

Reading for CT Malta Book Group gathering, March 7, 2018 with

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A very brief statement made by Cardinal Bergoglio in one of the sessions that were held before the conclave that elected him Pope. It provides a valuable look at the thinking of Pope Francis on the eve of the conclave and what is likely to be a blueprint for his papacy.

“Evangelizing Implies Apostolic Zeal

1. Evangelizing pre-supposes a desire in the Church to come out of herself. The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all misery.

2. When the Church does not come out of herself to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and then gets sick. (cf. The deformed woman of the Gospel [Luke 13:10-17]). The evils that, over time, happen in ecclesial institutions have their root in self-referentiality and a kind of theological narcissism. In Revelation, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks [Rev. 3:20].

Obviously, the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter but I think about the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out.

*3. When the Church is self-referential, inadvertently, she believes she has her own light; she ceases to be the *mysterium lunae* [Latin, “mystery of the moon,” i.e., reflecting the light of Christ the way the moon reflects the light of the sun] and gives way to that very serious evil, spiritual worldliness (which according to de Lubac, is the worst evil that can befall the Church). It lives to give glory only to one another.*

*Put simply, there are two images of the Church: Church which evangelizes and comes out of herself, the *Dei Verbum religiose audiens et fidente proclamans* [Latin, “Hearing the word of God with reverence and proclaiming it with faith”]; and the worldly Church, living within herself, of herself, for herself. This should shed light on the possible changes and reforms which must be done for the salvation of souls.*

4. Thinking of the next pope: He must be a man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out to the existential peripheries, that helps her to be the fruitful mother, who gains life from “the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.”

Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Elected Pope March 13, 2013