

Pope Francis on Priestly Vocations, Formation, Virtues and Ministry

- Introduction

- I'd like to focus in the two conferences today on Pope Francis' rich thoughts on priestly vocations, formation, virtues and ministry. It's a very rich subject that I'd encourage you to read in the notes for these conferences, because it exceeds what we'll be able to do in two hours.
- On Pope Francis' priestly vocation itself, l'Osservatore Romano printed a beautiful reflection at the beginning of January a beautiful reflection he had written about the parish priest who had baptized him and promoted his vocation, Fr. Enrique Pozzoli, a Salesian. He wrote this reflection in October of 1990 on the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pozzoli's death. It's a wonderful tribute to a pastor who promoted not only the vocation of a future priest but a future pope and we pray future saint.
  - When my father arrived in Buenos Aires he went to live with the Salesians in Solis Lane, and it was there that he met Fr Pozzoli who immediately (1929) became his confessor. He joined the group of young men that had gathered around Fr Pozzoli, here he met Mama's brothers... and through them Mama, whom he married on 12 December 1935 in San Carlos. Papa told many stories about Fr Pozzoli and the other Fathers.
  - During the economic recession, Fr Pozzoli introduced my grandparents to a person who lent them 2,000 pesos, which my grandparents used to buy a store in the Flores quartier... and Papa — who had been an accountant [*sic*] at the Bank of Italy and the business' accountant — took deliveries around. This shows Fr Pozzoli's concern for "his" boys, when they were going through difficult situations.
  - Fr. Pozzoli intervened so that I and my second brother might enter — in 1949 — as boarders at the Colegio Wilfrid Barón de los Santos Angeles in Ramón Mejía. There I completed sixth grade, in 1949, and my brother fifth and sixth in 1949-1950. Then in February of 1948, it happened that Mama had her last child (my sister, the fifth and last) and she was exhausted. It was necessary that the three eldest become boarders (my sister, the third, today the mother of a Jesuit and of a woman religious, was placed as a boarder at María Auxiliadora. Here, too, Fr Pozzoli intervened). As a family we always turned to him whenever there was a problem, or when we needed help or advice. He baptised us all, except my second brother because (in January-February 1938) Fr Pozzoli was in Usuahia. Several times during the year (generally for Sant'Enrico) he came to lunch at Quintino Bacayuva 556, the home of my maternal grandparents (Francisco Sívori e María Gogna de Sívori), and we would all get together there and celebrate with ravioli: he was the spiritual Father of the family.
  - Strangely enough, I usually did not go to confession with Fr Pozzoli, but I confessed with some of the "giants" of the confessional: Fr Montaldo (doubly a giant), Fr Punto, Fr Carlos Scandroglio (even though I was a little afraid of him). But in September of 1954 Troy burned and I began a serious spiritual direction with Fr Duarte Ibarra, who passed away the following year in the military hospital assisted by Fr Aristi, a Sacramentine. I didn't say anything at home until November 1955: that year I was qualifying at the Industrial School (it was a six year program) and I enrolled for technical chemistry. At home they were doubtful. They were practicing Catholics... but they wanted me to wait for some years while studying at the University. Since I knew how the conflict would end, I went to Fr Pozzoli and told him everything. He examined my vocation. He told me to pray and to leave everything in God's hands. He gave me the blessing of Mary Help of Christians. Every time I recite *Sub tuum praesidium*... I think of him.
  - Naturally at home the idea came up: why not talk to Fr Pozzoli? And I, with the best face in the world, said "yes". I can still remember the scene. It was 12 December 1955. Papa and

Mama were celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary. The celebration was a Mass (only my parents and the five children) in the San José de Flores parish. Fr Pozzoli was to celebrate it. Once the Mass had ended, Papa invited him to breakfast at the “Pearl of Flores” pastry shop (Rivera Indarte and Rivadavia, half a block from the Basilica)... Papa thought that Fr Pozzoli would not accept because he asked him if he could (I think that otherwise we would have gone home, six blocks away), but Fr Pozzoli (who knew what the topic of discussion would be) accepted without hesitation. What freedom of spirit and readiness to help a vocation! Halfway through breakfast the subject was raised. Fr Pozzoli said that University was a good thing but that things should be undertaken when God wants them to be undertaken... and he began recounting various vocation stories (without taking sides), and at the end he told the story of his own vocation. He told us how a priest had suggested that he become a priest, how in just a few short years he had become a subdeacon, then deacon and priest... how he had been given what he had not expected... Well, at this point “finally” my parents’ hearts had melted. Naturally Fr Pozzoli didn’t end by telling them to let me enter seminary nor did he demand a decision from them... He simply knew that he had to “soften” them... and the rest took care of itself. It was just like him: “*una de cal y otra de arena*” the Spanish would say [“lime and sand”, which is equivalent to the English “the carrot and stick approach”]. One didn’t know his intention... but he did; and generally he didn’t want to reach the point where one would recognize that “he had won”. When he “whiffed” that he was about to get what he wanted, he withdrew before the others realized it. Then the decision came on its own, freely from those with whom he was speaking. They didn’t feel forced... but he had prepared their hearts. He had sown, and well... but he left the enjoyment of the harvest to others.

- I entered the Seminary in 1956. In August 1957 I contracted pneumonia. I was about to die. Then they operated on my lung. Fr Pozzoli visited me during my illness. During the second year at the Seminary a religious vocation had matured in me. And so once I was better in November, I didn’t return to the Seminary and I wanted to enter the Society. I talked about it with Fr Pozzoli, he examined my vocation and gave the green light. I made regular visits to Fr Pozzoli and to the Chapel of Mary, Help of Christians. But Fr Pozzoli was concerned about the time I would have to spend at home until March when I would enter the Novitiate. He didn’t like so much time out... even less so during the holidays. I don’t know how he did it, but he spoke with the Inspector and arranged for me to spend the holidays with the clerics in Tandil. Fr Grosso was the Director. At Tandil I met good clerics... One of them was Fr Wenceslao Maldonado... In March I entered the Novitiate.
- There are two moments in my relationship with Fr Pozzoli that make me sad when I think of them. One was Papa’s death, on 24 September 1961. Fr Pozzoli came to the wake and wanted to take a photo of Papa with his five children.... I was “ashamed” and I arranged for it not to happen. I think that Fr Pozzoli was aware of my attitude, but he didn’t say anything. And to think that in less than one month he would be dead... The second occasion was his death. A few days before I visited him in the Hospital Italiano. And he was sleeping. I didn’t let them wake him (I really was upset, and I didn’t know what to say to him). I left the room and stayed talking with a Father who was there. A short while after another Father came out of the room and said that Fr Pozzoli had awoken, that he told him about my visit and he had asked that, if I was still there, I come in. I told him to tell him that I’d already left. I don’t know what came over me, if it was shyness or something else.... I was 25 years old and in the first year of philosophy.... But I assure you, Fr Bruno, that if I could “redo” that moment I would. How many times have I experienced deep pain and regret for my “lie” to Fr Pozzoli when he was about to die. It was one of those moments in life (few, perhaps) that one would like to be able to live over again in order to behave differently. (...)
- What mark did Fr Pozzoli leave? First of all I refer to my family experience. If in my family today we seriously live out the Christian life it is thanks to him. He knew how to plant and make the foundation of Catholic life grow. There are vocations: my cousin Julio Picchi; my nephew José Luis (Jesuit) and my niece María Inés (Handmaid of the Sacred Heart): both my sister’s children; me.... And among my other nieces and nephews, who are younger there is

