



# The Holy See

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APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO TURKEY

(28-30 NOVEMBER 2014)

***IN-FLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS  
FROM ISTANBUL TO ROME***

*Papal Flight*

*Sunday, 30 November 2014*

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## **[Multimedia]**

*Yasemin Taskin, Turkish television:* President Erdogan spoke about “Islamophobia”. Naturally, you reflected more on the current “Christianophobia” in the Middle East, which is effecting both Christians and minorities. Taking interreligious dialogue into consideration as well, what more can be done? That is, is interreligious dialogue enough? Can more be done? And in your opinion, what must world leaders do? As you are not only the spiritual leader of Catholics, but also a moral leader on a global scale, what can be done concretely, is it possible to go further?

*Pope Francis:* You've asked a book's worth of questions! I would like to say something with respect to Islamophobia, Christianophobia and interreligious dialogue.

On Islamophobia: It's true that there has been a reaction to these acts of terrorism, not just in this region but in Africa as well: “If this is Islam it makes me angry!”. So many Muslims feel offended, they say: “But that is not what we are. The Quran is a prophetic book of peace. This is not Islam”. I can understand this. And I sincerely believe that we cannot say all Muslims are terrorists, just as we cannot say that all Christians are fundamentalists – we also have fundamentalists among us, all religions have these small groups. I told the President [Erdogan] that it would be good to issue a clear condemnation against these kinds of groups. All religious leaders, scholars, clerics, intellectuals and politicians should do this. This way they hear it from their leaders' mouth. There needs to be international condemnation from Muslims across the world. It must be said, “no, this

is not what the Quran is about!". This is the first thing.

On Christianophobia: It's true, I'm not going to soften my words, no. We Christians are being chased out of the Middle East. In some cases, as we have seen in Iraq, in the Mosul area, they have to leave or pay a tax which then makes no sense. And other times they push us out wearing white gloves. For example, in one country, a husband lives in one place and his wife in another.... No, let the man come and live with his wife. No, no: let the woman leave, and leave the house free. This is happening in several countries. It's as if they wished that there were no more Christians, that nothing remain of Christianity. In that region this is happening. It's true, it's first of all a result of terrorism, but when it's done diplomatically with white gloves, it's because there's something behind it. This is not good.

Third, on interreligious dialogue: I had what was probably the most wonderful conversation about this with the President for Religious Affairs and his team. When the new Turkish Ambassador to the Holy See came to deliver his Letters of Credence, over a month and a half ago, I saw an exceptional man before me, a man of profound piety. The President of that office was of the same school. They said something beautiful: They said: "Right now it seems like interreligious dialogue has come to an end. We need to take a qualitative leap, so that interreligious dialogue is not merely: 'What do you think about this?' 'We....' We need to take this qualitative leap, we need to bring about a dialogue between religious figures of different faiths". This is a beautiful thing: men and women who meet other men and women and share experiences. We are not just talking about theology but religious experience. And this would be a beautiful step forward, beautiful. I really enjoyed that meeting. It was excellent.

Getting back to the first two aspects, especially Islamophobia, there should always be a distinction between what a religion proposes and the concrete practice of that proposal by any specific government. One may say: "I'm Muslim" – "I'm Jewish" – "I'm Christian". But you govern your country not as Muslim or Jewish or Christian. There's an abyss. The distinction must be made, because so often the name is used but the reality does not reflect what the religion says. I'm not sure if I've answered ....

*Esma Cakir, Information Agency of Turkey:* What was the significance of that moment of such intense prayer that you had in the Mosque? Was it, for you, a way of turning to God? Is there something in particular that you would like to share with us?

*Pope Francis:* I went to Turkey as a pilgrim, not a tourist. And I went especially for today's feast. I went precisely in order to celebrate it with Patriarch Bartholomew. It was for a religious reason. But then, when I entered the Mosque, I couldn't say: now, I'm a tourist! No, it was completely religious. And I saw that wonder! The Mufti explained things very well to me, with such meekness, and using the Quran, which speaks of Mary and John the Baptist. He explained it all to me.... At that moment I felt the need to pray. So I asked him: "Shall we pray a little?". To which he responded: "Yes,

yes". I prayed for Turkey, for peace, for the Mufti, for everyone and for myself, as I need it ... I prayed, sincerely.... Most of all, I prayed for peace, and I said: "Lord, let's put an end to these wars!". Thus, it was a moment of sincere prayer.

