

FutureChurch 2019 Fall Event

Keynote Presentation: "The Francis Reforms: Too Little, Too Late?"

By Robert Mickens

Thanks, Chris. And, thank you for the invitation. It's good to be back in Ohio.

I was just down in a place called Springfield. Anybody know Springfield? Okay. My brother lives down there and we're about 18 months apart, but really about 20 years apart. He's very, very young and he also votes for the wrong candidate in elections. So, we talk about hockey.

Got to go to the Jackets and Golden Knights game the other night. My brother took me into the nationwide arena where I'd never been before. I was looking for our seat and I thought for sure we'd be in the nosebleed section, but we marched right down and we were right on the glass. That shows you that blood is thicker than water, even frozen water.

Now I don't know what I can say to you after the introduction and the honoring of such fervent, prophetic Catholics. What I do is I just follow this kind of circus in Rome. That's basically what I've been doing it for a long time and it was one of those things that just kind of happened. You know, I didn't go to school for this. There's no school for "vaticanisti." I guess the best thing that you could do is be a kremlinologist.

I didn't make that up. That's a colleague of mine, Marco Politi, who writes in Italian -- writer of *Francis among the wolves*. I think that book is in English now. Has anyone read it? Anyone know about it? Okay, a couple have heard of it. Marco Politi used to write for a paper called *La Repubblica* and before he was covering the Vatican, he was covering Moscow during the cold war. And he said covering the Vatican is a lot - being a vaticanista - is a lot like being a kremlinologist because you have to read between the lines.

So it's a great pleasure. It's hard to know what to tell a group of Catholics who are desirous of change, who are still hanging in there, despite the long year. We're like Cleveland Browns fans. . . long suffering, long suffering. Don't worry. Chicago Cubs finally did it. So, I mean, I'm sure eventually... I say to people, 'my brother's no longer a Catholic, my sister's no longer a Catholic.'

My mom was one of three children from Seneca County. As a matter of fact, that side of the family came to Ohio in 1854. And I'm the seventh generation in that line and I'm the first to not be born in Seneca County. That's amazing, when you think about it. My grandmothers were both Catholics from, since God was a boy. They go way back on my mom's side. They're Alsace. On my dad's side, my grandmother's Hungarian. And there's a man there who took over the parish church that I was baptized in, in Toledo, Ohio, in the Hungarian neighborhood of Birmingham. He raffled off my baptismal font. He closed the parish like we've closed so many of them. Another one of the betrayals, the betrayals of a church.

Pope Francis talks about church. The churches should always be open, welcoming. And we're closing churches. Why we don't have enough, we don't have enough men who will promise to be celibate and obedient to some guy with a strange hat on and the ones that come after him. That's the only reason. And that means that we are a priest-centered church. We are not a Eucharistic-centered church. Oh, we say yes, it's about the Eucharist. It's not about the Eucharist, it's about priest.

I'll get to that in a moment. But what I want to say to you this evening... I want to give you a little bit of hope. I want to first of all say thank you once again for the invitation. I've known Chris -- as she said since 2008 -- and then Russ and Deb since then and it's been great. It's been great because they are challenging to me. I was a pretty traditional Catholic when I was growing up. I would never have been in favor of women priests, but I've come to see that there is absolutely no reason why we should not have women priests.

I know that would get me in trouble. But I don't work for the church, I report on it. The way I like to describe the work that I do as a Vatican or a Pope critic is that it's similar to food critics, music critics, art critics. These are all people who like the subject that they critique. They love the subjects that they critique, but they don't just promote a particular restaurant. They're not in the pockets of this particular art gallery. They use the tools of art criticism.

My meter for critiquing the Catholic Church is the Second Vatican Council as I have come to learn it and study it. And by the way, I take the majority view of the council, not the minority view. Thank God that is back. The tail is no longer wagging the dog as it did for almost eight years between 2005 and 2013 because that's exactly what happened in the pontificate of Benedict XVI. And that's why we're in a bit of a mess right now because of tearing off the bandage of a wound that had begun to heal and allowing neo-Tridentine Catholics to have a prominent voice in the Church has been, it's almost been fatal. Thank God that Francis has put a stop to that.