vocational unrest. Furthermore, we five siblings have a life of faith, and this faith was cultivated by Fr Pozzoli through the advice and direction he gave my parents. When the five of us get together, the discussion always turns to Fr Pozzoli; he is a point of reference we carry within us, and my nephews and nieces (none of whom have met him) know who Fr Pozzoli is. He knew how to strengthen faith and piety in that group of young people whom he helped in their Christian life. He gave great importance to devotion to Mary, Help of Christians. And to St Joseph. (...) In short: he was a labourer for the Kingdom of God.

- Well, Father Bruno, I will end here. I feel that today I have only done my duty. At my age one begins to accept that life “shows you where credit is due”, i.e. that it points out the people who have helped you to live, to grow, to be a Christian, a priest, a religious... And in recognizing the good that so many people have done me each day, I savour more and more the joy of being grateful. This is precisely what happens to me with Fr Pozzoli. Every day I remember him in the divine office when I pray for the faithful departed... And believe me that I do indeed rejoice with this feeling of gratitude which the Lord grants me.

- Pope Francis and Vocations

- Intense prayer of others precedes every vocation
  - (April 21, 2013, Good Shepherd Sunday) — Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community... This is why Jesus said: “Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest”, that is, God the Father, “to send out laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38). Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit.
- Vocations come not from advertising campaigns but from God.
  - (Seminarians and novices, July 7, 2013) “Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk 10:2). **The laborers for the harvest are not chosen through advertising campaigns or appeals of service and generosity, but they are “chosen” and “sent” by God.** It is he who chooses, it is he who sends, it is Lord who sends, it is he who gives the mission. For this, prayer is important. The Church, as Benedict XVI has often reiterated, is not ours, but God’s; and how many times do we, consecrated men and women, think that the Church is ours! We make of it... something that we invent in our minds. But it is not ours!, it is God’s. The field to be cultivated is his. The mission is grace. And if the Apostle is born of prayer, he finds in prayer the light and strength of his action.
- A vocation comes from God’s choosing us, not the other way around, and should fill us with joy.
  - (July 6 with seminarians and religious) 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 calling you God says to you: “You are important to me, I love you, I am counting on you”. Jesus says this to each one of us! Joy is born from that! The joy of the moment in which Jesus looked at me. Understanding and hearing this is the secret of our joy. Feeling loved by God, feeling that for him we are not numbers but people; and hearing him calling us. Becoming a priest or a man or woman religious is not primarily our own decision. I do not trust that seminarian or that woman novice who says: “I have chosen this path”. I do not like this! It won’t do! Rather it is the response to a call and to a call of love. I hear something within me that moves me and I answer “yes”. It is in prayer that the Lord makes us understand this love, but it is also through so many signs that we can read in our life, in the many people he sets on our path.
- Vocational discernment begins in silent prayer.
  - (Assisi, Oct 4, Questions with young people of Umbria) I will respond with two essential elements on how to recognize the vocation to the priesthood and to consecrated life. Praying and walking in the Church. These two go together, they are intertwined. A powerful experience of God is always at the origin of every vocation to consecrated life, an unforgettable experience that you remember for the rest of your life! This is what happened to Francis. And this is not something we can calculate or plan. God always surprises us! It is

God who calls; however, it is important to have a daily relationship with him, to listen to him in silence before the Tabernacle and deep within ourselves, to speak with him, to draw near to the sacraments. Having this familiar relationship with the Lord is like keeping the window of our lives open so that he can make us hear his voice and hear what he wants us to do. It would be beautiful to hear from you, to hear from the priests who are present, from the sisters... It would be very beautiful, because each story is unique. However, they all begin with an encounter that illumines one deeply within, that touches the heart and engages the whole person: affections, intellect, senses, everything. A relationship with God does not only involve one part of us, it involves everything. It is a love so great, so beautiful, so true, that it deserves everything, and it deserves all our trust..

- Young people shouldn't be afraid of what God might ask or of definitive choices.
  - (WYD July 28, to Volunteers) God calls you to make definitive choices, and he has a plan for each of you: to discover that plan and to respond to your vocation is to move toward personal fulfillment. God calls each of us to be holy, to live his life, but he has a particular path for each one of us. ... The Lord calls some to be priests, to give themselves to him more fully, so as to love all people with the heart of the Good Shepherd. ... I will never forget that day, 21 September – I was 17 years old – when, after stopping in the Church of San José de Flores to go to confession, I first heard God calling me. Do not be afraid of what God asks of you! It is worth saying “yes” to God. In him we find joy! Dear young people, some of you may not yet know what you will do with your lives. Ask the Lord, and he will show you the way. The young Samuel kept hearing the voice of the Lord who was calling him, but he did not understand or know what to say, yet with the help of the priest Eli, in the end he answered: Speak, Lord, for I am listening (cf. 1 Sam 3:1-10). You too can ask the Lord: What do you want me to do? What path am I to follow?
- The Church seeks as a mother to help people make definitive decisions with true freedom within the context of the culture of the temporary
  - (July 6 with seminarians and novices) I heard a seminarian, a good seminarian, who said that he wanted to serve Christ for 10 years, and then he would think about starting a different life.... This is dangerous! However, listen carefully: we are all, even the older people among us, we too, are under pressure from this “culture of the temporary”; and this is dangerous because one does not put one's stakes on life once and for all. I marry as long as love lasts; I become a woman religious, but only for “a little while...”, “a short time” and then I shall see; I become a seminarian in order to become a priest, but I don't know how the story will end. This is not right with Jesus! I am not reproaching you, I reproach this culture of the temporary, which hits us all, since it does us no good: because it is very hard today to make a definitive decision. In my day it was easier, because the culture encouraged definitive decisions, whether for married life, consecrated life or priestly life. However, in this day and age it is far from easy to make a decision once and for all. We are victims of this culture of the temporary. I would like you to think about this: how can I be free, how can I break free from this “culture of the temporary”?. We must learn to close the door of our inner cell from within. Once a priest, a good priest, who did not feel he was a good priest because he was humble, who felt he was a sinner, said many prayers to Our Lady; and he said this to Our Lady — I will say it in Spanish because it is beautiful poetry. He told Our Lady that he would never abandon Jesus, saying: *“esta tarde, Señora, la promesa es sincera. Por las dudas, no olvide dejar la llave afuera”* (“this evening, Mother, the promise is sincere. But in case anything happens, do not forget to leave the key outside”). However he said this with love for the Virgin — people say “Our Lady” — constantly in mind. Yet when someone always leaves the key outside, for any eventuality.... It won't do. We must learn to close the door from the inside! And if I am not sure, if I am not sure, I think, I shall take my time, and when I feel sure, in Jesus, you understand, because without Jesus no one is safe! — when I feel sure, I will shut the door. Have you understood this? What the culture of the temporary is?
  - (May 4 Rosary at St. Mary Major) A good mother not only accompanies her children in their growth, without avoiding the problems and challenges of life; a good mother also helps them

