

# Pope Francis: Understanding His Language And Mission

*(Transcript from recording of talk by Rev. Dr. Federico Colautti, ITI, 1-10-2015)*

Good morning everyone.

Allow me to begin with a prayer to the Virgin Mary

## *The Hail Mary*

First of all I would like to thank President Geusau and the Dean for entrusting me with this beautiful task. It's an honor to be here. When Dr. Geusau called me and proposed this adventure, I hesitated because there were a lot of things to do in September, but I considered it as a providential gift from God. I told Dr. Geusau that a few days before, I was discussing animatedly with my brother (who is a priest too), this topic of the Pope: his language, his behavior and his theology. And we got—not into a fistfight—but into an intense conversation. So I thought that it was providential for me to have this opportunity to go deeper into what I thought I knew about Pope Francis and maybe to be surprised by him again—because that's the synthesis from my own experience: this Pope is a huge, nice surprise. And as it was said, I am here because I am Argentine, not because I'm an expert on the Pope. I did do my homework, but mostly I am going to share with you my intuitions and what arises from my own experience being born and having grown up in Argentina.

I can tell you first that I didn't have any personal contact with him as he was bishop in Buenos Aires, so I cannot tell you firsthand how it was. I know many stories and I have known many people who were very close to him. However, I don't have more contact other than the fact that the bishop who allowed me to go to Rome to study when I was very young was the same bishop who then became the cardinal in Buenos Aires, Cardinal Quarracino. It was he who picked Bergoglio from Cordoba, from this sort of exile. So that's the only kind of connection we had as far as history goes. The other connection is really surprising to me—because even if I am a priest of the diocese of Rome an election of the pope doesn't come around every other day—so I wasn't ever present in a single election at St. Peter's square. But providentially, though I was living in Vienna at the time, I happened to be in Rome in the days of the election, and I was providentially there that afternoon when the white smoke came out. It was a very nice experience and the first surprise. When I heard the name it was another surprise—because probably on the television you could hear the cardinal's announcement of the new Pope clearly, but not so much for us. I heard “Bertone” first—so I started asking around “What did he say? Who? Bertone?” “No, Bergoglio” “What??” It was one surprise after the other. And the second was nicer than the first, to be sincere.

So I think from that day on, from his first gesture to ask for a blessing, he started putting some questions in my mind. “What is he doing? Why is he doing that? Why is he saying that?” It was not someone who just continues with the usual. It was surprising from the beginning, maybe for all of us. Little by little I started to appreciate it. At the beginning I read everything that he said. Then little by little occupations and other reasons prevented me from reading everything that the Pope said. But especially in the beginning it was very

nice for me to hear those Argentine expressions translated to Italian, because you could tell he was thinking in Argentine and then trying to speak Italian. And he made many mistakes in Italian, but it was always very nice, it was with a sweetness, so to speak—with a plus of meaning that only a few of us could understand. We could hear the Argentine from Buenos Aires, which is very special; it is called “Porteño.” I am not Porteño, I am from a city close by, but we all appreciate this kind of language. So he was very funny, very entertaining. But also it was another occasion for surprise and to discover the freedom that this man had. Through my history I was led to speak many languages and I still see that I still hate to make mistakes. I am going to do many today in English, but I still hate it. I see that he doesn't. He “just don't care.”

Let's begin with a famous joke. Maybe you will laugh just out of politeness, maybe you will understand it the next day—but those are the best jokes anyway—those that you understand the following day. Have you heard the definition of an Argentine? An Argentine is an Italian who speaks Spanish, and believes that he's British. If you didn't get it don't worry...

This joke is very profound because it's a type of synthesis of the whole history of modern Argentina; Argentina from the so-called Independence times. So I would like to make a brief summary of this history, because there is always an influence of the history, of the facts, of the political developments in a person—in every person. So we can safely assume that even the Pope is a son of this history and for this reason he also carries this history in himself, in his experience.

