

## Pope Francis, the Reform of the Church and the Reform of the Priesthood

- Introduction
  - Very happy to be with you for these days of retreat.
  - I know you've interrupted your vacation for this retreat and that some of you were not totally excited about coming back. But before the foundation of the world Jesus made an appointment to be here with you to give you, he hopes, a real vacation. Vacation comes from the Latin word *vacare*, which means to empty out. We get the word "vacant" from the term. Jesus wants to empty us out of frustrations, worldliness, so much more so that he can in fact fill us with himself. That's the type of rest we most need. We see how often he would take the apostles apart with him, "Come apart with me for a while and rest." Real rest comes from yoking ourselves to Christ in his meekness and humility.
  - He also wants to give you himself in a special way during these last days of the 12 days of Christmas. His desire is to make us sharers in his divinity by his taking on our humanity. He wants to help you to enter much more deeply into that mystery of God-with-us (Emmanuel) to save us (Jesus).
- How to live a good retreat
  - Time fundamentally of prayer. Persevering prayer is hard work. It requires a commitment. Some days we're full of consolation. Other days we're as arid as the Sahara. But the key is to keep going, to fight off distractions by uniting ourselves with the Lord.
  - To receive these graces, God wants our free cooperation. That requires preparation. Parable of the Sower and Seed. Four types of soil, all found in seminarians:
    - Hardened soil of the know-it-all or the inveterate sinner
    - Superficial soil of the one who is looking to be entertained and fight off boredom, but the one who's not really interested in a deep change of life, who doesn't want the seed to go to the core of his being. Seed will get scorched as soon as kickoff happens in the NFL playoffs this weekend.
    - Thorny soil. Worldly cares and anxieties, lure of riches and pleasures. Definitely chokes the word. Seminarians are not immune from these types of thorns. We need to throw our cares on the Lord. We need to place the treasure of our heart in him.
    - Good soil. Bears fruit. Not just "some" fruit, but abundant fruit, 30, 60 or 100 fold. One seed of the Lord well planted ought to be able to change our life in 30 or 100 ways or more. That's the power of the word of God. Received with faith the size of a mustard seed, it can translate the Catskill mountain range.
    - Pope Francis, on whose words and work this retreat will be based, commented on this parable back in June at daily Mass that to bear fruit we need to be prepared (June 8, 2013):
      - What does it mean to guard the Word of God? It means "opening our hearts" to the Word, "as the earth opens to the seed". Some seeds scatter and "are eaten by birds," and this happens when the Word is not guarded. It means that some hearts "do not know how to receive it". Sometimes the seed falls "on earth with many rocks and the seed cannot take root and dies." That is, they are not capable of guardianship because they are inconstant. "The Word can also fall on unprepared ground", he added, "where there are thorns and in the end it dies" because "it is not guarded". But what are these thorns? Jesus says it is our "attachment to wealth, vice". To guard the Word is to receive it, but we must "prepare our hearts to receive it. Meditate on what the Word tells us today, watching what happens in life." This is what Mary did, ... she pondered these events. Here lies the task for Christians: to welcome the Word of God and to think about what it means today.

- For this to happen, we need to talk about a few things.
  - Conferences and Homilies
    - I'd encourage you to take notes if you can do so prayerfully. Eventually I'm going to put up my outlines for the conferences as well as audio recordings on catholicpreaching.com, so don't think you have to get it all down. But take down the phrases, the words, in which you know that the Lord is speaking directly to your heart, when he's encouraging you, when he's calling you to conversion. Then after the conferences, take those to your prayer.
    - We'll talk over the course of this retreat on what Pope Francis says about sacred preaching. He says the point is to invigorate that covenantal dialogue with the Lord. It's supposed to start it, or reignite it, or strengthen it. Try to leave with one or a few points to continue the conversation going, focusing on how the Lord wants to help you bear fruit from that word.
  - Silence
    - We're not going to bear good fruit if we're giving it to thorns or to superficiality.
    - Ponder the medicinal punishment of Zechariah. To help him become more like Mary.
    - Mary's heart. Putting together and treasuring things in her heart.
    - So at a practical level, I'm going to ask you to keep a reverential silence, to vacate from normal conversations, throughout the entire retreat except at meals. This is to open our ears to hear the Lord speak to us in gentle breezes. Be respectful that others are having a conversation. If you're going out of your mind, that's why the priests are here. At the meals, don't linger too long in conversation. If you have to speak out of charity or to fulfill a duty, please do so. If one of the retreatants on the other retreat says hello, you can say hello back. If you're serving or singing at a Mass and need to coordinate something, do so in a polite whisper. But be jealous of the time just with the Lord. We need to cultivate this habit of silence if we're ever going to become contemplatives on the street.
    - Also love each other enough as true brothers not to try to steal them from the Lord. If they're weak, strengthen them by your good example to persevere on retreat just like you want to help them persevere in Christian fidelity and in their vocation.
    - Likewise, I'm going to ask you to leave the world behind until Monday at noon. Shut off your cell phone and give it to a friend to hold it for you, or, if you need it to pray, put it on airport mode. The same thing with your ipad or your laptop.
    - We're in an age in which it's increasingly hard for young people to be silent. You're going to need to become teachers of that silence and if we can't do it for five days, we're never going to help our people by example.
  - Confession
    - Every retreat we should go to confession, but that's not enough.
    - Pray for the grace to make the best confession of your life. Get it all out. Hide nothing.
    - General confession, where we really look to the roots are, the idols I have, the compromises, the places I'm making peace with.
    - A general confession doesn't have to be long. It can still be done in about five minutes with greater preparation. Perhaps you can examine on the seven capital sins, or the beatitudes, or the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- Pope Francis, the Reform of the Church and the Reform of the Priesthood
  - Both before and after the election of Pope Francis, there has been much talk about the reform of the Vatican. Francis gave some witness that reform was on the mind of the cardinals who elected him when he joked with journalists on March 16 that some had suggested he take the name

