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AFRICA/SOUTH AFRICA - "The Church needs Pope Francis' simple gestures," said Bishop Ponce de Leon who knew him

Johannesburg (Agenzia Fides) - "I met the then Cardinal Bergoglio two years ago when I was in Buenos Aires on holiday" says to Fides Agency His Exc. Mgr. José Luis Gerardo Ponce de Leon, Apostolic Vicar of Ingwavuma (in South Africa) a Consolata missionary of Argentinian origin.
"I sent an email asking to meet him, since I was born in Buenos Aires, writing to him with great simplicity: "Jorge since you are the Archbishop of the place and I am a missionary Bishop born in your Archdiocese I would like to meet you." And he immediately answered "I am very busy but we will find the time." We were for half an hour in his office with great simplicity and great sharing," says Mgr. Ponce de Leon.
"I remember - continues the Apostolic Vicar – when he greeted me in told me: " I heartily thank you for wanting to come and see me." Mgr. Ponce de Leon points out that "As yesterday Pope Francis asked the people in the square to pray for him, even in his email response he wrote: "I beg you to pray for me." You can see that it is a constant feature of his charisma. "
"The choice of the name Francis seems an indication of the desire of his heart," continues Mgr. Ponce de Leon. "In Argentina he is known as a very simple man, who personally cooks and invited even his barber for lunch."
"The fact that he asked for the prayers of the faithful for him and went before them to welcome their prayer, I think are signs of what we need as a church," says the Apostolic Vicar.
"Since August I am also Apostolic Administrator of Manzini (Swaziland) where in the bishop's house we have a room called the "Pope's room " where John Paul II had rested for a few hours .... I wonder if it also host Pope Francis," concluded Mgr. Ponce de Léon. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 14/03/2013)

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