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Francis to journalists: 'Dialogue, discernment and frontier'

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NCR Today

Here's an interesting report issued by the Vatican on a meeting Pope Francis had with staff from the *La Civita Catholica*, a Jesuit journal published in Rome.

Dialogue, discernment and frontier: These were the three words that Francis suggested the staff follow as they consider their work.

"Your fidelity to the Church still needs you to stand strong against the hypocrisies that result from a closed and sick heart. But your main task isn't to build walls but bridges. It is to establish a dialogue with all persons, even those who don't share the Christian faith but 'who cultivate outstanding qualities of the human spirit' and even with 'those who oppress the Church and harass her in manifold ways. ... Through dialogue it is always possible to get closer to the truth, which is a gift of God, and to enrich one another.' Pope Francis reiterated that dialogue means being convinced that the other has something good to say, making room for their point of view, their opinion, their proposals, without falling, of course, into relativism. For dialogue [to exist] it is necessary to lower the defences and open the doors."

The Holy Father then highlighted spiritual discernment, his second area of focus, to those present, calling it "a Jesuit treasure ... that seeks to recognize the Spirit of God's presence in human and cultural reality, the seed already planted by his presence in events, feelings, desires, in the deep tensions of our hearts and in social, cultural, and spiritual contexts."

Mentioning Jesuit Fr. Matteo Ricci as an example, Francis observed that it is necessary to keep open hearts and minds and to avoid the spiritual illness of self-referentiality. Even the church, when it becomes self-referential, gets sick and old. "May our gaze, well fixed upon Christ, always be prophetic and

dynamic towards the future. In this way you will always remain young and daring in your reading of events!"

The Holy Father declared that the fracture between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly a tragedy. "You," he said, "are called to make your contribution to heal this rift, which even passes through each of your and your readers' hearts. This ministry is typical of the Society of Jesus. ? Please, be men of the frontier, with that qualification that comes from God. In today's world, which is subject to quick changes and is shaken by questions of great importance for the life of faith, it is urgent to have a courageous commitment to educating a convinced and mature faith that is capable of giving meaning to life and of giving convincing answers to those in search of God. This means sustaining the Church's activity in all the areas of her mission. ... Be strong! I'm sure I can count on you."

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