“Adrian” after Adrian VI, a pope who ferociously reformed the Church’s central administration after the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

- But the reform that Francis seems intent on carrying out will be much broader than a reform of the Vatican curia. What needs to be fixed in the Vatican, he recognizes, is just one symptom of a much larger problem plaguing the Church as a whole.
- To re-form means to bring something back into the shape it ought to have and Francis is already at work, in his words and in his personal witness, at trying to lead that much more important, and widespread, renewal.
- Four days before his election, he gave an address in the cardinals’ general congregation meetings that several of them noted totally changed the dynamics of the Conclave. It got many of them to think that not only this cardinal “from the end of the earth” diagnose profoundly the fundamental corruption afflicting the Church but also had the vision and the passion to lead the Church back to shape.
- What did he say was the reform the Church most needed? Thanks to the work of Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana, we know. The Cuban cardinal was so impressed by what Cardinal Bergoglio had said that he asked if he could have a copy of his address. Cardinal Bergoglio replied that he had spoken without notes and apologized for having nothing to give him.
- During the night, however, Cardinal Bergoglio decided to write out for his confrère what he had said earlier — clearly a sign of his charity — and gave the hand-written copy to a grateful Cardinal Ortega when he saw him in the morning. Cardinal Ortega asked if he could have it published, and the Argentine prelate consented. A few days later, after Pope Francis’ election, Cardinal Ortega asked him the same question again, now that they had obviously taken on larger significance. Pope Francis agreed and the handwritten sheets were published in “Palabra Nueva,” the Catholic magazine of the Archdiocese of Havana.
- Cardinal Bergoglio told the 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.”
- The chief corruption of the Church, he underlined, happens when she becomes narcissistic, when she starts looking at herself rather than looking toward God and toward others Jesus came from heaven and died to save.
- We saw this corruption among the apostles who on several occasions began to focus on jockeying for position in an earthly kingdom they presumed Jesus had come to inaugurate rather than on denying themselves, picking up their cross and follow Jesus to all those on the periphery.
- We’ve seen it throughout Church history when some have fought more for benefices and sinecures than for the towel to wash others’ feet.
- We see it in certain segments of the Roman Curia when high-ranking prelates use their positions to try to find spots to advance the career of friends.
- And we see it in Church institutions — dioceses, parishes, schools, hospitals, charities — that begin to focus all of their efforts on those who are already coming, rather than getting outside of themselves to serve all those for whom Jesus gave his life.
- “When the Church is self-referent without realizing it,” Cardinal Bergoglio went on to say, “she believes she has her own light. She ceases to be the *mysterium lunae* 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.”
- Several fathers of the early Church used to refer to the Church as the *mysterium lunae*, the “mystery of the moon,” because the Church was called to reflect the light of Christ in the same way that the

moon is illuminated by reflecting the light of the sun.

