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## Ten Central Themes of Pope Francis' Magisterium Until Now

- Introduction
  - I'm happy to be invited to speak about Pope Francis. It was a great joy for me to be present doing television coverage during the Conclave that elected him and, immediately after his election, to plunge into his pre-papal book length interviews, homilies, speeches — in short, his head, his heart, his life — for various articles and commentaries. Since then, as I prepare a series of retreats to be given to priests, religious and lay people next year on the theme of Pope Francis and the Reform of the Church, I've had a reason to read almost everything he says publicly, from big documents like last week's apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" and the encyclical "The Light of Faith" he co-authored with Pope-emeritus Benedict, to the interviews, to his daily Mass homilies, weekly Angelus meditations, Wednesday audience catecheses and so many other things. To enter into the school of Pope Francis is not to enter a university but a vocational school. The main thrust of what he's teaching us by words and example lies in the practical transformation of behavior rather than in the verbal exposition of the beauty of Christian revelation or theological reflection upon it.
  - When the other members of Raymond Arroyo's Conclave Crew and I arrived in Rome back at the beginning of March to prepare for the papal conclave, we had a nice meal at a great restaurant called the Taverna Giulia to hash out a game plan for our coverage and start to get to know not only each other better, but each other's ideas better. At that dinner, Robert Royal, the brilliant lay social commentator, provocatively asked Raymond, Fr. Gerry Murray, our producer Chris Edwards, and me whether we thought we needed another teaching pope in the line of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI. I didn't know Bob at all personally at this point and I was quite jet-lagged, but my first reaction, which thanks be to God I suppressed, was to shout out, "What are you crazy? Of course we need a pope who will continue to teach the world in the line of JP II and Benedict." Instead, I said, "Your question already implies that you think that we might not need another great teaching pope. What danger might you see in that?" Bob said that he was grateful for all the teaching that the Church had given from the Second Vatican Council documents to the Catechism to all the encyclicals, exhortations, homilies, speeches, messages and letters given to us by the Popes but he said that he thought the main issue facing the Church in the near future is precisely putting what the Council and Popes have taught into practice. We've had so many great documents, but not sufficient time and energy given to digesting them and implementing their insights at every level of the Church. He thought that the next Pope the Church needed had to be one who could help us to live by the great teaching documents. I think that Bob's prophetic insight was realized on March 13 when Pope Francis was announced the 265<sup>th</sup> successor of St. Peter.
  - As we've all witnessed over the course of the 268 days of Pope Francis' papacy, he's one who teaches the faith in action. Rather than a beautiful homily on love of neighbor, he embraces a man with a face totally disfigured by fibromitotic tumors. Rather than an encyclical on the dignity of human life, he embraces a handicapped man and allows a boy with Down's Syndrome to take a spin with him in his Popemobile. Rather than merely talking about reaching out to the fallen-away, he picks up his cell phone and he calls teenage boys worried about finding jobs, parents with a six infant, a woman sexually abused the police, a critic who had been attacking him on liturgy, a woman whose boyfriend abandoned her when she was pregnant wondering who would baptize her child.
  - And Pope Francis' living the Gospel has really caught the world's fascination, including so many who had long dismissed the Church as a relic of the past. A few weeks ago, it was revealed that Pope Francis is the most talked about name on the internet. I was interviewed by various reporters for the stories they were doing. One asked me, perceptively, whether the Pope's celebrity was a good or a bad thing for the Church. I replied that In and of itself, his celebrity is a great opportunity, but whether it turns out to be a good or bad thing depends on whether people get beyond his celebrity

status to ponder his words and example. I told the reporter that my sense is that many of those who are fascinated by Pope Francis readily say that the reason they "love" him is because they don't think he judges them or is as interested as they believe most leaders of the Church are in getting them and the world to convert on those subjects where popular opinion and Church teaching aren't aligned. But the real litmus test of whether his celebrity turns out to be a good or a bad thing for the Church is whether we and others do more than "like" or "love" Pope Francis but follow his Christian example. The Pope is interested, I said, not in winning popularity contests, but in saving people in the great field hospital of the Church, and that he would doubtless prefer to be unliked and reluctantly followed than liked and benignly ignored. And if that's true for people in general in the world, how much more important is it for us as Catholics.

