

Pope Francis: I Didn't Want to Be Pope

Pope Francis said on Friday he had not wanted to become pontiff and that he had decided against moving into the luxurious papal apartments in order to preserve his mental health.

Meeting thousands of children from Jesuit schools across Italy and Albania, Francis held a question-and-answer session in which one girl, Teresa, asked him if he had wanted to become the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

"Anyone who wants to be pope doesn't care much for themselves, God doesn't bless them. I didn't want to be pope," he said.

Another girl, Caterina, asked why he had refused to move into the sumptuous papal apartments, choosing to live instead in a simple hotel-like Vatican residence.

"It's not just a question of riches but also a personality issue. I need to live among people and if I lived on my own, perhaps a little isolated, it wouldn't do me good," he said, adding that he had made the decision for "psychiatric reasons".

The former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina, who has set a humble tone for the papacy since his elevation in March, also said it was important to lead a simpler life, given the extent of poverty and suffering in the world.

"These days there is a lot of poverty in the world and that's a scandal when we have so many riches and resources to give to everyone," he said. "We all have to think about how we can become a little poorer."

Earlier this week, Francis denounced what he called a "culture

of waste" in an increasingly consumerist world and said throwing away good food was like stealing from poor people.

In another departure from papal tradition, Francis said on Thursday he would not spend his summer in the lavish hilltop palace at Castel Gandolfo that has been host to popes for centuries but would stay in the Vatican.

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