John Allen recently wrote about what a Cardinal who's known Pope Francis for many years told him he said to Pope Francis in a private audience, "You're not the same guy I knew in Argentina." According to this cardinal, the pope's reply was the following: "When I was elected, a great sense of inner peace and freedom came over me, and it's never left me." Msgr. Dario Viganò of Vatican Television says (in an interview with Fr. Thomas Rosica of Salt and Light Television) that when Pope Francis was leaving the Sistine Chapel on his way to the balcony, his head was down and he looked crestfallen. But after praying for a few minutes in the Pauline Chapel, he emerged a new man, a different man, a man almost risen from the dead.
    - Perhaps the biggest change in his communication style has been with regard to interviews. When he was onboard "Shepherd One" flying to Brazil, he came to the back of the plane and said to the reporters, "It is true that I do not give interviews, but why, I do not know, I can't, it's just like that. For me it is quite an effort to do so." And then after the tremendous experience of World Youth Day, he gives a half hour television interview with *O Globo*, an 80 minute interview on the plane, and lengthy interviews with Jesuit journals and then *LaRepubblica*.
    - Despite the fact that he calls himself disorganized and says he never trusts his first thought because it's almost always wrong, he is now giving all types of interviews, pointing to the new freedom and confidence he has as Pope, likely a result of the grace of office. His papal communication style in this regard is considerably different than his pre-papal.
  - Sixth, Pope Francis is simple, in speech and in life.
    - He said to the bishops assembled in Rio on July 27: a "lesson that the Church must constantly recall is that she cannot leave simplicity behind; otherwise she forgets how to speak the language of Mystery, and she herself remains outside the door of the mystery, and obviously, she proves incapable of approaching those who look to the Church for something which they themselves cannot provide, namely, God himself. At times we lose people because they don't understand what we are saying, because we have forgotten the language of simplicity and import an intellectualism foreign to our people. Without the grammar of simplicity, the Church loses the very conditions which make it possible 'to fish' for God in the deep waters of his Mystery."
    - He himself is modeling that simple language that he's asking all bishops to employ.
    - But he's also modeling for them and the whole Church a simplicity in body language. In Buenos Aires, he was famous for his small, Spartan apartment, taking the bus and public transportation, eschewing a car. In Rome, he's moved into a small suite at the Vatican residence where he stayed before his election, and inside — as the Jesuit interview revealed — his study there's only a tiny desk, a few plain chairs and four objects: a Crucifix; an icon of St. Francis of Assisi; a statue of Our Lady of Luján, the patroness of Argentina; and an image of a sleeping St. Joseph.
  - Seventh, he speaks through unforgettable images
    - On March 28, at the Chrism Mass in which he helped lead his brother priests in the renewal of their priestly promises, he used a powerful image of the anointing with Sacred Chrism with which priests' hands are drenched in their priestly ordination. "The image of spreading oil, flowing down from the beard of Aaron upon the collar of his sacred robe, is an image of the priestly anointing which, through Christ, the Anointed One, reaches the ends of the earth, represented by the robe," he said. "The precious oil that anoints the head of Aaron does more than simply lend fragrance to his person; it overflows down to 'the edges.' The Lord will say this clearly: his anointing is meant for the poor, prisoners and the sick, for

those who are sorrowing and alone. My dear brothers, the ointment is not intended just to make us fragrant, much less to be kept in a jar, for then it would become rancid ... and the heart bitter. A good priest can be recognized by the way his people are anointed: this is a clear proof. When our people are anointed with the oil of gladness, it is obvious: for example, when they leave Mass looking as if they have heard good news. Our people like to hear the Gospel preached with “unction”, they like it when the Gospel we preach touches their daily lives, when it runs down like the oil of Aaron to the edges of reality, when it brings light to moments of extreme darkness, to the “outskirts” where people of faith are most exposed to the onslaught of those who want to tear down their faith. ... A good priest can be recognized by the way his people are anointed: this is a clear proof.

- During the same homily, he used another unforgettable image, that priests are supposed to know those they serve so well that they bear the “smell of the sheep.” “The priest who seldom goes out of himself, who anoints little – I won’t say ‘not at all’ because, thank God, the people take the oil from us anyway – misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. Those who do not go out of themselves, instead of being mediators, gradually become intermediaries, managers. We know the difference: the intermediary, the manager, “has already received his reward”, and since he doesn’t put his own skin and his own heart on the line, he never hears a warm, heartfelt word of thanks. This is precisely the reason for the dissatisfaction of some, who end up sad – sad priests - in some sense becoming collectors of antiques or novelties, instead of being shepherds living with “the odor of the sheep”. This I ask you: be shepherds, with the “smell of the sheep”, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men.”
- He returned to the image on August 28, when he visited the Church of St. Augustine in Rome: “Augustine let God make him restless, he never tired of proclaiming him, of evangelizing with courage and without fear, he sought to be the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep (cf. Jn 10:14). Indeed, as I like to repeat, he knew the odor of his sheep”, and went out to search for those that had strayed.”
- A third image came through in his interview with La Repubblica, when he said that the “leprosy of the papacy” are sycophantic courtiers flattering narcissistic leaders. These are unforgettable images all.
- That leads to an eighth point about his style, which is that he regularly uses graphic language to make his point in down-to-earth ways.
  - In a July 6 talk to seminarians about how they’re called to be joyful not gloomy, he used several graphic and earthy phrases: “There is no holiness in sadness, there isn’t any! St Teresa — there are many Spaniards here and they know it well — said: “a saint who is sad is a sad saint”. It is not worth much.... When you see a seminarian, a priest, a sister or a novice with a long face, gloomy, who seems to have thrown a soaking wet blanket over their life, one of those heavy blankets... which pulls one down.... Something has gone wrong! But please: never any sisters, never any priests with faces like “chili peppers pickled in vinegar” — never!”
  - On Sept 22 in Cagliari, he said, “May our childlike heart know how to defend itself from the many “windbags” who make false promises?”
  - On May 8 to Superiors General, he said, “The consecrated woman is a mother, she must be a mother, not a “spinster”! Excuse me for speaking like this, but motherhood in the consecrated life is important, this fruitfulness!”
  - During the Plane Interview on July 28, he was asked about the case of Msgr. Nunzio Scarano, who was arrested for allegedly trying to smuggle currency illegally into the Vatican. He said, “He didn’t exactly go to prison because he was like Blessed Imelda, he was no saint.” Blessed Imelda Lambertini was the 11 year old patron saint of first Communion who went into ecstasy after receiving Jesus for the first time and never emerged from the ecstasy, passing to the eternal wedding banquet. Msgr. Scarano wasn’t in trouble because he did nothing wrong, in other words.