We all know that Argentina is a land of immigration and mostly of Italian origin, as it is for my family, and also for the Pope. He is a descendent of Italians who moved to Argentina. In that regard, the presence of the immigrants began to influence the politics of Argentina around the beginning of the twentieth century. Until that point Argentina was more or less as every other land in South America. It was a land divided between the big landowners, an oligarchy of Spanish descent, and the common people, the *criollos* (who were mixed with the locals and the Indians and constituted a lower class). It's a schema that is present all over South America, or all of Latin America. The role of Great Britain and the U.S. in Argentina's history may not seem very visible, but has a big role because through their relationships Argentina became a part of the economic commonwealth. The production of meat and other raw material was very important for the economy of the northern hemisphere, especially Great Britain, who was the main actor in the area. So even if in 1807 and 1808 the British didn't manage to conquer the city of Buenos Aires, because the people [Argentines] expelled them, they eventually came to be very important partners in the economic life of the country. This economic relationship produced a very wealthy social class, those who produced this raw material (mainly meat), as well as a second class made up of the people who were more oppressed, or rather, those who actually did the labor. And it is this sort of social injustice that is at the origin of modern Argentina.

With immigration this will begin to change little by little. The people who arrive from Europe arrive mostly as farmers, but the next generation will have access to formation at universities, and little by little the middle class will appear. There is a book called *M'Hijo*

*el Dotor: My Son the Doctor*,<sup>1</sup> which shows this reality. It shows all the sacrifices the immigrants did in order to give education to their children, because their children will be the doctors, the ones who somehow take the position in society. So with the appearance of the radical party at the beginning of the twentieth century there is the first entrance of this political class, this middle class, that tries to break the hegemony of the oligarchy and tries to bring some sort of social justice. This easy production of meat (meat produces itself: you let the livestock go and gather it when it is time), created huge wealth. But this enormous wealth wasn't evenly distributed. Therefore this desire for social justice begins, and its first representative is a man descended from immigrants: Yrigoyen. Yrigoyen began from this lower class and became president at the beginning of the twentieth century around the time of the Great Depression. This time of the Great Depression is very important as well, because it was at that point that the Commonwealth closed up and stopped having a relationship [with Argentina]. The Commonwealth locked into the political commonwealth, and left Argentina outside of it. The timing is interesting because in 1930 (remember the Great Depression began in 1929) a series of coup d'état begins. And this is the rhythm of our modern history. There were coup d'états in 1930, 1943, 1955, 1962 1966, 1967 and 1976. That one I remember, I was 10 years old. So, why did this phenomenon happen? Because the oligarchy wanted to regain political power. However, they were not good at economics and so they always put someone from the "liberal side" as a minister of economics and finances. And then each revolution, as all revolutions do, betrayed itself.

So, within this process a very important person appears: Peron. Peron is military, and he originally represents more of this oligarchy. But little by little, because he was astute and a very good politician, he understood that his mission was to introduce the worker class into the political life. So, as Yrigoyen introduced the immigrant class, Peron introduced the worker class. His mandates, especially at the beginning (I think by the inspiration of his wife, the famous Evita), actually managed to bring about many benefits for the population, including construction of hospitals and schools, all from the wealth that Argentina gathered during the Second World War, and thanks to its neutrality during the war. This wealth was invested to create a structure to benefit the population. It's also known that especially in this period the social teaching of the Church was really inspiring this government. There was a desire to bring this social justice that had nothing to do with Marxism, and was this famous "third way." But, as every revolution betrays itself and becomes corrupt, even Peron turned against the Church and became corrupt (it was a very complicated situation I wont get very much into the details).

Bergoglio was a young person in those days and he certainly experienced all these transformations and the role of the Church in this time, also how the Church became very stubborn and eventually opposed Peron and Peronism. It ended very badly, with the burning of churches and killing of some priests. But at the same time, the people, even if most people were Peronists because of all these benefits they received, the catholic population did a very impressive march in which even my parents took part. It was called the "March of Silence," because everything political was prohibited. The people marched in silence from the Cathedral of Buenos Aires to Parliament. That brought about the fall of

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<sup>1</sup> Florencio Sánchez, *M'hijo el dotor*, 1903.

