

Vaticano

Pope Francis on Coronavirus crisis: "Don't waste these difficult days. While at home re-discover the importance of hugging kids and relatives"



An exclusive interview with the Pope: "Our behaviour has an impact on other's life. I asked God to stop this epidemic with "his hand"'"

PAOLO RODARI

VATICAN CITY - "During these difficult days we can find small, concrete gestures expressing closeness and concreteness towards the people closest to us, a caress for our grandparents, a kiss for our children, for the people we love. These are important, decisive gestures. If we live these days like this, they won't be wasted."

Pope Francis spends his days in the Vatican following closely the news on the coronavirus emergency. Two days ago he went to Santa Maria Maggiore and to the church of San Marcello al Corso to pray. He tells *la Repubblica* what these days are teaching him.

Holy Father, what did you ask for when you prayed in the two Roman churches?

"I asked the Lord to stop the epidemic: Lord, stop it with your hand. That's what I prayed for."

How can one live these days so that they are not wasted?

"We must rediscover the concreteness of little things, small gestures of attention we can offer those close to us, our family, our friends. We must understand that in small things lies our treasure. These gestures of tenderness, affection, compassion, are minimal and tend to be lost in the anonymity of everyday life, but they are nonetheless decisive, important. For example, a hot meal, a caress, a hug, a phone call... They are familiar gestures of attention to the details of everyday life that make life meaningful and that create communion and communication amongst us".

Isn't it how we always live?

"Sometimes, we only experience a virtual form of communication with one another. Instead, we should discover a new closeness. More concrete relationships made of attention and patience. In their homes, families often eat together in great silence, but not as a result of listening to each other, rather because the parents watch television while they eat, and children are on their mobile phones. They look like monks, all isolated from each other. Here there is no communication, whereas listening to each other is important because that's how we can understand the needs, efforts, desires of the other. This language made of concrete gestures must be safeguarded. In my opinion, the pain of these days should open us up to this concreteness".

Many people have lost loved ones, many others are fighting on the front line to save lives.

What can you say to them?

"I thank those who give themselves in this way to others. They are an example of this concreteness. And I ask everyone to stay close to those who have lost loved ones, to be close to them in every possible way. Consolation must now be everyone's commitment. In this respect, I was very impressed by the article Fabio Fazio wrote for *Repubblica* on what he is learning in these days".

What, in particular?

"Various passages, but in general the fact that our behaviour always affects the lives of others. He is right, for example, when he says: 'It has become evident that those who do not pay taxes do not only commit a felony but also a crime: if there are not enough hospital beds and artificial respirators, it is also their fault'. I was very impressed by this".

How can those who do not have faith have hope in days like these?

"They are all God's children and are looked upon by Him. Even those who have not yet met God,

those who do not have the gift of faith, can find their way through this, in the good things they believe in: they can find strength in love for their children, for their family, for their brothers and sisters. One can say: 'I cannot pray because I do not believe.' But at the same time, however, he can believe in the love of the people around him, and thus find hope".

translated by Luis E. Moriones

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