I want to remind you as we look very quickly at a few things here. The context in which Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected on the 13th of March, 2013. Now keep this in mind, he's been Pope for six years and eight months. He's going to be 83 years old another month from now on the 17th of December. Compare that with Benedict XVI; he was pope for seven years and ten months, almost eight years. He was almost 86 when he resigned. John Paul II, of course, was pope for over 26 years and he was just short of his 85th birthday when he died in 2005. The pope that I like to compare with Pope Francis is John XXIII for a lot of very suggestive and obvious reasons. And John was pope for only four years and seven months.

And what a change that made. He was 81 when he died of stomach cancer. 1962 Paul VI was elected. And to Paul's credit, he continued the council, the Vatican Council, Pope John had the intuition to call just in the first few months of his pontificate.

I want to go back to context because the title of my talk is "The Francis Reforms Too Little, Too Late?" I think we become very impatient as Americans. We're very much cued in on efficiency.

We're also very forward looking., I mean it's a kind of a strange thing. For example, I brought up my family history because I thought it was very odd that my family would stay for seven generations in one county, in one state, in the United States. That's not very typical.

We Americans want something new, something better. There's an upside to that. There's also a danger that we forget our roots. I'm very interested in the roots of my family. Maybe because I live in Europe and so I'm very interested in recovering and understanding better my family history, especially in Hungary (where I go off and it's only an hour and 20 minutes away by plane). So I go to Budapest a lot. I mean it's my second home. That's not because of the government and I don't come here because of the government either. Just so we're clear on that. So as Americans, we want to make things better and we're anxious for change. We're anxious for good change, for positive change.

And I think the danger with that is, when we're dealing with a universal church and one that is based in, rooted in two millennia of tradition, that we become impatient and discouraged. We see that the change isn't coming right away, right? So, people are saying, 'ah, Pope Francis, how he talks a great game. He's all... but nothing's changing. Nothing's changing.'

So I want to put this in a bit of context. He's only been pope for just six years and eight months. That's not a very long time. He's not even been pope as long as Benedict XVI was pope and he did some things.

I'm going to do a timeline very quickly.

World War II began in 1939. That's what -- 80 years ago? -- ended in 45.

What the world was like between the war, after World War II? And Pius XII was the Pope -- 'the angelic pastor.' He was the first pope on TV. And he was dramatic. He had a flare.

We forget the scripted pontificate of John Paul II because he was a foreigner. So everything was scripted with him. They did not let him go off script very often. And he was afraid to, I think, especially in Rome because he did not have a good command of Italian. Oh, he spoke it. But it was not his native language. So, he would speak in other languages when he would travel and he'd go off script. But at home he rarely went off script. The Italian [popes] used to do that and Pius XII did that. And you could see Pius XII in films talking to people. And very animatedly in the same way that our current Pope does, but it was a different church. It was a different world and the people that are nostalgic, I think the people who are critics of Pope Francis today, they are nostalgic of the church of the 1950s, priest-centered church where father knew best and father did everything.

John XXIII is elected in 1958. That's 61 years ago. What a change. What hope he brought to the Church. He calls the Council. We are now 55 years since the end of Vatican II. That's a long time for the Twitter age for Facebook time. You know where things change so quickly.

Humanae Vitae – 1968 -- that's a half a century ago. It was a watershed moment for the Church. The year of three popes. Remember that one? 1978 VI died that year and August 6th John Paul I was elected and he shook the rafters a bit. His first audience, they gave him a script with the Cardinals and he said, and now I give you the written form. Now I give you my blessing. And he said, why am I giving, why is the Bishop giving other bishops a blessing? Ooh, that was a challenge to the system. He died 33 days later.

JP II was elected on August, October 16th and installed some days later in 1978 and that long pontificate during which, 30 years ago, this Saturday we will Mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. 30 years ago. This has changed our world. It's changed Europe. The end of the cold war.

So keep this -- all these things -- in mind. What I'm saying is to be mindful of how much has changed over this period of prelude to this pontificate.

Then we have the crisis, which really starts in 1993 (and I'm talking about the sex abuse crisis). We've got the crisis. This starts a big change in the church. Things are starting to rumble and by 2002 Boston and that whole mess, and we have a cardinal who cannot leave his residence because the media is tracking him and wants to stand down, wants to resign, and the Vatican says, no, you stay.

Because if they can pressure us to depose a bishop, they will do it all over the country. And finally, they do take Bernard Law's resignation and he's moved to Rome.

