

WELCOME TO HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO SRI LANKA

“Pope Francis: corrupt should be tied to a rock and thrown into the sea”

“Pope Francis gives fire-and-brimstone sermon, saying the corrupt should be tied to a rock and thrown into the sea”



Pope Francis' sermons and homilies often include stern, fire-and-brimstone language and references to the Devil. Photo: Andrew Medichini/AP



By Nick Squires, Rome
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“Pope Francis has delivered a fiery sermon against corruption, quoting a passage from the Bible in which Jesus said some sinners deserve to be tied to a rock and thrown into the sea.

In one of his strongest-worded homilies since he was elected in March, the Argentinean pontiff said Christians who lead “a double life” by giving money to the Church while stealing from the state are sinners who deserve to be punished.

Quoting from the Gospel of St Luke in the New Testament, he said “Jesus says: It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea.”

While he did not allude directly to corruption within the Catholic Church, his remarks come just days after a scandal erupted inside an ancient religious order linked to the Vatican, and as he forges ahead with a determined effort to root out cronyism within the Holy See and financial irregularities in the scandal-tainted Vatican bank.

The Pope described people engaged in corruption as “whitewashed tombs”, explaining that “they appear beautiful from the outside, but inside they are full of dead bones and putrefaction.” A life based on corruption is “varnished putrefaction”, the Pope said.

The Jesuit Pope may have been hailed for adopting a softer, more inclusive stance on sensitive subjects such as homosexuality and divorce since his election in March, but his sermons and homilies often include stern, fire-and-brimstone language and references to the Devil.

Pope Francis made the remarks during his daily morning Mass inside Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican guesthouse which he has chosen to live in after spurning the much grander apostolic apartments on the other side of St Peter’s Basilica.

It was the second time in just a few days that he had targeted the evils of corruption.

On Friday he had strong words for Catholics who grow wealthy from graft and use tainted money to shower their children with gifts and send them to expensive schools.

“Those who take kickbacks have lost their dignity and give their children dirty bread”, he said.

Corruption was as much of an addiction as taking drugs — “We might start with a small bribe, but it’s like a drug,” he said.

He prayed “that the Lord may change the hearts of those who worship the kickback god”.

The most recent scandal to hit the Catholic Church was exposed last week, when the head of a 440-year-old religious order was arrested on suspicion of bringing trumped-up charges against rivals in a bid to be re-elected.

Renato Salvatore, 58, was allegedly so desperate to be re-elected Superior General of the Camillians, also known as the Order of Ministers to the Sick, that he invented false charges against two rival priests who were opposed to his nomination.

The unfounded charges resulted in the two priests, Rosario Messina and Antonio Puca, being hauled off to a police station in Rome, with the result that they were unable to cast their votes against Father Salvatore at a general assembly of the order, which was founded in 1582 and recognised by Pope Sixtus V in 1586.

Members of the order wear black cassocks emblazoned with red Crusader-style crosses — the origins of the Red Cross symbol.

Father Salvatore was chosen by Pope Benedict XVI to participate in a general synod of bishops in October last year, five months before the German pontiff decided to resign from the papacy.”

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