Peron, who escaped first to Uruguay and eventually to Spain where he remained for several decades, from 1955 to 1973.

I think this tension inside of the history of Argentina, this situation has certainly an influence on what the Pope experienced of social justice. I think this influence cannot be defined as Peronism, because anything that Peronism implemented as social justice came from the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Church who, for several decades already had clearly spoken about the injustices the industrial revolution had brought about, and how society had to look for ways to bring about a social justice. As a parenthesis we can say that the experience of Peronism in Argentina formed the antibodies for Marxism. Marxism didn't really enter into the political field in Argentina, until it penetrated as a wing of Peronism in the early 70s, but when Peron he came back from Spain he somehow rebuked this left wing, this Marxist wing, which at that moment went underground and started with the terrorist acts that mark most of the decade of the 70s. Eventually this upheaval brought about another coup d'état. It was the coup d'état of 1976 that produced this terrible war, the so-called "dirty war" which was a great suffering for all of us. So I was growing up in this time, during these hard years until 1982 in which, thanks be to God, we lost the famous Malvinas, the Falkland war. Thanks to that defeat the military lost any sort of appreciation and it was possible to start the last process of democratization, which continues to today.

We have to keep in mind these influences on Bergoglio, because he is a son of these times. And again I want to insist, because someone has named him the "Peronist Pope"—which I find completely superficial and unjust—so I must insist that any good Peron did insofar as social justice came from the Church, and not the other way around.

I think another important aspect is his literary influences. You know that he was a teacher of literature, and something very special happened to him. Jorge Luis Borges is one of the most important Argentine authors of the twentieth century. As a young teacher Bergoglio, invited him to his class (which was not in Buenos Aires but in Santa Fe which is 500 or 600 kilometers away from Buenos Aires in a small school). No one knows exactly why, but Borges accepted. Which was surprising because you can imagine that he had requests from many people who wanted to have him visit their class, but the only invitation he accepted was this one, from Bergoglio. A young Jesuit (he was 28), who was teaching a high school class, not even in the university, and with his students he was reading Borges and other foundational literature from Argentina. This literature is gaucho literature, and this "literatura gauchesca" somehow makes present the summary of the history of Argentina that I attempt to present you. The gaucho is the person who has to toil, has to work, receives little from what he does, and lives in a huge injustice. There is the story of Martín Fierro,<sup>2</sup> the Pope just quoted him in the UN. It is the history of a gaucho who had a very beautiful life enjoying nature, enjoying meat, horses, and was not rich but we would call him middle class—he is having a nice life. All of a sudden the government, that unjustly represents the interests of just a part of the society, makes him fight the Indians, and he loses everything and becomes an illegal—someone who is an outcast of society. It is very interesting how he describes all these struggles and how he becomes a very wise

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<sup>2</sup> José Hernández, *El Gaucho Martín Fierro*, 1872; *El regreso de Martín Fierro*, 1879.

person exactly because he goes through all this suffering. He's a foundational figure for all of us in Argentina. We all read this book and somehow it is always present.

