

# 3 Things that Pope Francis Taught Us about Jesus

If you live in Washington, D.C., New York City or Philadelphia, everything about your life patterns last week was altered by these words, “The pope’s in town.”

We changed our commute times. We braved the crowds and packed public transportation like sardines to get a glimpse of the holy man. We saw “pope” memorabilia fill the shops.

Simply put, the pope has not been far from our minds. I even downloaded (just for laughs) “pope emoji” for my text messages.

And while I am not Catholic and could never be – due to that whole women clergy thing – I have loved getting to know Pope Francis. I’ve loved getting to know him because he’s a refreshing a man of the people.

He has let his humanness show by wearing simple clothes, driving a simple car and asking folks constantly to “pray for him.”

He’s striving to be a bridge builder by not leaving conversations when disagreements occur. He even participates in interfaith dialogue.

But during his U.S. trip in particular, I’ve loved getting to know the pope all over again because Pope Francis has reminded me of Jesus – a Jesus that I say I know well, but maybe I don’t.

In the spirit of Jesus, here are three Pope Francis lessons that I learned last week:

1. When you go to a new city, seek out the poor.

This lesson rang loud and clear on Sept. 24 when the pope addressed Congress and was then asked by congressional leaders to dine with them at a fancy lunch.

He [said no](#). Instead, he dined at [Maria’s Meals](#), a food program for the homeless in our city. Such witness made me think of the story of Jesus dining with the outcasts and “sinners” of his day from Luke 14.

When Jesus met criticism about his choice, he said, “When you give a luncheon or

dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed.”

2. When you encounter children, love them.

Everywhere Pope Francis goes, children flock to him. Not that this is unusual, of course, because everybody wants their baby blessed by the pope.

But it's how Pope Francis engages the encounter. Not annoyed. Not put off. But delighted.

At several points, watching the coverage on TV you could tell his behavior made several of the commentators nervous, though. I heard, “Doesn't he know he has somewhere to be? He's going to be late.”

Yet, in those moments on the streets or outside his residence, there seems to be no other place he'd rather be. It was beautiful.

I was reminded of a story from Jesus' ministry when complaints came too about Jesus' time spent with children; he rebuked them, saying, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14).

3. When in meetings with people of influence or power, treat them like everyone else - people who, like all of us, are in need of God's grace.

Who did the pope not see in the U.S. of influence? President Obama, Vice President Biden, Speaker Boehner, members of the United Nations security council; the list could go on.

But at any point did he seem to be wowed by power or trapped by it? Did he stay behind closed doors constantly with those with titles of “better than”?

No, he laughed. For, his entire American tour, we found him making time to be out among the people, with the same smile, the same laugh, the same sign of peace with everyone.

One of his last stops even included visiting a prison. No hashtag needed.

#AllLivesMatter to Pope Francis.

I was reminded of a time when Jesus' disciples argued over who was the greatest, and he caught wind of their argument and says to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35).

But hear me say this: Pope Francis is not Jesus. And we certainly will get ourselves into a heap of trouble if we try to make him such.

Yet, I believe that what Pope Francis did last week in the U.S. was point us back to Jesus. He gave us a new vision of what doing Jesus' ministry looks like.

He showed us again a Jesus that loves unconditionally. A Jesus who isn't afraid to do the work. And a Jesus who calls us to elevate the unseen.

It's been such inspiring good news!

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