

# Full text: Pope Francis' in-flight press conference from Canada

By [Pope Francis](#)

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*Pope Francis returned to Rome on Saturday after a week-long trip to Canada. During the July 24 to 30 trip, the pope visited Edmonton, Québec, and Iqaluit on what he called a “penitential pilgrimage” to apologize to the country’s indigenous communities.*

*Please read below for CNA’s full transcript of Pope Francis’ press conference on the flight from Iqaluit, Canada to Italy.*

**Pope Francis:** Good evening and thank you for your accompaniment, for your work here. I know you have worked hard, and thank you for the company. Thank you.

**Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See press office:** Good, the first question tonight is from Ka'nhehsíio Deer, a Canadian journalist of Inuit origin.

**Ka'nhehsíio Deer, CBC Radio [in English]:** My name is Ka'nhehsíio Deer. I am a reporter with CBC Indigenous. As a descendant of a residential school survivor, I know that survivors and families want to see concrete action in your apology, including rescinding the "doctrine of discovery." Given that it is still ingrained in the Constitution and legal systems within Canada and the United States, where indigenous people continue to be dispossessed and disempowered, was it a missed opportunity to issue a statement during your trip to Canada?

**Pope Francis:** On the last part, I don't understand the problem.

**Ka'nhehsíio Deer:** It's just that indigenous people still today are being dispossessed and disempowered with, you know, like that their land was taken away from them because of these papal bulls and the concept of the doctrine of discovery.

When I talk to indigenous people, they talk a lot about how when people came to colonize the Americas, there was this — the doctrine of discovery was something that gave the concept that indigenous peoples of those lands were inferior to Catholics, and that is how Canada and the United States became countries.

**Pope Francis:** Thank you for the question. I think this is a problem of every colonialism, every — even today's ideological colonizations have the same pattern. Those who do not enter their path have ways that are inferior. But I want to elaborate on this. They were considered not only inferior. Some somewhat crazy theologian wondered if they had souls.

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When John Paul II went to Africa to the port where the slaves were boarded, he made a sign for us to come to understand the drama, the criminal drama. Those people were thrown into the ship in dire conditions, and then they were slaves in America. It is true that there were voices that spoke out, like Bartolomé de las Casas for example or Peter Claver, but they were the minority.

The consciousness of human equality came slowly. And I say consciousness because in the unconscious, there is still something. Always we have — allow me to say — like a colonialist attitude of reducing their culture to ours. It is something that happens to us in our developed way of life; sometimes we lose the values that they have.

For example, indigenous peoples have a great value which is the value of harmony with creation. And at least some I know express it in the phrase "living well." That does not mean, as we Westerners understand it, to spend it well or to live the sweet life, no. To live well is to cherish harmony, and that, to me, is the great value of the indigenous peoples: harmony. We are used to reducing everything to the mind. And instead, the personality of the original peoples — I am speaking generally — they know how to express themselves in three languages: that of the head, that of the heart, and that of the hands. But all of them together. And they know how to have this language with creation. So then this accelerated developmental progressivism, a little bit exaggerated, a little bit neurotic, that we have — I'm not speaking against development, development is good, but that anxiety of development, development, development is not good ... Look, one of the things that our super-developed commercial civilization has lost is the capacity for poetry. Indigenous peoples have that poetic capacity. I'm not idealizing.

Then, this doctrine of colonization, truly, it is bad and unfair. Even today, the same is used — with silken gloves maybe — but it is used. For example, some bishops in some countries have said: "But our country, when it asks for credit from an international organization, they put conditions on us, even legislative, colonialist conditions. To give credit, they make you change your way of life a little bit." Going back to our colonization, let's say of America, the colonization of the British, French, Spanish and Portuguese, which are four ... there has always been that danger, indeed that mentality of "we are superior, and these indigenous people don't count." And that is serious. That's why we have to work on what you say. To go back and sanitize, let's say, what was done wrong, in the knowledge that even today, the same colonialism exists.