- When he spoke to Argentinian young people in Rio on July 25, he said, “Please do not water down your faith in Jesus Christ. We dilute fruit drinks – orange, apple, or banana juice, but please do not drink a diluted form of faith. Faith is whole and entire, not something that you water down”
  - Describing his early thoughts on the Charismatic Renewal on the plane returning from Rio on July 28, he said, “Once, speaking about them, I said: “These people confuse a liturgical celebration with samba lessons!”
  - Earlier this month, when he was in Assisi, he addressed the problem of *mammoni*, bachelors who live at home well into their 30s and 40s despite their mother’s desires to see them make a commitment and marry. He said when a mother has said to him, “But, Father, I have a son who is 30 years old and he won’t get married. I don’t know what to do! He has a beautiful girlfriend, but he won’t make up his mind,” he normally replies, “Well, Signora, stop ironing his shirts! That’s how it is!”
  - Such language and concepts creates an immediacy where people are able to connect with him because he speaks not in lofty idioms but down-to-earth phrases.
- Ninth, Pope Francis is “messy.” He seems to revel a little in making a mess and shaking things up.
  - In his Sept 19 interview with Jesuit publications, he said, “Religious men and women are prophets. ...A religious must never give up prophecy.” As a Jesuit he takes this prophetic dimension seriously and then gives it greater definition. “Being prophets may sometimes imply making waves. I do not know how to put it.... Prophecy makes noise, uproar, some say ‘a mess.’”
  - When he spoke to Argentinian youth in Rio on July 25, he said, “Let me tell you what I hope will be the outcome of World Youth Day: I hope there will be a noise [a mess]. Here there will be noise, I’m quite sure. Here in Rio there will be plenty of noise, no doubt about that. But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves. ... May the bishops and priests forgive me if some of you create a bit of confusion afterwards. That’s my advice. Thanks for whatever you can do.”
  - He made a similar appeal to the youth of Piacenza-Bobbio on August 28: “I wanted to tell you this and say to you, have courage, go forward and make noise. Where there are young people so should there be noise. Then things settle down but the dream of a young person is to make noise forever. Go ahead!”
  - There’s obviously a risk in making a mess and encouraging others to make a mess. But Pope Francis says that it’s a risk worth taking. To the members of new movements on the Vigil of Pentecost, May 18, he said: “But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same as can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed.”
- Tenth, he’s tri-partite in many of his communications with his famous three points.
  - On Sept. 27 to Catechists in Rome for a Year of Faith celebration, he described where this characteristic method comes from, “I am going to speak about three things: one, two, three, the way the old-fashioned Jesuits did... one, two, three!”
  - Not only do these three point have a Trinitarian resonance, but it is also an easy mnemonic to help one remember what was said, pass it on and put it into practice.
- Eleventh, he’s dialogical, using questions especially when he wants to call people to consider conversion. This allows them to answer the questions in a conversation rather than simply be preached at.
  - On Oct 13, he asked aloud, “Am I a Christian by fits and starts, or am I a Christian full-time?”
  - On Aug 28 at the Church of St. Augustine, he queried, “We may ask ourselves: am I anxious for God, anxious to proclaim him, to make him known? Or do I allow that spiritual

worldliness to attract me which impels people to do everything for love of themselves? We consecrated people think of our personal interests, of the functionality of our works, of our careers. Eh! We can think of so many things.... Have I, so to speak, “made myself ‘comfy” in my Christian life, in my priestly life, in my religious life, and also in my community life? Or do I retain the force of restlessness for God, for his Word that makes me “step out” of myself towards others?”