- So what I'd like to do tonight is to ponder what I believe are the ten main things Pope Francis has been teaching all of us over the course of the first 268 days of his papacy. My hope that the talk will be more than informative, but *performative*, something that will help us not just to know better what Pope Francis is doing and why but to follow his lead and act on what he's saying with words and witness.
- Ten main things Pope Francis has been teaching us.
  - There are many themes that Pope Francis returns to frequently and that are also 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 ten points that I think are most distinctive about the magisterium of 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.
    - Pope Francis himself phrased the kerygma very powerfully in his exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”
    - In the Sept 19 interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro of La Civiltà Cattolica, 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, died, 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.”
    - EG 34: “If we attempt to put all things in a missionary key, this will also affect the way we communicate the message. In today's world of instant communication and occasionally biased media coverage, the message we preach runs a greater risk of being distorted or reduced to some of its secondary aspects. In this way certain issues which are part of the Church's moral teaching are taken out of the context which gives them their meaning. The

biggest problem is when the message we preach then seems identified with those secondary aspects which, important as they are, do not in and of themselves convey the heart of Christ's message. We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness."

- In interviews, he has said that this identification with secondary aspects regularly happens with the presentation, coverage and understanding of Church's teachings on human sexuality. But, as the coverage of the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* makes clear, the same distortions can happen with regard to the Church's social teaching on poverty and the markets. It's frankly unrealistic to expect the media to focus on the kerygma and Francis' summons to the whole Church to share it and live it when he includes whole sections and a slew of sound-bites on economic policy, poverty, and peace that are much more within the comfort zone and interest of media members. It would be like asking hungry boys to eat all their asparagus when there's a big, tempting chocolate cake on the table. It would have been wise for Pope Francis to follow his own wise advice to prevent these distortions. As important as it is to provoke a conversation on economic injustices, the cause of peace, and various needed institutional reforms, it's even more important for the Church and the world to focus anew on what Pope Francis rightly calls the "heart of the Gospel," which was the point of this exhortation. The result of his including various "secondary" issues in the exhortation is that few are talking about the "primary." Francis has given us most practical program on evangelization any pope has ever written and most think that he has written an exhortation on social policy
- 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."
  - God's mercy always precedes us he says. This is the fundamental story of his vocation. He said to the 200,000 in St. Peter's Square on the Vigil of Pentecost (May 18): "One day in particular, though, was very important to me: 21 September 1953. I was almost 17. It was 'Students' Day,' for us the first day of spring — for you the first day of autumn. Before going to the 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."
  - 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 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."
- 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 emphasis of Pope Francis' teaching 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'm working on a book on Jesus' four mercies, the four different occasions it tells us what Jesus did when he had compassion on the crowds: he taught, he fed, he healed and he forgave. We are called to take responsibility to do the same.
  - "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."



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 be capable of warming hearts, we must preach and live with the faith with joy.
  - This was the main point of his new apostolic exhortation, the Joy of the Gospel.
  - He said in the exhortation that often Catholics look like they’re always coming “back from a funeral,” whose lives “seem like Lent without Easter.” Quoting Pope Paul VI, he said that people will not be able to receive the salve of the Gospel from those who are “dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious,” but need those “whose lives glow with fervor, who has first received the joy of Christ.”
  - He said the whole history of salvation, the proto-kerygma of the Father’s love, is a “great stream of joy.” We’re called to drink of the joy of Jesus’ “brimming heart,” the heart that came into the world to give us his joy and make our joy complete (Jn 10:10). “The good news is the joy of the Father who desires that none of his little ones be lost, the joy of the Good Shepherd who finds the lost sheep and brings it back to the fold.”
  - “Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, [Christians] should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet.” The Church grows “by attraction” precisely caused by this joy, not by proselytizing, by trying to “recruit” members or manipulate or steal them away from others.
  - He said in the exhortation that he wants to impart a “definitive style of evangelization,” which he asks us to “adopt in every activity that you undertake.” That style is “rejoice in the Lord always,” and to announce always the “good news of great joy to all the people.”
- Sixth, to heal the wounds and warm the hearts, to bring the saving message of Christ’s mercy with joy, 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."