This literature brings out another aspect that I think is very important, which is speaking with images. That comes very much from this literature; every other sentence is an image. The literature uses many metaphors, is very poetic, and speaks a lot through imagery; so I think that for those who have read this literature it's not a huge surprise when we listen to the Pope. He speaks like that, because that's how many Argentines speak; we use a lot of sayings and images. So certainly this literature had an influence on him. In this regard, a friend of mine, Segundo, who is from Spain and works at the Vatican suggested that to understand Pope Francis we need to look at *Don Segundo Sombra*.<sup>3</sup> It is a very famous book, one of these gaucho literature, a very interesting story that I invite you to read (there is an English translation from Pittsburgh University Press from 1995). The name alone says many things. "Segundo," "second," is not first; so this man's name is "second." And *sombra* means shadow. So, "second, shadow." It is not "second shadow," but second *and* shadow. These two words don't come together in Spanish because one is masculine and the other is feminine. So it's not a second shadow, but it's "second" and "shadow." Who is this Don Segundo Sombra? He's a very mysterious person that a young boy will encounter. A boy who is an orphan and has suffered a lot. He lives the periphery of a small town in the midst of my province, the province of Buenos Aires. When he is an adolescent he is ready for an adventure as everyone is at that age, and because is an orphan, no one can tell what to do or how to act. He was a very free spirit and was about to embark on an adventure that would probably lead him to the destruction of his life. Providentially he meets this mysterious Don Segundo Sombra, who takes him into his care and accompanies him in this walk during this time of his life. It is essentially the narration of a long trip. It was very common in those days to go and round up cattle on the pampa, which is like a sea of grass where cows grow like...well, like grass. The only thing the gaucho had to do was to round up the cattle and bring it from one place to another until they get to the marketplace. So, this young boy embarks on this adventure and Don Segundo Sombra helps him on this long initiation, it is a walk of initiation. I don't want to sell out the end of the story but read it even if I do, because it's very interesting. This orphan is an illegitimate son of one of these estancieros, i.e. one of the very rich landowners. So he was growing up in poverty but he was the son of a very rich man. And throughout this trip, Don Segundo Sombra accompanies him in a paternal way and he helps this young boy to reconcile with his history, to know himself, who he is. He ends up being the best friend of his half brother (without knowing it) so it's a very nice ending with this boy and his half-brother who is his best friend, who will live together in happiness.

It's a parable of a reconciliation of all of these social classes. It's a very profound book by Ricardo Güiraldes who wrote several other beautiful things.

I think that my friend Segundo is right. If you read this book you can understand many attitudes of the Pope, about always being present but a shadow; not being the first place, but in the second place. Educating without imposing, allowing people to make mistakes and gain experience from those mistakes, to learn. To challenge but at the same time

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<sup>3</sup> Ricardo Güiraldes, *Don Segundo Sombra*, 1926.

accompany. I think that to understand the Pope one needs to understand the influence that this literature plays.

He uses literature for other occasions. If you think about his response to the whole problem of gender ideology he just answered with a few words. “Read Benson.” He quoted “The Lord of the World.” Read that book and you will understand—and it’s true. I read it and I recommend you to read Benson, *The Lord of the World*;<sup>4</sup> and when he speaks about this ideological colonization, he refers to this. All of this wisdom is in his mind, not just one sentence. But he encourages us to read. Maybe not a lot of people did, but I think we have to be attentive to these impulses that come from his own knowledge of literature, and how world literature if permeated by an experience of faith, could be very helpful to look at the ways in which God is speaking in our day and age and try to find answers that God is already proposing and giving us through these authors.

Third and I think maybe most important are his theological influences. This maybe is a little bit harder to see, but I’m going to use my own experience to explain what I think they could be. As I said I’m not an expert and I hope we have time for questions and debate so that we can share more. I do have an experience of studying with Jesuits for many years, and I am very grateful for it. I came to know some of my professors very closely, and observe their way of living. It was very moving. As Father was saying today in his homily, they are examples of people who put us in our reality and help us see how many superficial things we have.

So first of all we cannot forget that the Pope *is a Jesuit*, and I mean this in a very positive way. I don’t think that he had to suffer very much to make this Franciscan bent. It sort of comes naturally. Maybe if he had been Benedictine it would have been more difficult, but being a Jesuit it came naturally to speak about poverty, because they do embrace austerity in a very serious way and try to do everything for the greater glory of God. Among these Jesuits, it is well known, that Peter Fabre has a great influence on the Pope. You know one of the first things he did was to declare him a saint, St. Peter Fabre.

