



# The Holy See

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## PASTORAL VISIT TO ASSISI

### SILENT PRAYER BEFORE THE CRUCIFIX OF SAINT DAMIAN

### *ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE CLOISTERED NUNS*

*Chapel of the Choir of the Basilica of Saint Clare, Assisi*

*Friday, 4 October 2013*

### Video

I thought that this meeting was going to be like the one we had twice before in the chapter hall in Castel Gandolfo: alone with the nuns. But I must confess to you that I do not have the courage to send away the cardinals. Let's do it this way.

Good. I thank you all very much for the welcome and the prayers for the Church. When a cloistered nun consecrates her entire life to the Lord, a transformation happens beyond our understanding. It would be natural to think that this nun becomes isolated, alone with the Absolute, alone with God: it is an ascetic and penitent life. But this is not the path neither of a Catholic nor a Christian cloistered nun. The path always leads to Jesus Christ, always! Jesus Christ is at the centre of your life, your penitence, your community life, your prayer and also of the universality of prayer. And on this path the opposite of what one might think, happens to an ascetic cloistered nun. When she takes this path of contemplating Jesus Christ, of prayer and penitence with Jesus Christ, she becomes extremely human. Cloistered nuns are called to have a great humanity, a humanity like that of the Mother Church; human, to understand everything about life, to be people who know how to understand human problems, how to forgive, how to supplicate the Lord on behalf of others. Your humanity. Your humanity takes this road, the Incarnation of the Word, the path of Jesus Christ. And what is the mark of such a human nun? Joy, joy, when there is joy! I am sad when I find nuns who are not joyful. Perhaps they smile, but with the smile of a flight

attendant. And not with a smile of joy, like the one that comes from within. Always with Jesus Christ. Today at Mass speaking of the Crucifix, I said that Francis had contemplated this with open eyes, with open wounds and blood pouring out. And this is your contemplation: reality. The reality of Jesus Christ. Not abstract ideas, not abstract ideas because they dry up the mind.

Contemplating the wounds of Jesus Christ! He brought them to heaven and bears them! It is Jesus Christ's path of humanity: always with Jesus Christ, God-Man. Thus it is so beautiful when people go to the parlour of a monastery and ask for prayers and recount their problems. Perhaps the nun doesn't say anything extraordinary but a word that comes to her through contemplating Jesus Christ, because that nun, like the Church, is on the path of being an expert in humanity. And this is your path: not too spiritual! When paths are too spiritual... I think for example of the foundress of the monasteries of your competition St Teresa. When a nun came to her, oh, with these things... she said to the cook: "Get her a steak!".

Always with Jesus Christ always. The humanity of Jesus Christ! Because the Word became flesh, God became flesh for us and this gives you human sanctity that is great, beautiful, mature, the sanctity of a mother. And the Church wants this: mothers, mother, mother. Give life. When you pray, for example, for priests and seminarians, you have a maternal relationship with them. With prayer you help them to become good Shepherds of the People of God. Remember the story of St Teresa's steak! It is important. And this is the first point: always with Jesus Christ, the wounds of Jesus Christ, the wounds of the Lord. Because it is true that, after the Resurrection, he had them and he carried them.

And the second thing I wanted to tell you quickly is about community life. Forgive and sustain each other because community life is not easy. The devil takes advantage of everything in order to divide us! He says: "I do not want to speak ill but..." and then the division begins. No, this is not good because it does not do anything but bring division. Build friendship between yourselves, family life, love among you. May the monastery not be a Purgatory but a family. There are and there will be problems but like in a family, with love, search for a solution with love; do not destroy this to resolve that; do not enter competitions. Build community life, because in the life of a community it is this way, like a family, and it is the very Holy Spirit who is in the middle of the community. I wanted to tell you these two things: always contemplate, always with Jesus: Jesus, God and Man. And community life always with a big heart. Let things go, do not brag, be patient with everything, smile from the heart. And a sign of this is joy. And I ask for you this joy which is born from true contemplation and from beautiful community life. Thank you! Thanks for the welcome. I beg you to pray for me please, don't forget! Before the Blessing, let's pray to Mary. [*Hail Mary*]