- On April 14, when he went to St. Paul’s Outside the walls, he said: “I would like all of us to ask ourselves this question: You, I, do we worship the Lord? Do we turn to God only to ask him for things, to thank him, or do we also turn to him to worship him? What does it mean, then, to worship God? ... This evening I would like a question to resound in the heart of each one of you, and I would like you to answer it honestly: Have I considered which idol lies hidden in my life that prevents me from worshipping the Lord?”
- On May 18 at the Vigil of Pentecost with members of new movements, he said, “I put a question to you: do you pray for these brothers and sisters [persecuted for the faith]? Do you pray for them? In your daily prayers? I am not going to ask those who do to raise their hands: no. I am not going to ask that now. But think about it carefully. In our daily prayers let us say to Jesus: ‘Lord, look at this brother, look at this sister who is suffering so much, suffering atrociously!’”
- On June 22, welcoming to St. Peter’s Basilica several thousands to celebrate Pope Paul VI, he said: “And I return to this discourse again and again because it does me good to hear these words of Paul VI today. And us? Do we have the same love for Christ? Is he the center of our life? The witness of our daily actions?” ... These questions are also put to our Church today, to all of us. We are all responsible for the answers and must ask ourselves: are we really a Church united to Christ in order to go out and proclaim him to everyone, also and above all in what I call the “existential outskirts”? Or are we closed in on ourselves, in our own groups, in our own little churches? Or do we love the great Church, Mother Church, the Church that sends us out on mission and brings us out of ourselves?
- And if one want to see this style of asking questions in its most exaggerated form, we can turn to the lengthy list of questions he asked of the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM) on July 28: “Consequently, we, as pastors, need to ask questions about the actual state of the Churches which we lead. These questions can serve as a guide in examining where the dioceses stand in taking up the spirit of Aparecida; they are questions which we need to keep asking as an examination of conscience: 1. Do we see to it that our work, and that of our priests, is more pastoral than administrative? Who primarily benefits from our efforts, the Church as an organization or the People of God as a whole?; 2. Do we fight the temptation simply to react to complex problems as they arise? Are we creating a proactive mindset? Do we promote opportunities and possibilities to manifest God’s mercy? Are we conscious of our responsibility for refocusing pastoral approaches and the functioning of Church structures for the benefit of the faithful and society?; 3. In practice, do we make the lay faithful sharers in the Mission? Do we offer them the word of God and the sacraments with a clear awareness and conviction that the Holy Spirit makes himself manifest in them?; 4. Is pastoral discernment a habitual criterion, through the use of Diocesan Councils? Do such Councils and Parish Councils, whether pastoral or financial, provide real opportunities for lay people to participate in pastoral consultation, organization and planning? The good functioning of these Councils is critical. I believe that on this score, we are far behind; 5. As pastors, bishops and priests, are we conscious and convinced of the mission of the lay faithful and do we give them the freedom to continue discerning, in a way befitting their growth as disciples, the mission which the Lord has entrusted to them? Do we support them and accompany them, overcoming the temptation to manipulate them or infantilize them? Are we constantly open to letting ourselves be challenged in our efforts to advance the good of the Church and her mission in the world?; 6. Do pastoral agents and the faithful in general feel part of the Church, do they identify with her and bring her closer to the baptized who are distant and alienated?

- Twelfth, he's fatherly, perhaps a little grandfatherly and at the same time a model of the Church's maternal tenderness.
  - Speaking to the Bishops of CELAM on July 28, he described the type of pastoral style he was hoping they would adopt, something that seems to be a fitting self-description: "Bishops must be pastors, close to people, fathers and brothers, and gentle, patient and merciful."
  - In his Sept 19 interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro of *La Civiltà Cattolica*, he stated, "The first reform must be the attitude. The ministers of the Gospel must be people who can warm the hearts of the people, who walk through the dark night with them, who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people's night, into the darkness, but without getting lost. The people of God want pastors, not clergy acting like bureaucrats or government officials."
- Twelve points about the *substance* of Pope Francis' communications
  - Pope Francis' communications are effective not only because of his style, but also because of the content of what he seeks to convey. There are many themes that he returns to frequently and that are present in a lot of his pre-papal ideas. Different people could come up with different lists — including things that every Pope stresses a lot, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus in the Eucharist, the importance of the Cross, etc. — but I would like to propose the following twelve aspects of the substance of Pope Francis' message that I think are most distinctive about our new pope.
  - First, Pope Francis prioritizes the *kerygma*.
    - This is the Greek word for "proclamation" but it refers to the basic initial proclamation that Christ is the Savior, the incarnate Word of God who came into the world to save us our sins, who suffered, died and rose. We see the classic kerygma in St. Paul's 1 Corinthians 15. "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."
    - In the Sept 19 interview, he said, "I say this also thinking about the preaching and content of our preaching. A beautiful homily, a genuine sermon must begin with the first proclamation, with the proclamation of salvation. There is nothing more solid, deep and sure than this proclamation. Then you have to do catechesis. Then you can draw even a moral consequence. But the proclamation of the saving love of God [i.e., the kerygma] comes before moral and religious imperatives."
    - In a 2010 book length interview with Sergio Rubin entitled *El Jesuita*, the future Pope stressed that conversion has to begin with making Jesus come alive in people's lives, rather than with particular moral issues. "The most important thing in preaching," he emphasized, "is to proclaim Jesus Christ, what in theology is called the kerygma, that Jesus Christ is God, became man to save us, lived in the world like any one of us, suffered, tied, was buried and rose. ... [This] provokes astonishment, and brings one to contemplation and to faith. ... After the encounter with Jesus comes reflection, ... where one can deduce the principles of religious and moral behavior." He expressed his concern that sometimes there can be a "degrading reductionism" in the preaching of the Church, focusing above all on sexual morality and what's licit and illicit. "When this happens," he stated, "we bury the treasure of the living Jesus, the treasure of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, the treasure of the project of Christian life that has many other aspects beyond sexual questions. We push to the side a rich catechesis, with the mysteries of faith and the Creed, and we center ourselves on whether we should organize a rally against a political proposal to legalize condoms."
  - Second, as a crucial part of that kerygma, Pope Francis preaches on mercy as his principle theme.