to make definitive decisions with freedom. This is not easy, but a mother knows how to do it. But what does freedom mean? It is certainly not doing whatever you want, allowing yourself to be dominated by the passions, to pass from one experience to another without discernment, to follow the fashions of the day; freedom does not mean, so to speak, throwing everything that you don't like out the window. No, that is not freedom! Freedom is given to us so that we know how to make good decisions in life! Mary as a good mother teaches us to be, like her, capable of making definitive decisions; definitive choices, at this moment in a time controlled by, so to speak, a philosophy of the provisional. It is very difficult to make a lifetime commitment. And she helps us to make those definitive decisions in the full freedom with which she said “yes” to the plan God had for her life (cf. Lk 1:38). Dear brothers and sisters, it is so hard in our time to make final decisions! Deciding everything with the total freedom with which she answered “yes” to God’s plan for her life (cf. Lk 1:38). Dear brothers and sisters, how difficult it is to make a final decision in our time. Temporary things seduce us. We are victims of a trend that pushes us to the provisional... as though we wanted to stay adolescents. There is a little charm in staying adolescents, and this for life! Let us not be afraid of life commitments, commitments that take up and concern our entire life! In this way our life will be fruitful! And this is freedom: to have the courage to make these decisions with generosity.

- The call to celibacy and virginity for the sake of the Kingdom is a yes not a no
  - (Assisi, Oct 4, Questions with young people of Umbria) There is another vocation that is complementary to marriage: the call to celibacy and virginity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the vocation that Jesus himself lived. ... There is one thing I would like to tell you forcefully, especially today: virginity for the Kingdom of God is not a “no”, it is a “yes”! Of course it involves the renunciation of the marriage bond and of having a family of one's own, but at its foundation and core there is a “yes”, as a response to Christ’s total “yes” to us, and this “yes” makes us fruitful.
- We must constantly rekindle the memory of our first call
  - (Rio, July 27) I believe that it is important to rekindle constantly an awareness of our divine vocation, which we often take for granted in the midst of our many daily responsibilities: as Jesus says, “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). This means returning to the source of our calling. For this reason, a Bishop, a priest, a consecrated person, a seminarian cannot be “forgetful”: it would mean losing the vital link to that first moment of our journey. Ask for the grace, ask the Virgin for the grace, she who had a good memory; ask for the grace to preserve the memory of this first call.
- Formation of Priests — Both for the priesthood and in the priesthood, he reveals the qualities most needed.
  - Formation is an art and must involve formators’ engaging candidates up close in dialogue and confrontation, lest we produce self-centered clerical monsters.
    - (Nov 29 meeting with male religious superiors) “The formation of candidates is fundamental. ... Problems today are not solved simply by forbidding doing this or that. Dialogue as well as confrontation are needed. To avoid problems, in some houses of formation, young people grit their teeth, try not to make mistakes, follow the rules smiling a lot, just waiting for the day when they are told: ‘Good. You have finished formation.’ This is hypocrisy that is the result of clericalism, which is one of the worst evils. I said as much to the bishops of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) this summer in Rio de Janeiro: we need to conquer this propensity toward clericalism in houses of formation and seminaries too. I summarize by some advice that I once received as a young man: ‘If you want to advance, think clearly and speak obscurely.’ That was a clear invitation to hypocrisy. We need to avoid that at all costs.” As a matter of fact in Rio the Pope identified clericalism as one of the causes of the “lack of maturity and Christian freedom” in the People of God. It follows that: “If the seminary is too large, it ought to be divided into smaller communities with formators who are equipped really to accompany those in their charge. Dialogue must be serious, without fear, sincere. It is important to recall that the language of young people in formation today is different from that in the past: we are living through an epochal change. Formation

is a work of art, not a police action. We must form their hearts. Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And then these little monsters mold the People of God. This really gives me goose bumps.” The Pope then insisted on the fact that formation should not be oriented only toward personal growth but also in view of its final goal: the People of God. It is important to think about the people to whom these persons will be sent while forming them: “We must always think of the faithful, of the faithful People of God. Persons must be formed who are witness of the resurrection of Jesus. The formator should keep in mind that the person in formation will be called to care for the People of God. We always must think of the People of God in all of this. Just think of religious who have hearts that are as sour as vinegar: they are not made for the people. In the end we must not form administrators, managers, but fathers, brothers, traveling companions.”

- Seminarians need to be trained to be capable of warming people’s hearts
  - (Rio, Bishops, July 27) Dear brothers, unless we train ministers capable of warming people’s hearts, of walking with them in the night, of dialoguing with their hopes and disappointments, of mending their brokenness, what hope can we have for our present and future journey? It isn’t true that God’s presence has been dimmed in them. Let us learn to look at things more deeply. What is missing is someone to warm their heart, as was the case with the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:32). That is why it is important to devise and ensure a suitable formation, one which will provide persons able to step into the night without being overcome by the darkness and losing their bearings; able to listen to people’s dreams without being seduced and to share their disappointments without losing hope and becoming bitter; able to sympathize with the brokenness of others without losing their own strength and identity.
- We must form the young for mission
  - (July 27 to bishops in Rio) Many of you, dear Bishops and priests, if not all, have accompanied your young people to World Youth Day. They too have heard the mandate of Jesus: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (cf. Mt 28:19). It is our responsibility as Pastors to help kindle within their hearts the desire to be missionary disciples of Jesus. Certainly, this invitation could cause many to feel somewhat afraid, thinking that to be missionaries requires leaving their own homes and countries, family and friends. God asks us to be missionaries. But where – where he himself places us, in our own countries or wherever he chosen for us. ... Let us form them in mission, to go out, to go forth, to be itinerants who communicate the faith. Jesus did this with his own disciples: he did not keep them under his wing like a hen with her chicks. He sent them out! 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! The Apostles made mistakes before us. Let us urge them to go forth. Let us think resolutely about pastoral needs, beginning on the outskirts, with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church. They are the VIPs who are invited. Go and search for them at the crossroads.
- Seminarians need cultural training and education.
  - (July 6 to seminarians and novices) We also need education. I underline cultural training, in order to account for faith and hope. The context in which we live continually asks us to “account” in this way, and it is a good thing, because it helps us to take nothing for granted. Today we cannot take anything for granted! This civilization, this culture... we cannot. But it is certainly also demanding, it requires a good, balanced formation which combines all the dimensions of life, the human, the spiritual, the intellectual dimension with the pastoral. In your formation there are the four fundamental pillars: spiritual formation, that is, the spiritual life; intellectual life, this means studying “in order to account for”; apostolic life, beginning to go out to proclaim the Gospel; and fourthly, community life. Four.

