

# KATNET APRIL 2015

## Talk 2

### Pope Francis and Unity

# LIFE & MESSAGE

The importance of Pope Francis for Christian unity does not come first from major teachings on ecumenism but from

1. His Lifestyle
2. The focus and spirit of his daily teaching

# ECUMENICAL IMPORTANCE OF LIFESTYLE

From first moment, Francis is bishop of Rome.

He refuses all surviving elements of an imperial or monarchical papacy

- Elevation above everyone else
- Living in a palace
- Refusing all privileges of aristocracy

In this way through the way he lives, Pope Francis removes the grounds for many Protestant and Orthodox objections to the papacy.

By embodying the servant spirit of Jesus, he reverses the pattern of history when popes demanded the submission and obedience of all.

# MESSAGE

Pope Francis focuses constantly on **Jesus** (with a priority in homilies for the gospels). Jesus is at the centre. To be a Christian is to be a **disciple**.

Pope Francis is highly sensitive to the Holy Spirit. He speaks frequently about **openness** to the Holy Spirit, about the **creativity** and the **newness** of the Holy

These hallmarks of Francis immediately make him attractive to other Christians. They begin to destroy their image of the Catholic Church as an institution that preaches itself not Jesus, and that is not open to the Holy Spirit. Francis criticizes the **self-referential** Church.

Francis's love for the poor, his prioritizing the poor and the suffering, clearly show how he wants to follow Jesus.

# MODEL FOR UNITY

1. The Holy Spirit creates a huge **diversity**.

Diversity in creation (Gen. 1)

Diversity in new creation (1 Cor. 12: 4 – 6)

2. In the new creation, the Holy Spirit brings the wounded and damaged diversity into **harmony**.

*Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 117:

The Holy Spirit “brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony.”

*Evangelii Gaudium*, para. 131:

“Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity.”



# RECONCILED DIVERSITY

Francis uses the term **reconciled diversity** (see EG, para. 230).

This term had been used by some Protestant leaders and ecumenists to describe the goal of ecumenical activity. This had been rejected as inadequate by the Vatican as it falls short of **organic unity of the one body**.

# IMPORTANCE OF FRANCIS

With Catholic Church insisting on goal of organic unity, this becomes discouraging as real progress seems so distant, the goal so impossible.

Francis focuses on **relationships**. In broken relationships, progress is always possible.  
See EG, 230.

- “If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards **common expressions of proclamation, service and witness.**” (EG, 246).

# Collegiality/Synodality

Very important for ecumenical relations, especially with the Orthodox Churches, is the emphasis of Francis on collegiality.

Teaching of Vatican Two on primacy and collegiality.

Restoring right balance between Pope & bishops.

Pope & bishops like Peter & Twelve.

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople first to attend the installation of a bishop of Rome.

Francis appoints a Commission of 8 Cardinals (later 9) to help him govern and guide the Church.

Sits in on synod preparations, synod sessions & meeting of Commission of Cardinals.

Has open discussions with bishops making Ad Limina visits to Rome.

Gives interviews and answers any questions.

To synod: One general and basic condition is this: speaking honestly. Let no one say: “I cannot say this, they will think this or this of me...”. It is necessary to **say with parrhesia** all that one feels. After the last Consistory (February 2014), in which the family was discussed, a Cardinal wrote to me, saying: what a shame that several Cardinals did not have the courage to say certain things out of respect for the Pope, perhaps believing that the Pope might think something else. This is not good, this is not synodality, because it is necessary to say all that, in the Lord, one feels the need to say: without polite deference, without hesitation. And, at the same time, one must **listen with humility** and welcome, with an open heart, what your brothers say.

# NEW PARADIGM FOR

Instead of starting from doctrines, Francis starts from living faith in God, in Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit. He wants to meet people he can talk with and to pray with as a Christian leader.

Theological dialogue will remain necessary, but it will now take place in a much healthier context: context of renewal and conversion, context of prayer.

# MEETINGS WITH EVANGELICAL LEADERS

1. Meeting with 5 Pentecostals from Argentina.
2. Message to Kenneth Copeland conference.
3. Meeting with Copeland, Arnott, Robison, Tunncliffe June 2014
4. Visit to Pentecostal Church in Caserta July 14



What will come from these meetings?

Almost certainly commitment to **joint action**.

Organized by Francis and Dr Welby, a Joint Declaration against Modern Slavery was signed by many religious leaders in December 2014.