Think, for example, of a case, which is universal, and I dare to say it, think of the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar: they have no right to citizenship, they are inferior. Even today. [In English] Thank you very much.

**Bruni:** The second question, Your Holiness, comes from another Canadian journalist, Brittany Hobson.

**Brittany Hobson, The Canadian Press:** Good evening Pope Francis, My name is Brittany Hobson. I am a reporter with the Canadian press. You have often spoken on the need to speak clearly, honestly, forthrightly, and with parrhesia. You know that Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission described the residential school system as "cultural genocide." This has since been amended to just "genocide." Those who were listening to your apologies the past week did express disappointment that

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the word genocide was not used. Would you use those words and accept that members of the Church participated in genocide?

**Pope Francis:** It's true, I didn't use the word because it didn't occur to me, but I described the genocide and asked for pardon, forgiveness for this work that is genocidal. For example, I condemned this too: Taking away children and changing culture, changing mentalities, changing traditions, changing a race, let's say, a whole culture. Yes, it's a technical word, genocide, but I didn't use it because it didn't come to mind, but I described it. It is true; yes, it's genocide. Yes, you all, be calm. You can say that I said that, yes, that it was genocide. [In English] Yes. Yes. Thank you.

**Bruni:** Another question comes from Valentina Alazraki; you know her well, from Televisa.

**Valentina Alazraki, Televisa:** Pope Francis, good evening. We assume that this trip to Canada was also a test, a test for your health, for your -- what you said this morning -- physical limitations. So we wanted to know what — after this week — you can tell us about your future travels. Whether you want to continue traveling like this, whether there will be trips that you can't do because of these limitations, or whether maybe you think that after this week that a knee surgery could help resolve the situation so you can travel like before?

**Pope Francis:** Thank you. I don't know. I don't think I can move at the same pace of travel as before. I think that at my age and with this limitation, I have to cut back a little bit to be able to serve the Church or, on the contrary, think about the possibility of stepping aside. This is nothing strange. This is not a catastrophe. You can change the pope. You can change, no problem. But I think I have to limit myself a little bit with these efforts.

Knee surgery is not planned in my case. The experts say yes, but there is the whole problem of anesthesia. Ten months ago, I underwent more than six hours of anesthesia, and there are still traces. You don't play, you don't mess around with anesthesia. And that's why you think it's not entirely convenient. ... But I'm going to try to continue to go on trips and be close to people, because I think it is a way of service, closeness, but more than that I don't get to say. Hopefully. There is no visit to Mexico [scheduled] yet, is there?

**Alazraki:** No, no. And in Kazakhstan? And if you go to Kazakhstan, shouldn't you maybe go to Ukraine, even as you go to Kazakhstan?

**Pope Francis:** I said I would like to go to Ukraine. Let's see now what I find when I get home. For the moment, I would like to go to Kazakhstan; it's a quiet trip without a lot of movement, it's a congress of religions. But for the time being, everything stands.

Because I need to go to South Sudan before Congo, because it is a trip with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of the Church of Scotland, all three together as all three of us did the retreat two years ago. And then the Congo, but it will be next year because of the rainy season -- we'll see. I have all the goodwill, but let's see what the leg says.

**Bruni:** The next question, Holiness, is from Caroline Pigozzi of Paris Match.

**Caroline Pigozzi, Paris Match:** Good evening, Holy Father. This morning you met at the archbishopric as you do every time you go to a country with local members of the Society of Jesus, your family. Nine years ago, returning from World Youth Day in Brazil, I had asked you on July 28, 2013, if you still felt like a Jesuit. The answer was positive.

On Dec. 4, you explained after seeing the Jesuits of Greece in Athens, "When one starts a process, one must let it develop, let a work grow, and then retire. Every Jesuit has to do that. No work belongs to him because it belongs to the Lord." Holy Father, could this statement also one day apply to a Jesuit pope?

