

Pope Francis Speaks Out About His Controversial 'Breed Like Rabbits'

Pope Francis on Wednesday sought to clarify his remark that Catholics should not breed "like rabbits," saying economic injustice—not large families—was the real cause of poverty.

Francis had made the comment during a news conference aboard the plane returning from a week-long Asia trip on Monday when speaking about birth control.

His unusually frank language raised eyebrows, particularly in social media, where some commentators said it was offensive to people who were raised in large families.

"I have heard it said that families with many children and the birth of many children are the among the causes of poverty. I think that is a simplistic opinion," he said at his weekly general audience at the Vatican.

The economic system, which had placed money at its center and created a "throw-away culture," was the main cause of poverty, not large families, he said.

During the news conference on the plane, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church restated its ban on artificial birth control, adding there were "many ways that are allowed" to practice natural family planning.

The Church approves only natural methods of birth control, principally abstinence from sex during a woman's fertile period.