

Pope Francis' Surprise Trip to Amatrice

Joelle Grosso (October 04, 2016)



On October 4th, Pope Francis visited the Italian town of Amatrice, which was destroyed in the summer by a high magnitude earthquake.

It is only fitting that the name day of [Saint Francis of Assisi](#) [2], the saint from which the pontiff took his papal title, also happens to be the day that [Pope Francis](#) [3] made a visit to the devastated city of [Amatrice](#) [4]. At the end of August, the tiny town located in the region of Lazio in central Italy was completely destroyed by a 6.0 level magnitude earthquake. With an extremely small population of just 1,046 people, at least 298 have been reported dead since the earthquake happened.

The Pope admitted that he waited so long to visit as to not be a bother, he didn't want to cause a big fuss in a time of such grief and desperation. He felt his presence would be a burden more than anything else. For this reason, only a few knew about his plan to visit the town in October. He also didn't release the date of his arrival so that the mass media couldn't find out ahead of time and be there waiting for him with cameras. Pope Francis, in his typical humble fashion, wanted to be alone



with the people of Amatrice and did not want this intimate experience to be broadcasted everywhere by the news. Instead of creating even more problems, he was able to express his warmest sentiments and offer his prayers directly to the victims affected by the earthquake.

The pontiff went to the local school and met with young children who presented him with handmade gifts. He then walked along the ruins to the center of town which is still closed off to the public. He thanked the firefighters and even asked if he could take a picture with them and all those who helped in the aftermath of the earthquake, telling them that they are the true heroes because they selflessly put their life on the line for others every single day. The Pope's overall message was one of encouragement and hope. He prayed for those who have passed and urged the survivors to keep fighting and moving forward because there is a greater purpose for them in this world. He also met with those still living in tents and then had lunch with the elderly evacuees before making his way to other nearby towns that were also affected by the earthquake like [Accumoli](#) [5] and [Arquata del Tronto](#) [6].

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