

# VATICAN INSIDER

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## "Careerism and vanity: Sins of the Church"

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JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO WITH THE POPE

### The Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, speaks to Vatican Insider about the Consistory and the words pronounced by the Pope

ANDREA TORNIELLI  
ROME

During the recent Consistory that was held in the midst of the controversy regarding the documents that were leaked from the Vatican Secretary of State, Benedict XVI wanted cardinals to talk about the **new evangelisation**. He reminded cardinals about the spirit of service and the importance of humility. **The Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio**, a Jesuit of Turinese origin, is a prominent figure within the Latin American Episcopate. In his diocese, Buenos Aires, the Church has, for quite some time now, been going out into the streets, squares and stations to evangelise and administer the sacraments. Vatican Insider interviewed the archbishop, asking him to comment on the discussions that took place during the Consistory and on the Pope's words.

#### What do you make of the Pope's decision to call for a year of faith and his insistence on the new evangelisation?

"Benedict XVI has insisted on the renewal of faith being a priority and presents faith as a gift that must be passed on, a gift to be offered to others and to be shared as a gratuitous act. It is not a possession, but a mission. This priority indicated by the Pope has a commemorative purpose: through the Year of Faith we remember the gift we have received. And there are three pillars to this: the memory of having been chosen, the memory of the promise that was made to us and the alliance that God has forged with us. We are called to renew this alliance, our belonging to the community of God's faithful."

#### What does evangelisation mean in a context such as that of Latin America?

"The context is that which emerged from the fifth conference of Latin American bishops, held in Aparecida, in 2007. It called us to undertake a continental mission, the entire continent is a missionary state. Plans were and continue to be made, but the paradigmatic aspect remains: all ordinary activities of the Church take place in view of the mission. This signifies very strong tensions between centre and periphery, between parish and district. We need to come out of ourselves and head for the periphery. We need to avoid the spiritual sickness of a Church that is wrapped up in its own world: when a Church becomes like this, it grows sick. It is true that going out onto the street implies the risk of accidents happening, as they would to any ordinary man or woman. But if the Church stays wrapped up in itself, it will age. And if I had to choose between a wounded Church that goes out onto the streets and a sick withdrawn Church, I would definitely choose the first one."

#### What is your experience of this in Argentina and in Buenos Aires in particular?

"We seek to make contact with families that are not involved in the parish. Instead of just being a Church that welcomes and receives, we try to be a Church that comes out of itself and goes to the men and women who do not participate in parish life, do not know much about it and are indifferent towards it. We organise missions in public squares where many people usually gather: we pray, we celebrate mass, we offer baptism which we administer after a brief preparation. This is the style of the parishes and the diocese itself. Other than this, we also try to reach out to people who are far away, via digital means, the web and brief messaging."

#### In his speech during the Consistory and in his homily on Sunday 19th February, the Pope stressed the fact that the cardinalate is a service and that the Church cannot build itself. What are your thoughts on Benedict XVI's words?

"I was struck by the imagery evoked by the Pope, who talked about James and John and the tensions between the first followers of Jesus on who should be first. This shows us that certain attitudes and arguments have existed in the Church since the beginning. And this should not shock us. The cardinalate is a service, it is not an award to be bragged about. Vanity, showing off, is an attitude that reduces spirituality to a worldly thing, which is the worst sin that could be committed in the Church. This is affirmed in the final pages of the book entitled *Méditation sur l'Église*, by Henri De Lubac. Spiritual worldliness

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is a form of religious anthropocentrism that has Gnostic elements. Careerism and the search for a promotion come under the category of spiritual worldliness. An example I often use to illustrate the reality of vanity, is this: look at the peacock; it's beautiful if you look at it from the front. But if you look at it from behind, you discover the truth... Whoever gives in to such self-absorbed vanity has huge misery hiding inside them."

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