



THE CHRIST-EFFECT AND THE POPE'S HOPES

Before the Holy Father set out on his Apostolic Journey to Cuba and the United States, there was a lot of talk about the “Francis Effect”! That talk became more and more the talk of Havana, Washington, New York, and Philadelphia. It truly became the “talk of the town”.



Anyone even remotely familiar with what has happened in the Church and the world during the relatively brief amount of time that Francis has walked in *the shoes of the fisherman*, would readily agree that he has had quite an effect. Yet if asked what he would call that effect, he himself would never call it the “Francis Effect”. And while he might possibly call it the Papal Effect, especially if he considered what happened in Cuba after Pope Saint John Paul II visited there in 1998 (Fidel Castro declared Christmas a “national holiday”), and what happened in Cuba after Pope Benedict XVI visited there in 2012 (Raul Castro declared Good Friday a “national holiday”), I don’t think that he would call it that either. Pope Francis would – at least in the opinion of your Pastor – more likely than not call the effect that has touched the world since his arrival: the Christ-effect! That effect while refreshing and restorative, has also been challenging! And the Pope wouldn’t have it any other way. But don’t take it from your Pastor. Take it from Pope Francis himself who had this to say on the occasion of XXVIII World Youth Day in Brazil (28 July 2013):

Jesus did not say: “go, if you would like to, if you have the time”, but he said: “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Sharing the experience of faith, bearing witness to the Faith, proclaiming the Gospel: this is a command that the Lord entrusts to the whole Church, and that includes you; but it is a command that is born not from a desire for domination, from the desire for power, but from the force of love, from the fact that Jesus first came into our midst and did not give us just a part of Himself, but He gave us the whole of Himself, He gave His life in order to save us and to show us the love and mercy of God. Jesus does not treat us as slaves, but as people who are free, as friends, as brothers and sisters; and **He not only sends us, He accompanies us, He is always beside us** in our mission of love.



Where does Jesus send us? There are no borders, no limits: **He sends us to everyone**. The Gospel is for everyone, not just for some. It is not only for those who seem closer to us, more receptive, more welcoming. It is for everyone. Do not be afraid to go and to bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society, even to those who seem farthest away, most indifferent. The Lord seeks all; He wants everyone to feel the warmth of His mercy and His love.” That is why Pope Francis was sent! That is why we have been sent!

In order to help us carry out our mission, the Pope has announced an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy/a Year of Favour from the Lord (8 December 2015 – 20 November 2016). It is the Pope’s hopes, in his own words that “the celebration of the Holy Year will be for all believers a true moment of encounter with the mercy of God; a living experience of the closeness of the Father; a genuine experience of God’s mercy.” A true Christ-effect in the lives of everyone who might otherwise be saddened to hear Pope Francis say: “Hasta Luego”.

