



The Pope: A Conversation in Hell

by

Jon Rappoport

on

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Within an hour of passing from this life, Pope Francis found himself in a small office. Worn carpet, a desk, two chairs. The wall paint was peeling. A young man wearing a white tropical suit walked in and sat down behind the desk. He motioned the Pope to the chair across from him.

Where am I?

In Hell, Francis.

That's impossible.

Why?

I'm the Pope.

There's another way to look at it. Why wouldn't you be here?

No, really. There's obviously been an error. A tragic mistake.



I'm afraid not. Our transport system is bulletproof. It runs on AI.

Then...then you're Satan?

Good one, Francis. No. I'm Sid, the assistant director of Human Resources.

Where is Satan? I demand to speak with him.

Satan doesn't do celebrity intake. He didn't even speak with Stalin. Or Torquemada.

Look, I don't care about your system. I've been sent to the wrong place. I'm destined to meet with the Savior and His Father.

Yeah, well, that's not going to happen. You're here, this is Hell, and that's that.

Baloney. How do I get a message through to God?

After all this time, you don't know how? Anyway, we're blocked off. No service from here to there.

There must be an angel I can talk to.

Another good one. No, Francis, we're all out of angels.

I have resources. Art, gold, manuscripts.

You HAD them.

Get the Vatican on the phone.

We used to have a direct line. But then they stopped paying their bill.

I'm...stuck...here?

I'm afraid so. For the duration.

This is unconscionable. Somebody has their wires crossed. There are millions of people named Francis. I was switched out.

Or you deserve to be here. Let's talk about that.

There must be something I can offer you.

In the abstract, bribery is an interesting conversation, but we're way past that.

What's the set-up here? Who needs favors and blessings?

We run a tight ship. We have a schedule. Monday is medical day. Right now, we're performing a series of experiments on brain-computer interface. Volunteers are attached through skull probes to a program that loads them up with advanced mathematics. The integration phase has run into serious problems. Instead of data, people are experiencing raw electronics. The pain levels are exceedingly high. So we're trying to counteract that with drugs.

You're not serious.

This is Hell.

You said "volunteers."

On Mondays, you could opt for a clinical trial of high-dose AZT. We're measuring the timeline of cell death. AZT essentially stops cells from replicating. In layman's terms, the body decays rapidly and falls apart.

This must be a dream.

On Tuesday, we strap you to a treadmill traveling 37 miles an hour for two hours, while gradually lowering you into the lake of fire.

What have I done? What have I done to deserve this?

Let's talk about that. For instance, the deal with the Chinese.

The Chinese are a wonderful people.

Sure. We're all wonderful, Francis. I'm talking about the Chinese regime and Xi Jinping.

You mean the Vatican support for abortion? Our endorsement of their social credit score system? The conferences on integrating Catholicism and Communism?

That would be a start.

So what? So what if we made those accommodations? China is a powerhouse. I wasn't just going to sit there and watch them roll over us. Sid, they already control half of Italy. Why do you think the first COVID lockdowns in the West started in my backyard?

Your allegiance was to Jesus and God.

You're joking, right? Even God makes deals. He applies pressure, gets what he wants, and then he backs off. Send a plague, obtain compliance, declare a truce. It's all about the action. One player gets one piece, another player gets another. You spread out the baksheesh, you pocket the vig.

Now we're getting somewhere. Similar situation with climate change, right?

Just another deal. Another hustle. These flim-flam artists really believe they can measure the Earth's overall temperature? Are you kidding me? Much less the HISTORY of the temperature? But that's the play now. The UN Panel. They'll package the threat of a planetary collision between the Earth and Mars, if it'll give them a leg up.

You saw an opportunity.

Of course. I'm the number one humanitarian in the world when it comes to hunger and inequality. Those are my talking points. I can do a bang-up job of faking a connection between them and climate change. So I'm needed. The grifters involved are all already making out like bandits on climate. So they sit down with me, I negotiate my ten percent. Plus they get to reduce energy production all over the world. You know, as the "solution." This gives them more poverty and debilitation, which are good for their business-Control. I'm in the same business. We see eye to eye.

I like it, Francis.

Wait a minute. I'm losing the thread. I mean, you're on my side, right? You get an insight into my strategy and you approve. Yes?

Absolutely. You're talking our language.

So then why are you talking about Monday and Tuesday and subjecting me to all kinds of torture on your schedule, if I'm not here to pay for my sins?



Francis, I would have thought you'd figured that out a long time ago. We're sadists. We enjoy our work. That's all. We don't truck with Heaven. We have no opinion or knowledge about them. We just accept the souls who show up here. I'm happy you're with us. But we need raw material. You're it.

What?! There's nothing moral about punishment in this place?

Moral? Think it through, Francis. Again, this is Hell.

All right. I'm a fast adapter. There are things, then. Things I could teach you, Sid.

I don't think so. We've been around the block a few million times. We know our business.

There's no money involved?

We're cashless. Let me show you to your room. It has a view of the lake...

I'm having a mental health problem. Can I see a doctor?

This place is filled with doctors. I can get you in this afternoon. You supported psychiatric treatment while you were at the Vatican, right? Here, though, the doctors tend to be a little bent. They go to extremes with their treatments. I'll make a few calls and find you an unenthusiastic straight shooter. Of course, experiencing what a standard protocol of Haldol does to the nervous system...the tranquilizing effect is only stage one. After that, the neurons start firing randomly. Impulse control goes out the window...

I want out!

Ah, but you're in, Francis.