The second crisis is the unending, never-ending pontificate of John Paul II. Had he died after 10 years in office, he probably would have been a good Pope. As it turns out, he ends up being just a great pope. I always want to write a book, "JP II -- a great pope, but not a very good one." And great in the sense that he was an icon of the Catholic Church. He became the icon of the Catholic Church: strength, visibility, magnetism. But the things that happened – the crisis and how that was dealt with is just one of them -- the re-clericalization, the re-centralization of the church under JP II with the help of his theological guru, Joseph Ratzinger, who then becomes Pope in 2005.

With his document, *Summorum Pontificum*, (7/7/07) that unleashed the universal celebration of the pre-Vatican II liturgy, which is the embodiment and expression of a different Church, a pre-Vatican II Church: very clerical, hierarchical-centered Church that does not at all reflect the development in doctrine that we have with the second Vatican Council.

Benedict XVI has had more of an influence on the post-Vatican Church than any other individual by his writings and time as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith since 1981 and then Pope. So, for 30 some years he had, and his theology became normative for the Catholic church. And this has had a deep and lasting effect on our Catholic community: a Eurocentric, Neoplatonic based influenced theology that has a difficulty with incarnational,

understanding of Catholicism or is at least in a very anemic expression of that. And a very scant recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Very Christocentric, Eurocentric altar and throne kind of Catholicism. The last breath, the last gasp of upholding Eurocentric Catholicism.

This is the background. This is the context in which Francis is elected on March 13th, 2013. And what does he do? The first thing, he comes out and I remember and he says, "buona sera." Pope's don't usually do that. They usually say something very Augusta and Latin-like. He looked lost. He didn't smile. I thought, 'Oh God, he's going to be a killjoy this way.'

And then the first speech on day one sets it all -- the balcony address: "We take up this journey, bishop and people, the journey, fraternity, love and trust in one another." Then he asked that, before the bishop gives his blessing, he asked the people to ask God to bless me and he put his head down, basically asked people to pray over him. A magnificent moment. People were with tears in their eyes. It was so wonderful. Not he comes in and tells, but he humbly asked for the blessing.

The next day or the same day -- actually - he made the most important decision that which continues to be in my mind, continues to be the most important decision that he's made in this pontificate. He decided to stay at the Santa Marta residence where the cardinals lodged for the the conclave. Why do I say that's important? Well, because living inside the Vatican, it's difficult to have people come in and out without lots of checks and balances. It's like a series of Chinese boxes to get into the place.

But the real reason I believe that he decided to stay at Santa Marta is because Benedict XVI, in the months before he resigned, made two very important appointments before he had ever announced his resignation. But already having had decided because he has said that he decided in April of 2012 that he would resign and began restoring a building within the Vatican gardens that would be his residence where he lives to this day.

In that summer, he named Gerhard Ludwig Müller to be prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. If you remember, Cardinal William Laveda from San Francisco had been there. He was 76 or 77 years old. The Pope could have allowed him to stay there -- because they can stay on until 80 -- knowing that he was going to resign and allow his successor to name the new prefect. He didn't do that. Why? Because Gerhard Müller is the curator, the one in charge of the *omnia opera* or the *magna opera* of the works of the theological writings of Joseph Ratzinger. Benedict XVI wanting to protect his legacy.

The second appointment he made was, is he made his personal secretary, Georg Gänswein Archbishop. He named him the head of the Pontifical household and archbishop. Why is that important? Because that position is the one who lives, or at least is in charge of the appointment in the calendar and who comes in and who comes out in the Vatican apartment where the Pope lives. The arrangement would be that Gänswein would live with Ratzinger as his personal secretary and shuttle back and forth. And they thought that one of the Ratzinger

disciples, uh, Marc Ouellet from Canada or Angelo Scola from Italy ... one of these men would be elected Pope and there will be a seamless transition and Gänswein would be the Robespierre, going right back and forth between the two. And Francis could see it. I'm absolutely sure. And he just pulled the rug out from underneath them and said, 'I'm gonna live at Santa Marta because I want to live in the community.' No, he didn't want to be controlled. And I contend that this is still, if not the most important, it's certainly one of the most important reforms that he has undertaken.

Now I don't have much time, so I don't want to take a whole lot. There was a mandate, bishops say we gave the Pope a mandate to reform the Vatican, to clean out the stables, to clean up the finances. He, yes, he has attended to the cardinals' concerns and he set up immediately this council of cardinals, originally nine from different geographical regions to help him reform the Roman Curia, but also to help him in his governance of the universal church. This should not be looking looked upon as something kind of peripheral or just window dressing. This is the first hint of more collegiality, more decentralization and the beginning of synodality.