*Alexey Bukalov of Russia:* Your Holiness, in thanking you for what you have done for the orthodox world, I would like to know, after this visit, and after this extraordinary meeting with the Patriarch of Constantinople, what is the outlook for relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow?

*Pope Francis:* Last month, [Metropolitan] Hilarion attended the Synod as a delegate of Patriarch Kirill. He wanted to speak to me not as a Synod delegate but as the President of the Commission for Orthodox-Catholic Dialogue. We spoke for some time. First I'll say something about Orthodoxy in general, and then I'll "come to" Moscow.

I believe we are moving forward in our relations with the Orthodox; they have the sacraments and apostolic succession... we are moving forward. What are we waiting for? For theologians to reach an agreement? That day will never come, I assure you, I'm sceptical. Theologians work well but remember what Athenagoras said to Paul VI: "Let's put the theologians on an island to discuss among themselves and we'll just get on with things!" I thought that this might not have been true, but Bartholomew told me: "No, it's true, he said that". We mustn't wait. Unity is a journey we have to take, but we need to do it together. This is spiritual ecumenism: praying together, working together. There are so many works of charity, so much work.... Teaching together.... Moving forward together. This is spiritual ecumenism. Then there is an ecumenism of blood: when they kill Christians, we have so many martyrs.... starting with those in Uganda, canonized 50 years ago: half were Anglican, half Catholic, but the ones [who killed them] didn't say: "You're Catholic.... you're Anglican...." No: "You are Christian", and so their blood mixed. This is the ecumenism of blood. Our martyrs are crying out: "We are one! We already have unity, in spirit and in blood". I don't know if I told you the anecdote about Hamburg, which I heard from the parish priest of Hamburg. Did I tell you? When I was in Germany, I went to Hamburg to celebrate a baptism, and the parish priest was working on the cause for canonization of a priest who had been guillotined by the Nazis for having taught catechesis to the children. During his work on this cause, he discovered that in line behind the priest in question, there was a Lutheran pastor condemned to the guillotine for the same reason. The blood of these two mixed. And this parish priest went to the bishop and said: "I'm not taking this cause forward only for the priest: it's either for both or for neither!".

This is ecumenism of blood, which helps us so much, which tells us so much. And I think we have to take this journey courageously. Yes, share university chairs, it's being done, but go forward, continue to do so.... I'll say something that a few, perhaps, are not able to understand: the Eastern Catholic Churches have a right to exist, but uniatism is a dated word. We cannot speak in these terms today. We need to find another way.

Now, “we land” in Moscow. I told Patriarch Kirill, and he agreed, there is a willingness to meet. I told him: “I’ll go wherever you want, you call me and I’ll come”; and he too wants this. But there is the problem of war in these times. The poor man has so many issues there that the meeting with the Pope has been put on the back burner. Both of us want to meet and move forward. Hilarion suggested that the commission, for which he presides over the Russian Orthodox part, hold a study meeting on the question of Primacy. We have to continue in the footsteps of John Paul II: “Help me to find a form of Primacy that we can agree on”. This is what I can tell you.

*Mimmo Muolo, of Avvenire:* I was struck by a phrase you used this morning during the Divine Liturgy: “I want to assure each one of you here that, to reach the desired goal of full unity, the Catholic Church does not intend to impose any conditions”. We would like to ask you to more fully explain this phrase, if possible, and whether it was in regard to the issue of Primacy, to which you referred earlier.

*Pope Francis:* That is not a condition: it's an agreement, because they too want it; it's an agreement to find a form that is more closely in line with that of the first centuries. I once read something that made me think. The thing I feel most deeply about on this path toward unity, I mentioned in yesterday's homily on the Holy Spirit: only the path of the Holy Spirit is the right path; he is full of surprises; he will lead us to see where the point lies, he is creative.... The problem – and as I said in the general congregations before the Conclave, this may be self-criticism – is that the Church has the shortcoming, the sinful habit of focusing too much on herself, as if she believes she shines her own light. The Church does not have her own light. She needs to look to Jesus Christ. Why did the first Fathers call the Church “*mysterium lunae*”, the mystery of the moon? Because it gives off light, but not its own: it's what comes from the sun. And when the Church focuses too much on herself, divisions arise. And that's what happened after the first millennium. At the table today, Bartholomew and I were talking about the moment when a cardinal – I don't remember which one – went to convey the Pope's excommunication to the Patriarch: the Church was focusing on herself too much at that moment! She wasn't looking to Jesus Christ. I believe that all these problems which arise between us, among Christians – at least speaking about our Catholic Church – come from focusing on oneself: we become self-referential. Today, Bartholomew used a word that wasn't “self-referential” but very similar and really beautiful... I don't remember it now, but really beautiful, very beautiful [the Italian translation of the term was “introversion”]. They accept Primacy: in the Litany today, they prayed for the “Pastor and Primate”. How do they say it? “*Ποιμένα καί Πρόεδρος*”, “He who presides...”. They recognize it, they said so today, in front of me. But for the form of primacy, we need to go back to the first millennium for inspiration. I'm not saying that the Church was in error, no. She had her historical path. But now the historical path of the Church is what John Paul II asked for: “Help me to find a point of agreement in the light of the first millennium”. This is the key point. When the Church mirrors herself, she stops being the Church and becomes a “theological NGO”.