- That's what the renewal of the Church is. In EG, he quoted JP II: "All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion."
- 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."
- In EG, he emphasized this mission over maintenance: "Mere administration can no longer be enough." The Church must be "permanently in a state of mission."
- The Church doesn't just have a mission, but is a mission. Each of us individually is this mission. That has concrete personal consequences for us.
  - To be a disciple is to be a "Missionary disciple." First disciples went to announce that they had found the Messiah.
  - "I am a mission on this earth; this is the reason why I am here." It's not a badge we can take off, an extra, or just another moment in life.
- 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!
- 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!”

- Seventh, 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.”
  - 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.”
- Eighth, he wants a “poor Church for the poor.”
  - This, he said in an audience with journalists a few days after his election, is what convinced him to accept the papacy. “Some people wanted to know why the Bishop of Rome wished to be called Francis...I will tell you the story. During the election, I was seated next to the Archbishop Emeritus of São Paulo and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal Claudio Hummes: a good friend, a good friend! When things were looking dangerous, he encouraged me. And when the votes reached two thirds, there was the usual applause, because the Pope had been elected. And he gave me a hug and a kiss, and said: “Don't forget the poor!” And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi.”
  - In his new exhortation he gave a huge section on the poor, calling inclusion of the poor in society one of the “great issues that strike me as fundamental at this time in history.”
  - EG 48: The Church “has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbors, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (Lk 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel”, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that “there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor”. May we never abandon them!
  - EG: “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.”
  - “We incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor when we are deeply moved by the suffering of others. . . . This message is so clear and direct, so simple and eloquent, that no ecclesial interpretation has the right to relativize it. The Church’s reflection on these texts ought not to obscure or weaken their force, but urge us to accept their exhortations with courage and zeal. Why complicate something so simple?”
  - “God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself “became poor” (2 Cor 8:9). The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor. . . . When he began to preach the Kingdom, crowds of the dispossessed followed him,

illustrating his words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (*Lk* 4:18).”

- For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy.” This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have “this mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (*Phil* 2:5). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness.
- “I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care.”
- “I fear that these words too may give rise to commentary or discussion with no real practical effect. That being said, I trust in the openness and readiness of all Christians, and I ask you to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call.
- Nine, in contrast to a poor Church of the poor, Pope Francis is warning the world about what he calls the ferocious idolatry of money.
  - This is the theme that has caught much of the attention of the secular media and parts of the Catholic media in the coverage of his apostolic exhortation.
  - EG 55: “One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.”
  - 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.”
  - 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.”

- EG 53: “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”
- 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.”
- Tenth, in contrast to a poor Church for the poor, he warns against the Church’s becoming spiritually worldly, which transforms the Church basically into an NGO (a non-governmental organization) and ends us being reduced to promoters of an ideology.
  - 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.
    - EG 93: “Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being. ... It is a subtle way of seeking one’s “own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (*Phil 2:21*). It takes on many forms. ... Since it is based on carefully cultivated appearances, it is not always linked to outward sin; from without, everything appears as it should be. But if it were to seep into the Church, ‘it would be infinitely more disastrous than any other worldliness which is simply moral.’
    - EG 95: “This insidious worldliness is evident in a number of attitudes that appear opposed, yet all have the same pretense of “taking over the space of the Church”. In some people we see an ostentatious preoccupation for the liturgy, for doctrine and for the Church’s prestige, but without any concern that the Gospel have a real impact on God’s faithful people and the concrete needs of the present time. In this way, the life of the Church turns into a museum piece or something which is the property of a select few. In others, this spiritual worldliness lurks behind a fascination with social and political gain, or pride in their ability to manage practical affairs, or an obsession with programmes of self-help and self-realization. It can also translate into a concern to be seen, into a social life full of appearances, meetings, dinners and receptions. It can also lead to a business mentality, caught up with

management, statistics, plans and evaluations whose principal beneficiary is not God's people but the Church as an institution. The mark of Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen, is not present; closed and elite groups are formed, and no effort is made to go forth and seek out those who are distant or the immense multitudes who thirst for Christ. Evangelical fervor is replaced by the empty pleasure of complacency and self-indulgence.