But what Pope Francis has done is gone beyond his remit – if there was such, if it is indeed that he was given the mandate to reform the Vatican and the finances of the Holy See. What he's done more than that and is focused even more than that, because I would say that the internal reform is minimal to what out what he's really done.

He's begun to reform the papacy and the universal church in a short period of time. He has turned the focus and the direction of this church 180 degrees around, despite the fact that his predecessor, the great theologian lives about 200 yards from him across the bushes in the Vatican gardens. A lesser man could not have done that. And he's done that without disparaging or criticizing Benedict. He's been brilliant in including the people that he inherited, the Roman Curia that he has inherited. Most of these people are still in place. And as a matter of fact, that's the criticism that he gets from a lot of progressive Catholics. Why doesn't he get rid of this one? Why doesn't he get rid of that one? Let me tell you, he's still alive. That's no small feat. What he has done has shaken the foundations of the Roman Curia. They are very upset. The Europeans are, especially the conservative Europeans, are especially upset with him because he does not follow the Eurocentric protocols.

And this is great.

This shakes their identity. They don't like him because he's a Christian. He's more of a Christian than he is a Roman Catholic. He's evangelical. I would say we have the most evangelical Pope probably in modern history. He is more concerned about, you know, it might sound trite, 'What would Jesus do?' than what does Canon law say? And you know, that is challenging to people who are doctors of the law.

The blueprint for all of this of course, is *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Joy of the Gospel. And that document was written, in November 2013 it was published, and I would suggest that if you've not read it or studied it, do it because he gives you permission to act lavishly and boldly to bring

this Church out of the sanctuary. He talks about a Church in that document that is wounded, that stumbles, that is accident-prone, not afraid to make mistakes.

He talks about decentralization. He talks about giving more authority to the national and regional bishops' conferences -- even doctrinal authority, which he says has not yet been fully addressed. (Well JPII actually did that in a document called *Apostolos Suos* in 1998 but I don't think it, there must've been something in the postal system in Argentina.) And then get in insiders, he has restated in this document. He restates, he recaptures, he re-elaborates. He fully embraces the vision and the message and the spirit, the true spirit of the Second Vatican Council. I like to say that what he is undertaken is an attitude adjustment program because when you read *Evangelii Gaudium*, you should also read the interview that he gave with *America* magazine or with the Jesuits. *A heart open to God* I think is how *America* entitled the interview. Antonio Spadaro, an Italian Jesuit, did the interview and in there he asks him about reform and he said the reform is mentality. Because if you change the structures and the mentality hasn't changed, nothing will happen. We just have, you know, different structures.

But the dimension, what he has done, he's done everything upside down. In his reform. There been very few structural reforms. They've come, they have, they've happened and they've come slowly. But the big change has been the attitude adjustment program. And I contend that we have a different Church that welcomes people and doesn't judge people. That's a huge change.

Think of it. What I'm trying to say is don't lose heart. Cause I know when you see things: like it seems like we're never going to get women deacons because now we've got another commission. But thank God he's redoing the commission and put new members on it. Francis likes to start processes -- plants seeds. He starts a process and we will not, we will not turn back on this. The Synod for the special assembly of bishops on the Amazon is a great example and probably the best proof of what he's been up to. That assembly, the bishops and laypeople. One of the things he did was the second day, he said, um, usually when you go to Rome for these gatherings, bishops are expected to wear the cast sick and the beanie and the sash and everything. And he said after the second day dress code optional.

Oh, the Romans were furious. But I'll tell you one thing, it made a huge difference for the non bishops in the room. I covered a number of synods when I worked at Vatican radio and even women who were in charge of LCWR, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, they went into those meetings and they were, 'wow, this is intimidating. They're all in their finery silk and it's intimidating.' And they took all that off probably because most of the Amazonian bishops don't even have a cassock.

This story of Bishop Jim Malone from Youngstown. He went, he was the president of bishops conference. He ends up in Rome for some meeting. He didn't bring a cassock and Cardinal Baum, who was at congregation for education said, 'Oh, you have to have a cassock on.' Cardinal Baum had a wee fat man as his secretary. And he said, 'You can use his cassock.'