- Mercy is central to his self-identity. In the Sept. 19 interview, when he was asked “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?,” he replied, “I am a sinner. This is the most accurate definition. It is not a figure of speech, a literary genre. I am a sinner. . . . The best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon.” And he repeats: “I am one who is looked upon by the Lord. I always felt my motto, Miserando atque Eligendo [By Having Mercy and by Choosing Him], was very true for me. . . . This is what I said when they asked me if I would accept my election as pontiff.” Then the pope whispers in Latin: “I am a sinner, but I trust in the infinite mercy and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I accept in a spirit of penance.”
- During his first Sunday Mass and then Angelus Message on March 17, he proclaimed the beauty of God’s undying mercy as not only Jesus’ most powerful message but the Church’s most powerful continued message to the world: “Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think – and I say it with humility – that this is the Lord’s most powerful message: mercy. It was he himself who said: “I did not come for the righteous”. The righteous justify themselves. Go on, then, even if you can do it, I cannot! But they believe they can. “I came for sinners” (Mk 2:17).... The Lord never tires of forgiving: never! It is we who tire of asking his forgiveness. Let us ask for the grace not to tire of asking forgiveness, because he never tires of forgiving.”
- In the 2010 book *El Jesuita* he said that when priests ask him for advice, he always responds, “Be merciful.”
- In the interview on the plane returning from Brazil (7/28), he said that the Church must follow the path of mercy and that this is a special need of our time: “The Church is a mother: she has to go out to heal those who are hurting, with mercy. If the Lord never tires of forgiving, we have no other choice than this: first of all, to care for those who are hurting. The Church is a mother, and she must travel this path of mercy. And find a form of mercy for all. When the prodigal son returned home, I don’t think his father told him: “You, sit down and listen: what did you do with the money?” No! He celebrated! Then, perhaps, when the son was ready to speak, he spoke. The Church has to do this, when there is someone... not only wait for them, but go out and find them! That is what mercy is. And I believe that this is a kairos: this time is a kairos of mercy. But John Paul II had the first intuition of this, when he began with Faustina Kowalska, the Divine Mercy... He had something, he had intuited that this was a need in our time.”
- This path of mercy isn’t always easy. He said on the plane about an unfortunate case of a Vatican Monsignor who was accused of engaging in conduct unbecoming of a priest in Uruguay but who was appointed by an unknowing Pope to be his prefect for the Vatican bank that if God is merciful, so we must be as well: “But if a person, whether it be a lay person, a priest or a religious sister, commits a sin and then converts, the Lord forgives, and when the Lord forgives, the Lord forgets and this is very important for our lives. When we confess our sins and we truly say, “I have sinned in this”, the Lord forgets, and so we have no right not to forget, because otherwise we would run the risk of the Lord not forgetting our sins. That is a danger. This is important: a theology of sin. Many times I think of Saint Peter. He committed one of the worst sins, that is he denied Christ, and even with this sin they made him Pope. We have to think a great deal about that.”
- An authentically Christian discipleship begins our recognition that we’re sinners in need of salvation and the concomitant experience that that Savior looks on us with merciful love. “For me, feeling oneself a sinner is one of the most beautiful things that can happen, if it leads to its ultimate consequences” the future Pope Francis said in “El Jesuita.” At the Easter Vigil, he says, we sing “O Felix culpa,” exulting in the “happy sin” that brought us to experience the love of the Redeemer. “When a person becomes conscious that he is a sinner and is saved by Jesus,” Cardinal Bergoglio said, “he proclaims this truth to himself and discovers the pearl of great price, the treasure buried in the field. He discovers the greatest thing in life: that there is someone who loves him profoundly, who gave his life for him.” Many Catholics have sadly not had this fundamental Christian experience. “There are people



who believe the right things, who have received catechesis and accepted the Christian faith in some way, but who do not have the experience of having been saved,” he lamented. He then gave a powerful metaphor of what the true experience of God’s mercy is like. “It’s one thing when people tell us a story about someone’s risking his life to save a boy drowning in the river. It’s something else when I’m the one drowning and someone gives his life to save me.” That’s what Christ did for us to save us from the eternal watery grave of the deluge of sin. That’s what we should celebrate every day of our life, just like someone whose life has been saved by a hero would never be able to forget it, not to mention thank him enough. Unfortunately, he said, “There are people to whom you tell the story who don’t see it, who don’t want to see, who don’t want to know what happened to that boy, or who always have escape hatches from the situation of drowning and who therefore lack the experience of who they are. I believe that only we great sinners have this grace.”

- The third main message of Pope Francis’ communications flows from the second. The Church and all of us in the Church must be serious in continuing Jesus’ work of mercy in healing the wounds of those in the world.
  - “I see clearly,” the pope said in the Sept. 19 interview with Jesuit publications, “that the thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.... The church’s ministers must be merciful, take responsibility for the people and accompany them like the good Samaritan, who washes, cleans and raises up his neighbor. This is pure Gospel. God is greater than sin.”
  - He had said to the bishops assembled in Rio on July 27: “Concerning pastoral conversion, I would like to recall that “pastoral care” is nothing other than the exercise of the Church’s motherhood. She gives birth, suckles, gives growth, corrects, nourishes and leads by the hand ... So we need a Church capable of rediscovering the maternal womb of mercy. Without mercy we have little chance nowadays of becoming part of a world of “wounded” persons in need of understanding, forgiveness, love.”
- The fourth principal message of his papacy is that the Church must once again warm hearts.
  - In Rio on July 27, he told the bishops that the Church must emulate Jesus’ actions accompanying the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, entering into their conversation, showing the light of faith on their doubts and disappointments, warming their hearts, and firing them up to want to share the faith. He said: “From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people’s side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the “night” contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus. I would like all of us to ask ourselves today: are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?”
  - In a speech to the plenary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on September 21 — the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his receiving his priestly vocation — he said that all of us in social communications are called to warm the hearts of those whom we befriend, whom we follow and who follow us: “[The] challenge which we must all face together in this environment of communications where the issues are not principally technological. We must ask ourselves: are we up to the task of bringing Christ into this area, or better still, of bringing others to meet Christ? Can we walk alongside the pilgrim of today’s world as Jesus walked with those companions to Emmaus, warming their hearts on the way and bringing