- Seminarians need the courage to go against the tide of a culture of exclusion, waste and efficiency toward a culture of encounter, solidarity and communion
  - ((July 27, Rio) 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. At times, it seems that for some people, human relations are regulated by two modern “dogmas”: efficiency and pragmatism. Dear Bishops, priests, religious and you, seminarians who are preparing for ministry: have the courage to go against the tide of this culture. Be courageous! Remember this, which helps me a great deal and on which I meditate frequently: take the First Book of Maccabees, and recall how many of the people wanted to adapt to the culture of the time: “No ...! Leave us alone! Let us eat of everything, like the others do... Fine, yes to the Law, but not every part of it ...”. And they ended up abandoning the faith and placing themselves in the current of that culture. Have the courage to go against the tide of this culture of efficiency, this culture of waste. 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. Be so without being presumptuous, imposing “our truths”, but rather be guided by the humble yet joyful certainty of those who have been found, touched and transformed by the Truth who is Christ, ever to be proclaimed (cf. Lk 24:13-35)
- Community formation is key to developing friendship and brotherhood
  - (July 6 to seminarians and novices) Formation must be undertaken in community, in the novitiate, in the priory, in seminaries.... I always think of this: the worst seminary is better than no seminary! Why? Because this community life is essential. Remember the four pillars: spiritual life, intellectual life, apostolic life and community life. These four. You must build your vocation on these four elements. And here I would like to stress the importance, in this community life, of relations of friendship and brotherhood that are an integral part of this formation. ... However, in this aspect of friendship and brotherhood there are two extremes: isolation as much as dissipation. Friendship is fraternity that helps me not to fall into either isolation or dissipation. Cultivate friendships, they are a precious good; however they must not teach you to close yourselves in but to go out of yourselves. A priest or a man or woman religious religious can never be an island, but must be a person who is always ready to meet others. Friendships moreover are enriched by the different charisms of your religious families. This is a great wealth. Let us think of the beautiful friendships of many of the saints.
- Seminarians should avoid all gossip and criticism expressed to those who can't fix problems
  - (July 6 to seminarians and novices) Here we come across another problem. Why do I say this: relations of friendship and brotherhood? So often I have found communities, seminarians, religious or diocesan communities where the most common remarks are gossip! It is terrible! They “flay each other alive”. And this is our clerical or religious world... Excuse me, but it is common: jealousy, envy, criticism of others. Not only speaking badly of our superiors, that's a classic! But I want to tell you that this is so common, so very common. I too have fallen into this. I have often done it, often! And I am ashamed of myself! I am ashamed of this. It is not good to do this: to go and gossip: “Have you heard... have you heard?...”. That community is hell. This is not good for us. For this reason relationships of friendship and brotherhood are important. Friends are few. The Bible says this: friends, one or two.... But brotherhood with everyone. If I have some problem with a sister or brother, I say so to his or her face or I say it to someone who can help, but I do not tell others in order to “blacken” their name. And gossip is terrible! Underlying gossip is envy, jealousy and ambition. Think about this. I once heard of a person who after the spiritual exercises — a consecrated person, a sister.... This is good! This sister had promised the Lord never to speak badly of another. This is a beautiful, beautiful way to holiness! Never to speak badly of others. “But father, there are problems”. Tell the superior, tell the Bishop who can remedy

them. Do not tell a person who cannot help. This is important: brotherhood! But tell me, would you speak badly of your mother, your father, your siblings? Never. And why do you do so in the consecrated life, at the seminary, in your priestly life? Only this: think, think.... Brotherhood! This brotherly love!

- Priests and seminarians need to say no to the double life and live authentically, especially with regard to material possessions and the sacrament of penance
  - (April 11, 2013 daily homily) In our life, Pope Francis said, “we are often proposed things that do not come from Jesus, that do not come from God. At times our weaknesses take us down the wrong road. Or even a more dangerous road. We make a deal — we go forward with a double life”. ... The Holy Father continued: “what happens when we hear Jesus?”. At times we are persecuted, he said, remembering all those “who have placed themselves in the fire and tell us with their lives: ‘I want to obey and to follow the path of Jesus’”. In choosing to obey God and not the world, in no way giving in to compromise, the Christian is not alone. “Where can we find help in finding the way to listen to Jesus?”, the Pope asked. “In the Holy Spirit. We ourselves are witnesses to this. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him”. Thus he said: “it is the Holy Spirit inside of us who gives us the strength to go forward”.
  - (July 6 to seminarians and novices) 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! This is a primary responsibility of all adults, of formators. And it is your responsibility, you formators who are here: to set an example of consistency to the youngest. Do we want consistent young people? Are we consistent? On the contrary, the Lord will say to us what he said to the People of God about the Pharisees: “Do what they say but not what they do!”. Consistence and authenticity! However, you too, in turn, seek to follow this road. 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. But in this world to which wealth does so much damage it is necessary that we priests, that we sisters, that all of us be consistent with our poverty! But when you find that money is the principal concern of an educational, parochial or indeed any other institution, this is not good. It is not good! It is an inconsistency! We must be consistent and authentic. On this route, let us do what St Francis says: preach the Gospel with our example and then with words! However, **it is in our life that others must first be able to read the Gospel!** Here too, without fear, with our shortcomings which we try to correct, with our limitations which the Lord knows, but also with our generosity in letting him act through us. Faults, limitations and — I add a little more — with sins.... I would like to know something. Here, in this hall, is there anyone who is not a sinner, who has not sinned? Put up your hand! Put up your hands! No one? No one. From here to the back... everyone! Yet how do I carry my sin, my sins? I want to recommend this to you: be honest with your confessor. Always. Confess everything, do not be afraid. “Father, I have sinned!”. Think of the Samaritan woman who, to test him, in order to tell her fellow citizens that she had found the Messiah, said to him: “you have told me all that I have ever done”, and everyone knew about this woman’s life. Always tell your confessor the truth. This transparency will do us good, because it makes us humble, all of us. “But father, I have got stuck in this, I have done this, I have hated”... whatever it may be. Tell the truth, without hiding anything, without mincing your words, because you are talking to Jesus in the person of the confessor. And Jesus knows the truth He alone always forgives you! But all the Lord wants is for you to tell him what he already knows. Transparency! It is sad when one finds a seminarian or sister who in order to be rid