And he looked, looked at him.... So the housekeeper, the Cardinal's housekeeper, with pins and things, pins this up on Jim Malone to go to the see the Pope. That's how important a stupid cassock was. And Pope Francis in a simple gesture opened up this dynamic of fraternal sharing – synodality - which is more than just episcopal collegiality. Remember the first day: bishop and people on the journey together, bishops and people on the journey together. And he, he broke down this barrier because clothing can be a barrier, titles can be a barrier. And he breaks it up. What does he call himself all the time? He refers to himself as 'father.' Not 'your holiness.' These are, these are barriers.

This is the attitude adjustment program. A part of that. Pope John wanted to bring Church into dialogue with the world. And when we were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Council and journalists asked the Pope if he'd consider the possibility of having a Third Vatican Council - Vatican II. And he said, 'absolutely no, no, no, no, no, no.' He said what he was trying to do was to fulfill Vatican II and to bring about a true encounter between the Church and the modern world -- encounter and dialogue. Those are the two words that, and who does that? Jesus does that. Jesus condemns nobody except the religious authorities of his time.

Sounds familiar. Now there is resistance, as you know. There is resistance and a lot of it is coming from some of the conservative or traditionalist media. And in the United States EWTN unfortunately is no longer even hiding the fact that they don't like him and they reach a lot of people. This is a problem because it's similar to politics where if you continue to bend the truth, tell lies and repeat them and repeat them and repeat them, people start believing: 'well, maybe that's it is true.' So this is a bit of a problem. The other problem and the biggest problem that the Pope faces is opposition among the clergy, especially clergy in Rome and our younger priests and seminarians.

I have the impression in Rome -- among our young clergy especially, and the bishops and cardinals that don't particularly like Francis -- is that they're just waiting him out. They call it the biological solution. Just wait 'em out.

The good news is that the group that's going to elect his successor, the College of Cardinals, there are now 124 electors. Francis has named 53% of them, 66 out of the 124. Some of them that he's made cardinals are not going to vote for someone that he likes. Like for example, Cardinal Muller, whom he fired -- or let go -- after five years on the job. But he did, out of deference, I think, to Benedict XVI make Muller a Cardinal. So there are some of those and there are a number of John Paul II cardinals that are great friends of Bergoglio-- voted for Bergoglio. I mean they were the JP II people and some Benedict XVI people, but he's got 53%. You need two third majority for conclave.

And it doesn't mean necessarily that if you named two thirds of the cardinals that they're all going to vote for somebody that are going to advance your program. But it's interesting to see that the European share of the vote is down to 43%. And that's good because it's always been over 50%. North America, let's say excluding Mexico, say Canada and the United States are at

nine US cardinals and four Canadians. So there are 13, if you take the global North, say Europe, Canada, and the United States, there are still the majority, 53%, but that's probably way down from what it once was. It was probably in the 60s. The global South now, and I say Latin America, Africa, Asia, Oceania, with the exception of New Zealand and Australia there at almost 47%. So that's, that's good news. The bad news is the US electors aren't very good and they're going to be around for a while. The next one to age out is Cardinal Wuerl. That'll be next November. O'Malley in 2024. Burke is not going to age out until 2028.

How about that?

Harvey? Cardinal Harvey, do you know who Cardinal Harvey is? Cardinal Harvey is another very... he's a friend of a Cardinal Burke and he was the head of the papal household under Benedict and before Benedict retired, he made him a Cardinal. He's not gonna turn 80 until 2029 and Dolan won't turn 80 till 2030. The young kid on the block is Joe Tobin. That's the good news. It's 2032 for Joe.

So, Francis reforms too little, too late? I guess it's how you look at it. The Church moves very slowly. Pope Francis has opened up processes. I think what's happened with Synod assembly for the Amazon is that he's accepted – he's shown already that he's going to some of the proposals that the Synod has made that have an effect on inner ecclesial life for the Universal Church. And those have to do with ministry. That's not what that Synod assembly was about, but it was certainly an avenue and instrument for bringing in some of these ministerial concerns. And, you know, the reality is that we continually profess and believe that we are a Eucharistic-centered Church. That the Eucharist is the source and summit of our life as a church. And if we profess that, that means that we should be receiving the Eucharist.

