

**SENATOR SANDERS FLOOR SPEECH, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015**  
**RUSHED TRANSCRIPT**

Mr. **Sanders**: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I am delighted that Pope Francis will be addressing a joint session of congress on Thursday. The pope has played, in my view, an extraordinary role since he assumed his position in speaking out with courage and brilliance about some of the most important issues facing our world. From the moment he was elected, he immediately let it be known that he would be a different kind of pope, a different kind of religious leader.

In choosing his papal name, Francis, he said, I quote Francis of Assisi, for me, he is the man of poverty, a man of peace, a man who loves and protects creation, end of quote. What I wanted to do, Mr. President, in a short period of time, is just read some of the very profound and important statements that Pope Francis has made over the last several years. They are incisive, they are courageous, and they speak to a world in trouble that needs the kind of leadership that he is providing let me just quote from a number of the statements that he has made.

Quote -- "while the income of a minority is increasing exponentially, that of the majority is crumbling. This imbalance results from ideologies which uphold the absolute right of control to states, which are themselves charged with providing for the common good." end of quote.

Now, obviously, he is not just talking about the United States. He's talking about the global economy. But certainly in our country when talks about the income of a minority increasing exponentially and that of the majority crumbling, he is, of course, right. What we have right now in our country is the top .1% owning almost as much wealth as the bottom 90%. We have about 58% of all new income being created now going to the top 1%. In the last several years, we have seen the 14 wealthiest people in America increase their wealth by \$156 billion, and that increase in wealth is more wealth than is owned by the bottom 40% of the American people. But as the Pope points out, this is not by any means just an American issue. This is a global issue, and we are moving toward a period where very shortly the top 1% of the planet, people on our planet will own more wealth than the bottom 99%. To me, this is immoral, this is wrong, this is unsustainable, and I am glad that the pope has raised that issue. And he talks about another issue which is even more profound. It is one thing to talk about, income in wealth and equality. Here he talks about poverty. But here he says, and I quote -- "we have created new idols. The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money and the dictatorship of an economy which is faceless and lacking any truly humane goal." end of quote. The worship of the golden calf of old has found a new and heartless image in the cult of money. What does that mean? Well, I take it to mean that we are living in a society which turns its back on people who work hard, decent people, people who are good parents but yet we worship those people who for whatever reason sometimes honestly and with creativity, sometimes dishonestly and illegally, but who have become millionaires and billionaires. Those are the people that we worship. And the more money that they make, the more they get worshipped. And I think the pope is right in saying that that is not something that we should be doing.

And then in another statement, which is certainly relevant for a lot of the discussions we have here on the floor of the senate, he says, and I quote -- "in this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth encouraged by a free market will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system, and I quote. What is he talking about? Well, he is talking about a lot of what has gone on here in this country for many, many decades.

There is a theory which the pope is right in saying has never been confirmed by the facts. Quite the contrary, that if we give huge tax breaks to billionaires and large corporations, somehow that money will trickle down to the middle class and working class. Well, that theory has not proved to be true. Under trickledown economics, the rich get richer and virtually everybody else gets poorer, and I think the pope is quite right in making that point. Let me quote briefly another quote from the pope. This is what he says, and I quote -- "man is not in charge today. Money is in charge. Money rules." end of quote.

Money rules. Well, five years ago, the united states supreme court by a 5-4 decision passed a -- the disastrous citizens united basically said to the wealthiest people in this country, well, you the opportunity to buy the United States government, and that is exactly what they are now attempting to do. Money rules. You have one family, the Koch brothers, who will spend \$900 million in this election cycle to elect candidates who will protect the wealthy and the powerful. That is more money that will be spent by either the Democratic or the Republican party. When you have one family spending more money than either the two major political parties, I think it is an example of what the pope is talking about when he says money rules. Money does rule, and that is why, in my view, we have got to overturn citizens united and in fact move to public funding of elections so the wealthy and the powerful will not be able to buy elections.

Then he says something very interesting about the media, and this is what he says -- and I quote -- "these things become the norm, that some homeless people die of cold on the streets is not news. In contrast, a ten-point drop on the stock markets of some cities is a tragedy." end of quote. Well, what is news? Is he right? We talk about the stock market going up, the stock market going up; it is big news. 45 million Americans living in poverty, gee, I don't hear much discussion about that. Thousands of people dying every single year because they don't have health insurance and can't get to a doctor when they need, that ain't big news. Not big news at all.

So I think it is an interesting point about what constitutes news, and I think the pope makes a very good point in that regard. Let me give you another quote. Quote -- "it is a well-known fact that current levels of production are sufficient, yet millions of people are still suffering and dying of starvation. This, dear friends, is truly scandalous." end of quote. So what the pope is talking about, I think, is that a world where we have enormous productive capability -- industrial, agricultural -- yet, we have a situation where children die of diseases which are preventable, all over the world, where people go hungry all over the world. And yet, as he says, our current levels of production are sufficient. We are producing enough to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide what people need. And yet, we have an economy which works day after day to make billionaires richer and turns its back on desperate people all over the world.

Let me just end on this note. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest. Where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape." end of quote. This is certainly true in the United States. It is certainly truer all over the world. We are living in a world of the survival of the fittest. If you are poor, if you are unemployed, if you are hungry, government turns its back on you. But if you are rich and if you are powerful and if you can make campaign contributions of hundreds of millions of dollars, we love you, we welcome you, we need you more and more.

So I think during this week where we welcome the pope to Washington, D.C., I would hope that some of my colleagues would examine the very profound lessons that he is teaching people all over this world. With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.