*Irene Hernández Velasco:* I wanted to ask about your historic bow yesterday in front of the

Patriarch of Constantinople. I wanted to especially know your thoughts on confronting the criticism of those who perhaps do not understand these gestures of openness, those who in particular are slightly ultraconservative, who are always looking with suspicion on these gestures of openness...

*Pope Francis:* Allow me to say that this is not just our problem. It is also their [the Orthodox] problem. They have the problem of certain monks in various monasteries going down this path. For example, one problem that has been discussed since the time of Blessed Paul VI was the date of Easter. And we still don't agree! Because having it on the first moon, after 14 Nisan, runs the risk that in time our great-grandchildren will celebrate it in August! We must try... Blessed Paul VI proposed establishing a date, a Sunday in April, which everyone agrees on. Bartholomew, for example, was courageous in two instances. One I remember, but the other I do not. In Finland, he said to the small Orthodox community: "Celebrate Easter with the Lutherans, on the Lutheran date", so that in a country with a Christian minority there aren't two Easters. Even the Eastern Catholics... One time while I was eating on Via della Scrofa, I heard ... the Catholic Church was preparing for Easter and there was an Eastern Catholic who said: "Oh no, our Christ rose one month later! Your Christ rises today?". And the other said: "Your Christ is my Christ". The date of Easter is important. There is resistance to this, on their part and on ours. These conservative groups... we must be respectful towards them and we must not tire of explaining, catechizing, and discussing without insulting, badmouthing or gossiping. Because you cannot dismiss someone by saying: "He is a conservative". No. He is a child of God just as much as I am. But come and we'll talk. If he doesn't want to speak, that's his problem, but I am respectful. Patience, meekness and dialogue.

*Patricia Thomas of the Associated Press:* During the Synod there was a bit of a controversy about language, regarding how the Church should regard homosexuals. The first document spoke about welcoming gays and spoke in a very positive light about them. Do you agree with this language?

*Pope Francis:* First, I would like to say one thing: I would like the main subject of your news reports to be about this visit. But I will answer, I will answer, be assured. But let this not be perhaps the most *éclatant*: people need to be informed about this visit. But I will respond to you. First, the Synod is a journey, it is a path. Second: the Synod is not a parliament. It is a protected space so that the Holy Spirit may speak. Every day there was a briefing with Fr Lombardi and the other Synod Fathers, who related what had been said that day. There were some conflicting things. Then at the end of these interventions, that draft was written, which was the first *relatio*. Then that became the working-document for the language groups which discussed it. They then made their suggestions, which were made public. It was in the hands of all the journalists. That is, just as the language groups – English, Spanish, French, Italian – it became common knowledge [the first *relatio*], including the part you are referring to. Then everything went back to the editing commission and that commission tried to insert all of the amendments. The substantial part remains, but everything has to be summarized, everything. And that substantial part is in the final *relatio*. It doesn't finish there. Even that is a provisional draft because it has become the

*Lineamenta* for the next Synod. This document was sent to the bishops' conferences to discuss and offer their amendments. Then, another “*Instrumentum laboris*” will be made and then another Synod will make it its own. It is a journey. For this reason, you cannot form an opinion from one person or one draft. We must see the Synod in its totality. I do not agree – and this is my opinion, I don't want to impose it – I do not agree when it is reported: “Today this Father said this, and today that Father said that”. What was said should be reported, but not who said what. Because, and I repeat, the Synod is not a parliament; it is an ecclesial, protected space and this protection is so that the Holy Spirit may work. That is my response.

*Antoine-Marie Izoard of France:* Your Holiness, I would first like to say that the families and faithful in France await you with much joy. This afternoon you were able to spend a bit of time with refugees. Why was it not possible during this journey to visit a camp? And also, do you think you will be able to go to Iraq soon?