**Pope Francis:** Yes.

**Pigozzi:** Does that mean you could retire like the Jesuits?

**Pope Francis:** Yes, yes. It is a vocation.

**Pigozzi:** To be a pope or to be a Jesuit?

**Pope Francis:** Let the Lord say. The Jesuit tries to — he tries, he doesn't always, he can't — do the Lord's will. The Jesuit pope must do the same. When the Lord speaks, if the Lord says go ahead, go ahead. If the Lord says go to the corner, you go to the corner. It is the Lord who teaches ...

**Pigozzi:** By what you say, you mean that you are waiting to die?

**Pope Francis:** But all of us are awaiting death ...

**Pigozzi:** But I mean: will you not retire first?

**Pope Francis:** Whatever the Lord says. The Lord can tell me to resign. It is the Lord who commands.

One thing about St. Ignatius, and this is important. When someone was tired or sick, St. Ignatius would dispense him from prayer, but he never dispensed them from examination of conscience — twice a day, a look at what has happened ... It's not about sins or no sins, no. It is how the spirit moved me today. Our vocation, he said, is to search for what happened today. If I — this is a hypothetical — I see that the Lord is telling me something, I do a discernment to see what the Lord is saying and it may be that the Lord wants to throw me in the corner. He is in charge.

This I think is the religious way of life of a Jesuit: Being in spiritual discernment to make decisions, to choose ways of working, to discern compromises as well. St. Ignatius in this was very nuanced because it was his own experience of spiritual discernment that led him to conversion. And the Spiritual Exercises are really a school of discernment. By vocation, a Jesuit must be a man of discernment. Discerning situations, discerning conscience, discerning decisions to be made. And for that he must be open to whatever the Lord asks of him. This is kind of our spirituality.

**Pigozzi:** But do you feel more like a pope or more like a Jesuit?

**Pope Francis:** I have never made that measurement. I feel I am a servant of the Lord with a Jesuit mentality. There is no papal spirituality; that does not exist. Each pope brings forth his own spirituality. Think of John Paul II with that beautiful Marian spirituality he had. He had it before and as pope.

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Think of so many popes who have brought their own spirituality. The papacy is not a spirituality; it is a job, a function, a service, but each one brings to it his own spirituality, with his own graces, his own faithfulness and also his own sins. But there is no papal spirituality. That is why there is no comparison between Jesuit spirituality and papal spirituality because the latter does not exist. Do you understand? Thank you!

**Bruni:** Another question, Your Holiness, comes from a German journalist, Severina Bartonitschek, from a Catholic news agency in Germany.

**Severina Bartonitschek, KNA:** Good evening. Holy Father, yesterday you also spoke about the fraternity in the Church, about a community that knows how to listen and do dialogue, that promotes a good quality of relationships. A few days ago there was a statement from the Holy See on the German “Synodal Way” without a signature. Do you think this way of communication contributes to dialogue, or is it an obstacle to dialogue?

**Pope Francis:** First of all, that statement was made by the Secretariat of State. It was a mistake not to [sign it] below. I think it said: communiqué from the Secretariat of State, but I'm not sure. It was a mistake not to sign it as a communiqué of the Secretary of State. But it is a mistake of the office, not of ill will.

On the [German] “Synodal Way”, I wrote a letter, and I did so by myself ... a month of prayer, reflection, consultations ... and I said everything I had to say about the “Synodal Way”. More than that I will not say. That is the papal magisterium on the “Synodal Way”, that letter I wrote [three] years ago. I bypassed the Curia, because I didn't do consultations, or anything ... I did my own way, even as a pastor for a Church that is looking for a way, as a brother, as a father, as a believer. And this is my message. I know it's not easy, but it's all in that letter.

**Bruni:** The next question is from Ignazio Ingrao of Rai1.

**Ignazio Ingrao, Rai1:** Your Holiness, Italy is going through a difficult time that also causes concern internationally. There is an economic crisis, pandemic, war, and now we also find ourselves without a government. You are the primate of Italy. In the telegram you wrote to President [Sergio] Mattarella on his birthday, you spoke of a country marked by not a few difficulties and called for crucial choices. Your Holiness, how did you experience the fall of Mario Draghi?

