

## In His Own Words



Many of us, I suspect, have heard snippets of an interview that Pope Francis did for a series of Jesuit publications, including the USA magazine, *America*, where, among other things, he suggested that we might be wise to not always emphasize the moral issues around abortion, gay marriage, and contraception in our conversations. That's, of course, the phrase that most caught the attention of the media, but the whole interview is remarkable for its candor and includes a whole range of thoughts that help give us a sense of how Francis intends to color his papacy. Here are a few of his thoughts, in his own words:

- On why our pastoral focus needs to be on healing and not on reiterating certain moral concerns

"I see clearly 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 an injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the levels of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about something else. ...

During the return flight from Rio de Janeiro I said that if a homosexual person is of good will and is in search of God, I am no one to judge. By saying this, I said what the catechism says. Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free: it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person. A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: 'Tell me: when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?'

... I also consider the situation of a woman with a failed marriage in her past and who also had an abortion. Then this woman remarries, and is now happy and has five children. That abortion is her past weighs heavily on her conscience and she sincerely regrets it. She would like to move forward in her Christian life. What is the confessor to do? We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I have been reprimanded for that. But when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in context. The teaching of the church, for that matter, is clear and I am a son of the church, but it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time."

- On women in the church

"Women are asking deep questions that must be addressed. ... We must therefore investigate further the role of women in the church. ... The challenge today is this: to think about the specific place of women also in those places where the authority of the church is exercised for various areas of the church."

- On what it means to think with the church

"All the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of belief, and the people display this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together. This is what I understand today as 'thinking with the church'. ... We should not even think, therefore, that 'thinking with the church' means only thinking with the hierarchy of the church."

- On manifesting a wide Catholicity

"This church with which we should be thinking is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal church to a nest protecting mediocrity."

- On Benedict's decision to allow a wider use of the Tridentine Mass

"I think the decision was prudent and motivated by the desire to help people who have this sensitivity. What is worrying, though, is the risk of the ideologization of the Vetus Ordo [the decree authorizing a limited use of the Latin mass], to its exploitation."

- On the temptation to defensively circle the wagons in face of a growing secularity

"If the Christian is a restorationist, a legalist, if he wants everything clear and safe, then he will find nothing. Tradition and memory of the past must help us to have the courage to open up new areas to God. Those who today always look for disciplinarian solutions, those who long for an exaggerated doctrinal 'security', those who stubbornly try to recover a past that no longer exists - they have a static and inner-directed view of things. In this way faith becomes an ideology among other ideologies. ... It is amazing to see the denunciations of lack of orthodoxy that come to Rome."

Perhaps it's best not to add much commentary to this. His words speak for themselves and, obviously, for him.

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