of the stain confesses today with this one; tomorrow he or she goes to another, to another and to yet another: a peregrination to confessors in order to hide the truth from them. Transparency! It is Jesus who is listening to you. Always have this transparency before Jesus in the confessor! However, this is a grace. Father I have sinned, I have done this, and this, and this.... with all the words. And the Lord embraces you, he kisses you! Go, sin no more! And if you come back? Once again. I say this from experience. I have encountered many consecrated people who fall into this hypocritical trap of lacking transparency. “I have done this”, humbly. Like the publican at the back of the Temple: “I have done this, I have done that...”. And the Lord shuts your mouth: it is he who cuts you short! But don’t you do it! Do you understand? From one’s own sin grace overflows! Open the door to grace with this transparency! The saints and teachers of spiritual life tell us that to help us develop our life in authenticity, the daily practice of the examination of conscience is very useful; indeed, it is indispensable. What is happening in my soul? Hence be open, with the Lord and then with the confessor, with the spiritual director. This is so important!

- What the Ministerial Priesthood is
  - The priest is anointed to be the source of anointing for others
    - (March 28 Chrism Mass Homily) “Psalm 133: “It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down upon the collar of his robe” (v. 2). 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.” The sacred robes of the High Priest are rich in symbolism. One such symbol is that the names of the children of Israel were engraved on the onyx stones mounted on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod, the ancestor of our present-day chasuble: six on the stone of the right shoulder-piece and six on that of the left (cf. Ex 28:6-14). The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were also engraved on the breastplate (cf. Es 28:21). This means that the priest celebrates by carrying on his shoulders the people entrusted to his care and bearing their names written in his heart. When we put on our simple chasuble, it might well make us feel, upon our shoulders and in our hearts, the burdens and the faces of our faithful people, our saints and martyrs who are numerous in these times. 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. People thank us because they feel that we have prayed over the realities of their everyday lives, their troubles, their joys, their burdens and their hopes. And when they feel that the fragrance of the Anointed One, of Christ, has come to them through us, they feel encouraged to entrust to us everything they want to bring before the Lord: “Pray for me, Father, because I have this problem”, “Bless me Father”, “Pray for me” – these words are the sign that the anointing has flowed down to the edges of the robe, for it has turned into a prayer of supplication, the supplication of the People of God. When we have this relationship with God and with his people, and grace passes through us, then we are priests, mediators between God and men. ... We need to “go out”, then, in order to experience our own anointing, its power and its redemptive efficacy: to the “outskirts” where there is suffering, bloodshed, blindness that longs for sight, and prisoners in thrall to many evil masters.



Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own Son's blood" (cf. Acts 20:28). A lack of vigilance — as we know — makes the Pastor tepid; it makes him absentminded, forgetful and even impatient. It tantalizes him with the prospect of a career, the enticement of money and with compromises with a mundane spirit; it makes him lazy, turning him into an official, a state functionary concerned with himself, with organization and structures, rather than with the true good of the People of God. Then one runs the risk of denying the Lord as did the Apostle Peter, even if he formally presents him and speaks in his name; one obscures the holiness of the hierarchical Mother Church making her less fruitful.

- The vocation of priests is to be consoled and to console
  - (Seminarians and novices, July 7, 2013) Where does mission originate? The answer is simple: it originates from a call, the Lord's call, and when he calls people, he does so with a view to sending them out. How is the one sent out meant to live? Every Christian, and especially you and I, is called to be a bearer of this message of hope that gives serenity and joy: God's consolation, his tenderness towards all. But if we first experience the joy of being consoled by him, of being loved by him, then we can bring that joy to others. This is important if our mission is to be fruitful: to feel God's consolation and to pass it on to others! I have occasionally met consecrated persons who are afraid of the consolations of God, and ... the poor things, they were tormented, because they are of this divine tenderness. But be not afraid. Do not be afraid, because the Lord is the Lord of consolation, he is the Lord of tenderness. The Lord is a Father and he says that he will be for us like a mother with her baby, with a mother's tenderness. Do not be afraid of the consolations of the Lord. Isaiah's invitation must resound in our hearts: "Comfort, comfort my people" (40:1) and this must lead to mission. We must find the Lord who consoles us and go to console the people of God. This is the mission. People today certainly need words, but most of all they need us to bear witness to the mercy and tenderness of the Lord, which warms the heart, rekindles hope, and attracts people towards the good. What a joy it is to bring God's consolation to others!...
- Priests are called to be men of hope strengthened by the Eucharist
  - (Sept 9, 2013 daily homily) It is sad to see priests who have lost hope. For this reason at the Mass he celebrated at Santa Marta on Monday morning, Pope Francis asked the priests present to cultivate this virtue, "which for Christians has the name of Jesus". "I see many priests here today", he said, "and I am prompted to tell you something, it's a bit sad when one comes across a priest without hope, without that enthusiasm which gives hope; and it is very beautiful when one comes across a priest who is reaching the end of his life still filled with that hope, not with optimism, but with hope, and who is sowing hope". "For it means", he said further, that "this priest is attached to Jesus Christ. And the People of God need us priests to give them this hope in Jesus which makes all things new, which is capable of making all things new and is doing so: at every Eucharist he recreates Creation, in every act of charity he recreates his love within us"
- Priestly Virtues and Vices
  - To bear fruit, priests must pray and be with God, lest the vocation and mission become a job.
    - (Seminarians and novices, July 7, 2013) Our mission ceases to bear fruit, indeed, it is extinguished the moment the link with its source, with the Lord, is interrupted. Without a constant relationship with God, the mission becomes a job. But for what do you work? As a tailor, a cook a priest, is your job being a priest, being a sister? No. It is not a job, but rather something else. The risk of activism, of relying too much on structures, is an ever-present danger. If we look towards Jesus, we see that prior to any important decision or event he recollected himself in intense and prolonged prayer. Let us cultivate the contemplative dimension, even amid the whirlwind of more urgent and heavy duties. And the more the mission calls you to go out to the margins of existence, let your heart be the more closely united to Christ's heart, full of mercy and love. Herein lies the secret of pastoral fruitfulness, of the fruitfulness of a disciple of the Lord!



of concern for the dangers which could threaten them, but above all instilling hope: so that light will shine in people's hearts. Men capable of supporting with love and patience God's dealings with his people. The Bishop has to be among his people in three ways: in front of them, pointing the way; among them, keeping them together and preventing them from being scattered; and behind them, ensuring that no one is left behind, but also, and primarily, so that the flock itself can sniff out new paths.

