

## Pope says gossiping is 'worse than COVID'

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Pope Francis has said gossiping is worse than COVID-19. He said gossip is a danger that divides communities. He added that the devil is the "biggest gossiper" who is seeking to create division with his lies. The Pope spoke about the dangers of gossiping during his weekly blessing at the Vatican. He said: "Please brothers and sisters, let's try to not gossip. Gossip is a plague worse than COVID. Worse. Let's make a big effort. No gossiping." The Pope has regularly spoken about the dangers of gossiping, especially on social media. He advises people not to listen to Internet trolls, saying: "If something goes wrong, offer silence and prayer for the brother or sister who make a mistake, but never gossip."

The Pope was making his first public audience since the pandemic started. His latest speech on gossip is not the first time he has made strong remarks on the topic. In 2016, he warned people not to "fuel the terrorism of gossip". He urged people to resist the temptation to spread gossip. He said: "If you get an urge to say something against a brother or a sister, to drop a gossip bomb, bite your tongue. Hard." Two years later he brought the subject up again. He told worshippers in St Peter's Square that gossip is lethal "because the tongue kills, like a knife". A visitor to the Vatican agreed. She said: "Gossips are nothing but scandalmongers and busybodies."

Sources: [cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com) / [inforum.com](https://www.inforum.com) / [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com)

### Writing

Gossip is lethal "because the tongue kills, like a knife". Discuss.

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

gossiping / communities / the devil / division / blessing / plague / COVID-19 / trolls / audience / pandemic / speech / terrorism / urge / lethal / tongue / knife / busybodies

### True / False

- a) Pope Francis said communities divide gossiping. T / F
- b) Francis said the biggest gossiper was the devil. T / F
- c) Francis advised people to listen to trolls on the Internet. T / F
- d) The Pope suggested praying and being quiet if something goes wrong. T / F
- e) The Pope made his first speech in public for many months. T / F
- f) The Pope suggested gossip was a form of terrorism. T / F
- g) Francis suggested biting one's tongue if there is an urge to gossip. T / F
- h) Francis said the tongue is deadly and kills like a virus. T / F

### Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. <b>danger</b>      | a. comments        |
| 2. <b>divides</b>     | b. pandemic        |
| 3. <b>plague</b>      | c. topic           |
| 4. <b>advises</b>     | d. talk            |
| 5. <b>silence</b>     | e. risk            |
| 6. <b>speech</b>      | f. mischief-makers |
| 7. <b>remarks</b>     | g. quiet           |
| 8. <b>temptation</b>  | h. splits          |
| 9. <b>subject</b>     | i. desire          |
| 10. <b>busybodies</b> | j. recommends      |

### Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you know about Pope Francis?
- b) What do you think of gossip?
- c) What do you think of people who gossip?
- d) How much of a gossip are you?
- e) Why might the Pope think gossip is worse than COVID-19?
- f) When was the last time someone gossiped about you?
- g) What do you think of people who gossip on social media?
- h) Is it better to pray than to gossip?

## Phrase Match

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. He said gossip is a danger that divides | a. about the dangers     |
| 2. Let's make a big                        | b. up again              |
| 3. The Pope has regularly spoken           | c. public audience       |
| 4. He advises people not to listen         | d. communities           |
| 5. If something goes                       | e. and busybodies        |
| 6. The Pope was making his first           | f. to Internet trolls    |
| 7. the first time he has made              | g. resist the temptation |
| 8. He urged people to                      | h. effort                |
| 9. Two years later he brought the subject  | i. wrong                 |
| 10. Gossips are nothing but scandalmongers | j. strong remarks        |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How do you feel if you are the subject of gossip?
- Do you like gossip about movie stars and celebrities?
- In what way might gossip be like terrorism?
- When was the last time you had to bite your tongue?
- Should gossip be made illegal?
- Who is the biggest busybody you know?
- What questions would you like to ask a huge gossip?

## Spelling

- a danger that divides mtesconuim
- seeking to create oidvnsi
- during his klewye blessing at the Vatican
- Gossip is a uapgle worse than COVID
- not to listen to Internet torlsl
- offer silence and earpyr
- The Pope was making his first public cunaeedi
- since the cnpemdia started
- fuel the rimorset of gossip
- resist the tepoamtitn to spread gossip
- gossip is elthla because the tongue kills
- scandalmongers and uebysisobd

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. b	4. j	5. g
6. d	7. a	8. i	9. c	10. f

## Role Play

### Role A – Neighbours

You think neighbours are the worst people to gossip about. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why it isn't so bad to gossip about their people. Also, tell the others which is the most fun of these to gossip about (and why): other students, bosses or friends.

### Role B – Other Students

You think other students are the worst people to gossip about. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why it isn't so bad to gossip about their people. Also, tell the others which is the most fun of these to gossip about (and why): neighbours, bosses or friends.

### Role C – Bosses

You think bosses are the worst people to gossip about. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why it isn't so bad to gossip about their people. Also, tell the others which is the most fun of these to gossip about (and why): other students, neighbours or friends.

### Role D – Friends

You think friends are the worst people to gossip about. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why it isn't so bad to gossip about their people. Also, tell the others which is the most fun of these to gossip about (and why): other students, bosses or neighbours.

## Speaking – Gossip

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst things to gossip about at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| • teachers     | • movie stars    |
| • best friends | • neighbours     |
| • a spouse     | • other students |
| • celebrities  | • the boss       |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.