I didn’t know much about him so I went to look him up. He was one of the first companions of St. Ignatius at the beginning of the formation of the Company of Jesus and it seems that the greatest characteristic of Peter Fabre was that he had great confidence that the inspiration of God would move the spirit and the sentiments of the people. He was a sort of anticipation of The Little Flower, St. Thérèse, in this way of being attentive to one’s own spirit, to the affections, and to our human experience. Fabre proposes making discernment based on this dialogue, always enlightened by faith. Not as today’s society would say “being led by the heart,” that whatever your heart tells you to do you should do—not listening to your heart in that superficial way. But to pay attention to how God is moving you. How do you feel when you think about doing something, are you happy about it? Are you sad? Through this dialogue God is moving you through these very human feelings and trying to guide you. And I think that is what this Pope has done during these almost three years of his pontificate, i.e he often justifies what he does based on these inclinations. “I felt like I had to do this. I didn’t have a plan.” Many people were looking

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Hugh Benson, *The Lord of the World*, 1907.

for politics about his trip to the Americas and they asked him “Why did you go to Cuba?” The Pope responds simply: “Well you know I was thinking maybe to go to Mexico, but then I thought to go to Cuba.” It doesn’t sound so much “Pope-like” but he doesn’t care, he just states clearly that many things he does are because he feels like God is inspiring him to do this or that. Maybe the roots of this attitude are in this saint that seems to be very close to his heart.

He is also a son of the Second Vatican Council. When this council was happening he was in his early youth. He is the age of my father so I can compare more or less what time of his life he was in. We know that he tried to do his doctorate on Romano Guardini so certainly the theology of Romano Guardini is very important to understand him. We can assume an influence of The *Nouvelle Theologie*, which also inspired the Second Vatican Council, and the invitation of the Council to enter into a real dialogue with the world is something that he feels very strongly, as a mandate to the Church through this Council that has to continue; not that it wasn’t done, but that it has to continue. I think that he envisions his dialogue not as assimilation but as a real dialogue, trying to discover what the culture of today is proposing and trying to do, I think, what Jesuits have done in history. I am thinking about humanism for example. Humanism appeared as a philosophy, breaking with Middle Ages and putting man at the center. The Jesuit took that and put Jesus Christ at the center, because Jesus is the real man—then Christian humanism appears. So I think that this is the spirit that is moving him.

The starting point of my conversation with my brother was a discourse; a video message that the Pope sent to the Catholic University of Buenos Aires.<sup>5</sup> In this video you can see him more at ease, because he’s speaking Spanish (Porteño); he’s speaking his own language and he can express himself better. It was an alarming video for my brother who was saying that perhaps it is something that we should be concerned about, was he preaching theology of liberation?, etc. And I was saying "no" he was saying "yes," and back and forth. I had just had a glimpse of this discourse before our conversation, so as a good Argentine I was discussing without knowing. So, I then went back and looked at the discourse and read it more seriously. I discovered that one of the few quotes he makes is from a theologian that I didn’t have a clue about. Maybe you haven’t heard of him—a certain Michel de Certeau. He’s a Jesuit too. I read a little bit about him and it seems this man was always searching. In different moments he studied psychoanalysis and modern philosophies and allowed these philosophies and worldviews to challenge his faith, and didn’t allow himself to settle. Going through this process it appears that in the third period of his life he had a very profound mystical experience. I can imagine that also this author had a great influence in the Pope’s way of being open and not being afraid of being challenged. Entering into this unsettlement. Not letting faith be a false security in the sense that you believe only in order to hold onto something, and you base your security on something that is not there. Not making faith of a museum—an expression that appears often in the discourses of the Pope —“the Church is not a museum,” or getting institutionalized, seeking refuge in the institution, not going out. This preference for the periphery could have a relationship with this theologian Michel de Certeau.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150903\\_videomessaggio-teologia-buenos-aires.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150903_videomessaggio-teologia-buenos-aires.html)

