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"Draw close to Jesus in his humanity and divinity"

In an address on September 9, in Medellin, Colombia, Pope Francis gave some advice on how to stay close to Christ in our daily lives.

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The good news is that the Lord is willing to cleanse us. The good news is that we are not yet cut off, for we are “work in progress,” like good disciples on a journey. How does

Jesus eliminate those things which lead to death and which take hold of our lives and distort his call? By inviting us to dwell in him. Dwelling does not only signify being, but rather also indicates maintaining a relationship that is alive, existential and absolutely necessary; it means to live and grow in a fruitful union with Jesus, “the source of eternal life.”

Dwelling in Jesus cannot be a merely passive act or a simple abandonment without any consequences in our daily lives. It always brings consequences, always . . . allow me to propose three ways of making this “dwelling” effective, in other words, three ways that can help you dwell, remain, in Jesus:

1. Dwelling in Jesus by touching the humanity of Jesus:

With the **gaze and attitude of Jesus**, who contemplates reality not as a judge, but rather as a good

Samaritan; who recognizes the value of the people who walk with him, as well as their wounds and sins; who discovers their silent suffering and who is moved by peoples' needs, above all when they are overwhelmed by injustice, inhumane poverty, indifference or by the perverse actions of corruption and violence.

With **Jesus' gestures and words**, which express love for those nearby and search for those far away; tender and firm in denouncing sin and in announcing the Gospel, joyful and generous in surrendering and in service, especially for the smallest among us, steadfastly rejecting the temptation to believe that all is lost, to accommodate ourselves or to become mere administrators of misfortune

2. Dwelling by contemplating his divinity:

Awakening and sustaining **an admiration for the study** that increases knowledge of Christ because, as Saint Augustine reminds us, we cannot love someone we do not know (cf. Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, Book X, ch. I, 3).

Giving priority, in this way of knowing, to **the encounter with Sacred Scripture**, especially the Gospel where Christ speaks to us, reveals his unconditional love for the Father, and instils the joy that comes from obedience to his will and the service of our brothers and sisters. I want to ask you a question, but don't reply aloud, only in the silence of your hearts. How many minutes or hours do I spend daily reading the Gospel or other parts of Sacred Scriptures? Answer in your hearts. Whoever does not know the Scriptures, does not know Jesus. Whoever does not love the Scriptures, does not love Jesus (cf.

Saint Jerome, *Preface to the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, PL 24, 17). Let us spend time prayerfully reading the Word of God, listening to what God wishes for us and for our people.

May all of our study help us to interpret reality with the eyes of God, that it may not be a way of avoiding what is happening to our people, nor be subject to the whim of fashions or ideologies. May our study not be overcome by nostalgia or the tendency to confine the mystery, nor may it be unwilling to respond to questions that people no longer ask themselves, and may it not abandon those who find themselves in an existential void and who question us from their worlds and cultures.

Dwelling in and contemplating his divinity by making **prayer** a fundamental part of our lives and our apostolic service. Prayer frees us

from the burden of worldliness, and teaches us to live joyfully, to distance ourselves from superficiality, in an exercise of true freedom. In prayer we grow in freedom, in prayer we learn to be free. Prayer draws us out of our self-centredness, from being reclusive in an empty religious experience; it leads us to place ourselves, with docility, in the hands of God in order to fulfil his will and to realize his plan of salvation. In prayer. And I want to offer you some advice here: ask, contemplate, thank, intercede, but also be familiar with the need **to adore**. It is not very fashionable to adore. Grow accustomed to adoring. To learn to adore in silence. Learn to pray in this way.

Let us be **men and women** who have been **reconciled in order to reconcile**. Being called does not give us a certificate of right conduct and sinlessness . . . We are all sinners and

we all need forgiveness and God's mercy to rise each day. He uproots whatever is not good in us, as well as the wrong we have done, casting it out of the vineyard to be burned up. He cleanses us so that we may bear fruit. This is the merciful fidelity that God shows his people, of which we are part. He will never leave us at the side of the road, never. God does everything to prevent sin from defeating us and subsequently closing the doors of our lives to a future of hope and joy. He does everything to prevent this, and if he does not achieve this, he waits at one side until I am inclined to look up, until I realize that I have fallen. This is how he is with us.

3. Finally, dwelling in Christ in order **to live joyfully**. This is the third way, to remain in him in order to live joyfully.

If we remain in him, his joy will be in us. We will not be sad disciples and bitter apostles. Read the end of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [the Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI], I recommend this. On the contrary, we will reflect and be heralds of true happiness, a complete joy that no one will be able to take away from us. We will spread the hope of a new life that Christ has given to us. God's call is not a heavy burden that robs us of joy. Is it burdensome? Sometimes, but it never robs us of joy. Through that burden God also gives us joy. He does not want us to be immersed in sadness – one of the evil spirits that takes over the soul and which the monks of the desert used to denounce – God does not want us to be immersed in a weariness that comes from activities lived poorly, but rather wants a spirituality that brings joy to our lives and even to our weariness. Our contagious joy must be our first testimony to the

closeness and love of God. We are true dispensers of God's grace when we reflect the joy that comes from encountering him.

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