And if we're not making the Eucharist available to people, we have to ask why not? And if it's because of a human made, no, it's a man-made law. Men did this, the women had nothing to do with it. Uh, that's true. The manmade law that you have to be a celibate to be a priest. And we continue this, uh, fiction and we allow the loud mouths on EWTN and other places say that this is a heresy, that the Pope is starting a revolution. If he allows married men to be priest, that's just nonsense. These people don't know their theology and they don't know their history. There's always been married priests alongside with, with priests who are not married. I mean, if you believe that Saint Peter was the first pope, then the first pope was married. I mean in the scripture it says Peter's mother-in-law was sick and Jesus went to heal her. And not only that; we had married bishops in the first centuries of the church; even popes who were legitimately married before they were elected Bishop of Rome, right up until at least at least the eighth century. So, people need to study their history. This is not a break with history, it's a recovery or retrieval of an older history.

What I would say is that the Pope's focus on synods really has opened up conversation. A Church that we have not had in many years. And yes, we are impatient because it's not moving quickly enough perhaps. But at the Amazon assembly they made three proposals which could be very interesting. One is the *virī probati*. And they were very modest proposals because they

have to be. Otherwise they won't go anywhere because there's lots of opposition, especially in Rome. Even cardinals are speaking out against Pope Francis. That's kind of new.

The proposal to ordain married male deacons in areas in the Amazon -- that opens a door.

The proposal to continue to look at the possibility of women deacons. You know the Pope had a commission and the commission ended and he said keep studying. There's no conclusive evidence – bullshit – but he has to say that because he's got opposition. They've proposed and the Pope has already said, 'I am going to start the commission again and appoint new members and some from the Amazon region.' That's positive.

And the third one, and maybe this is the one that people aren't looking at closely enough, but this is maybe the most significant, the possibility of establishing a liturgy, an Amazonian rite. Like we have the Ambrosian rite in Milan or we have the Old Dominican rite. We have these different rituals that reflect the culture of certain places and countries and peoples.

And he said that he would give this over to the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, because they must take care of this. And there was great sigh of relief for the traditionalist because who's in charge of the Vatican's office on liturgy? A man named Cardinal Robert Sarah, who was a Canadian who was very, very conservative... in favor of the old mass. He's in favor of mass with the *ad orientem* -- back to the people kind of thing. He's not going to be around forever, but this will be a significant change. It marks what I saw that happened at this Synod was a shift.

We are no longer a Euro-centric church. This is a Universal Church and Pope Francis talks about unity in plurality. We can celebrate and worship God in different ways according to our different cultures. We don't all have to be Latins or Greeks. We don't all have to filter the gospel through Plato or Aristotle as we have done in the West. That was an instance of inculturation.

This marks watershed moment in the Church, I believe. And it's up to us now and other Catholics to continue to push and to support the Pope in these efforts. I saw an article in the New York Times saying that -- you probably read it as well -- for the Catholic bishops, anybody but a woman and had argued that though the bishops are willing, they don't want to add married priests and they know that it's going to cause a lot of problems that they don't want to have to deal with. Like what happens when they get divorced? That's their big problem cause it'll happen. How do you deal with that and all kinds of other things.

But, the author argued that this shows the bishops will do anything just to keep women out, even bite the bullet and have married priests again. But I say that's too shortsighted. I think once you, I think it's very clever, once you have married men who are priests they have children, right? And some of those children will be girls and some of those daughters will say, 'dad, I think I want to be a priest too.' What's dad going to say?

And then the big shift will be when the dads, the priests, say to their daughters, 'have you ever thought about becoming a priest?' That will happen. That will happen because that's what fathers do.

And that will be, that will mark the change. It will be, it may be, faster than what we think; but it may be slow. But we trust in the working in the Holy Spirit.

The last thing I will say: We're all in this together. Everything is connected and this is one another theme that Pope Francis talks about a lot and especially in his encyclical. Love that though, see, and this is about this, not just about the environment. This is God's creation. We are God's handiwork. We are God's creation. We're responsible for this creation. We cooperate in with this creation. We are a part of it. We are all in this together.

So I would say that Catholics like you and me who are eager to see Pope Francis succeed in bringing about the vision of Laudato Si, bring about synodality, bring about a more inclusive Church, a Church that's field hospital, a Church that's daring to give expression to the promptings of the Holy spirit... I think we should be very generous in answering the request that he makes every single time he addresses people. Almost every speech and every address. He always says, 'don't forget to pray for me.'

Thank you.