**Pope Francis:** First of all, I do not want to meddle in Italian domestic politics. Second, no one can say that President Draghi was not a man of high international standing, he was president of the [European Central] Bank. He had a good career, let's say. And then I only asked one question to one of my staff: how many governments has Italy had in this century? He told me: twenty. That is my answer.

**Ingrao:** What appeal do you make to political forces in view of these difficult elections?

**Pope Francis:** Responsibility. Civic responsibility.

**Bruni:** Thank you, Your Holiness. Thank you, Ignatius. And the next question is from Claire Giangravé of Religion News Service.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/251921/full-text-pope-francis-in-flight-press-conference-from-canada>

**Claire Giangravé, Religion News Service:** Hello Holy Father, good evening. Many Catholics, but also many theologians, believe that the development of Church doctrine regarding contraceptives is necessary. Even it appears that your predecessor, John Paul I, thought that a total ban needed reconsideration. What are your thoughts on this? Are you open to a reevaluation in this regard, or is there a possibility for a couple to consider contraceptives?

**Pope Francis:** I understand. This is very timely. But know that dogma, morality, is always in a path of development, but development in the same direction.

To use one thing that is clear, I think I've said it other times here, for the development of a question either moral — for theological development let's say — or dogmatic, there is a rule that is very clear and illuminating, which I said another time. [It is] the one that Vincent de Lérins made in the 10th century, more or less, [he was a] French [saint]. He says that true doctrine in order to go forward, to develop, must not be quiet, it develops *ut annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*.

That is, it consolidates with time, it expands and consolidates, and becomes more steady, but is always 'progressing.' That is why the duty of theologians is research, theological reflection. You cannot do theology with a 'no' in front of it. Then the magisterium will be the one to say no if it has gone too far, come back ... but theological development must be open, because that's what theologians are for, and the magisterium must help to understand the limits.

On the issue of contraception, I know there is a publication out on this issue and other marriage issues. These are the proceedings of a congress and in a congress there are hypotheses, then they discuss among themselves and make proposals. We have to be clear: those who made this congress did their duty because they tried to move forward in doctrine, but in an ecclesial sense, not out, as I said with that rule of St. Vincent of Lerins. ... And then the magisterium will say: yes, it is good [or] it is not good.

But so many things have changed. Think, for example, about atomic weapons: today it is officially declared that the use and possession of atomic weapons is immoral. Think about the death penalty. Before the death penalty, yes, but ... today I can tell that we are close to immorality there because the moral conscience has developed well. To be clear: when dogma and morality develop, it is fine, but in the direction of the three rules of Vincent of Lerins, I think this is very clear.

A Church that does not develop its thought in an ecclesial sense is a Church that goes backwards. And this is the problem of so many who call themselves traditional today. They are not traditional, they are "indietrists," they are going backwards without roots — "That's the way it has always been done," "That's the way it was done in the last century." Indietrism [looking backward] is sin because it does not go forward with the Church. And instead, someone described tradition — I think I said it in one of the speeches — as the living faith of the dead and instead for these "indietrists," who call themselves "traditionalists," it is the dead faith of the living.

Tradition is the root of inspiration to go forward in the Church, always these roots, and "indietrism," looking backward, is always closed. It is important to understand well the role of tradition, which is always open like the roots of the tree. The tree grows like that, no. A composer had a very beautiful

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phrase — Gustav Mahler — said that tradition in this sense is the guarantee of the future, it is not a museum piece. If you conceive tradition as closed, this is not Christian tradition. Always it is the root substance that takes you forward forward forward. That's why what you say above thinking, carrying forward faith and morals, while going in the direction of the roots, of the substance goes well with these three rules I mentioned of Vincent of Lerins.

**Bruni:** There is another question from Eva Fernandez of Cope.

**Pope Francis:** She is good.

**Eva Fernandez, Cope:** Holy Father, at the end of August we will have a consistory. Lately many people have been asking if you have thought about resigning. Don't worry, we won't ask this time. But we are curious: Holy Father, have you ever thought of what characteristics you would like your successor to have? Thank you.

