
Pope on climate change: "we're on the brink of suicide", but "certain" that "they will do something" in Paris

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Vatican City (AsiaNews) – “We are on the brink of suicide” regarding climate change, but "I'm sure that almost all of those who are in Paris at Cop21, are aware of this and want to do something”, said Pope Francis responding to just one of the questions put to him by reporters yesterday afternoon, during his return flight from the Central African Republic to Rome. He was asked many questions about different topics including, among others, religious fundamentalism, the idolatry of money, Vatileaks 2 and, of course, Africa, the "exploited continent".

When asked if he thinks that the climate change conference in Paris will be the beginning of the solution, he replied: " I am not sure. I am not sure. But, I can tell you: (it's) now or never. But, from the first that was in Tokyo, no. They did few things. Every year, the problems are more serious. Speaking to a meeting of university students about what world we want to leave our children, one said, “But are you sure there will be children in this generation? We’ve reached the limit. We’re on the verge of suicide, to use a strong word. And, I’m sure that nearly the entirety of all of those in Paris for the COP21 have this awareness and want to do something. The other day, I read that in Greenland, the glaciers have lost thousands of tons. In the Pacific, there’s a nation buying land from another nation to move the country because within 20 years it won’t be there any more. I am confident, I’m confident that these people will do something because I’m sure that they have the good will to do it. And I hope it happens and I pray it happens".

Regarding religious fundamentalism, the Pope affirmed that " Fundamentalism is a sickness that exists in all religions. We Catholics have some, not just some, so many, who believe they

have the absolute truth and they move forward with calumnies, with defamation and they hurt (people), they hurt. And, I say this because it's my Church, also us, all of us. It must be combatted. Religious fundamentalism isn't religious. Why? Because God is lacking. It's idolatrous, as money is idolatrous. Making politics in the sense of convincing these people who have this tendency is a politics that we religious leaders must make, but fundamentalism that ends up always in tragedy or in crime, in a bad thing comes about in all religions a little bit".

On Islam he said "dialogue is possible: they have virtues, many virtues and these virtues are constructive. I also have the experience of friendship – it's a strong word, friendship – with a Muslim, a world leader, we can talk, and he had his beliefs and I had mine, he prayed and I prayed. (There are) many values, prayer for example, fasting, religious values. Also other virtues...We can't cancel out a religious because there are some, or even many fundamentalist groups at a certain point in history. It's true, wars between religions have always been there throughout history, always. We also need to ask for forgiveness, Catherine de'Medici was no saint, and that 30 years war, that night of St. Bartholomew, we must also ask for forgiveness from the fundamentalist extremists in the religious wars.

But they have virtues, one can dialogue with them. Today I was at a mosque, an Imam prayed with me, he wanted to go around the small stadium with me in the popemobile, where there were many who couldn't enter, and in the popemobile there was the Pope and an Imam. It was possible to speak. As everywhere, there are people with religious values, there are people who don't...how many wars, not only religious, wars we Christians have made. It wasn't the Muslims who did the Sack of Rome. They have virtues".

80 percent of the world's wealth is in the hands of 17 percent of the population

In a subsequent question about his encounter with the poor during the journey, Francis, after pointing out that the matter was discussed in the "Evangelii Gaudium" and again in "Laudato si'," added: " don't remember the statistics, so I ask you not to publish them, because I don't know if they are true or not, but I believe that 80 percent of the world's riches are in the hands of 17 percent of the population. I don't know if it's true, but if it isn't true...There's an economic system where money is at the center, the god of money. I remember that once a great French ambassador told me this expression – and he was not Catholic...If things continue like this, then the world will continue like this. You asked me what I felt hearing the testimonies of the youth and at Kangemi. I spoke clearly about rights. I felt pain. I thought, how is it that people do not notice? I felt great pain. Yesterday, for example, I went to a pediatric hospital, the only one in Bangui and maybe in the country, and in the intensive care unit they do not have instruments of oxygen. There were many malnourished children there, many of them, and doctor told me that the majority of them will die soon because they have a very bad malaria and are seriously malnourished. I don't want to give a homily, but the Lord always rebuked the people of Israel...that we accept and adore, because the word is god, idolatry. Idolatry is when a man or woman loses their identity card for being a child of God, and prefers to look for a god according to their own measure. That's the beginning. If mankind does not change we will continue to have more miseries, tragedies, wars, children who die of hunger, of injustice. What does one think of those who have 80 percent of the world's wealth in their hands? And this is not communism. This is the truth. But the truth is not easy to see. Thank you for this question.... ".

