

**Address of the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi  
To the Permanent Council of the CCCB / CECC  
(Ottawa, March 20, 2014)**

My dear brothers in the Episcopate,

On the happy occasion of the meeting of the Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, I have just had the honor of presenting to your President, Archbishop Paul-André Durocher of Gatineau, the Letter in which Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, asks him and thereby, the Bishops of Canada, to offer me that collaboration without which I could not perform in a truly fruitful manner, the task of representing Pope Francis amongst you.

For my part, I have every confidence that I may be able to always count upon your prayers, your advice, even your fraternal correction: please, do not let me lack the charity of your indispensable collaboration for which, in advance, I thank you with all my heart!

I have been sent to represent in your midst the Holy Father who, at this time has the face of the beloved person of Pope Francis. In him we can quite rightly recognize the "wonderful work" (*cf. Ps 118.23*), born of the faith of Pope Benedict XVI.

In this regard, it has caught my attention - and I would like to share with you - the perspective from which Fr. Bartolomeo Sorge, SJ, has interpreted the transition from the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI to that of Pope Francis. Fr. Sorge writes:

The Pontificate of Pope Ratzinger was a 'crucified' pontificate, but the Cross is not an end in itself: it reaches its full meaning in the resurrection. This means that the 'passion and crucifixion' of Pope Benedict finds its full meaning in the 'resurrection' brought by Pope Francis. (*B. Sorge, L'esercizio della leadership nella vita consacrata a 50 anni dal Vaticano II, Roma 22-24 maggio 2013*)

From this theological reading of the change of pontificates, Father Sorge derives an important consequence for the pastoral life of the Church, as follows: "Between the two pontificates, therefore, there is continuity but also a strong discontinuity: the discontinuity between the exercise of leadership in a Church tired and tested, and the new leadership in a church that rises and renews itself" (*ibidem*). We have entered a new phase (a new *kairos*) in the history of the Church. It is important then to know how to attune ourselves to the pontificate of Pope Francis, so that we may collect with Pope Francis, the benefits of the "passion and crucifixion" of the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI.

We might ask: "What are the characteristics of the pontificate of Pope Francis?" This is a comprehensive and challenging question to which, in fact, it is not possible, at the present moment to give a precise answer. Indeed, we understand and discover the answer day after day, because as Pope Francis likes to repeat: "Walking opens the way." There is no "road map" written in advance. Certainly, we know very well what is the beginning, the final destination and especially the center of the pathway of the Church: it is the Lord Jesus, Redeemer of man. It is good for us, Pastors of the Church, to ask ourselves: "Is Christ the center of my life? Do I truly put Christ at the center of my life? Because there is always a temptation to think that we are at the center." (*Homily of Pope Francis, Feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, 2013*) We need to ask the Apostle Paul to help us to develop within ourselves his own sentiments: "Indeed I count everything as loss on account of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order to gain Christ..." (*cf. Phil. 3:8-9*)

With this in mind, I did like and take the liberty to offer also for your consideration, the response of Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, spokesman of the Holy See, when asked to comment upon the characteristics of the Pontificate of Pope Francis:

We have entered into a situation in which the Church is set in motion. There are no clear-cut objectives presented, nor a precise image of how the Church should be organized tomorrow to reach this goal. We must enter the way, we must repent, we must welcome the surprises that God gives us in our lives and see where he is calling us, precisely within the situations and the reality in which we find ourselves. So the image is of a Church that is in motion, on the move, a pilgrim in fulfilling its mission: this seems to me to be one of the most characteristic spiritual aspects of this Pontificate. (*Vatican Radio's news program of 12.27.2013*).

Dear Brother Bishops, it is precisely a "Church-in-motion" that Blessed (soon to be Saint) Pope John Paul II saw at the beginning of the Third Millennium, when, at the end of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, he challenged her to "put out into the deep" ("*duc in altum!*", *cf. Luke 5:4*), to throw again and again the nets for a catch, to be open to the future with confidence: there is indeed a miraculous catch that lies before us! (*cf. Apostolic Letter Novo Millennium Ineunte, n. 1*)

In the wake of Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI - who with humility and wisdom guided for eight years the path of the Church, among other things with the initiatives of the Pauline Year, the Year of Priests and the Year of Faith (initiatives that must continue to bear healthy fruit) - Pope Francis is now inviting us to retrieve the missionary impulse to which the Holy Spirit calls the Church. It is the invitation to return to her original purity, to the Apostolic period when the Christian community was not turned in on itself, but was reaching out to throw the "nets of the Gospel" she had received. If the Church is experiencing difficulties and because of this we have lost

enthusiasm, then the Holy Spirit is at work to transform this situation into an opportunity of purification, of renewal, and returning to the freshness of the origins.

From what we have just said, an interior attitude, a kind of change of mentality should, I think, accompany us. We should not begin with ourselves but from those longing for our service. We have to ask ourselves of course “What does the Church need?” but in order to avoid the danger of being self-referential, we should first ask: “What does the world need?” “What injuries afflict it and call for treatment?” “What are the faithful asking of us? What do our people need? What are their questions?”

Dear Brothers, thank you for your attention. I have shared these simple thoughts arising within me from the desire to understand the powerful “wind of the Holy Spirit” which accompanies the ecclesial moment in which we are living, so that we may grasp more effectively its message. With the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the arrival of Pope Francis, a page of history has suddenly been turned, and a new one has been opened, a page yet to be written. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit has displaced us all a bit! However, **together**, we can help to attune ourselves to the new breath which is Pope Francis, so as not to remain on the margins of the flow of life and of divine grace that the Lord is dispensing over his Church and over the entire world.

I said, “together”, “helping together” because “the most important thing is to walk together, by working together, by helping one another”. (*cf. Address of Pope Francis in Assisi, in the encounter with the clergy, consecrated persons and the members of pastoral councils, October 4, 2013*)

For this reason, I conclude with you as I did a few days ago in my address to the Assembly of the Bishops of Québec, with these words of Pope Francis: “Let us walk together behind the Lord, and let us always be called together by him, in the midst of his faithful people, the holy People of God, holy Mother the Church.” (*Homily, on the occasion of the creation of new Cardinals, February 22, 2014*)

Thank you!