▪ NGO

- 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.

▪ Reducing the message of the Gospel to an ideology

- On October 17, at his daily Mass homily at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, he described how many of the Scribes and the Pharisees basically made the Mosaic Law an ideology by focusing on the law itself as a rigid set of principles to be imposed on others rather than on the Legislator and how the law is meant to bring us and others into a life changing relationship with him. Ideological religion becomes an obstacle to true faith. He said, “The faith passes, so to speak, through a distiller and becomes ideology. And ideology does not bring people together. In ideologies Jesus isn't

present, in his tenderness, his love, his meekness. And ideologies are rigid, always, in every way. And when a Christian becomes a disciple of the ideology, he has lost the faith: he is no longer a disciple of Jesus, he is a disciple of this attitude of thought... For this reason Jesus said to [the Pharisees]: ‘You have taken away the key of knowledge.’ The knowledge of Jesus is transformed into an ideological and also moralistic knowledge, because these close the door with many requirements. ... The faith becomes ideology and ideology frightens, ideology chases away the people, distances the people and distances of the Church of the people. But this is a serious illness, ideological Christians. It is an illness, but it is not new. Already the Apostle John, in his first Letter, spoke of this [with the gnostics]. Christians who lose the faith and prefer ideologies. They become rigid, moralistic, ethical, and without kindness. But how is it that a Christian can become like this? Just one thing: this Christian does not pray,” who doesn’t have a living relationship with God that changes him to become sensitive to what wills, which is something that can happen even when someone is “saying prayers” but not truly praying them.

- When he met with the bishops of CELAM assembled in Rio on July 28, he said that ideologized Christianity is a real danger: “Making the Gospel message an ideology. This is a temptation that has been present in the Church from the beginning: the attempt to interpret the Gospel apart from the Gospel itself and apart from the Church. An example: Aparecida, at one particular moment, felt this temptation. It employed, and rightly so, the method of “see, judge and act” (cf. No. 19). The temptation, though, was to opt for a way of “seeing” which was completely “antiseptic”, detached and unengaged, which is impossible [prescinding from faith] The way we “see” is always affected by the way we direct our gaze. There is no such thing as an “antiseptic” hermeneutics. The question was, rather: How are we going to look at reality in order to see it? Aparecida replied: With the eyes of discipleship.” He described different forms of Christian ideologies: sociological reductionism (just studying the phenomenon of religion or comparative religions), psychologizing [reducing spirituality to psychology], gnostic solution [making Christianity too much a thing of the head and knowledge rather than a way of life], and the pelagian solution [focusing too much on ourselves and our work and not on God.]
- This is one of the reasons why Pope Francis says that the Church’s proclamation must always begin with Christ, with the kerygma, because sometimes there is a “degrading reductionism” of the faith to an ideology advancing some type of cause, even a good cause, as the end of the Christian faith rather than as a part.

- Conclusion

- We’ve covered a lot of ground. Pope Francis has been challenging us by his example and his words to preach the kerygma of God’s mercy with joy to bind the wounds and warm the hearts of the world, particularly through an encounter with the poor on the peripheries, and leavening both the Church and society to overcome the ferocious idolatry of money that can make us spiritually worldly and strip us of a supernatural outlook in our relationship to God and to others. This is what the reform of the Church is all about.
- It’s key for us not merely to understand what Pope Francis is about, but freely to take the responsibility, to make the commitment, to join him in this reform through our own actions and words.
- Thank you for your attention and I’d be very to take your questions and enter into a discussion.