Replying to a question about Vatileaks and the importance of free, secular press in rooting out corruption wherever it is found, Francis said: " The free press, secular and also religious, but professional; because the press, secular or religious, must be professional. It's important that

they are truly professional, that the news isn't manipulated. For me it's important, because the denunciation of corruption, of injustice, is good work, because there is corruption. And then the one in charge must do something, make a judgment, a tribunal. The professional press must tell everything, without falling into the three most common sins: misinformation, to tell one half but not the other; calumny, which is not professional – when there is no professionalism, you dirty the other person, with or without truth; and defamation, to take away the good name of the person who right now hasn't done anything wrong to anyone, maybe it's something from the past. These are the three defects that are an attack against the professionalism of the press. We need professionalism, what's right: things are like this and this. And on corruption? To see the data well and say it: this, this and this. If there is corruption, they should say it. And if a journalist, if they are truly professional, gets it wrong, he should apologize".

Still, on the same subject, when asked if the appointment of Msgr. Vallejo Balda and Ms. Chaoqui to Cosea was a mistake, he replied "I think it was". As for the contents of the leaked documents, " For me, it was not a surprise. I didn't lose any sleep because it showed the work that had begun with the commission of cardinals, the C9, of seeking out corruption and things that don't work. And here, I want to say something, not about Vallejo Balda and Chaouqui, but everything. And then I'll come back to this if you want.

The word "corruption," one of the two Kenyans mentioned it. 13 days before John Paul II died, in that Via Crucis the then-Cardinal Ratzinger who was leading the Via Crucis spoke of the filth in the Church. He denounced it first. Then, in the Easter Octave after this Good Friday, Pope John Paul II died and he became pope. But, in the pro-eligendo pontefice Mass, he was Dean – or he was Camerlengo, no Dean – he spoke about the same thing, and we elected him for that freedom in saying things. So since then, it's been in the air that in the Vatican, there is corruption. There is corruption there. On this trial: I gave the judges the concrete charges, because what is important to the defense is the formulation of the accusations. I didn't read the actual, technical charges, no? I would have liked to finish it before Dec 8 for the Year of Mercy, but I don't think they'll be able to do it, because I would like all of the lawyers who are defending to have the (necessary) amount of time to defend, that they have the freedom of defense. All of them. As they're chosen, then (inaudible). But corruption has been around for a long time... ".

"What do you plan to do - replied the journalist -? How do you plan to proceed so these things don't happen again? I just thank God that Lucrezia Borgia isn't around. (laughs) But, I don't know, continue with the cardinals, with the commissions to clean. Thank you".

Wars are an industry, wars are for ambition

Then wars. " Then, the wars. Wars happen for ambitions. Wars, I speak of wars not for defending oneself against an unjust aggressor but wars are an industry. In history, we've seen so many times that in a nation, the balance sheets aren't going well, "Ah, let's fight a war" and the offset is over. War is a business, a business of weapons. Terrorists, do they make weapons? Yeah, maybe just little ones. Who gives them to them to make war? There an entire network of interests where there is money or power behind, either imperial or joint power. But we have been at war for years and more all the time. The pieces are fewer and bigger. What do I think? I don't know what the Vatican thinks, but what do I think? (laughs) That wars are a sin. They are against humanity. They destroy humanity. They are a cause of exploitation, of human trafficking, of so many things. They must be stopped. At the United Nations, twice I said this word, both in Kenya and in New York, that your work not be a "declarationist" nominalism, that

it be effective, that they make peace. They do so many things. Here in Africa, I saw how the "Blue helmets" work. But this isn't sufficient. Wars don't come from God. God is a God of peace. God made the world. God made everything beautiful and then, according to the Biblical account, one brother kills another. It's the first war, the first world war, between brothers. That's what comes to me and it pains me greatly".

The last question of a Kenyan journalist on Africa torn by war. "Africa is a victim – he responded - Africa has always been exploited by other powers. From Africa, they came to America, sold as slaves. There are powers that only seek to take the great wealth of Africa, possibly the richest continent. But, they don't think about helping to grow the nation, that they may work, that all may have work. Exploitation. Africa is a martyr, a martyr of exploitation. Those who say that from Africa come all calamities and all wars perhaps don't understand well the damage they certain forms of development do to humanity. It's for this that I love Africa, because Africa has been a victim of other powers".