them to an encounter with the Lord? ... The challenge is to rediscover, through the means of social communication as well as by personal contact, the beauty that is at the heart of our existence and journey, the beauty of faith and of the beauty of the encounter with Christ. Even in this world of communications, the Church must warm the hearts of men and women. ... We need to bring Christ to others, through these joys and hopes, like Mary, who brought Christ to the hearts of men and women; we need to pass through the clouds of indifference without losing our way; we need to descend into the darkest night without being overcome and disorientated; we need to listen to the dreams, without being seduced; we need to share their disappointments, without becoming despondent; to sympathize with those whose lives are falling apart, without losing our own strength and identity. This is the path. This is the challenge.”

- Fifth, to heal the wounds and warm the hearts, to bring the saving message of Christ’s mercy, the Church must go outside of herself, she must go to the peripheries to find the lost sheep.
  - In his March 9 intervention in the General Congregation of Cardinals intervention that changed the dynamics of conclave and ultimately Church and world history, Cardinal Bergoglio told his brother cardinals that the Church exists and is impelled by Jesus to evangelize, to come out of herself and go to the ends of the earth — not just geographically but also to those at the periphery of existence, who are alienated from God and others through sin, pain, injustice, ignorance, ideology, material and spiritual poverty, and other types of misery. When those in the Church lose this “apostolic zeal,” when the Church doesn’t come out of herself to bring Christ to others, she becomes self-referential and sick. “The evils that over the course of time happen in ecclesial institutions,” he said, “have their root in a self-reference and a sort of theological narcissism. ... The self-referent Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him come out.”
  - He said in the 2010 book length interview, *El Jesuita*: “The key is for catholics, both clergy and laity, to go out to meet the people.” (We have one and we don’t go out to the 99). “I sincerely believe that the fundamental option of the Church today is not to diminish or eliminate prescriptions or make this or that easier but to go out to the street looking for people, to get to know people by name. But not only because this is the Church’s mission, to go out to proclaim the Gospel, but because not to do it would harm us.”
  - He continued in *El Jesuita*: “I believe that a Church that reduces itself to administration, to guarding the small flock, is a Church that in the long run is sick. The pastor who closes himself in is not an authentic pastor of the sheep, but a sheep dresser who makes curls with their hair instead of looking for others.”
  - This is one of his most insistent messages to a Church that in many places is more dedicated to maintenance than mission. In a Mass with bishops, priests and seminarians in Rio on July 27, he said, “We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, in our parish or diocesan institutions, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel! To go out as ones sent. It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome because they come, but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people! Let us urge our young people to go forth. Of course, they will make mistakes, but let us not be afraid!
  - Meeting with members of the new movements on May 18 in St. Peter’s Square, he called them to be part of a new Pentecost, bursting through the closed doors of the Upper Room and taking the Gospel out. “At this time of crisis we cannot be concerned solely with ourselves, withdrawing into loneliness, discouragement and a sense of powerlessness in the face of problems. Please do not withdraw into yourselves! This is a danger: we shut ourselves up in the parish, with our friends, within the movement, with the like-minded... but do you know what happens? When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she falls ill! That is a danger. Nevertheless we lock ourselves up in our parish, among our friends, in our movement, with people who think as we do... but do you know what happens? When the Church is closed, she falls sick, she falls sick. Think of a room that has been closed for a year. When you go into it there is a smell of damp, many things are wrong with it. A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church. The Church must step outside herself. To go

where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but she must step out. Jesus tells us: “Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!” (cf. Mk 16:15).

