
Father Eduardo, the Franciscan friar interpreter of the Pope in Cyprus and Greece: "Like a grandfather with his grandson"

We saw him at the side of Pope Francis virtually every moment of the apostolic journey to Cyprus and Greece, where he served as his interpreter. Father **Eduardo Maseo Miguel Gutierrez Jimenez** is a young friar of the Custody of the Holy Land. He is currently residing in Rome to complete his doctorate in History of the Eastern Churches at the PIO - Pontifical Oriental Institute. He holds a Licentiate from Thessaloniki, Greece, and studied Greek language in Athens. **A gift of the Divine Providence.** "When the Custos, Father Francesco Patton, told me that I would be the Pope's interpreter for his visit to Cyprus and Greece, I couldn't believe it", the young friar of Mexican origin told SIR. "Never in a million years would I have contemplated this happening. I took it as a gift from God, not sought after, especially as it was something I had never done in my life. It has been a deeply moving experience, whose memories and images grow sharper with each passing moment." One in particular is the arrival in Cyprus, graced by the Pope's cordial expression: "In Cyprus, even before saying goodbye, the Holy Father smiled, looked at me and said: 'You Franciscans come and visit me wherever I go'. From that moment on," says Father Eduardo, "we started conversing. During the journey from Larnaca and Nicosia he asked me to translate from Greek into Spanish, my mother tongue, and vice versa. I accompanied him throughout most of the trip, both in Cyprus and Greece, and there was a lot to share. The Pope is extremely welcoming, I felt loved like a grandchild is loved by his grandfather, with great fatherly care and thoughtfulness." **A time of spiritual exercises.** For Father Eduardo, being with the Holy Father has been an extraordinary human and spiritual experience: "I would describe these five days spent with Pope Francis as a time of Ignatian spiritual exercises, also considering the Pope's spirituality." The thing that impressed me most about Pope Francis is his ability to make all the persons who are with him feel 'at home'. The Holy Father lives out concretely and profoundly the feelings of welcome and openness to others that he often refers to, and he conveys them from the very first moment of being with him." *"In particular, I was touched by the fact that he was deeply moved by all circumstances. Only a few days ago I was reflecting on the extent to which humanity has lost the ability to empathise. The Pope teaches us to be human, to feel with our heart and empathise with the other person's circumstances, whoever they may be."* **Driving home.** Such humanity is also evident in unexpected gestures, such as driving Father Eduardo home upon the arrival at Ciampino: "When we were still in Athens, on our way to the last meeting, with young people, the Pope asked me how I would get home once in Rome. I replied that I would be using public transport, since I had not informed the other friars." And then, unexpectedly, "when we landed at Ciampino, the Pope's security guards asked me to step forward. When the Pope saw me, he said: 'My son, I'm going to bring you back home. And then I shall proceed to my home'. At those words I remained silent, what could I answer? When we reached the convent, we also took the wrong entrance. Despite the tiredness of the journey, the Pope got out of the car and walked to the door of the convent. He wanted to greet the friars before leaving. The Pope accompanied me home from the airport. This gesture further testifies to his humanity and simplicity of heart."

Daniele Rocchi