

FROM A PAPAL GENERAL AUDIENCE IN NOVEMBER 2018

Pope Francis Applauds Autistic Child who Took the Stage: ‘He Is Undisciplinedly Free’



‘It Made Me Think: Am I also Free Like This before God?’

Vencel, an Argentine autistic child about 6 or 7, went up on the stage where Pope Francis was sitting — during the November 28, 2018, General Audience in Paul VI Hall — to touch the hand of one of the Swiss Guards and to run around the Pope and Archbishop Georg Gaenswein. The Pontiff and Archbishop Gaenswein smiled at the child who, despite his sister’s attempts and then those of his mother, would not leave the platform.

Going up to the dais to get him, his mother explained to the Holy Father that the child has “some problems, he has autism,” adding “we are from Argentina,” as she looked at her compatriot, Pope Francis. The Holy Father answered her calmly to let him play there if he wanted to, dismissing the interruption. The Pontiff joked with Archbishop Gaenswein, saying: “He’s Argentine; he is undisciplined!”

“Am I Free before God?”

When the Pope spoke in Spanish today, as he does in every General Audience when addressing Spanish-speaking pilgrims, he said: “Dear brothers, this child can’t talk, he is dumb, but he knows how to communicate, he knows how to express himself. And he has something that made me think, he is free, he is undisciplinedly free.”

The Holy Father reflected: “But he’s free and he made me think: Am I also as free before God? When Jesus says that we must become like children, he says to us that we must have the freedom of a child before his father. I don’t know, I think this child preached to all of us, and let’s pray for the grace that he will be able to speak.”