- (To Nuncios in the Vatican, June 21, 2013). You know the famous expression that indicates a fundamental criterion in choosing who should govern: *si sanctus est oret pro nobis, si doctus est doceat nos, si prudens est regat nos* - if holy let him pray for us, if learned teach us, if prudent govern us. In the delicate task of carrying out inquiries for episcopal appointments be careful that the candidates are pastors close to the people, fathers and brothers, that they are gentle, patient and merciful; animated by inner poverty, the freedom of the Lord and also by outward simplicity and austerity of life, that they do not have the psychology of "Princes." Be careful that they are not ambitious, that they do not seek the episcopate - *volentes nolimus* - and that they are married to a Church without being in constant search of another. That they are able to "watch over" the flock that will be entrusted to them, take care to keep it united, vigilant of the dangers that threaten it, but above all that they are able to "watch over" the flock, to keep watch, imbue hope, that they have sun and light in their hearts, to lovingly and patiently support the plans which God brings about in His people. Let us think of the figure of St. Joseph, who watches over Mary and Jesus, of his care for the family that God entrusted to him, and the watchful gaze with which he guides it in avoiding dangers. For this reason Pastors must know how to be ahead of the herd to point the way, in the midst of the flock to keep it united, behind the flock to prevent someone being left behind, so that the same flock, so to speak, has the sense of smell to find its way.
- A priest must at least have great goodness
  - (June 3, 2013 on John XXIII with pilgrims from Bergamo ) It is so beautiful to find a priest, a good priest, filled with goodness. And this reminds me of something that St Ignatius of Loyola said to the Jesuits — but I am not advertising! — when he was talking about the qualities a superior should have. And he said: he must have this and that... a long list of qualities. Lastly, however, he says this: “and if he does not possess these virtues, he must at least have great goodness”. It is the essential. He is a father. A priest with goodness.
- Jesus calls pastors to be good shepherds not mercenaries in it for themselves and they should show others this same road
  - (Apr 22, 2013 daily homily) Only one door opens to the Kingdom of God. And that door is Jesus. Anyone who tries to climb in by another way is “a thief”, or “a brigand”, or “a social climber who thinks solely of his own advantage”, prestige, and robs God of glory. “He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door’ is not not the Shepherd”. Whoever does not enter the sheepfold by the door — whom he says “I am” — “but climbs in by another way is a thief and a robber’ (Jn 10:1)”, is someone who seeks his own advantage. But how can we be sure that Jesus is the true door? “Take the Beatitudes and do what the Beatitudes say”, was the Pope’s answer. And when someone suggests anything else, “do not listen: the door is always Jesus and those who enter by that door are not mistaken”. Jesus “is not only the door: he is the way, he is the road”. There are many paths that may be easier, but “they are not true. They are false. Only Jesus is the road
- Priests must be aware of and pray not to succumb to the temptations of money and careerism
  - (May 15, 2013 daily homily) Bishops and priests who succumb to the temptations of money and the vanity of careerism turn into wolves “who devour the flesh of their own sheep”. Mincing no words to stigmatize the conduct of anyone who, the Pope said, citing St Augustine, “takes the flesh of the sheep to eat it, exploit it or trade in it, and who is attached to money, becomes a miser and frequently also a simonist”. Or else he makes use of the wool for his own vanity, in order to boast”. Bishops and priests must pray not to give in to these “true and proper temptations”, but they need the prayers of the faithful too. The Pope explained several key phrases from the day’s Gospel (Jn 17:11-19), such as “keep them,”

which expresses a relationship of protection and love between God and the pastor and between the pastor and the people. This, the Pope said, “is a message for us bishops and for priests and clergymen”. They must care for their people and “be ready to sound the alarm when wolves are approaching”. Bishops and priests are not for themselves but for the people. “Do you always think of bishops and priests? We need your prayers.... We too are men and sinners... and are also tempted. What are the temptations of the bishop and the priest?”, the Holy Father asked. According to St Augustine these temptations are avarice and vanity. “When a priest takes the road of vanity he enters into the spirit of careerism and does great damage to the Church.... He boasts, he likes to be seen as high and mighty. And the people don’t like it! You see what our difficulties and our temptations are; you should pray for us that we be humble, gentle, and at the service of the people”.

- Clericalism flows from a lack of prophecy
  - (Dec 16) The Pope turned to the life of young Samuel as an example. “As he was sleeping, he heard the call of the Lord, but he did not know what it was. And the Bible says: ‘the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no frequent vision’” (1 Samuel 3:1). It was a time when “Israel had no prophets”. However, he added: “the same thing happens when a prophet comes and the people do not receive him, as we read in the Gospel of Matthew (21:33-27). When there is no prophecy, the emphasis falls on legality; these priests went to Jesus to ask him for his legal card: ‘By what authority are you doing these things?’ they asked him”. Pope Francis continued: “It is as if they’d said to him: ‘We are in charge of the masters of the temple; as for you, by what authority do you do these things?’ They did not understand the prophecies, they had forgotten the promise. They did not know how to read the signs of the present moment, they did not have eyes opened nor did they hear the word of God. They only had authority”. “It was the same in Samuel’s day,” he added, “when the word of the Lord was rare and there was no frequent vision. Legality and authority. When there is no prophecy among the people, clericalism fills the void. It is precisely this clericalism that asks Jesus: ‘by what authority do you do these things, by what legal authorization?’. The memory of the promise and hope to go forward are reduced only to the present: neither the past, nor a future and hope”
- A priest’s holy ambition on should be to be given a larger share of the Cross and humiliations
  - (May 21, 2013 daily homily) The Pope noted our way of speaking about career changes: “When someone is given a higher position — in the world's eyes — we say, ‘ah, that person has been promoted to.... Yes, that's a lovely phrase and we in the Church should use it, yes: this person was promoted to the cross; that person was promoted to humiliation. That is true promotion. It is what makes us more like Jesus”.
- Pastoral Effectiveness is determined by the logic of the Cross
  - (Seminarians and Novices, July 7, 2013) Pastoral fruitfulness, the fruitfulness of the Gospel proclamation is measured neither by success nor by failure according to the criteria of human evaluation, but by becoming conformed to the logic of the Cross of Jesus, which is the logic of stepping outside oneself and spending oneself, the logic of love. It is the Cross – always the Cross that is present with Christ, because at times we are offered the Cross without Christ: this has no purpose! – it is the Cross, and always the Cross with Christ, that guarantees the fruitfulness of our mission. And it is from the Cross, the supreme act of mercy and love, that we are reborn as a “new creation” (Gal 6:15).
- Pastors should help their brothers and sisters move forward, not themselves
  - (Flight from Rio, July 28) To do the work of a bishop is a wonderful thing, it is wonderful. The problem arises when someone seeks that work: this is not so good, this is not from the Lord. But when the Lord calls a priest to become a bishop, this is good. There is always the danger of thinking oneself a little superior to others, not like others, something of a prince. There are dangers and sins. But the work of a bishop is wonderful: it is to help one’s brothers and sisters to move forward. The bishop ahead of the faithful, to mark out the path; the bishop in the midst of the faithful, to foster communion; and the bishop behind the faithful, because the faithful can often sniff out the path. The

