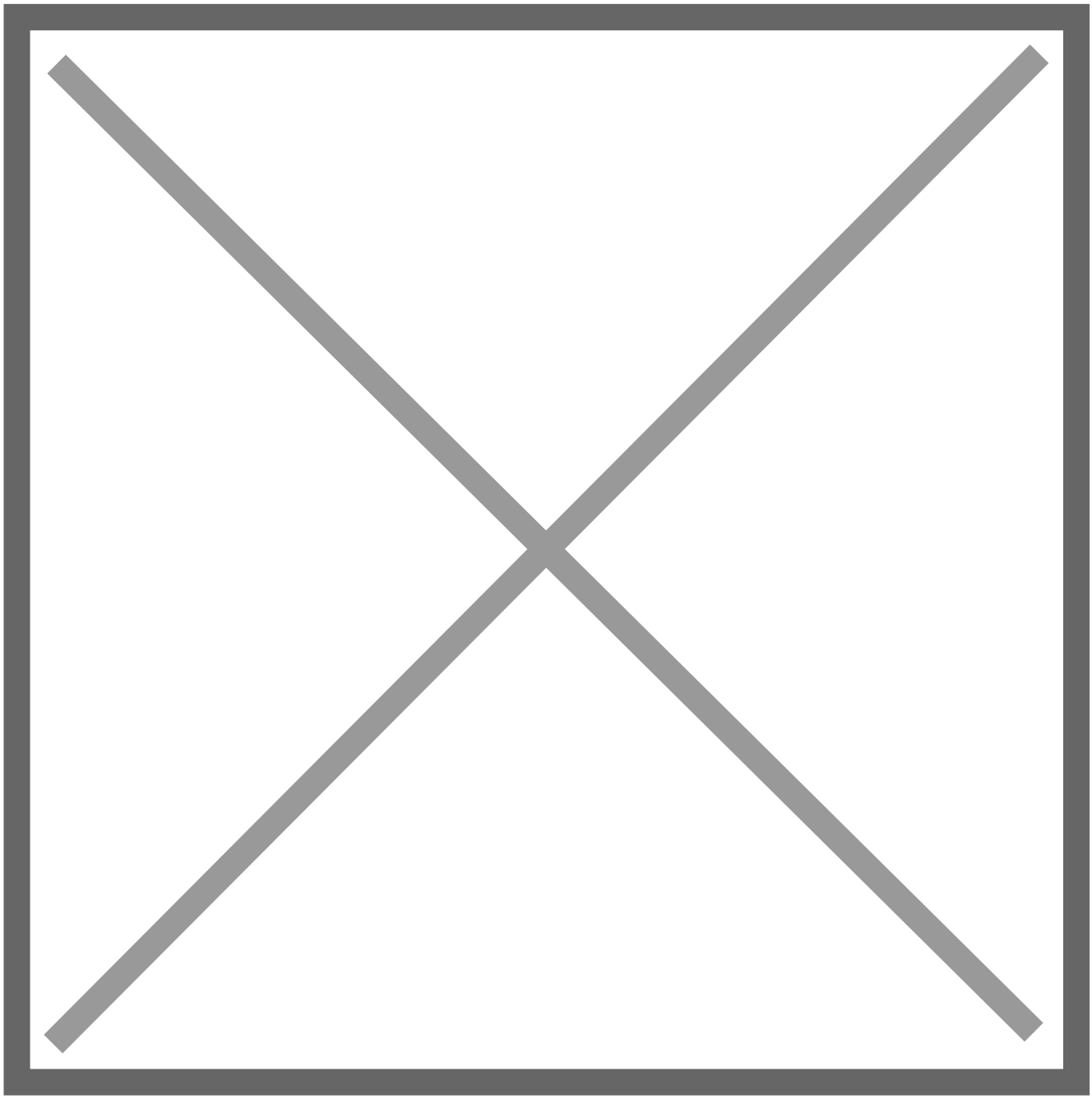
Spirituality
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis leads his general audience in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 5, 2021. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Carol Glatz

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Contemplative prayer transforms and purifies the human heart, Pope Francis said.

Being contemplative in prayer is an act of faith and love, it is "the 'breath' of our relationship with God," he said during his weekly general audience May 5.

Continuing his series of talks on prayer, the pope reflected on contemplative prayer, which is not so much a way of doing, "but a way of being," he said.

"Being contemplative does not depend on the eyes, but on the heart. And here prayer enters into play as an act of faith and love" that offers God's "breath," purifying the heart and sharpening one's gaze so that one can see the world from another point of view, he said.

"Contemplation is a gaze of faith, fixed on Jesus. 'I look at him and he looks at me'" in loving contemplation, the pope said, citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2715).

Jesus' gaze "illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men," the quote continues.

"Everything comes from this — from a heart that feels that it is looked on with love," Francis said. "Then reality is contemplated with different eyes."

One does not need many words, he said; "a gaze is enough. It is enough to be convinced that our life is surrounded by an immense and faithful love that nothing can ever separate us from."

Contemplation and action are not at odds, Francis said.

"There is only one great call in the Gospel, and it is that of following Jesus on the way of love," which is the pinnacle and center of everything, he said.

In this way, charity and contemplation say the same thing, and as St. John of the Cross believed, one small act carried out with pure love "is more valuable to the church than all other works combined."

Francis said that whatever is "born of prayer and not from the presumption of our ego, what is purified by humility, even if it is a hidden and silent act of love, is the greatest miracle that a Christian can perform."

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