What is the most certain, we can say, the most clear influence for him theologically is the theology of the people. What is this Theology of the People? Maybe you know that the theology of South America and Latin America was very much marked by the theology of liberation. This theology has a very clear root, the social situation, where this social justice was really hard to see. The common thing was that the majority of the population lived in poverty and very few had riches. This situation still remains this way in many countries. So from this historical and sociological situation, theologians started to think and look at Scripture and try to develop a theology that would actualize the message of Jesus Christ for this time. Now, the huge problem of this theology of liberation was that these theologians, or most of them, started with the Marxist analysis. So the tool they use—as in the *Theologia Perennis* Aristotle was the tool for Thomas and for this beautiful tradition, with metaphysics, which produce the great synthesis of Thomas Aquinas—instead they would use Marxism to understand the message of the Scriptures and of the Gospel. That was the context in Latin America. As I said, with the antibodies from the experience of Peronism, Argentina was a little bit outside the discourse of Marxism. It was not a discourse that was common among people, and also due to the coup d'état and the military presence. I can give witness to that, it wasn't easy to think Marxist, thanks be to God. So in this regard Argentina remained outside of this theological development. But at the same time other theologians tried to elaborate an option. A theology that did not start from above, but that started from the roots, from this so-called preferential option for the poor, but one that at the same time wasn't based on Marxism. So this is how theologians like Lucio Gera and Justino O'Farell began to develop this Theology of the People. This theology, instead of having the Marxist analysis as their foundation, begins with the conviction that in the culture of the people, the very culture that has already been permeated by the gospel and by faith, appears a manifestation, an expression of faith, that adds up to a theology. You have to look to the people and see how they celebrate, how they live their faith, and from there discover a theology comes from the people.

So this great confidence in the People of God that lives faith comes from this vision of theology. The Pope himself came up with this expression “the faithful people of God.”<sup>6</sup> There is the conviction that every nation—they connect with a nation and not with a social class, it's not a matter of the conflict between social classes—but the Argentine nation is a people that has received faith and has incarnated this faith, has lived this faith. And in that experience of faith, God is speaking to us today. So there are two documents that are very important. One is from 1984,<sup>7</sup> about Liberation Theology which in those days, Cardinal Ratzinger speaks very clearly about its mistake and I think that's very good to look at, but that's not the only document. There is one from 1986,<sup>8</sup> only two years later, in which Ratzinger develops a sort of little manual, a little booklet on Liberation Theology. What is the real Liberation Theology? One that puts the correct anthropology at the foundation, that is, that sin is what makes the people suffer and not social injustice per se. It's a very nice

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImZejSMYWW0>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19840806\\_theology-liberation\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_it.html)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19860322\\_freedom-liberation\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19860322_freedom-liberation_it.html)

document, because it takes the challenges of the time seriously, as well as the preferential option of the poor, but it is developed in the tradition of the church with the right tools. I got the impression that this document of 1986 is the backbone of the doctrine of Bergoglio, insofar as his insistence on social justice and the Theology of the People, not Liberation Theology. This is all to give you some more information, because I know sometimes it's easy to speak in clichés, and so we can say that Liberation Theology as a whole is wrong. But the theologian Scannone,<sup>9</sup> who also has some influence on Pope Francis, tells a story that Ratzinger called him and other representatives of Liberation Theology in Schönstadt, Germany; and they had a meeting to see how they could foster this theology. The Vatican was not just against it, but it was attentive to this development as a promising development for the Church. Even Gutierrez who little by little went for the best, if still not my cup of tea, but Gutierrez has even a little bit abandoned these Marxist ideologies (though not totally).

Anyway this Theology of the People is not based on a Marxist analysis, but is an option that takes seriously the challenges that Liberation Theology presented, but presents them within the tradition of the Church with the correct anthropology, which is the most important thing. The Pope does speak often about sin and the devil so he has no fear to use those words.

So there are four principles that animate this theology, and they animate the message of the Pope. Four very simple principles, and if you know them you can hear at least one of them every time the Pope speaks.

So what are these principles?

First, priority of time over space. People appear in time in a history not because they conquer spaces or dominate. So, there is this opposition: history or possession. The Pope says history is more important. Time. It has much more of an influence. It's not about gaining territory but about time. I hope not to take too much time but I would like to read from *Evangelii Gaudium*, numbers 223 and 224:

223. "This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give a priority to time. One of the faults which we occasionally observe in sociopolitical activity is that spaces and power are preferred to time and processes. Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about *initiating processes rather than possessing spaces*. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of

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<sup>9</sup> Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J., "El papa Francisco y la teología del pueblo," *Razón y Fe*, 271 (2014) 38.

return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity.”

