

MEDIA TRANSCRIPT

Transcript of Pope Francis' comments to travelling media on flight from USA to Rome



28 September 2015

During the Pope's flight back to Rome he spoke to journalists aboard the Papal plane, touching on many issues including his just concluded visit, the sex abuse scandal in the Church, the right to be a conscientious objector, a peace accord in Colombia, migration and the upcoming Synod on the Family.

To follow is an extract, provided by Vatican Radio, from the full transcript of the press conference in which the Pope answers questions about child sexual abuse.

David O'Reilly, Philadelphia Inquirer:

Holy Father: Philadelphia, as you know, has had a very difficult time with sex abuse. It's still an open wound in Philadelphia. So I know many people in Philadelphia were surprised that you offered bishops comfort and consolation and I think many in Philadelphia would ask you why did you feel the need to offer compassion to the bishops?

Pope Francis:

In Washington I spoke to all the US bishops... they were all there no? I felt the need to express compassion because something really terrible happened. And many of them suffered who did not know of this. I used words from the bible from Apocalypse: You are coming from a large tribulation. What happened was a great tribulation. But also the suffering (emotional). What I said today to the victims of abuse. I wouldn't say an apotheosis but almost a sacrilege. We know abuses are everywhere: in families, in neighborhoods, in schools, in gyms. But when a priest abuses it is very serious because the vocation of the priest is to make that boy, that girl, grow towards the love of God, toward maturity, and towards good. Instead this is squashed and this is nearly a sacrilege and he betrayed his vocation, the calling of the Lord. For this reason the Church is strong on this and one must not cover these things up. Those who covered this up are guilty. Even some bishops who covered this up, it is a terrible thing and the words of comfort were not to say: "Don't worry that was nothing... no, no, no even some bishops who covered this up, it's a terrible thing and the words of comfort were not to say "don't worry that was nothing...no, no, no, but it was so bad that I imagine that you cried hard"... that was the sense of what I meant and today I spoke strongly.

Maria Antonietta Collins, Univision:

You have spoken a lot about forgiveness, that God forgives us and that we often ask for forgiveness. I would like to ask you, after you were at the seminary today. There are many priests that have committed sexual abuses to minors and have not asked for forgiveness for their victims. Do you forgive them? And on the other hand, do you understand the victims or their relatives who can't or don't want to forgive?

Pope Francis:

If a person has done wrong, is conscious of what he has done and does not say sorry, I ask God to take him into account. I forgive him, but he does not receive that forgiveness, he is closed to forgiveness. We must forgive, because we were all forgiven. It is another thing to receive that forgiveness. If that priest is closed to forgiveness, he won't receive it, because he locked the door from the inside. And what remains is to pray for the Lord to open that door. To forgive you must be willing. But not

everyone can receive or know how to receive it, or are just not willing to receive it. What I'm saying is hard. And that is how you explain how there are people who finish their life hardened, badly, without receiving the tenderness of God.

Maria Antonietta Collins, Univision:

Regarding victims or relatives who don't forgive - do you understand them?

Pope Francis:

Yes, I do. I pray for them. And I don't judge them. Once, in one of these meetings, I met several people and I met a woman who told me "When my mother found out that I had been abused, she became blasphemous, she lost her faith and she died an atheist." I understand that woman. I understand here. And God who is even better than me, understands her. And I'm sure that that woman has been received by God. Because what was abused, destroyed, was her own flesh, the flesh of her daughter. I understand her. I don't judge someone who can't forgive. I pray and I ask God... God is a champion in finding paths of solutions. I ask him to fix it.

Read full transcript [here](#):

http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/28/pope_francis_im_not_a_star,_but_the_servant_of_servants_o/1175317

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>