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Pope says it's important to keep hope alive, have a sense of humor

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Mar. 14, 2014 The Francis Chronicles
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At the end of his Lenten retreat, Pope Francis said he and his closest collaborators at the Vatican "want to follow Jesus more closely, without losing hope in his promises and without losing a sense of humor."

The pope and 82 members of the Roman Curia, who left the Vatican by bus Sunday to travel the 20 miles to the Pauline Fathers' retreat and conference center in Ariccia, returned to the Vatican by bus Friday.

Before they left the retreat house, Pope Francis thanked Msgr. Angelo De Donatis, the pastor of St. Mark's parish in the center of Rome, whom he had chosen to guide the Lenten retreat.

"We are returning home with a good seed -- the seed of the word of God," the pope told him. "The Lord will send the rain and that seed will grow. It will grow and bear fruit. We thank the Lord for the seed and for the rain he will send, but we also want to thank the sower."

Pope Francis said De Donatis really knew what he was doing. "He threw some seed here and he threw some there without knowing it -- or pretending not to know -- but he hit the mark."

The 10 meditations offered by the monsignor focused on "the purification of the heart."

While the meditations were not made public, the Vatican newspaper offered brief reports on their content. According to *L'Osservatore Romano*, De Donatis began the final reflections Thursday talking about how no one could understand the value of God's love using economics or commerce, which too often are the only way modern people determine the value of anything.

He told the story of a little boy in a first Communion class in his parish who asked him, "Do you know Jesus so well through your work or are you friends?" De Donatis told the pope and Curia officials that the only way to truly know Jesus is through friendship and love.

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