



From Deacon Mark Miller's Desk

Pope Francis has been busy the last couple of weeks. He's traveled to Hungary and Slovakia, granting radio and print media interviews and publishing letters to various organizations.

In remarks presented to the G20 Interfaith Forum [and reported in LaCroix, an independent Catholic daily newspaper], Pope Francis noted:

- The role of religions is essential in overcoming war and hatred, since "true religion consists in adoring God and loving our neighbor."
- Religious leaders are called to "serve truth" and "declare without hesitation and fear that evil is evil, even and especially when those who commit the acts profess our same creed."
- "Truly, the time for alliances of some against others has past [sic] Now is the time for alliances in the search for shared solutions to the problems of all,"
- "We should not be neutral but allied on the side of peace!"
- "The path of peace is not found in arms but in justice."
- "More than putting something on display, we are called to show the fatherly presence of the Heavenly God through our harmony on earth."
- Religious leaders are called to "serve truth" and "declare without hesitation and fear that evil is evil, even and especially when those who commit the acts profess our same creed."

He spent four days in Hungary and Slovakia. When asked about the coronavirus pandemic, he said, "It has taught us how easy it is, even when we are all in the same boat, to withdraw and think only of ourselves. Let us instead set out anew from the realization that all of us are frail and in need of others."

Continuing his campaign to combat corruption that began with comments about the Mafia, he said, "We need to cooperate in building a future in which laws are applied fairly to all, based on a system of justice that is not up for sale. If justice is not to remain an abstract ideal but to be as real as bread, a serious

battle against corruption must be undertaken and, above all, the rule of law must be promoted and must prevail."

While traveling to Saint Martin's Cathedral, Pope Francis spotted a group of women and children waving at him. In what has become an almost routine event, he had the driver stop, got out of the car, and greeted the small crowd. He offered individual blessings to some; he gave a rosary to each person. Unfortunately, he didn't tell his security team or the Slovakian police that we was going to stop – they were not pleased.

Saints Cyril and Methodius brought Christianity to the region in 862. The brothers were born and raised in St. Paul's community in Thessalonica. Cyril was a priest-philosopher who taught at the prestigious University of Magnaura. Methodius was ordained a deacon [and ordained a priest in 867] was an administrator and abbot. Pope Francis invoked their memory when urging the people "to always cultivate this vocation to fraternity, along with your native gifts of warmth and sincerity."

The Pope, recalling these two saints' inventiveness in bringing Christ's message, urged the people to follow their example in reaching out to all people. They had to invent an entire alphabet to transcribe the bible so the people could, for the first time, read the story of salvation. He also noted the brothers "identified with all and sought communion with all, Slavs, Greeks and Latins alike, and their firm faith found expression in a spontaneous openness to others." The Pope called on Catholics to emulate that missionary spirit.

Pope Francis spoke to the bishops, priests, religious, and seminarians among his many meetings and presentations. He told them, "We need to become immersed in the real lives of people and ask ourselves: What are their spiritual needs and expectations? What do they expect from the church? It is important to try to respond to these questions."

Francis spoke at length about the vital need for pastors to prepare their homilies well and told them to limit homilies to 10 minutes. When he finished speaking on this, they applauded vigorously, but he quipped, "It was the nuns who applauded most because they are the victims of our homilies!"