**Pope Francis:** This is the work of the Holy Spirit. I would never dare to think that. The Holy Spirit can do this better than me and better than all of us because He inspires the decisions of the pope, always inspires because He is alive in the Church. You cannot conceive of the Church without the Holy Spirit. He is the one who makes the differences, who makes the noise — think about the morning of Pentecost — and then leads to harmony. It is important to talk about harmony rather than unity. Unity, but harmony, not as a fixed thing. The Holy Spirit gives a progressive harmony that goes on.

I like what St. Basil says about the Holy Spirit: *Ipsa Armonia Est*, he is harmony. He is harmony because first he makes noise with the differences of charisms. Let us leave this work to the Holy Spirit.

On the topic of my resignation, I would like to thank a nice article that one of you wrote on all the signs that could lead to a resignation and all the signs that are appearing. And that is a nice journalistic work by a journalist who then ultimately gives an opinion. But to see those signs as well, not just the statements, that subterranean language, and other signs as well. That is being able to read signals or at least make an effort to interpret that it may be this or it may be that. This is good work and I thank you very much.

**Bruni:** Now perhaps one last question from Phoebe Nathanson of ABC.

**Phoebe Nathanson, ABC:** I know you've had a lot of questions like this, but I wanted to ask: At this time, with the health difficulties and everything, has the idea occurred to you that it may be time to retire? Have you had any problems that made you think about this? Were there any difficult moments that made you think about this?

**Pope Francis:** The door is open. It's one of the normal options, but up to today I haven't knocked on that door ... I haven't felt like thinking about that possibility. But maybe that doesn't mean the day after tomorrow I will start thinking. But right now I honestly haven't.

It's true that this trip was a bit of a test; you can't take trips in this condition. You have to maybe change your style a bit, lessen, pay off the debt of the trips you still have to take, rearrange. But the Lord will say. The door is open, that's true.

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Before I take my leave I would like to talk about something that is very important to me. The trip to Canada was very much related to the figure of St. Anne, and I said some things about women, but especially about the elderly, mothers about grandmothers, and I emphasized one thing that is clear: faith should be transmitted in dialect, and the dialect, I said it clearly, the dialect of grandmothers. We received the faith in that female dialect form. And that is very important. The role of the grandmother, in faith transmission and faith development.

It is the mother or grandmother who teaches how to pray, it is the mother or grandmother who explains the first things that the child does not understand about the faith. I can tell that this dialectal transmission of faith is feminine. Someone may say to me: but theologically, how do you explain it?

Before I take my leave I would like to talk about something that is very important to me. The trip to Canada was very much related to the figure of St. Anne, and I said some things about women, but especially about the elderly, mothers about grandmothers. And I emphasized one thing that is clear: faith should be transmitted in dialect, and the dialect, I said it clearly, the accent of grandmothers. We received the faith in that form of female dialect. And that is very important: The role of the grandmother, in faith transmission and faith development.

It is the mother or grandmother who teaches how to pray. It is the mother or grandmother who explains the first things that the child does not understand about the faith. I can tell that this vernacular transmission of faith is feminine. Someone may say to me: but theologically how do you explain it?

I will say: The one who transmits the faith is the Church, and the Church is a woman. The Church is bride. The Church is not male. The Church is female, and we have to enter into this thought of the Church as woman, the Church as mother, which is more important than any macho ministerial fantasy or any macho power. The Church is *mater*, the motherhood of the Church, that which is the figure of the Mother of the Lord.

It is important in this sense to emphasize the importance of this maternal dialect. I discovered this by reading, for example, the martyrdom of the Maccabees: two three times it said that the mother gave soul in maternal dialect. Faith has to be transmitted in dialect and that dialect is spoken by women, and that is the great joy of the Church because the Church is a woman. The Church is a bride, and this I wanted to say clearly thinking of St. Anne. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for listening, and have a good trip.