bishop must be like that. You asked me whether I like it. Yes, I like being a bishop, I like it. In Buenos Aires I was very happy, very happy! I was happy, it's true. The Lord helped me in that. But as a priest I was happy, and as a bishop I was happy. In this sense I say: I like it!

- If a priest isn't joyful, it's because of a defect in celibacy and a lack of love and spiritual fatherhood.
  - (July 6 with seminarians and novices) Do not be afraid to show the joy of having answered the Lord's call, of having responded to his choice of love and of bearing witness to his Gospel in service to the Church. And joy, true joy, is contagious; it is infectious... it impels one forward. Instead when you meet a seminarian who is excessively serious, too sad, or a novice like this, you think: but something has gone wrong here! The joy of the Lord is lacking, the joy that prompts you to serve, the joy of the encounter with Jesus which brings you to encounter others to proclaim Jesus. This is missing! 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 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 beans pickled in vinegar” — never! The joy that comes from Jesus. Think about this: when a priest — I say a priest, but also a seminarian — when a priest or a sister lacks joy he or she is sad; you might think: “but this is a psychological problem”. No. It is true: that may be, that may be so, yes, it might. It might happen, some, poor things, fall sick.... It might be so. However in general it is not a psychological problem. Is it a problem of dissatisfaction? Well, yes! But what is at the heart of this lack of joy? It is a matter of celibacy. I will explain to you. You, seminarians, sisters, consecrate your love to Jesus, a great love. Your heart is for Jesus and this leads us to make the vow of chastity, the vow of celibacy. However the vow of chastity and the vow of celibacy do not end at the moment the vow is taken, they endure.... A journey that matures, that develops towards pastoral fatherhood, towards pastoral motherhood, and when a priest is not a father to his community, when a sister is not a mother to all those with whom she works, he or she becomes sad. This is the problem. For this reason I say to you: the root of sadness in pastoral life is precisely in the absence of fatherhood or motherhood that comes from living this consecration unsatisfactorily which on the contrary must lead us to fertility. It is impossible to imagine a priest or a sister who is not fertile: this is not Catholic! This is not Catholic! This is the beauty of consecration: it is joy, joy.
- Priests can't live a double-life
  - Second, throughout his time as Archbishop, the future Pope spoke out forcefully against priests' living a “double-life.” When he was asked in a 2010 book-length interview, “El Jesuita,” about the common saying in Argentina, “I believe in God, but I don't believe in priests,” he replied, “Many of us priests do not deserve to have them believe in us.” He wants to change that, by calling, helping and requiring priests to live with genuine priestly integrity. In Buenos Aires, if he priests found themselves in difficult circumstances, he would help them address their situation, even if it meant their deciding to leave the priesthood. What he absolutely wouldn't tolerate, however, was priests' living incoherent lives, because he knew how much that harms and scandalizes God's people
- We must avoid the hypocrisy in sacred things
  - (June 19, 2013 daily homily) Drawing on the day's Gospel (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18), the Holy Father said: “the Lord mentions another class of hypocrites, those concerned with the sacred”. This form of hypocrisy, he warned, is the most serious one, for it touches on sin against the Holy Spirit. The Lord, he continued, “speaks of fasting, prayer and alms-giving, the three pillars of Christian piety.... There are hypocrites in this area who strut about”, making a show of doing all these things. “They know nothing of beauty, they know nothing of love, they know nothing of truth; they are petty, they are cowardly”.

- The Priestly Ministry

- Pastors are called to welcome magnanimously, walk with the flock and stay with the flock
  - (Sept 19, new bishops) “Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock” (1 Pet 5:2). May St Peter’s words be engraved on our heart! We are called and constituted Pastors, not pastors by ourselves but by the Lord; and not to serve ourselves, but the flock that has been entrusted to us, and to serve it to the point of laying down our life, like Christ, the Good Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11). What does tending and having the “permanent and daily care of their sheep” (Lumen Gentium, n. 27) actually mean? Three brief thoughts. Tending means: welcoming magnanimously, walking with the flock, staying with the flock. Welcoming, walking, staying.
    - To welcome magnanimously. May your heart be large enough to welcome all the men and women you come across during the day and whom you go and seek out when you go about your parishes and to every community. Ask yourselves from this moment: how will those who knock at my door find it? If they find it open, through your kindness, your availability, they will experience God’s fatherhood and will understand that the Church is a good mother who always welcomes and loves.
    - To walk with the flock. To welcome magnanimously, to walk. Welcoming everyone in order to walk with everyone. The bishop journeys with and among his flock. This means setting out with one’s faithful and with all those who turn to you, sharing in their joys and hopes, their difficulties and sufferings, as brothers and as friends, but especially as fathers who can listen, understand, help and guide. Walking together demands love and ours is a service of love, amoris officium, as St Augustine used to say
      - And as you walk I would like to remember affection for your priests. Your priests are your first neighbour; the priest is the bishop’s first neighbour — love your neighbour, but he is your first neighbour — your priests are indispensable collaborators of whom to seek counsel and help and for whom you should care as fathers, brothers and friends. One of your priority tasks is the spiritual care of the presbyterate, but do not forget the human needs of each individual priest, especially in the most delicate and important events in their ministry and their life. The time you spend with your priests is never wasted! Receive them whenever they ask you to. Do not let a telephone call go unanswered. I have heard priests say during the Spiritual Exercises I gave them — I don’t know whether it’s true but I’ve heard it very often in my life — “Well! I called the bishop and his secretary told me that he had no time to receive me!”. It was like this for months and months and months. I don’t know whether it is true, but if a priest telephones the bishop, then that same day or at least the following day the telephone call: “I heard, what would you like? I cannot receive you today but let’s look at the dates together”. Please listen to what the father says. Vice versa, the priest might think: “but he doesn’t care; he is not a father he is an office head!”. Think about this well. This would be a good resolution: reply to a telephone call from a priest, if I can’t today, at least the following day. And then see when you can meet him. Be constantly close, be in touch with them all the time.
      - Then presence in the diocese. In the homily in the Chrism Mass this year I said that Pastors must have “the odor of sheep”. Be Pastors with the odor of the sheep, present in your people’s midst like Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Your presence is not secondary, it is indispensable. Presence! The people themselves who want to see their bishop walk with them and be near them ask it of you. They need his presence in order to live and breathe! Do not close yourselves in! Go down among your faithful, even into the margins of your dioceses and into all those “peripheries of existence” where there is suffering, loneliness and human degradation. A pastoral presence means