224. “Sometimes I wonder if there are people in today’s world who are really concerned about generating processes of people-building, as opposed to obtaining immediate results which yield easy, quick short-term political gains, but do not enhance human fullness. History will perhaps judge the latter with the criterion set forth by Romano Guardini: “The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age”

Second criteria: priority of unity over conflict. So he says we cannot ignore conflict, conflict is there, but let us listen to what this theologian Scannone says about it, according to my own translation: "Bergoglio studied Guardini's dialectic dynamism of contraries, not in a Hegelian or Marxist way, in order to apply it to practice and history because the unity of the countries is given fully in Christ. There lays the last fundament of his much desired culture of encounter, in the NON ignorance of the reality of conflict".<sup>10</sup> So he says it’s not a matter of ignoring conflict; conflict is there. But he believes that Jesus Christ is the one who brings communion. So here the Pope can say it better than me. This is 228 and 229 of *Evangelii Gaudium*:

228. “In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.”

229. “This principle, drawn from the Gospel, reminds us that Christ has made all things one in himself: heaven and earth, God and man, time and eternity, flesh and spirit, person and society. The sign of this unity and reconciliation of all things in him is peace. Christ “is our peace” (Eph 2:14). The Gospel message always begins with a greeting of peace, and peace at all times crowns and confirms the relations between the disciples.

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<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, 44.

Peace is possible because the Lord has overcome the world and its constant conflict “by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). But if we look more closely at these biblical texts, we find that the locus of this reconciliation of differences is within ourselves, in our own lives, ever threatened as they are by fragmentation and breakdown. If hearts are shattered in thousands of pieces, it is not easy to create authentic peace in society.”

Third principle: reality is superior to ideas. Here we can see this criticism on ideologies and we see how he makes gestures that speak more than words. So, we can see that a faith lived means much more than ideas about that faith. Again so let's listen to the Pope:

232. “Ideas – conceptual elaborations – are at the service of communication, understanding, and praxis. Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason. Formal nominalism has to give way to harmonious objectivity. Otherwise, the truth is manipulated, cosmetics take the place of real care for our bodies.”

I was watching one interview in which he was kind of complaining when he was cardinal of Buenos Aires; he was saying “You know what’s the first superficial waste of money? Pets. Most of the western world wastes their money on pets. Second? Cosmetics.” So he has these clear ideas from his time of being Cardinal.

So to continue:

“cosmetics take the place of real care for our bodies. We have politicians – and even religious leaders – who wonder why people do not understand and follow them, since their proposals are so clear and logical. Perhaps it is because they are stuck in the realm of pure ideas and end up reducing politics or faith to rhetoric. Others have left simplicity behind and have imported a rationality foreign to most people.”

233. “Realities are greater than ideas. This principle has to do with incarnation of the word and its being put into practice: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is from God” (1Jn 4:2). The principle of reality, of a word already made flesh and constantly striving to take flesh anew, is essential to evangelization. It helps us to see that the Church’s history is a history of salvation, to be mindful of those saints who inculturated the Gospel in the life of our peoples and to reap the fruits of the Church’s rich bimillennial tradition, without pretending to come up with a system of thought detached from this treasury, as if we wanted to reinvent the Gospel.”

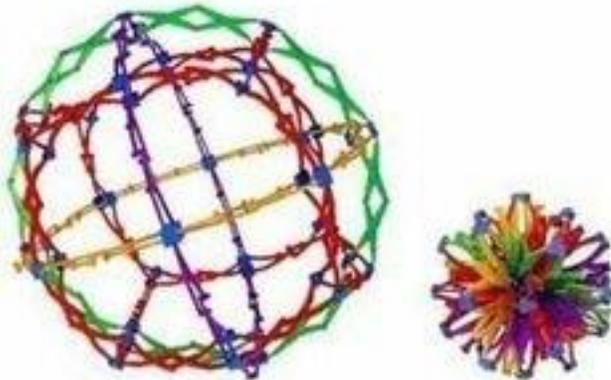
So those who are afraid about novelty, it’s not about that. He’s not reinventing the Gospel.