- He talked about his fondness for this expression on June 17 in a speech to the annual convention of the Church of the Diocese of Rome, calling on the members of his new Church to go to the peripheries: “I therefore like using the expression ‘to go toward the outskirts,’ the outskirts of existence. All, all the outskirts, from physical and real poverty to intellectual poverty, which is also real. All the peripheries, all the crossroads on the way: go there. And sow there the seed of the Gospel with your words and your witness.”
- He added at that June 17 convention that we need to leave the few sheep behind and go after the larger part of the Church, which has wandered away lost from our communities on Sunday and beyond.: “There is a beautiful passage of the Gospel which tells us about the shepherd who, when he returned to the sheepfold realized that one sheep was missing. He left the 99 others and went in search of it, he went off to look for one. But brothers and sisters, we have one sheep. We have lost the other 99! We must go out, we must go out to them! In this culture — let us tell the truth — we only have one, we are a minority! And do we feel the fervor, the apostolic zeal to go out and find the other 99? This is an enormous responsibility and we must ask the Lord for the grace of generosity, and the courage and patience to go out, to go out and preach the Gospel. Ah, this is difficult. It is easier to stay at home, with that one sheep! It is easier with that sheep to comb its fleece, to stroke it... but we priests and you Christians too, everyone: the Lord wants us to be shepherds, he does not want us to fuss with combing fleeces! Shepherds! And when a community is withdrawn, always among the same people who speak, this community is not a life-giving community. It is barren, it is not fertile. The fecundity of the Gospel comes through the grace of Jesus Christ, but through us, our preaching, our courage, our patience.”
- He stressed in a Sept 27 Year of Faith celebration with catechists in the Vatican that God is constantly going to the outskirts and we need to have the guts to go with him, not being afraid to make mistakes, but boldly taking the risks to spread the faith: “Starting anew with Christ means not being afraid to go with him to the outskirts. ... God is not afraid of the outskirts. If you go to the outskirts, you will find him there. ... To stay close to God, we need to know how to set out, we must not be afraid to set out. ... Whenever we Christians are enclosed in our groups, our movements, our parishes, in our little worlds, we remain closed, and the same thing happens to us that happens to anything closed: when a room is closed, it begins to get dank. If a person is closed up in that room, he or she becomes ill! Whenever Christians are enclosed in their groups, parishes, movements, they take ill. If a Christian goes to the streets, or to the outskirts, he or she may risk the same thing that can happen to anyone out there: an accident. How often have we seen accidents on the road! But I am telling you: I would prefer a thousand times over a bruised Church than an ill Church!”
- Sixth, we are called to head to the outskirts in order to bring about a culture of encounter.
  - In his May 18 meeting with the members of the new movements, Pope Francis stressed how important he deems the concept and reality of encounter for the whole Church. “In this ‘stepping out’ it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others. We live in a culture of conflict, a culture of fragmentation, a culture in which I throw away what is of no use to me, a culture of waste. Yet on this point, I ask you to think — and it is part of the crisis — of the elderly, who are the wisdom of a people, think of the children... the culture of waste! However, we must go out to meet them, and with our faith we must create a “culture of encounter”, a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, as well as those who hold other beliefs, who do not have the same faith.”
  - In Rio on July 27, he stressed that all of us are “called to promote the culture of encounter” and wants us to become “obsessed” about it in a good way. “In many places, generally speaking, due to the economic humanism that has been imposed in the world, the culture of exclusion, of rejection, is spreading. There is no place for the elderly or for the unwanted

child; there is no time for that poor person in the street. ... Encountering and welcoming everyone, solidarity – a word that is being hidden by this culture, as if it were a bad word – solidarity and fraternity: these are what make our society truly human. Be servants of communion and of the culture of encounter! I would like you to be almost obsessed about this.”

- He told seminarians and novices on July 6 that the culture of encounter leads to joy: “True joy does not come from things or from possessing, no! It is born from the encounter, from the relationship with others, it is born from feeling accepted, understood and loved, and from accepting, from understanding and from loving; and this is not because of a passing fancy but because the other is a person. Joy is born from the gratuitousness of an encounter! It is hearing someone say, but not necessarily with words: ‘You are important to me.’ This is beautiful.... And it is these very words that God makes us understand.”
- In a July 28 talk in Rio to the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, he stressed that to achieve the re-evangelization of their region as spelled out in the 2007 Aparecida document, we have to draw near to people and really meet them.: “In Aparecida, two pastoral categories stand out; they arise from the uniqueness of the Gospel, and we can employ them as guidelines for assessing how we are living missionary discipleship in the Church: nearness and encounter. Neither of these two categories is new; rather, they are the way God has revealed himself to us in history. He is the “God who is near” to his people, a nearness which culminates in the incarnation. He is the God who goes forth to meet his people. In Latin America and the Caribbean there are pastoral plans that are ‘distant,’ disciplinary pastoral plans that give priority to principles, forms of conduct, organizational procedures... and clearly lack nearness, tenderness, a warm touch. They do not take into account the ‘revolution of tenderness’ brought by the incarnation of the Word. There are pastoral plans designed with such a dose of distance that they are incapable of sparking an encounter: an encounter with Jesus Christ, an encounter with our brothers and sisters. Such pastoral plans can at best provide a dimension of proselytism, but they can never inspire people to feel part of or belong to the Church. Nearness creates communion and belonging; it makes room for encounter. Nearness takes the form of dialogue and creates a culture of encounter.”
- There are two dimensions of this encounter, he told seminarians and novices on July 6 in Rio: vertical and horizontal that are intrinsically united: “I would like to tell you: come out of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel, but to do this you must come out of yourselves to encounter Jesus. There are two ways out: one towards the encounter with Jesus, towards transcendence; the other towards others in order to proclaim Jesus. These two go hand in hand. If you only take one of them, that is no good! I am thinking of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was a fantastic sister.... She was not afraid of anything. She went about on the roads.... This woman was not even afraid of kneeling for two hours before the Lord. Do not fear to step out of yourselves in prayer or in pastoral action. Be brave, in order to pray and in order to go and proclaim the Gospel.”
- He told catechists on Sept 27 in Rome that this double-dynamism of encounter is like the action of a heart that receives blood from God and pumps it out in love for others: “Starting anew with Christ means imitating him by leaving ourselves behind and going out to encounter others. This is a beautiful experience, and yet a paradox. Why? Because when we put Christ at the center of our life, we ourselves don’t become the center! The more that you unite yourself to Christ and he becomes the center of your life, the more he leads you out of yourself, leads you from making yourself the center and opens you to others. This is the true dynamism of love, this is the movement of God himself! God is the center, but he is always self-gift, relationship, love that gives itself away . . . and this is what we will become if we remain united to Christ. He will draw us into this dynamism of love. Where there is true life in Christ, there follows an openness to others, and so a going out from oneself to encounter others in the name of Christ. And this is the job of the catechist: constantly to go forth to others out of love, to bear witness to Jesus and to talk about Jesus, to proclaim Jesus. This is

important because the Lord does it: it is the Lord himself who impels us to go forth. The heart of a catechist always beats with this systolic and diastolic movement: union with Christ – encounter with others. Both of these: I am one with Jesus and I go forth to encounter others. If one of these movements is missing, the heart no longer beats, it can no longer live.”

