

What Pope Francis Should Ask Obama About Religion

What goes on behind the scenes of a presidential debate or a nightly news show? Most people are unaware of how dependent journalists and candidates are on teleprompters and talking points.

During breaks at the presidential debates, candidates rush to the bathroom, chug lots of water and make a beeline to family, friends and political consultants. Carly Fiorina may be told she's coming across too stern in her attempt to appear authoritative. Ben Carson may be encouraged to be more assertive. Moderators and candidates review talking points so they are prepared for the next segment.

Likewise, nightly newscasters like Megyn Kelly, Bill O'Reilly and Pat Robertson appear extremely articulate and spontaneous when actuality much of what they say is on a teleprompter and in their talking points. Cameramen are skilled in focusing away from these TV personalities as they scan points on the desk or on the screen in their interaction with guests.

When Pope Francis sits down for a private session with President Barack Obama, you can be assured that he has talking points prepared for their conversation, in addition to the spontaneous moments they will share. I'd like to suggest three talking points the pontiff should consider for a fruitful time of dialogue. The White House stresses it is a pastoral, not political chat. So let's go down that path.

Three Pastoral Talking Points for the Pope

1. "Do you understand what it means to be Christian? Are you one?"

When Obama ran against John McCain he was interviewed by

George Stephanopoulos on ABC news and said, "my Muslim faith." When George pointed out what he said, he backed up and rephrased it, "my Christian faith." Watch it on YouTube if you don't recall this revealing moment.

Jeb Bush recently stated he thought Barack Obama was a Christian. Franklin Graham said, "I don't know if he's a Christian." Ted Nugent said, "If Obama is a Christian, I'm a gay vegetarian pirate." Jesus stated, "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit. But a corrupt tree bears evil fruit" (Matt. 7:17).

Here's the deal: From a moral perspective, there has been a truckload of "bad fruit" from President Obama's presidency. Maybe with some pastoral correction our nation's leader can start getting back on track.

Remember, Barack Obama states, "I believe that there are many paths to the same place, and that is a belief that there is a higher power, a belief that we are connected as a people. We are all children of God." The one the Catholic Church recognizes as the "Vicar of Christ" has a solemn duty to address this error.

Tell the president the Bible clearly teaches there is salvation in no one except Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12) and while all people are loved by God, created in God's image and are to be treated with dignity, only those who repent and put their total trust in God's only begotten Son are saved and designated "children of God" (John 1:12; John 14:6). This may not be popular or politically correct, but it's a fact according to divine revelation in Scripture.

Idea: tell how Jesus Christ told a prominent, religious leader, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5, comment added). Obama may recall that years ago, Charles Colson, White House special counsel for President Nixon, was radically transformed when he

was born again. He repented and became an authentic Christian when he yielded his life to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. His bestseller entitled *Born Again* shared his experience. Suggest Obama read this fascinating story of the late prison reformer.

Jesus emphatically stated, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Emphasize that this focus is not merely a declaration but a demonstration—obedience to God's Son and His Words as revealed in sacred Scripture.

Seize this opportunity to speak frankly about the spiritual condition of Barack Obama's soul. This is certainly an important pastoral matter. If he stiffens at this point and says, "Hold it! Religion is personal. That's disrespectful. Doesn't the Bible state, 'Judge not'?" Simply say that the Bible actually tells us, "Judge fairly and righteously" (John 7:24) while cautioning us to avoid anything hypocritical, mean-spirited or unredemptive.

2. Jesus taught the mark of a Christian is obedience to God's Word (see John 8:31). Skillfully inquire why the president holds many unbiblical positions and does he realize the serious consequences of teaching people contrary to God's ways? Quote James 3:1.

Point out as a spiritual shepherd that it was deeply offensive to see the guest list of his White House visit included LGBT activists, a homosexual "bishop" and abortion-advocating nuns. Possibly ask why he does things like this that are very hurtful and embarrassing.

It's imperative to remind Obama that it is the natural tendency of broken humanity to reject and drift away from God's revealed ways unless challenged by the truth of God's immutable Word. There has been a serious lack in Catholicism

of clear scriptural teaching on many issues, so multitudes have drifted into dangerous secular ideas. This has also happened to other Christian denominations.

USA Today just revealed a national poll of Catholics with shocking revelations. Fifty-four percent believe it is fine to live a lifestyle of fornication or to live together outside of marriage! Almost 40 percent believe it is OK to engage in homosexual behavior. Forty-six percent recognize homosexual marriage as normal, not sinful. And a recent Quinnipiac poll showed only 42 percent of self-identified Catholics believe abortion should be illegal.