“At the same time, this principle impels us to put the word into practice, to perform works of justice and charity which make that word fruitful. Not to put the word into practice, not to make it reality, is to build on sand, to remain in the realm of pure ideas and to end up in a lifeless and unfruitful self-centredness and gnosticism.”

I think it couldn't be more clear.

Fourth Principle: the whole is greater than the part. So in this regard it's important to see globalization and localization. Let me use this because you are all wondering why I brought this toy.<sup>11</sup> I borrowed it from the kids of my *Mission ad Gentes*. As you can see it was used by them; it's almost broken down, but still works for what I want to show you. So if you look at this you can see that it's a sphere more or less (there's no perfect sphere in nature). This sphere is defined by the fact that every point is equivalent in relationship to the center. There is uniformity. The parts are equal to the whole, or the whole is equal to the parts—you have this idea of the sphere where unity comes through uniformity. Now the Pope will speak about polyhedron (the toy becomes a polyhedron) you see still one, but there are many sides to it. It is a bit messy but more interesting to look at. Well, let us listen now to the Pope and maybe that will help us to understand.

234. “An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. In the first, people get caught up in an abstract, globalized universe, falling into step behind everyone else, admiring the glitter of other people's world, gaping and applauding at all the right times. At the other extreme, they



turn into a museum of local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, and incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders.”

235. “The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. “ [so, this is the theology of the people: the people have these roots] “We can work on a small scale, in our own neighborhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter into the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren.”

236. “Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. Pastoral and political activity alike seek to gather in this polyhedron the best of each. There is a place for the poor and their culture, their aspirations and their potential. Even people who can be considered dubious on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked. It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality; it is the sum total of persons within a society which pursues the common good, which truly has a place for everyone.”

So these are the four principles. And just to finish up because time is up and I don't want to be too long, I just want to insist on one thing: not to be scared of this poverty, as if the Pope was following a Marxist analysis. But poverty for the Pope is biblical and gospel poverty. Lets listen to *Evangelii Gaudium* 198:

198. “For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy”. [163] This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have “this mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (*Phil 2:5*). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness”. [164] This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – “is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty”. [165] This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know

the suffering of Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them."

So I think that's a clear view of what he thinks, especially what he thinks of the poor. For him the poor are a concrete people with a face, not an ideology, not the ideology of poverty; but a concrete people with a face.

I would like to add, that most of all, the Pope remains himself. My brother was telling me that he read somewhere that the Pope said he heard a voice from the Spirit saying to him "Francis remain yourself because, at 78 if you try to change you will look ridiculous, so just remain as you are." I think that he has tried to remain faithful to that. And from what I hear from people who were close to him, the only huge change is his smile. You can watch some videos as he was cardinal, he wasn't smiling. When he was in Argentina he had a funeral face; not because he was sad, he just had a funeral face. Yet now he's smiling all the time. He was asked by his successor by Cardinal Poli "how come you made us suffer so many years with that funeral face and now you are smiling to all the people?" and the Pope said: "well the Holy Spirit exists."

Finally, I think to complete this presentation of his deep trust, which is theologically really beautiful, the trust in the people of God, in the "7000 who did not bend their knees to Baal" (to use some of my biblical knowledge). The people of God that God saved; he believes that there is a people of God that is waiting for God to be manifested, to reveal himself. I think he also realizes the great challenge of secularization; that is why he puts so much emphasis on the new evangelization and how he announces himself the kerygma. That would be a whole other conference, about his way of catechizing, putting the kerygma, the first announcement, which is the foundation of his teaching and his way of life.

I want to stop here and open up the floor for questions if there are any