Vatican

Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis greets a child Sept. 13 at the Vatican during a meeting with people who were to take part in the conference, "Pope Francis' Theology of Tenderness," in Assisi, Italy, Sept. 14-16. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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Today, more than ever, the world needs a revolution of tenderness, Pope Francis said.

"Far from being reduced to sentimentalism, tenderness is the first step in overcoming the withdrawal into oneself, to emerge from the self-centeredness that ruins human freedom," he said Sept. 13.

"God's tenderness leads us to understand that love is the meaning of life," said the pope, speaking with people who were to take part in the conference, "Pope Francis' Theology of Tenderness," in Assisi, Sept. 14-16.

The Catholic faith "inextricably" binds together tenderness and theology, which is called "to communicate the concreteness of God (as) love," he said.

A theology of tenderness, the pope said, expresses "the beauty of feeling loved by God" and the beauty of feeling the need to love others in God's name.

"Whatever happens, whatever we do, we are sure that God is near, compassionate, ready to feel moved by us," he said, because God loves his children.

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"When people feel truly loved, they feel able to love, too," he said. "Furthermore, if God is infinite tenderness, then people — created in his image — are capable of tenderness, too."

"We feel called to pour onto the world the love received by the Lord, to offer it in the church, in the family, in society, to join it in serving and in giving ourselves," while is all done "not out of duty, but out of love," he said.

It is a theology of "walking," of moving out of the "strangleholds" that theology often finds itself locked in and of journeying toward God while taking other people by the hand, the pope said. It is a theology that is not "narcissistic," but extends itself to be at the service of the community, "a theology that is not content with repeating paradigms of the past," but desire always to be "the Word incarnate."

"Therefore, there is a lot of work to do for theology and for its mission today: make incarnate the Word of God for the church and for people of the third millennium," Pope Francis said. "Today more than ever, there needs to be a revolution of tenderness. This will save us."