

Pope Francis: "Avoid The Scandal of Being Airport Bishops"

Pontiff Addresses Newly Appointed Bishops During Audience

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY, September 19, 2013 (Zenit.org) - The Holy Father met today with newly appointed bishops participating in a congress organized by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Quote the words of St. Peter in his first letter, the Holy Father called on the new bishop to "tend to the flock of God that is in your charge."

"May these words of St. Peter be carved in the heart! We are called and made Shepherds not by ourselves, but by the Lord, and not to serve ourselves, but rather to serve the flock entrusted to our care, to serve to the extent of offering our lives, like Christ, the Good Shepherd," the Pope said.

In order to tend to one's flock, Pope Francis referred to three fundamental thoughts, the first one being the importance of welcoming with generosity.

"Your heart must be large enough to be able to welcome all the men and women you meet during your days and whom you will seek out as you walk your parishes and your communities". The Pope stressed the importance of manifesting to others the love of God so that they may see the Church as a "good mother who always receives them and loves them."

The second thought the Holy Father explained was to "walk with the flock", or rather "walking alongside the faithful and all those who turn to you, sharing joys and hopes, difficulties and sufferings." Pope Francis reminded the bishops not to forget their priests who assist in tending to the flock.

The Holy Father also took the opportunity to warn them to not fall into the snare of careerism.

"We shepherds are not men with the psychology of princes – ambitious men, who espouse this Church while awaiting another, more beautiful and richer. But this is a scandal! Imagine that a man confesses, saying, 'I am married and I live with my wife, but I continually look at a woman who is more beautiful than her; is this a sin,

Father?' The Gospel tells us that this is the sin of adultery. Is there such thing as 'spiritual adultery'? I don't know, think about it yourselves. Do not await another more beautiful, more important, richer Church. Do not fall into the trap of careerism! It is a form of cancer!"

The third element necessary to tend to one's flock, he continued, is to remain with the flock, that is, to remain in one's diocese without seeking any change or promotion. The Pope called on the new bishops to avoid being far from their diocese, and if they do leave, to do so for the shortest possible amount of time.

"Espouse your community, be profoundly bonded to it!" the Pope said concluding his address. "I beg you, please, to stay among your people. Avoid the scandal of being 'airport bishops'!"