- Seventh, he says that the opposite of this culture of encounter is a self-referential Church that leads to the worst evil that can afflict the Church: spiritual worldliness.
  - When he gave his pre-conclave intervention to his brother Cardinals, he cited the great Jesuit theologian Henri De Lubac who talked about the cancer of a worldly spirit instead of the Spirit of God. “When the Church is self-referent without realizing it,” Cardinal Bergoglio state, “she believes she has her own light. She ceases to be the *mysterium lunae* [the mystery of the moon reflecting the light of the sun (God)] and gives way to that very great evil which is spiritual worldliness (which according to [the great 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian Cardinal Henri] De Lubac, is the worst evil that can come upon the Church). The self-referent Church lives to give glory only to one another.”
  - He mentioned these thoughts anew at the Pentecost Vigil on May 18— “However there is one problem that can afflict Christians: the spirit of the world, the worldly spirit, spiritual worldliness. This leads to self-sufficiency, to living by the spirit of the world rather than by the spirit of Jesus.”
  - Spiritual worldliness is when we place our faith, hope and love in mammon, in the things of this world, rather than in God. That leads to the next point in his substance, one of the consequences of spiritual worldliness.
- Eighth, Pope Francis is warning the world about what he calls the ferocious idolatry of money
  - In his July 27 television interview with the Brazilian network *O Globo* he said: “The world in which we’re living has fallen into a ferocious idolatry of money. There is a world wide policy dominated by the pursuit of money. What’s in control now is money. These means that there is a world wide economy policy without any ethical control whatever, a self-sufficient economic system that is arranging social groups in accordance with this idolatry. What is happening as a result? When this world of the ferocious idolatry of money reigns, everything focuses for the most part in the center. Those on the extremes of society [the young who don’t work yet, seniors who are too old to work, and the handicapped who can’t work] are badly taken care of, neglected and discarded.”
  - This ferocious idolatry of money, he declared in a May 16 speech to Ambassadors, betrays a profound crisis for human beings: “The financial crisis that we are experiencing makes us forget that its ultimate origin is to be found in a profound human crisis. In the denial of the primacy of human beings! We have created new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old (cf. Ex 32:15-34) has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal.... The worldwide financial and economic crisis seems to highlight their distortions and above all the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to one of his needs alone, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods that can be used and thrown away. We have started a throw-away culture. This tendency is seen on the level of individuals and whole societies; and it is being promoted!
  - Several times he’s returned to the story of a medieval rabbi speaking about the building of the tower of Babel to illustrate this profound human crisis that flows from the savage cult of mammon and leads to slavery. On June 7, he told students in Jesuit schools: “I once read a story about a medieval rabbi in the year 1200. This rabbi explained to the Jews of that time the history of the Tower of Babel. Building the Tower of Babel was not easy. They had to make bricks; and how is a brick made? Mud and straw must be fetched, they must be mixed and the bricks brought to the kiln. It involved a lot of work. And after all this work a brick became a real treasure! They then had to hoist the bricks in order to build the Tower of Babel. If a brick fell it was a tragedy! But if a man fell nothing happened! It is this crisis that we are living today, this same crisis. It is the crisis of the person. Today the person counts for nothing, it is coins, it is money that count. And Jesus, God, gave the world, the whole

creation, to the person, to men and women that they might care for it; he did not give it to money. It is a crisis, the person is in a crisis because today — listen carefully, it is true — the person is a slave! We must liberate ourselves from these economic and social structures that enslave us. This is your duty.”

