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Francis: 'Reality understood best at outskirts'

Thomas C. Fox | May. 27, 2013 NCR Today
Pope Francis

?We understand reality better not from the center, but from the outskirts,? Pope Francis said to thousands of persons awaiting him Sunday at the parish of Sts. Elizabeth and Zechariah in the Prima Porta neighborhood on the northern outskirts of Rome.

Upon arriving, Francis greeted the families with children who had been baptized during the year and also heard several confessions, according to a Vatican statement.

In his homily, described as ?warm and conversational in tone,? interspersed with questions from and answers to the children present, the Francis recalled Mary?s visit to her cousin Isabel, observing that, as soon as the Virgin heard the news that her cousin was also pregnant, Mary--the Gospel says??set out in haste?, without waiting or thinking that Isabel ?will probably have friends who will help her.?

?It?s beautiful to think this about the Virgin, our Mother, who sets out in haste because she has this within her: helping. She goes to help, not to boast and say to her cousin: ?Listen, I?m in charge now because I am the mother of God!? No she didn?t do that. She went to help!

And Our Lady is always like that, the pope said. ?She is our Mother, who always comes in haste when we need help. It would be nice to add to the litanies of Our Lady one that says ?Our Lady who sets out in haste, pray for us!? ?

?Our Lady also helps us to understand God well ? to understand Jesus? life,? the pontiff continued, beginning a conversation with the children.

Pope Francis then asked questions of the assembled children, leading them through a kind of catechism.

?I ask you, children: Who knows who God is? Raise your hands, tell me. Okay! Creator of the earth. And how many Gods are there? One? But they told me that there are three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! ? They are three in one, three persons in one.

And what does the Father do? The Father is the origin: the Father, who created all things, who created us.

What does the Son do? ? He loves us? And what else? He brings the Word of God! Jesus came to teach us God?s Word. And what else? What did Jesus do on earth? He saved us! Jesus came to give his life for us.

The Father creates the world; Jesus saves us. And the Holy Spirit, what does He do? He loves us!?

?Now all the children together: the Father creates everything, He creates the world. Jesus saves us; and the Holy Spirit? He loves us! And this is the Christian life: talking with the Father, talking with the Son, and talking with the Holy Spirit. Jesus saved us, but He also walks with us in life. ? And how does He walk? What does He do when He walks with us in life? This is hard. The one who answers it wins the trophy! What does Jesus do when

He walks with us? ?

First of all He helps us. He guides us! Very good! He walks with us, helps us, guides us, and teaches us how to go forward. Jesus also gives us the strength to walk. ? When it?s difficult, right? And even with our homework! ? He gives us strength. How does Jesus give us strength? ? In Communion He gives us strength, He helps us exactly by giving us strength. ? But when you say ?He gives us Communion?, does a piece of bread give you so much strength? ? It looks like bread! But it?s not really bread. What is it? It Jesus? body. Jesus comes into our hearts.?

?Well, let?s all think about this, all of us. The Father gave us life; Jesus gave us salvation. He accompanies us, guides us, supports us, and teaches us. And the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit give us? He loves us! He gives us love.

Let us think about God like this and ask Our Lady, Our Lady who is our Mother, who is always quick to help us, to teach us to understand how God is: how the Father is, how the Son is, and how the Holy Spirit is.?

After Mass, the Francis greeted the parish pastors and returned to the Vatican to pray the Angelus.

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