*Pope Francis:* Yes. I wanted to go to a camp and Dr Gasbarri figured it all out, he did everything, but we needed another day and that was not possible. It wasn't possible for many reasons, not only personal ones. And so, I asked the Salesians who work with child refugees to bring them. I was with them before going to visit the Armenian bishop who was sick in hospital and then, in the end, I went to the airport. I spoke with them. And I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Turkish government which has been generous, they have been generous. I forgot the number of refugees they have...

*Alberto Gasbarri:* There are approximately one million in the country.

*Pope Francis:* One million! Do you know what it means when one million people come to you and you must think of their health, their nutrition, providing a bed, a home.... They have indeed been generous. And I would like to thank them publicly.

Yes. I would like to go to Iraq. I spoke with Patriarch Sako, I sent Cardinal Filoni, but for the moment it is not possible. And not because I don't want to. In this moment, if I went, it would create a serious problem for the authorities and security. I would really like to and I want to. Thank you.

*Thomas Jansen:* A few days ago, you visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Did you speak with President Erdogan about the European Union and the entry of Turkey?

*Pope Francis:* No, I did not speak with [President] Erdogan about this. It's curious. We spoke about many things, but we did not speak about that.

*Hiroshi Ishida of Japan:* I would like to ask you about the “Third World War” and about nuclear arms. During the ceremony in September in Redipuglia you said that the Third World War has

been fought “piecemeal” all around the world. Next year will be the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, as well as of the tragic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Still today there are numerous nuclear arms in the world. What do you think of the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? And how do you think that we, human beings, should react to the reality of these nuclear arms and the threat of radiation?

*Pope Francis:* I must say two things. The first is a personal opinion: I am convinced that we are experiencing a Third World War [fought] piecemeal, a war in chapters, everywhere. There are rivalries, political problems and economic problems and commercial ones, and not just these, but many more that are directed to keeping alive this system where the god of money is at the centre instead of the human person. Arms trafficking is terrible; it is one of the most powerful businesses right now. Therefore I believe that this reality is increasing because arms are being distributed. I remember that in September of last year, there was talk that Syria possessed chemical weapons: I do not believe Syria is in a position to produce chemical weapons. Who sold them these? Perhaps those who accused them of having them in the first place? I don't know. There is a great mystery surrounding this weapons business.

Second: atomic energy. It is true, the example of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, humanity has not learnt its lesson, they haven't learned. They are incapable of learning the basic concept of this issue. God gave us creation so that we could create culture out of this primordial lack of culture. We can advance it. Humans did this and discovered nuclear energy which has many positive uses, but they also used it to destroy creation, humanity. This became a second kind of lack of culture: that primordial lack of culture which man needed to transform into culture becomes another lack of culture, a second one. And this lack of culture, I don't want to say the end of the world, but it is a “terminal” culture. Then we will need to start from the beginning, and it is terrible how your cities had to start from the beginning again.

*Franca Giansoldati of Italy:* You have returned from this journey to Turkey. I haven't heard anything on the Armenians. Next year will be the centenary of the genocide of Armenians and the Turkish government has taken a position of denial. I want to know what you think of this. And you have also spoken before about the martyrdom of blood which refers directly to what happened here and which claimed the lives of one and a half million people.

*Pope Francis:* Today I went to the Armenian hospital to visit the Armenian Archbishop who has been there, ill for some time, for a long time.... I had contact with Armenians during this journey. The Turkish government made a gesture, last year: the then Prime Minister Erdogan wrote a letter on the anniversary; a letter that a few judged as too weak, but it was, in my opinion, great or small, I don't know, extending a hand. And this is always positive. I can reach out this way or that way, expecting the other person's response not to embarrass me. And this is positive, what the then Prime Minister did. One thing that is very close to my heart is the Turkish-Armenian border: if this could open, that frontier, it would be a beautiful thing! I know there are geopolitical problems in

the area, which don't facilitate opening the border. But we have to pray for the reconciliation of the peoples. I also know there is good will on both sides – I believe this – and we have to help so that this can be achieved. Next year there are many commemorative events planned for this centenary, but let's hope to arrive by a path of small gestures, of small steps towards closeness. This is what comes to mind at this time.

[KTO...] *Pope Francis*: A cordial farewell, and my best wishes. May you go forward, providing a better understanding of all that is happening in the world. My best wishes, and may the Lord bless you. And I thank you for your kindness and please, don't forget to pray for me. I need it. Thank you.