If the president can see how Catholicism has drifted from biblical doctrine, hopefully he can identify and humble himself to recognize how severely he has strayed. In a gentle way, challenge him by quoting Proverbs 19:20, "Listen to advice and accept discipline and at the end you will be counted among the wise."

It may prove beneficial to share with Barack Obama that you took your name from the historical figure, Francis of Assisi. Like Obama, in his early days he gave himself to carnal pleasures. When he was genuinely converted, he passed by an old, collapsing church where he knelt to pray and heard the audible voice of God tell him three times, "Francis, go and repair My house, which as you see is falling into ruin."

It was not an easy task to "turn the ship around." To dramatize his case, he petitioned Pope Innocent III attired in a poor, ragged tunic and was met with the rebuff, "Go find your pigs and preach to them!" (This may encourage you, Pontiff, if the president chafes at this juncture!)

When Francis of Assisi did just that and returned from a pigsty smeared in slop, the Pope was impressed and gave credence to the message he was carrying. He got results because Francis had a sense of urgency, seeing the decline of

his day. President Obama must be brought to a similar “Aha!” moment.

Pertinent areas of serious doctrinal error to point out to the president would include:

- Sanctity of human life—Emphasize that God commands us to “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves” (Prov. 31:8). God hates “hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:17). The slaughter of 57 million unborn babies, tens of millions who were black, must be stopped along with supporting the barbaric practices of Planned Parenthood, harvesting unborn baby parts and selling them on the market. Admonish him never to pronounce “God bless you!” over this deceitful organization.
- Homosexuality—Regardless of what pop culture says about political correctness, diversity and acceptance of all manner of sexual practice, a true Christian goes to the Bible as his authoritative guide on all matters of faith and morality, not opinion polls.

With charity and clarity remind him that we must be faithful to what the Scriptures teach. Regarding homosexuality, the Bible consistently, unambiguously, without exception prohibits homosexual practice and commands us to honor God’s design for sexual behavior between men and women.

- Gay marriage—Brace yourself for strong disagreement here, but appeal to the president in the strongest manner possible not to continue supporting a redefinition of the sacred institution of marriage, which is to be exclusively between a man and a woman.

He proclaims himself to be a professing “Christian” so remind him that the One to whom he pledges allegiance, Jesus Christ,

stated clearly that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Matt. 19:5). This is a non-negotiable tenet of our faith.

Look the president in the eye and remind him that gay marriage is contradictory to the self-evident truth of “Nature’s God” as America’s Founding Fathers expressed it. With all the passion you can muster, stress that homosexual marriage undermines the institution of marriage that has been the cornerstone of Western civilization in custom and law for more than 4,000 years of human history!

Remind Barack Obama that he once stated emphatically that marriage was exclusively between one man and one woman but he “evolved” to his new position. Graciously say, “Is it not time to devolve and go back to what is established by Almighty God? Put the fear of God in him by saying that one day he, like we all, will give an account to our Creator and Judge for what we’ve done in our lifetime.”

3. State clearly that the greatest need in America today is for another spiritual awakening! Tell him you’ve proclaimed 2016 the “Year of Mercy” but this is predicated upon humble repentance when we stray from God’s holy commands. Ask him if he will lead the way.

Commend him that his presidential hero is Abraham Lincoln. This man, one of the greatest presidents America ever had, lived in a similar time of turmoil, anxiety and division. He even expressed that our horrific Civil War was a judgment America brought on itself for disobedience. Refer to 9/11.

Exhort him that Abraham Lincoln humbled himself and followed the promise given us in sacred Scripture from 2 Chronicles 7:14. Don’t assume the president knows this passage. Request the very Bible in the White House that was Abraham Lincoln’s and show him this verse; maybe let him read it aloud while you silently pray for Holy Spirit conviction.

Before closure, tell him you want to pray for him with more than a perfunctory blessing. But first, present him with the prepared parchment that has these words from Abraham Lincoln. Have your translator read it slowly and deliberately. Then pose the question: "My son, the future of the world is hanging in the balance and America is at the center. We are in a grave situation and the war with terrorism is escalating daily throughout the world. I beseech you to listen to these words and then I invite you to repent and kneel with me to pray to the God who has so gifted you.

"Insomuch as we know that by His divine law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of Civil War, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole people? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

"It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

"Mr. President, don't dismiss this unrepeatable, holy moment. It will never come again. Before I depart, will you humble yourself, repent and join me in asking for forgiveness and God's mercy? America needs a spiritual awakening. Please, please lead the way."