- He reiterated the point on Sept 22 in Cagliari, stressing that it endangers man’s future: “An economic system ... leads to this tragedy; an economic system centered on an idol called “money”. God did not want an idol to be at the center of the world but man, men and women who would keep the world going with their work. Yet now, in this system devoid of ethics, at the center there is an idol and the world has become an idolater of this “god-money”. Money is in command! Money lays down the law! It orders all these things that are useful to it, this idol. And what happens? To defend this idol all crowd to the center and those on the margins are done down, the elderly fall away, because there is no room for them in this world! Some call this habit “hidden euthanasia”, not caring for them, not taking them into account.... “No, let’s not bother about them...”. And the young who do not find a job collapse, and their dignity with them. Do you realize that in a world where youth — two generations of young people — have no work that this world has no future.
- Ninth, he said that when a Church becomes spiritually worldly, it basically becomes just an NGO (a non-governmental organization).
  - During his first homily as Pope, at the Mass with the Cardinals who elected him on March 14 in the Sistine Chapel, he declared, “We can walk as much as we want, we can build many things, but if we do not profess Jesus Christ, things go wrong. We may become a charitable NGO, but not the Church, the Bride of the Lord.”
  - The process of going from bride to business occurs when the Church focuses too much on herself rather than on God and others. He told the Bishops of CELAM on July 28 in Rio: “The Church is an institution, but when she makes herself a “center”, she becomes merely functional, and slowly but surely turns into a kind of NGO. The Church then claims to have a light of her own, and she stops being that *mysterium lunae* [mystery of the moon reflecting the light of the sun, representing Christ] of which the Church Fathers spoke. She becomes increasingly self-referential and loses her need to be missionary. From an “institution” she becomes a “enterprise”. She stops being a bride and ends up being an administrator; from being a servant, she becomes an “inspector”. Aparecida wanted a Church which is bride, mother and servant, more a facilitator of faith than an inspector of faith”
  - A Church that has become an NGO is worthless, like salt that has lost its flavor, he told new movements on May 18: “The Church is neither a political movement nor a well-organized structure. That is not what she is. We are not an NGO, and when the Church becomes an NGO she loses her salt, she has no savor, she is only an empty organization.”
  - The Church has to avoid this loss of a supernatural sense by focusing mainly on efficiency. He told the bishops of CELAM on July 28 in Rio: “Functionalism. Its effect on the Church is paralyzing. More than being interested in the road itself, it is concerned with fixing holes in the road. A functionalist approach has no room for mystery; it aims at efficiency. It reduces the reality of the Church to the structure of an NGO. What counts are quantifiable results and statistics. The Church ends up being run like any other business organization. It applies a sort of “theology of prosperity” to the organization of pastoral work.”
  - All Church institutions, he said, need to make sure they do not succumb to this hyper-institutionalization of the Church. He told young Argentines in Rome on July 25: “Parishes, schools, and institutions are made for going out ... if they don’t, they become an NGO, and the Church cannot be an NGO.”
  - Hence, when people think about the reform Pope Francis was elected to bring about, it’s never going to be merely one of flow-charts and efficiencies, but one to overcome this spiritual worldliness and the temptation toward functionalism. True reforms is going to help the Church become an ever more faithful, loving, fruitful bride.
- Tenth, he has been helping the Church recognize another danger, that of reducing the message of the Gospel to an ideology.



celebration I passed through the parish I normally attended, I found a priest that I did not know and I felt the need to go to confession. For me this was an experience of encounter: I found that someone was waiting for me. Yet I do not know what happened, I can't remember, I do not know why that particular priest was there whom I did not know, or why I felt this desire to confess, but the truth is that someone was waiting for me. He had been waiting for me for some time. After making my confession I felt something had changed. I was not the same. I had heard something like a voice, or a call. I was convinced that I should become a priest. This experience of faith is important. We say we must seek God, go to him and ask forgiveness, but when we go, he is waiting for us, he is there first! In Spanish we have a word that explains this well: *primerear* — the Lord always gets there before us, he gets there first, he is waiting for us! To find someone waiting for you is truly a great grace. You go to him as a sinner, but he is waiting to forgive you."

- God always awaits us. He was awaiting us here at this Catholic New Media Conference. He awaits us in confession. He awaits us at Mass. He awaits us in others. He awaits us in work and in our social media apostolates. He awaits us in heaven, hoping we will respond to his invitation.
- Twelfth, Pope Francis stresses that if we grasp the above points — about the essence of the kerygma, God's call to share his mercy, to heal wounds and warm hearts, to promote a culture of encounter with all those especially on the outskirts, to avoid the cancer of spiritual worldliness and the idolatry of money, the bureaucratization and ideologization of the faith, and how God awaits us to help us go out to meet him in others — then we will recognize that we are our brothers' keeper. That God calls us to be responsible, loving stewards of others.
  - On the Vigil for Peace on Sept 7, he asked with regard to the situation in Syria: "It is exactly in this chaos that God asks man's conscience: "Where is Abel your brother?" and Cain responds: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). We too are asked this question, it would be good for us to ask ourselves as well: Am I really my brother's keeper? Yes, you are your brother's keeper! To be human means to care for one another!"
  - He stressed this stewardship in his incredible homily in Lampedusa, the small island off the southern coast of Sicily where 20,000 people who have died over the last 25 years trying to escape from persecution and poverty in North Africa. "Where is your brother?" His blood cries out to me, says the Lord. This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us. ... "Where is your brother?" Who is responsible for this blood? In Spanish literature we have a comedy of Lope de Vega which tells how the people of the town of Fuente Ovejuna kill their governor because he is a tyrant. They do it in such a way that no one knows who the actual killer is. So when the royal judge asks: "Who killed the governor?", they all reply: "Fuente Ovejuna, sir". Everybody and nobody! Today too, the question has to be asked: Who is responsible for the blood of these brothers and sisters of ours? Nobody! That is our answer: It isn't me; I don't have anything to do with it; it must be someone else, but certainly not me. Yet God is asking each of us: "Where is the blood of your brother which cries out to me?" Today no one in our world feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. We have fallen into the hypocrisy of the priest and the levite whom Jesus described in the parable of the Good Samaritan: we see our brother half dead on the side of the road, and perhaps we say to ourselves: "poor soul...!", and then go on our way. It's not our responsibility, and with that we feel reassured, assuaged. The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me; it doesn't concern me; it's none of my business!"
  - With very forceful words, Pope Francis is trying to communicate to all of us that Jesus calls us to true solidarity, to weep over the misfortune of our brothers and sisters, to pray and to the extent we can, get involved.



- Conclusion
  - These twelve lessons respectively on Pope Francis' style and substance of communications have been presented fundamentally as an example so that in our own parts of the vineyard of North America and the digital continent, we may emulate them in the hope that we might bear similar fruit. We have much to learn from how the Holy Spirit is inspiring him to lead the Church so that we may become a team of nurses making house calls with the Divine Physician so that he may continue to bind the injuries of a wounded world.