- Cardinal Bergoglio was saying that when the Church becomes corrupt, spiritually worldly and in need of reform, those in the Church begin to think that the Church gives off her own light, rather than is meant to reflect Christ. The Church ceases to some extent to think, speak, behave and love like Christ, but rather begins to think and speak of herself, as if she is an end in herself. From the parish level to the Vatican Curia, she begins to focus more on her institutional make-up than her Founder, Origin, Guide and Goal.
- The fundamental choice that the Church must make, he said, is whether we are going to be an “evangelizing Church that comes out of herself,” hearing the Word of God and faithfully proclaiming it, or a “worldly Church that lives within herself, of herself, for herself.” That distinction — and the importance of choosing the former — “must give light to the possible changes and reforms that must be made for the salvation of souls.”
- He then gave what he believed were the essential job qualifications for the next pope, qualities that the other cardinals evidently thought he met: “The next pope,” he declared, must be a man who “from the contemplation of Jesus Christ and from worshipping Jesus Christ will help the Church get out of herself and go to those on the outskirts of existence.”
- That is what Pope Francis has been trying to do, going from his intense relationship with Christ out to those on the periphery, kissing children and the handicapped, washing the feet of incarcerated teens, wading into the crowds, paying his own bills, calling the man who used to deliver his newspaper and so many other similar actions.
- He’s also been refusing to allow the Church he’s now been summoned to lead to be self-referential and narcissistically boxed in by small-t traditions of what clothes and shoes the pope wears, the place where he lives or celebrates Mass, the people whose feet he bathes, the schedule he keeps and the people he meets.
- The fundamental corruption of the Vatican curia, where it exists, is not about butlers’ stealing papal documents, questionable financial practices, lavender mafias, or bureaucratic inefficiency. It’s about focusing too much on self-referential institutional concerns and too little on having all parts of the institution participate fully in the Church’s evangelical mission, in reflecting Christ’s light to illumine a world walking in darkness.
- Pope Francis is seeking to lead the entire Church — not only priests and curial officials, but the faithful everywhere — on a spiritual exodus.
- “It’s key that we Catholics, both clergy and laity, go out to meet the people,” he stressed in the 2010 book-length interview, *El Jesuita*. This is “not only because the Church’s mission is to announce the Gospel, but because failing to do so harms us. . . . A Church that limits herself to administering parish work, that lives enclosed within a community, experiences what someone in prison does: physical and mental atrophy.” A Church that merely protects its small flock, that gives all or most of its attention to its faithful clientele, he believes, “is a Church that is sick.”
- He’s made the diagnosis and given the prescription the Church needs. Now it’s time for the entire Church to take the medicine that will bring us back to health so that we can go out as ministers of the Divine Physician to heal the world.
- New Wine Skins
  - For that reform, we need new wine skins, individually and ecclesially (July 6 daily homily)
    - Jesus makes all things new, he renews things”, as he himself said, as if it were his vocation to renew all things. “This is the kingdom of God which Jesus preached. It is renewal, true renewal. And this renewal begins first of all in our heart”.
    - Chesterton. The Times of London sent out an inquiry to famous authors, asking “What’s wrong with the world today?” He wrote back, “Dear Sir, I am. Yours, GK Chesterton.”
    - “The newness of the Gospel is a newness in the law itself which is inherent in the history of salvation”. It is a newness that goes beyond us and “renews structures. That is why Jesus said new wine needs new skins”. The Church, the Pope continued, has always gone in this direction, letting the Holy Spirit renew structures. And she teaches people “to not be afraid of the newness of the Gospel, of the newness the Holy Spirit works within us”.
    - We can’t be afraid of it.

- There are several parts of this reform that we can tackle by means of introduction
  - Preaching 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

- Focusing on God's mercy
  - 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.”
  - We'll ponder this tomorrow morning
- Healing the World's wounds
  - “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.”
  - We'll ponder this more later in the retreat.
- Warming hearts
  - In Rio on July 27, he told the bishops that the Church must emulate Jesus' actions accompanying the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus, entering into their conversation, showing the light of faith on their doubts and disappointments, warming their hearts, and firing them up to want to share the faith. He said: “From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the “night” contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus. I would like all of us to ask ourselves today: are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem? Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?”
  - We'll talk about this later as well.
- Getting outside of itself.
  - In a Rio meeting with Argentine youth on July 25, he said, “Let me tell you what I hope will be the outcome of World Youth Day: I hope there will be noise. Here there will be noise, I'm quite sure. Here in Rio there will be plenty of noise, no doubt about that. But I want you to make yourselves heard in your dioceses, I want the noise to go out, I want the Church to go out onto the streets, I want us to resist everything worldly, everything static, everything comfortable, everything to do with clericalism, everything that might make us closed in on ourselves. The parishes, the schools, the institutions are made for going out ... if they don't, they become an NGO, and the Church cannot be an NGO. May the bishops and priests

forgive me if some of you create a bit of confusion afterwards. That's my advice. Thanks for whatever you can do."

- We must overcome idolatry
  - 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."
- We must confront 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.

○ Making a mess

- To Fr. Spadaro: Religious are prophets and prophets make a mess.
- May 19 Homily (Pentecost): “the Holy Spirit would appear to create disorder in the Church, since he brings the diversity of charisms and gifts; yet all this, by his working, is a great source of wealth, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which does not mean uniformity, but which leads everything back to harmony. In the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who creates harmony. One of Fathers of the Church has an expression which I love: the Holy Spirit himself is harmony – “Ipse harmonia est”. He is indeed harmony. Only the Spirit can awaken diversity, plurality and multiplicity, while at the same time building unity. Here too, when we are the ones who try to create diversity and close ourselves up in what makes us different and other, we bring division. When we are the ones who want to build unity in accordance with our human plans, we end up creating uniformity, standardization. But if instead we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit, richness, variety and diversity never become a source of conflict, because he impels us to experience variety within the communion of the Church.”

• Conclusion

- Reform begins with us. Lord wants to reshape us. Reform us. Divinize us. Let’s cooperate and begin!