walking with the People of God, walking in front of them, showing them the way, showing them the path; walking in their midst, to strengthen them in unity; walking behind them, to make sure no one gets left behind but especially, never to lose the scent of the People of God in order to find new roads. A bishop who lives among his faithful has his ears open to listen to “what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev 2:7), and to the “voice of the sheep”, also through those diocesan institutions whose task it is to advise the bishop, promoting a loyal and constructive dialogue. It is impossible to think of a bishop who did not have these diocesan institutions: a presbyteral council, consultors, a pastoral council, a council for financial matters. This means really being with the people. This pastoral presence will enable you to be thoroughly acquainted with the culture, customs and mores of the area, the wealth of holiness that is present there. Immerse yourselves in your own flock!

- And here I would like to add: let your style of service to the flock be that of humility, I would say even of austerity and essentiality. Please, we pastors are not men with the “psychology of princes” — please — ambitious men who are bridegrooms of this Church while awaiting another which is more beautiful, wealthier. But this is a scandal! If a penitent arrives and says to you: “I am married, I live with my wife, but I am always looking at that woman who is more beautiful than mine: is this a sin, Father?”. The Gospel says: it is a sin of adultery. Is there a “spiritual adultery?”. I don’t know; think about it. Do not wait for another more beautiful, more important or richer. Be careful not to slip into the spirit of careerism! That really is a form of cancer! It is not only with words but also and above all with a practical witness in our life that we are teachers and educators of our people. The proclamation of faith requires us to live out what we teach. Mission and life are inseparable (cf. John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis*, n. 31). This is a question we should ask ourselves every day: do I practise what I preach?
- Staying with the flock. I am referring to stability that has two precise aspects: “staying” in the diocese and staying in “this” diocese, as I said, without seeking change or promotion. As pastors it is impossible to know your flock really well — walking in front of it, in its midst and behind it, caring for it with your teaching, with the administration of the sacraments and with the testimony of your life — unless you remain in your diocese. In this Trent is very up to date: residence. Ours is a time in which we can travel and move from one place to another easily, a time when communications are rapid, the epoch of the internet. However the old law of residence is not out of fashion! It is necessary for good pastoral government. Of course, concern for other Churches and for the universal Church can take you from your diocese, but let it be only for the time that is strictly necessary and not a regular practice. You see, residence is not only required for the purpose of good organization, it is not a functional element; it has a theological root! You are bridegrooms of your community, deeply bound to it! I ask you, please remain among your people. Stay, stay.... Steer clear of the scandal of being “airport bishops”! Be welcoming pastors, journeying on with your people, with affection, with mercy, treating them with gentleness and fatherly firmness, with humility and discretion. And may you also be able to see your own limitations and have a large dose of good humor. This is a grace we bishops must ask for. We must all ask for this grace: Lord, give me a sense of humor. Finding the way to laugh at oneself first is part of it. And stay with your flock!
- The pastor must accompany the flock, going before, astride and behind the sheep
  - (May 23 Homily to Italian Bishops) Being Pastors means believing every day in the grace and strength that come to us from the Lord despite our weakness, and wholly assuming the responsibility for walking before the flock, relieved of the burdens that obstruct healthy apostolic promptness, hesitant leadership, so as to make our voice recognizable both to

those who have embraced the faith and to those who “are not [yet] of this fold” (Jn 10:16). We are called to make our own the dream of God, whose house knows no exclusion of people or peoples, as Isaiah prophetically foretold in the First Reading (cf. Is 2:2-5). **For this reason being Pastors also means being prepared to walk among and behind the flock;** being capable of listening to the silent tale of those who are suffering and of sustaining the steps of those who fear they may not make it; attentive to raising, to reassuring and to instilling hope. Our faith emerges strengthened from sharing with the lowly. Let us therefore set aside every form of arrogance, to bend down to all whom the Lord has entrusted to our care. Among them let us keep a special, very special, place for our priests. Especially for them may our heart, our hand and our door stay open in every circumstance. They are the first faithful that we bishops have: our priests. Let us love them! Let us love them with all our heart! They are our sons and our brothers! Dear brothers, the profession of faith we are now renewing together is not a formal act. Rather, it means renewing our response to the “Follow me” with which John’s Gospel ends (21:19). It leads to living our life in accordance with God’s plan, committing our whole self to the Lord Jesus. The discernment that knows and takes on the thoughts, expectations and needs of the people of our time stems from this.

- Pastors need to listen to the vocation stories of the young.
  - (July 27 to Bishops in Rio) Let us help the young. Let us have an attentive ear to listen to their dreams – they need to be heard – to listen to their successes, to pay attention to their difficulties. You have to sit down and listen to the same libretto, but accompanied by diverse music, with different characteristics. Having the patience to listen! I ask this of you with all my heart! In the confessional, in spiritual direction, in accompanying. Let us find ways to spend time with them. Planting seeds is demanding and very tiring, very tiring! It is much more rewarding to enjoy the harvest! How cunning! Reaping is more enjoyable for us! But Jesus asks us to sow with care and responsibility.
- Priests should avoid greater triumphalism than what Christ himself enjoyed
  - (Sept 10, 2013 daily homily) [There] are Christians who in their inner depths “do not believe in the Risen One and want to make a more majestic resurrection than that” of Jesus. The Pope described them as “the triumphalistic”, since “they have an inferiority complex” and put on triumphalistic airs in their life, in their speech, in their pastoral work and in the liturgy”. Pope Francis therefore considers it necessary to recover the awareness that Jesus is the Risen One. And for this reason Christians are called “without timidity or fear and without triumphalism” to look at “his beauty”, to put their finger in the wounds of the Risen One, of that “Christ who is all, who is fullness; Christ who is the center, Christ who is hope”.

- Conclusions

- There’s several retreats worth of material here in terms of preparing for and living the priestly life. What’s obvious in this material is that this comes not only from the head but from the life of Pope Francis, who seems to practice what he preaches in this regard and is having a great impact in warming people’s hearts, especially those who have long grown cold.
- No reform has ever happened in the Church without a reform of the clergy. That’s why Pope Francis’ efforts to get pastors and future priests to adopt the mentality of mission rather than maintenance, of serving the least rather than clericalism, are so important in his overall mission.