



Francis and Mercy. The Pope and his number one priority. A Hall of the house Santa Marta in the Vatican, a journalist and three recorders. This is how the first book of the Argentine Pontiff was conceived. A handbook of spirituality riddled with anecdotes and pastoral recommendations of its protagonist. Written in the form of an interview, this week went on sale in 86 countries, in Spain edited by Planeta.

"The church condemns sin because it must tell the truth: this is sin. But at the same time, embraces the sinner who recognizes himself as such, approaches him, tells him about the infinite mercy of God. Jesus forgave even those who crucified him and despised him". This and other phrases weave a dynamic text, presented on Tuesday 12th in Rome.

The name of God is mercy bears his name and is signed by Francisco, although he is not its direct author. The interviewer is Andrea Torielli, competent "Vaticanist". But the book is signed by the Pope, among other things because the title of the cover was written by him, in his own hand.

Close to the prisoners

Is not the first time that Jorge Mario Bergoglio is subjected to a question and answer exercise. All remember the discreet sales of the first edition of the Jesuit, product of the conversations of the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires with journalists Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin. Once elected pope, the books flew from the showcases.

Now the situation is different: the new volume promises record sales. Its 150 pages not only offer complete brushstrokes on the deepest thought of Francis, they also let glimpse their human side. Apart from which, it is clear, is fundamental in its action of Shepherd.

For example, Francis tells the story of a niece of his, who married civilly to a man before he obtained the recognition of his marriage nullity. They wanted to get married, they loved each other, they wanted children, they had three. The civil judge had assigned him custody of the children had in the first marriage. This man was so religious that every Sunday he went to Mass, went to the confessional and

said to the priest: "I know that you cannot absolve me, but sinned in this and that, give me the blessing". "This is a religiously trained man", he says.

The pope also relates his communication, first by email and then by telephone, with an Argentinean lady who 20 years ago went to the ecclesiastical court to begin the annulment process. His reasons, he explains, were founded; The case was clear, but the first thing the priest asked was 5,000, 000. "When people find themselves in the face of these bad examples, where interest prevails, little mercy and closure are shocked", he laments.

Later, the Bishop of Rome recounts his encounter with a prostitute in a shrine to which she had come to thank the Virgin for leaving the life she wore because she met a man in the brothel who asked her to follow him. And she said she had a special relationship with the prisoners because every time she goes through the door of a prison she asks, "Why don't they and I? I deserve to be here. Their falls could have been mine, I do not feel better than who I have in front".

"Who am I to judge?"

In the book, the pope also responds to two controversial issues. On the one hand he explains his famous and controversial phrase "Who am I to judge?", which he uttered referring to homosexuals aboard the plane that drove him from Rio de Janeiro to Rome in July 2013.

Francis recalls that on that occasion he spoke of gays who "seek the Lord" and "have goodwill". And insisted on quoting the catechism, explaining that these people should be treated with delicacy and should not be marginalized.

The pope insists at the same time asking for the talk of "homosexual people" because first is the person in their entirety and dignity. "The person is not defined only by his sexual tendency", he says. "I prefer that homosexual people come to confession, that they stay close to the Lord, that we can pray together. You can advise them the prayer, the goodwill, the path, accompany them".

Sinners and corrupt.

To those who question the Church for preaching "too much mercy," the Pontiff warns that it must convey understanding to all those "who recognize themselves as sinners, responsible for the evil committed and feel in need of forgiveness." With that phrase, Francisco moves away from the myths of "mercy at low cost". The Pope is clear in indicating the conditions that the repentant sinner must fulfill. However, he insists that the Church is not in the world to condemn but to allow the encounter with the visceral love of God. For this, he points out, it is necessary to leave the churches and parishes to go and look for people where they live, where they suffer, where they wait.

Towards the end of the book, there are several passages dedicated to corruption, which the pope describes as "mental habit" and "way of life" rather than simple

sin. "The corrupt is the one who sins and does not repent, who sins and pretends to be a Christian while maintaining his double life of scandal. The corrupt do not know humility, does not consider needing help. The corrupt are tired of asking forgiveness and ends up believing that he should not ask. It is not transformed from a blow to a corrupt, it is a long degradation", he says.

The Pope's heart

this book was born in March 2015, when the Pope announced the extraordinary jubilee of Mercy, which opened last December and will be extended until the next 20 November. Tornielli insisted on interviewing Francis on the subject, with no desire to get a scoop or a journalistic title. He wrote a letter and Bergoglio answered him, provided to the dialogue.

Speaking to Alpha and Omega, the Italian "Vatican" was surprised because, from the words of the pope, the face of a god emerges clearly, who seeks all ways to approach human beings, who seeks every slit to donate his forgiveness. And he says: I hope the book will make your heart discover. In this interview, the Pope speaks with his heart and tells what has been for him, in his life as a young man and then as a priest and Bishop, Mercy. That is why I believe it is a book for believers, but also for those who do not believe. Because today we live in a world that has a real urgency of mercy and forgiveness.