

# Pope Francis Forum – Church of the Ascension

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## **On Family:**

*Love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel at home. Faith grows when it is lived and shaped by love. That is why our families, our homes, are true domestic churches. They are the right place for faith to become life, and life to become faith.*

*In families, there are difficulties, but these difficulties are overcome with love. Hate doesn't overcome any difficulty. Division of hearts doesn't overcome any difficulty. Only love is capable of overcoming difficulties. Love is a festival. Love is joy. Love is to keep moving forward.*

*Perfect families do not exist. This must not discourage us. Quite the opposite. Love is something we learn; love is something we live; love grows as it is "forged" by the concrete situations which each particular family experiences. Love is born and constantly develops amid lights and shadows. Love can flourish in men and women who try not to make conflict the last word, but rather a new opportunity. An opportunity to seek help, an opportunity to question how we need to improve, an opportunity to discover the God who is with us and never abandons us. This is a great legacy that we can give to our children, a very good lesson: we make mistakes, yes; we have problems, yes. But we know that that is not really what counts. We know that mistakes, problems and conflicts are an opportunity to draw closer to others, to draw closer to God.*

## **On the Presence of God:**

*Jesus did not provide a short list of who is, or is not, worthy of receiving his message, his presence. Instead, he always embraced life as he saw it. In faces of pain, hunger, sickness and sin. In faces of wounds, of thirst, of weariness, doubt and pity. It made no difference whether it was dirty, unkempt, broken. Jesus said: Go out and tell the good news to everyone. Go out and in my name embrace life as it is, and not as you think it should be.*

*One special quality of God's people is their ability to see, to contemplate, even in "moments of darkness", the light which Christ brings. God's faithful people can see, discern and contemplate his living presence in the midst of life, in the midst of the city.*

*No one or anything can separate us from his Love. Go out and proclaim, go out and show that God is in your midst as a merciful Father who himself goes out, morning and evening, to see if his son has returned home and, as soon as he sees him coming, runs out to embrace him. [This is good!] An embrace which wants to take up, purify and elevate the dignity of his children. A Father who, in his embrace, is "glad tidings to the poor, healing to the afflicted, liberty to captives, comfort to those who mourn" (Is 61:1-2).*

*One of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world. This will require creativity in adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life.*

## **On Social Justice:**

*I would encourage you to keep in mind all those people around us who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They too need to be given hope. The fight against poverty and hunger must be fought constantly and on many fronts, especially in its causes. I know that many Americans today, as in the past, are working to deal with this problem. It goes without saying that part of this great effort is the creation and distribution of wealth. The right use of natural resources, the proper application of technology and the harnessing of the spirit of enterprise are essential elements of an economy which seeks to be modern, inclusive and sustainable.*

*Not only in cases of religious or cultural persecution, but in every situation of conflict, real human beings take precedence over partisan interests, however legitimate the latter may be.*

*The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned, those considered disposable because they are only considered as part of a statistic.*

*God's dream does not change; it remains intact and it invites us to work for a society which supports families. A society where bread, "fruit of the earth and the work of human hands" continues to be put on the table of every home, to nourish the hope of its children.*

## **On Immigrants:**

*But know that they also possess resources meant to be shared. So do not be afraid to welcome them. Offer them the warmth of the love of Christ and you will unlock the mystery of their heart. I am certain that, as so often in the past, these people will enrich America and its Church.*

*When the stranger in our midst appeals to us, we must not repeat the sins and the errors of the past. We must resolve now to live as nobly and as justly as possible, as we educate new generations not to turn their back on our "neighbors" and everything around us. Building a nation calls us to recognize that we must constantly relate to others, rejecting a mindset of hostility in order to adopt one of reciprocal subsidiarity, in a constant effort to do our best. I am confident that we can do this.*

## **On the Environment:**

*First, it must be stated that a true "right of the environment" does exist, for two reasons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. We Christians, together with the other monotheistic religions, believe that the universe is the fruit of a loving decision by the Creator, who permits man respectfully to use creation for the good of his fellow men and for the glory of the Creator; he is not authorized to abuse it, much less to destroy it. In all religions, the environment is a fundamental good*

*The ecological crisis, and the large-scale destruction of biodiversity, can threaten the very existence of the human species. Creation is compromised "where we ourselves have the final word. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any instance above ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves*