

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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At the General Audience the Pope speaks about his journey to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic

## A seed of peace for Africa

*"The coexistence of wealth and poverty is a scandal, it is a disgrace for humanity". Pope Francis made this denunciation just hours after concluding his journey to Africa, where he saw firsthand the contradictions in this land. During the General Audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday morning, 2 December, the Pope recounted highlights of his visit to Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic, and also spoke about the importance of missionaries and of the young. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

A few days ago I made my first Apostolic Journey to Africa. Africa is beautiful! I thank the Lord for this great gift of his, which allowed me to visit three countries: first Kenya, then Uganda and finally the Central African Republic. Once again I express my gratitude to the civil authorities and to the bishops of these nations for welcoming me, and I thank all of those who collaborated in so many ways. My heartfelt thanks!

Kenya is a country that characterizes the global challenge of our time: to protect creation by reshaping the model of development to be equitable, inclusive and sustainable. All this can be seen in Nairobi, the largest city in East Africa, where wealth and poverty coexist: this is a scandal! Not only in Africa but here



too, everywhere. The coexistence of wealth and poverty is a scandal, it is a disgrace for humanity. Nairobi is where the Office of the United Nations Environmental Programme, which I visited, is located. In Kenya I met the authorities and diplomats, and also the residents of a poor neighbourhood; I met the leaders of various Christian confessions and of other religions, priests and consecrated people. I met young people, so many young people! On each occasion I encouraged them to treasure the great wealth of that country: the natural and spiritual wealth, made up of the earth's resources, of

the younger generations and of the values that shape the wisdom of the people. In today's tragic context I had the joy of bringing Jesus' word of hope: "Stand strong in faith, do not be afraid". This was the motto of the visit, words that are lived each day by many humble and simple people, with noble dignity. They are words witnessed to in a tragic and heroic way by the young people of Garissa University who were killed this past 2 April for being Christians. Their blood is the seed of peace and fraternity for Kenya, for Africa and for the entire world.

Then, in Uganda my visit unfolded under the auspice of the country's martyrs, 50 years after their historic canonization by Bl. Paul VI. This is why the motto was: "You will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). The motto connotes the words that immediately precede: "You will receive power from the Holy Spirit", because it is the Spirit that enlivens the heart and hands of missionary disciples. The entire visit in Uganda took place with the fervour of witness enlivened by the Holy Spirit. Witness in the explicit sense is the service of the catechists, whom I thanked and encouraged for their dedication, which often also involves their families. Witness is that of charity, which I saw firsthand at the House of Nalukolongo, and which sees so many communities and associations committed in service to the poor, the disabled, the sick. Witness is that of the young people who, despite the challenges, go against the tide, safeguard the gift of hope, and seek to live according to the Gospel and not according to the world. Witnesses are the priests, the consecrated men and women who day by day renew their total "yes" to Christ and dedicate themselves with joy to the service of the holy People of God. And there is another group of witnesses, but I will speak of them later. All of this manifold testimony, enlivened by the very same Holy Spirit, is leaven for the entire society, as shown by the effective work performed in Uganda in the fight against AIDS and in the welcoming of refugees.

The third leg of the journey was in the Central African Republic, in the geographical heart of the contin-

*Inflight interview*

### Africa surprises us

On the return flight from Bangui to Rome, on 30 November, Pope Francis spoke with journalists in a press conference moderated by Fr Federico Lombardi, Director of the Holy See Press Office.

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*On the Feast of St Andrew*

### A fraternal embrace

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*Traditions of community in Africa*

### The village as a family

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Francis opens the Holy Door in Bangui

### In the spiritual capital of the world

Today Bangui became the "spiritual capital of the world!". Pope Francis' impassioned announcement in the capital of the Central African Republic on Sunday, 29 November, is also one for the entire Church as she prepares for the Jubilee of Mercy, which will begin in a few days on 8 December.

Opening the Holy Door in one of the world's poorest countries is not only a gesture of closeness for this tormented people, but is also a lesson that resonated many times throughout his journey in Africa.

The Holy Father returned from his three-country visit in Africa on Monday, 30 November, and — as is now tradition — stopped to pray at the Basilica of St Mary Major.



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## VATICAN BULLETIN

### CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Severino Batista de França, OFM Cap., of Nazaré, Brazil. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (25 Nov.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Diamantino Prata de Carvalho, OFM, of Campanha, Brazil. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law. He is succeeded by Bishop Pedro Cunha Cruz, who until now has been Coadjutor of the said Diocese (25 Nov.).

Bishop Cunha Cruz, 50, was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 4 August 1990. He was ordained a bishop on 5 February 2011, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Agbia and Auxiliary of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro. On 20 May 2015 he was appointed Coadjutor of Campanha.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Edmar Perón as Bishop of Paranaguá, Brazil. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Mattiana and Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of São Paulo (25 Nov.).

Bishop Perón, 50, was born in Maringá, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 21 January 1990. He was ordained a bishop on 24 February 2010, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Mattiana and

Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of São Paulo.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Roberto Filippini from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Pisa, Italy, as Bishop of Pescia, Italy. Until now he has been professor, spiritual father at the archdiocesan seminary and chaplain of the prison in Pisa (25 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Filippini, 67, was born in Vinci, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 14 April 1973. He holds a licence in theology and in Sacred Scripture. He has served in parish ministry and as: diocesan vicar; vicar forane and city vicariate of San Martino Parish; head of the interdiocesan school of theology in Camaiole, Italy; rector of Santa Caterina Seminary; professor of fundamental theology and sacred scripture; the Archbishop's delegate for ecumenism; head of the Catharini-ana Library at the seminary and head of the "Beato Niccolò Stenone" Higher Institute of Religious Science.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Emmanuel Nguyễn Hồng Sơn, as Coadjutor Bishop of Ba Rịa, Vietnam. Until now he has been vicar general of the said Diocese (27 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Nguyễn Hồng Sơn, 63, was born in Biên Hòa, Vietnam. He was ordained a priest on 31 December 1980. He holds a licence in dogmatic theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: dean forane of the new Diocese of Ba Rịa; rector of St Thomas Minor Seminary; head of permanent formation for the diocesan clergy; a member of the Episcopal Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith; and secretary of the presbyteral council.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Héctor Vila as Bishop of Whitehorse, Canada. Until now he has been rector of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Toronto, Canada (27 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Vila, 53, was born in Lima, Peru, and he emigrated to Canada in 1979. He holds a diploma in engineering and a degree in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest on 14 May 1995. He has served in parish ministry in Rome and Toronto.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Laurent Akran Mandjo of Yopougon, Ivory Coast. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law. He is succeeded by Bishop Jean Salomon Lezoutié, who until now has been Coadjutor of the said Diocese (28 Nov.).

Bishop Lezoutié, 57, was born in Yopougon, Ivory Coast. He was ordained a priest on 23 July 1989. He

was ordained a bishop on 8 October 2005, subsequent to his appointment as Coadjutor Bishop.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Juraj Jezerinac from his office as Military Ordinary for Croatia. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (30 Nov.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Jure Bogdan as Military Ordinary for

Croatia. Until now he has served as Rector of the Pontifical Croatian College of St Jerome in Rome (30 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Bogdan, 60, was born in Donji Dolac, Croatia. He holds a doctorate in pastoral theology. He was ordained a priest on 22 June 1980. He has served in pastoral ministry and as: spiritual father at

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## Francis receives the Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda

On Monday, 23 November, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, Francis received in audience the Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda, H.E. Sir Rodney Williams, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussions, emphasis was placed on the good bilateral relations between the two countries, strengthened during recent years by the appointment of an Ambassador to the Holy See. Attention then turned to the contribution offered by the Catholic Church to promote the protection

of the human person, as well as in the sectors of education and assistance to those most in need. The hope of a fruitful mutual collaboration was also expressed.

Finally, the parties considered certain themes of regional and global relevance, with particular reference to migratory flows and climate change.



## Meeting of Archbishop Gallagher and US Vice President Biden




On Friday morning, 27 November, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, met with Vice President Joseph Biden of the United States of America

## Next hearing in Vatican trial set for 7 December

The next hearing in the trial regarding the illegal disclosure of confidential information and documents has been postponed to 9:30 am on Monday, 7 December. The new date was set by the Tribunal of Vatican City State during the hearing held in the council chamber on Monday, 30 November, at which all five of the accused were present. The Tribunal appointed 5 December as the deadline for the submission of exhibits. Giuseppe Dalla Torre, the presiding judge, announced at the start of the day's hearing that the defendant Francesca Immacolata Chaouqui had retained private council, Laura Sgrò, to replace Agnese Camilli, her court-appointed attorney. Sgrò requested an extension of at least five days to prepare the defence.

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## At the General Audience

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ent: really, it's the heart of Africa. This visit was really the first in my intentions, because this country is seeking to escape a very difficult period of violent conflicts and so much suffering in the population. This is why I wanted, there in Bangui, a week in advance, to open the first Holy Door of the Jubilee of Mercy, as a sign of faith and hope for that people, and symbolically for all the African peoples most in need of redemption and comfort. Jesus' invitation to the disciples: "Let us cross over to another shore" (cf. Lk 8:22), was the motto for Central Africa. "Cross over to another shore", in the civil sense, means to leave behind war, division, poverty, and choose peace, reconciliation, development. But this presumes a "passing" that takes place in the conscience, in the attitudes and intentions of the people. On this level the contribution of religious communities is crucial. For this reason I met the Evangelical and Muslim communities, sharing prayer and the commitment for peace. With the priests and consecrated people, but also with young people, we shared the joy of feeling that the Risen Lord is with us in the boat, and he guides us to the other shore. Last, in the final Mass at the stadium of Bangui, on the Feast of the Apostle Andrew, we renewed the commitment to follow Jesus, our hope, our peace, Face of Divine Mercy. This last Mass was marvellous: it was full of young people, a stadium of youth! More than half the population of the Central African Republic are minors, they are under 18 years old: a promise for moving forward!

I would like to say a word about the missionaries: men and women who have left their homelands, everything... When they were young they went there, living a life of so very much work, sometimes sleeping on the ground. At one point in Bangui I found a nun, she was Italian. You could see she was elderly: "How old are you?". I asked, "81" – "Not very, two years older than me". – This Sister has been there since she was 23 or 24 years old: all her life! And so many like her. She was with a little girl. And the girl, in Italian, called her "Grandma". And the nun said to me: "I am not really from here, but from a neighbouring country, from Congo; I came here in a canoe, with this little girl". This is how the missionaries are: courageous. "What do you do, Sister?" – "I'm a nurse and I also studied here to become an obstetrician and I've delivered 3,280 babies". This is what she told me. An entire life for the life, for the lives of others. And there are so very many like this nun: so many Sisters, so many priests, so many men and women religious who burn up their lives to proclaim Jesus Christ. It is beautiful to see this. It's beautiful.

I would like to say a word to the young people. There aren't many of them, because the birth rate is a luxury, it seems, in Europe: zero % birthrate, 1% birthrate. I am addressing the young people: think about what you are doing with your life.

Think about this nun and about the many like her, who have given their life and so many have died there. The missionary spirit is not proselytizing: this nun told me that the Muslim women go to them because they know that the Sisters are good nurses who take good care of them, and they don't catechize in order to convert them! They bear witness; then they do catechesis to those who want it. Witness is the great heroic missionary spirit of the Church. Pro-

claim Jesus Christ with your life! I am addressing the young; think about what you are doing with your life. It is time to think and ask the Lord to make you feel his will. Please, do not rule out this possibility of becoming a missionary, to bring love, humanity, faith to other countries. Not to proselytize, no. That is done by those who are seeking something else. Faith is preached first by witness and then through words. Slowly.

Together let us praise the Lord for this pilgrimage on African soil, and let ourselves be guided by his key words: "Stand strong in faith, do not be afraid"; "You will be my witnesses"; "Let us cross over to another shore".

Last Sunday we began the Season of Advent. I urge everyone to live this time of preparation for the birth of Jesus, Face of the Merciful Father, in the extraordinary context of the Jubilee, with the spirit of charity, more attention to those who are in need, and with moments of personal and community prayer.

### SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including those from England, Australia, Korea and the United States of America. My special greeting goes to the group "Up with People" for sharing their music with us. Upon you and your families I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you all.

I address a greeting to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. May the God of peace stimulate you, dear *young people*, to be promoters of dialogue and understanding; may he help you, dear *sick people*, to look to the Cross of Christ to learn to face suffering with serenity; and may he favour in you, dear *newlyweds*, the growth of peace and love in your new family.



## VATICAN BULLETIN

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the Archdiocesan Minor Seminary.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Vincent Kirabo as Bishop of Hoima, Uganda. Until now he has been professor at St Mary's National Major Seminary Ggaba in Kampala. (30 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Kirabo, 60, was born in Kyanaisoke, Uganda. He was ordained a priest on 9 September 1979. He holds a master's in education and a licence in biblical theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the Diocesan Commission for Vocations; professor and rector of St John Bosco Minor Seminary; diocesan treasurer; professor and treasurer of the Uganda Martyrs' National Major Seminary Alokolum, in Gulu.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Luis Albeiro Cortés Rendón as Auxiliary Bishop of Pereira, Colombia, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Fídeloma. Until now he has Bishop of Vélez, Colombia (30 Nov.).

Bishop Cortés Rendón, 63, was born in Quimbaya-Quindío, Colombia. He was ordained a priest on 8 December 1978. He was ordained a bishop on 27 June 2003, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Vélez.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Martín de Elizalde, OSB, of Nueve de Julio, Argentina. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law. He is succeeded by Bishop Ariel Edgardo Torrado Mosconi, who until now has been Coadjutor of the said Diocese (1 Dec.).

Bishop Torrado Mosconi, 54, was born in Veinticinco de Mayo, Argentina. He was ordained a priest on 17 November 1990. He was ordained a bishop on 13 December 2008, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop Vicus Pacati and Auxiliary Santiago del Estero, Argentina.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Víctor Alejandro Aguilar Ledesma as Auxiliary Bishop of Morelia, Mexico, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Castulo. Until now he has been parish priest of El Señor de la Clemencia parish (1 Dec.).

Bishop-elect Aguilar Ledesma, 50, was born in San Guillermo, Mexico. He was ordained a priest on 10 December 1989. He holds a licence in the Apostolate of the Family. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the Secretariate for Evangelization and of catechesis; chaplain to the Clarissian sisters; diocesan coordinator of the

Apostolate of the Family; assistant to the Christian Family Movement.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Herculano Medina Garfias as Auxiliary Bishop of Morelia, Mexico, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Gegi. Until now he has been treasurer of the Archiepiscopal seminary of Morelia (1 Dec.).

Bishop-elect Medina Garfias, 48, was born in Rincón de Cedeno, Mexico. He was ordained a priest on 15 February 1996. He holds a licence in the Social Doctrine of the Church. He has served as: head of the social apostolate and of *Caritas*; spiritual director and professor at the Archdiocesan seminary; chaplain to various religious communities.

### CARDINAL TAKES POSSESSION

On Sunday, 29 November, Cardinal John Atcherley Dew, Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand, took possession of the Title of Sant'Ippolito.

### NECROLOGY

Bishop José Benedito Simão of Assio, Brazil, at age 64 (27 Nov.).

Bishop Federico Ocampo Escaler, SJ, Bishop emeritus of Ipil, the Philippines, at age 93 (28 Nov.).

Press conference during the return flight

# Africa surprises us

The following is the English text of the transcript of Pope Francis' press conference during his return flight from Bangui to Rome, on Monday, 30 November. The meeting was introduced and moderated by Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ, Director of the Holy See Press Office.

(Bernard Namunane) *In Kenya, you met poor families in Kangemi. The same day you went to Kasarani Stadium, where you met the young people. What were your feelings as you listened to their stories? And what must be done to end injustices? Thank you.*

I have spoken out forcefully on this issue on at least three occasions: at the first meeting of popular movements in the Vatican; at the second meeting in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia; and then on a couple of other occasions, both in *Evangelii Gaudium* in passing, and then more clearly and forcefully in *Laudato Si'*. I don't remember the statistics – so I ask you not to publish the statistics that I am going to quote because I don't know if they are accurate – but I have heard it said that some 80% of the world's wealth is in the hands of 1% of its people. I don't know if that is true but if it isn't true, it is to the point, because that is really the way things are. If any of you know the statistic, I would ask you to report it, to be correct. It is an economic system centred on money, the god of money. I remember once meeting an important ambassador, not a Catholic, who told me, in French: "*Nous sommes tous tombés dans l'idolatrie de l'argent*". If things continue this way, nothing will change. You asked me what I felt when I heard the testimonies of the young people and again in Kangemi, where I also spoke out about people's rights. I was saddened. And I think of how people are unaware of these things.... It's painful. Yesterday, for example, I visited the children's hospital: the only one in Bangui and for the entire country! In the intensive care unit, they lack the apparatus for oxygen. There were many malnourished children there. The physician told me: "Most of these children are going to die because they have malaria, serious cases of malaria, and they are undernourished". The Lord – I don't want to preach! – but the Lord always rebuked his people, the people of Israel, for idolatry (this is something we take seriously, because we venerate it as the word of God). It is idolatry when a man or a woman loses his or her "identity card" as a child of God, and prefers to seek a god more to their liking. And this is how it begins. Unless humanity changes, there will continue to be poverty, tragedies, wars, children dying of hunger, injustice.... What does this percentage which possesses 80% of the world's wealth think? This is not communism. This is truth. And the truth is not always easy to see. I thank you for asking this question, because it is life....

(Mumo Makau) *I would like to know,*

*what was the most memorable moment of your trip to Africa. Will you come back to this continent soon? And where are you going next?*

Let's begin with the last question. If things go well, I think the next trip will be to Mexico. But the dates are not yet definite. Second, will I come back to Africa? Well, I don't know.... I'm elderly, and traveling takes its toll.... As for the first question, which moment [particularly struck me].... I think of all those people, the joy, the ability to celebrate, even on an empty stomach. For me Africa was a surprise. I thought: God surprises us; but Africa surprises us too! So many different things.... the crowds, the crowds... They felt they had a visitor. They have such a great sense of hospitality. In all three countries, I met with this hospitality, because they were happy that someone had come to visit. Then again, each country has its own identity. Kenya is a bit more modern, developed. Uganda has the identity of the martyrs: the Ugandan people, Catholics and Anglicans alike, revere the martyrs. I went to both shrines, first the Anglican and then the Catholic, and the memory of the martyrs is what gives the people their identity. The courage to



give one's life for an ideal.... And then the Central African Republic: the desire for peace, for reconciliation, for forgiveness. Until four years ago, they lived together – Catholics, Protestants, Muslims – as brothers and sisters. Yesterday I visited the Evangelicals, who are doing good work, and they came to Mass in the evening. Today I went to the mosque; I prayed in the mosque. And the Imam joined me in the popemobile to ride around the small stadium.... This is the thing: small gestures, this is what people are looking for, because there is a small group which – I understand – is Christian or calls itself Christian; they are very violent; I don't understand it really... but it is not ISIS, it is something else. People want peace. Now there are going to be elections; they chose an interim gov-

ernment and they chose the mayor [of Bangui] as the interim president; she is going to hold elections. But they are looking for peace among themselves; reconciliation, not hatred.

(Philip Pulella, Reuters) *I would like to ask you this question. In Uganda, speaking off the cuff, you mentioned that corruption exists everywhere, even in the Vatican. So my question: what is the importance of a free, independent press for rooting out such corruption, wherever it occurs?*

For me, a free press, whether independent or religious, provided it is professional – because whether independent or religious, what is important is true professionalism, so that the news will not be manipulated – is important, because reporting injustice and corruption is something important, because it says: "Look, this is a case of corruption". And then those responsible need to do something, they have to determine whether it is true and press charges. But a professional press has to tell the whole story: without falling into the three most common sins: disinformation – telling half the truth and not the other; calumny – when an unprofessional press throws mud at people, true or not; and defamation – saying things that ruin a person's reputation, things perhaps from the past which have little to do with the present... These are the three faults which detract from the professionalism of the press. But we need professionalism. The right kind: this is the way things are – this, this and that. And in the case of corruption, to look carefully at the facts and state them: yes, here is a case of corruption, because of this, this and this.... A journalist who is a real professional, if he makes a mistake, will beg pardon: I thought that was the way it was, but then I realized it wasn't. In this way things work out. This is very important.

(Philippine de Saint-Pierre) *Today more than ever we realize that religious fundamentalism threatens the entire planet. Faced with this danger, do you think that religious dignitaries should intervene more in the political sphere?*

Intervening in the political sphere: if that means "being a politician", then no. Let them be a good priest, imam or rabbi: that is their vocation. But in an indirect way we do get involved in politics when we preach values, true values, and one of the greatest of those values is fraternity, among ourselves. We are all children of God; we all have the same Father. In this sense, we must support a politics of unity, reconciliation and – a word I don't like, but I must use it – tolerance. But not only tolerance, but also coexistence, friendship! That's how it is. Fundamentalism is a sickness which exists in all religions. We Catholics have some people – not just a few, but a lot – who believe they possess absolute truth and go around slandering and defaming everyone else; they do

a lot of harm. I say this because it's my Church, but it is all of us! And we have to fight against it. Religious fundamentalism is not religious. Why? Because God is missing. It is idolatrous, just as money is idolatrous. Being political, in the sense of winning over people who have this tendency... that is the "politics" in which we religious leaders must engage. But fundamentalism, which always ends up in tragedy or crime, is something evil, but there is a bit of it in every religion.

(Cristiana Caricato) *While we were in Bangui this morning, there was another hearing in the trial involving Msgr Valledo Balda, Ms Chauqui and the two journalists. My question is one that many people have also been asking us. How did these two persons get appointed? How is it possible that, in the reform process which you have initiated, two persons of this sort could have been named to a Commission, the COSEA? Do you think you made a mistake?*

I believe a mistake was made. Msgr Valledo Balda joined the Commission because of the position which he had, and has had, until now. He was the secretary of the Prefecture for Economic Affairs, and so he was named to the Commission. How Ms Chauqui became a part of it, I am not sure, but I believe I am not incorrect in saying – but I am not certain – that it was Msgr Valledo who presented her as someone knowledgeable about the business world.... They did their work, and when their work was completed, the members of the COSEA continued in some positions within the Vatican. This was also the case for Valledo Balda. Ms Chauqui did not continue in the Vatican because she had been brought in for the Commission; she did not stay on. Some people say she was angry about this, but the judges will tell us the truth about their intent and their actions.... For me [what has emerged] has not been a surprise, it hasn't made me lose any sleep, because they have shown exactly the work undertaken by the Commission of Cardinals – the "C9" – to search out corruption and wrongdoing.

Here too I want to say something – not about Valledo Balda and Chauqui, but something more general, and then I will return to them, if you want. The word "corruption" – one of the two Kenyans mentioned it. Thirteen days before St John Paul II died, Cardinal Ratzinger led the Way of the Cross and spoke of "filth" in the Church: he denounced it! He was the first. Then the Pope died during the Easter Octave – this was Good Friday –, Pope John Paul II died, and Cardinal Ratzinger became Pope. But during the Mass *pro eligendo Pontifice* – he was the Dean – Cardinal Ratzinger spoke about the same thing, and we elected him for his ability to speak freely. So all this talk about corruption in the Vatican goes back to that time. In this particular case, I authorized the judges to proceed, because what matters,





for the defence, is the formulation of the charges. I have not read the specific, technical charges. I wanted the trial to conclude before 8 December, for the Year of Mercy, but I don't think this can be done, since I want all the defendants' lawyers to have time to prepare their defences, that there be the freedom of defence, complete freedom. And so, that is how they were selected, the whole story. But there has been corruption for a long time.

(Cristiana Caricato) *But what do you intend to do? How do you intend to ensure that such incidents do not happen again?*

Well... I thank God that these are not the days of Lucrezia Borgia! [laughter] I don't know, continue with the cardinals, with the commission to clean things up.... Thank you.

(Néstor Pongutá Puerto) *I would like to ask you a particular question. It is a specific matter that has to do with political change in Latin America, including Argentina, your country, in which there is now Mr Macri after 12 years of "Kirchnerism", and which is changing a little.... What do you think of these changes, of how Latin American politics are taking a new direction, of the continent from which you yourself come?*

I have heard some opinions, but really about this geopolitical question, at this time I do not know what to say, really. I just don't know. Because, there are problems in many countries along these lines, but I really do not know why or how it began, I do not know why. Really. That there are many Latin American countries in these changing situations, this is true, but I am not really able to explain it.

(Jürgen Baez) *AIDS is the leading cause of death among young Africans. You met with HIV-positive children and listened to a moving testimony in Uganda. Yet you said very little on this subject. We know that prevention is fundamental. We also know that condoms are not the only way to stop the epidemic. But we know that they are an important part of the response. Is it not perhaps time to change the Church's position on this issue? To allow the use of condoms for the purpose of preventing further infection?*

It strikes me that the question is too narrow, even one-sided. Yes, this is one method. The Church's moral teaching is – I think – uncertain about whether it has to do with the fifth or the sixth commandment: protect life or keep sexual relations open to life? But that is not the problem. The problem is bigger than that. The question makes me

think of what they once asked Jesus: "Tell us, Master, is it permissible to heal on the Sabbath?" It is a duty to heal! This question... is it permissible? But malnutrition, exploitation, slave labour, the lack of drinking water: these are the problems. Let's not worry about using this or that bandage for a small wound. The big wound is social injustice, environmental injustice, the injustice I mentioned with exploitation and malnutrition. This is injustice. I don't like to descend to this kind of casuistry while people are dying from lack of water, food or housing.... When everyone is healed and when these tragic maladies provoked by man no longer exist, whether as a result of social injustice or greed – think of the arms trade! – when these problems no longer exist, then I think we can ask a question like: "Is it permissible to heal on the Sabbath?" Why do we continue to manufacture and sell arms? Wars are the cause of an even greater number of deaths.... I would say not to think about whether it is permissible or not to heal on the Sabbath. I would say to mankind: work for justice, and when everyone is healed, when there is no injustice in the world, then we can speak about the Sabbath.

(Marco Ansaldo): *There is now a crisis on the international level, between Turkey and Russia. Turkey shot down a Russian plane for straying into Turkish airspace for 17 seconds; there were accusations and refusals to apologize on both sides, triggering a crisis which was frankly unnecessary in this "third world war fought piecemeal", to use your term. My question is: What is the Vatican's position on this? But I would like to press further and ask you if perchance you have considered going for the 101st anniversary of the events in Armenia, in April next year, as you did last year in Turkey.*

Last year I promised the three [Armenian] Patriarchs that I would go: the promise has been made. I don't know if it will be possible, but I did promise. Then, the wars: wars come about through ambition, wars – and here I am not referring to a just war, a war waged to defend oneself from an unjust aggressor – wars are an "industry". History shows that many times a country, when the economy is in trouble... [people say,] "Let's start a war", and the "deficit" ends. War is a business: commerce in weapons. Do terrorists make their own weapons? Yes, maybe some small ones. Who gives them the weaponry to wage war? There is a whole web of interested parties, behind which there is money or power: imperial power or economic power.... For years we have been at war and it is getting worse: the "pieces" of this piecemeal war are

growing bigger.... What do I think? I don't know what "the Vatican" thinks, but what do I think? That war is a sin, a sin against humanity. Wars destroy mankind. They lead to exploitation, human trafficking, so many things.... And this must stop. I said this to the United Nations on two occasions, here in Kenya and in New York. May your work not be a "declarationist nominalism", but yield results, bringing about peace. Many things are being done: here in Africa I have seen how the UN peacekeeping forces work.... But this is not enough. War is not of God. God is the God of peace. God made the world, he made everything beautiful and then, according to the biblical account, one brother kills another brother: the first war; it was the first world war, and it was between brothers. I do not know, this is what comes to mind. And I say it with great sadness.... Thank you.

(François Beaudonnet) *Today in Paris the Conference on climate change opens. Are we sure that the COP21 will be the beginning of a solution? Thank you.*

I'm not sure, but I can tell you that it is either now or never! Since the first Conference, which I believe was held in Tokyo, until now, little has been done, and every year the problems grow worse. When I spoke to a group of university students about the kind of world we will leave our children, one of them said to me: "Are you sure that there will be children of this generation?". We are at the limit! We are on the verge of suicide, to use a strong word. I am sure that almost all of those in Paris, at the COP21, are conscious of this and want to do something about it. The other day I read that in Greenland the glaciers have lost millions of tons. In the Pacific, one country is buying land from another country in order to move there, because within 20 years their own country will no longer be around.... But I am confident. I trust these people, that they will accomplish something; because I am sure that they have the good will to do so, and I hope that it will happen. I am praying for this.

(Delia Gallagher) *What do Islam and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad have to say to today's world?*

I don't really understand the question.... One can dialogue, they have values. Many values. They have many values and those values are constructive. I also have the experience of being friends – this is a strong word, "friends" – with a Muslim: he is a world leader. We can talk: he has his values, I have mine. He prays, and I pray. Many values.... For example, prayer, fasting, religious values but not only. One cannot write off a religion because there are some groups – or sometimes many groups – of fundamentalists. It is a historical fact that there have always been wars of religion. And we too have to ask forgiveness. Catherine de Medici was no saint! Then there was the Thirty Years War, the eve of St Bartholomew.... We too have to ask pardon for cases of fundamentalist extrem-

ism, for the wars of religion. Anyway, [Muslims] have their values and we can dialogue with them. Today I was in the mosque and I prayed; and the Imam wanted to come with me to circle the little stadium where many people were not able to fit.... And there, on the popemobile, were the Pope and the Imam. We could talk. As everywhere, there are people who have values, religious people, and there are people who don't.... But how many wars, and not only wars of religion, have we Christians waged? Muslims were not responsible for the sack of Rome! They have values, they have values.

(Marta Calderón) *We want to know something more about your visit to Mexico and also whether, since you want to visit countries experiencing problems, you are thinking of visiting Colombia or, in the future, any other countries in Latin America, like Peru...?*

You know, traveling at my age is not easy.... You can do it, but it takes its toll.... Anyway I am going to Mexico. First of all to visit Our Lady, because she is the Mother of America. That is why I am going to Mexico City. Were it not for Our Lady of Guadalupe, I would not go to Mexico City, because the idea behind my travels is to visit three or four cities which have never been visited by Popes. But I'll go to Mexico for Our Lady. Then I'll go to Chiapas in the South, on the border with Guatemala, and then to Morelia, and almost certainly, on the way back to Rome, I'll spend a day or part of a day in Ciudad Juárez. As for other Latin American countries, I have been invited to go in 2017 to Aparecida, since Our Lady of Aparecida is the patroness of America for Portuguese speakers – and from there I could visit another country... say Mass in Aparecida and then.... But I don't know, there are no plans.... Thank you.

(Mark Masai) *What do you have to say to the world which only thinks of Africa as being torn apart by wars and full of destruction?*

Africa is a victim. Africa has always been exploited by other powers. From Africa people came to America, sold as slaves. There are powers who seek only to take the great wealth of Africa, which is perhaps the richest continent.... But they don't think about helping the country to grow, about making sure that everyone has a job.... Exploitation. Africa is a martyr. Historically, it has been a martyr to exploitation. Perhaps people who associate Africa only with disasters and wars don't really understand the harm done to humanity by some forms of development. That is why I love Africa, because Africa has been a victim of other powers.

I thank all of you for your work. Now it is time for lunch, but they tell me that today you are fasting, since you have to work on this interview! Thank you very much for your work, your questions and your interest. I will only say this: I say what I know, and what I don't know I don't say because I don't know. I don't make things up. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Francis reminds clergy, religious and seminarians that God calls them to serve

## Enter the door of Christ

*At St Mary's School in Nairobi, the Pope met with the clergy, religious and seminarians of Kenya on Thursday afternoon, 26 November. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's address.*

*Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!* (Praised be Jesus Christ!)

*[Milele na Milele. Amina.]* (Now and forever. Amen.)

*[In English:]* Thanks for being here. I wish I could speak in English, but my English is not very good. I have listened carefully and there is much that I would like to say to each and every one of you.... It is easier for me to speak in my native tongue; Msgr Miles can translate. Thank you for understanding.

*[In Spanish:]* During the reading of the letter of St Paul, I was struck by these words: "May God who began a good work in you bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus!" (Phil 1:6).

All of you were chosen by the Lord; he chose each one of us. He began a good work on the day he looked at us in baptism, and then later, when he looked at us and said: "If you wish, come with me". So we lined up and began our journey. But it was he who began the journey, not ourselves. In the Gospel we read about one of the people Jesus healed, who then wanted to follow him. But Jesus told him "no". If we want to follow Jesus Christ – in the priesthood or consecrated life – we have to enter by the door! And the door is Christ! He is the one who calls, who begins, who does the work. Some people want to enter by the window.... It doesn't work that way. So please, if any of you have friends who came in by the window, embrace them and tell them it would be better to leave and go serve God in another way, because a work which Jesus himself did not begin, by the door, will never be brought to completion.

This should make us realize that we have been chosen: "Jesus looked at me; I was chosen". I am always struck by the beginning of the 16th chapter of Ezekiel: "You were the child of strangers; you were forsaken, but I passed by, I cleansed you and I took you to myself". This is the path! This is the work which the Lord began when he looked at us.

There are people who don't know why God calls them, but they know that he has. Don't worry: God will make you understand why he called you. Others want to follow the Lord for some benefit. We remember the mother of James and John, who said: "Lord, I beg you, when you cut the cake, give the biggest slice to my sons.... Let one of them sit at your right and the other at your left". We can be tempted to follow Jesus out of ambition: ambition for money or power. All of us can say: "When I first followed Jesus, I was not like that". But it happened to other people, and little by little, they sowed it in our heart like weeds.



In our life as disciples of Jesus, there must be no room for personal ambition, for money, for worldly importance. We follow Jesus to the very last step of his earthly life: the cross. He will make sure you rise again, but you have to keep following him to the end. I tell you this in all seriousness, because the Church is not a business or an NGO. The Church is a mystery: the mystery of Jesus, who looks at each of us and says: "Follow me".

So let this be clear: Jesus is the one who calls. We have to enter by the door when he calls, not by the window; and we have to follow in his footsteps.

Obviously, when Jesus chooses us, he does not "canonize" us; we continue to be the same old sinners. If there is anyone here – a priest or a religious – who doesn't think that he or she is a sinner, please raise your hand.... We are all sinners, starting with me. But the tenderness and love of Jesus keep us going.

"May he who began a good work in you bring it to completion". This is what keeps us going, what the love of Jesus began in us. Do you remember any time in the Gospel when the apostle James wept? Yes or no? Or when the apostle John wept? Or when any other apostle wept? The Gospel tells us that only one of the apostles wept: the one who knew that he was a sinner, so great a sinner that he betrayed his Lord. And once he realized this, he wept.... Then Jesus made him the Pope! Who can understand Jesus? It's a mystery!

So never stop weeping. When priests and religious no longer weep, something is wrong. We need to weep for our infidelity, to weep for all the pain in our world, to weep for all those people who are cast aside, to weep for the elderly who are abandoned, for children who are killed, for the things we don't understand. We need to weep when people ask us: "why?". None of us has all the answers to all those questions "why?".

A Russian writer once asked why children suffer. Whenever I see a

child with cancer, a tumour or some rare disease, I too ask myself why this child has to suffer.... And I don't have an answer. I just look to Jesus on the cross. There are situations in life for which we can only weep, and look to Jesus on the cross. That is the only answer we have for certain injustices, certain kinds of pain, certain situations in life.

St Paul told his disciples: "Remember Jesus Christ; remember Christ crucified". Whenever a consecrated man or woman, or a priest forgets Christ crucified, sad to say, he or she falls into an ugly sin, a sin which disgusts God, which makes God vomit. It is the sin of being tepid, lukewarm. Dear priests, sisters and brothers, religious men and women, beware of falling into the sin of tepidity.

What else can I say, from my heart to yours? I would say, never stray from Jesus. In other words, never stop praying. "But Father, sometimes it's so tiresome to pray.... It wearies us. It makes us fall asleep...." So sleep before the Lord: that is also a way of praying, but stay there, stay there before him and pray! Don't stop praying! Once consecrated persons stop praying, their souls wither; they grow ugly, like dried figs. Ugly. The soul of a man or woman religious, or a priest who doesn't pray is an ugly soul! I'm sorry, but that's the way it is....

I leave you with this question: Do I take away time from sleep, time from listening to the radio, watching television or reading the papers, in order to pray? Or would I rather do those other things? Prayer means being in the presence of God who began a good work and is bringing it to completion in each of you....

The last thing I would tell you – before telling you a few other things too! – is that when we let ourselves be chosen by Jesus, it is to serve: to serve the people of God, to serve the poor, men and women who are outcasts, living on the fringes of society, to serve children and the elderly. But also to serve people who

are unaware of their own pride and sin, to serve Jesus in them. Letting ourselves be chosen by Jesus means letting ourselves be chosen to serve, and not to be served.

A year or so ago, there was a gathering of priests – the nuns will get off free on this one! – and during the daily spiritual exercises one group of priests had to serve tables. Some of them complained, saying: "No! We should be served; after all, we paid, we paid to be served!". Please, let us never have any of this in the Church! To serve! Not to be served or to use other people.

That is what I wanted to say, what I felt when I heard those words of St Paul, who trusted that the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

An elderly cardinal – actually, he is only a year older than I am! – once told me that when he goes to the cemetery and sees the graves of dedicated missionaries and religious, he wonders: "Why don't we canonize this or that one tomorrow", because they spent their lives in serving others. I am always moved when, after Mass, I speak with a priest or religious who tells me: "I've worked in this hospital, or with autistic children, or in the missions of the Amazon, or this or that other place for 30 or 40 years". I find it very moving. That man or woman understood that following Jesus means serving others, not being served by others.

So then, I thank you very much. But you are thinking: What a rude Pope this is! He told us what to do, he beat up on us, and he never thanked us for what we do. But that is what I want to do now, the last thing I want to say, the cherry, as it were, on the cake. Thank you. I thank you for your courage in following Jesus. Thank you all the times you realize that you yourselves are sinners, and for all the tender caresses which you give to those who need them. Thank you for all those times when you helped so many people to die in peace. Thank you for "burning" your lives in hope. Thank you for letting yourselves be helped and corrected and forgiven each day. And as I thank you, I also ask you not to forget to pray for me, because I need it. Thank you very much!

*At the end of the meeting, the Pontiff took his leave with the following which he said extemporaneously:*

I thank you for the time we have spent together, but now I must leave, because there are sick children with cancer and I would like to see them and give them a caress.

I sincerely thank you seminarians, whom I did not mention, but you are included in all that I said. And should someone not have the courage to take this path, there is still time, seek another kind of work, get married and have a family. Thank you.



The Pope expresses his wish that the COP21 achieve a global agreement on the environment

## A change of course

*The Pope's second day in Kenya concluded at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. On Thursday, 26 November, the Holy Father visited the offices and addressed the assembly in Spanish. The following is the English text of his discourse.*

I would like to thank Madame Sahle-Work Zewde, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, for her kind invitation and words of welcome, as well as Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, and Mr Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. I take this occasion to greet the personnel and all those associated with the institutions who are here present.

On my way to this hall, I was asked to plant a tree in the park of the United Nations Centre. I was happy to carry out this simple symbolic act, which is so meaningful in many cultures.

Planting a tree is first and foremost an invitation to continue the battle against phenomena like deforestation and desertification. It reminds us of the importance of safeguarding and responsibly administering those “richly biodiverse lungs of our planet”, which include, on this continent, “the Congo basins”, a place essential “for the entire earth and for the future of humanity”. It also points to the need to appreciate and encourage “the commitment of international agencies and civil society organizations which draw public attention to these issues and offer critical cooperation, employing legitimate means of pressure, to ensure that each government carries out its

proper and inalienable responsibility to preserve its country's environment and natural resources, without capitulating to spurious local or international interests” (*Laudato Si'*, 38).

Planting a tree is also an incentive to keep trusting, hoping, and above all working in practice to reverse all those situations of injustice and deterioration which we currently experience.

*“It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good and lead to manipulating information in order to protect their own plans and projects”*

In a few days an important meeting on climate change will be held in Paris, where the international community as such will once again confront these issues. It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good and lead to manipulating information in order to protect their own plans and projects.

In this international context, we are confronted with a choice which cannot be ignored: either to improve or to destroy the environment. Every step we take, whether large or small, individual or collective, in caring for creation opens a sure path for that “generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings” (*ibid.*, 211).

“The climate is a common good,

belonging to all and meant for all”; “climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods; it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” (*ibid.*, 23 and 25). Our response to this challenge “needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged” (*ibid.*, 93). For “the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion” (*Address to the United Nations*, 25 September 2015).

COP21 represents an important stage in the process of developing a new energy system which depends on a minimal use of fossil fuels, aims at energy efficiency and makes use of energy sources with little or no carbon content. We are faced with a great political and economic obligation to rethink and correct the dysfunctions and distortions of the current model of development.

The Paris Agreement can give a clear signal in this direction, provided that, as I stated before the UN General Assembly, we avoid “every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective” (*ibid.*). For this reason, I express my hope that COP21 will achieve a global and “transformational” agreement based on the principles of solidarity, justice, equality and participation; an agreement which targets three complex and in-



terdependent goals: lessening the impact of climate change, fighting poverty and ensuring respect for human dignity.

For all the difficulties involved, there is a growing “conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home” (*Laudato Si'*, 164). No country “can act independently of a common responsibility. If we truly desire positive change, we have to humbly accept our interdependence” (*Address to Popular Movements*, 9 July 2015). The problem arises whenever we think of interdependence as a synonym for domination, or the subjection of some to the interests of others, of the powerless to the powerful.

What is needed is sincere and open dialogue, with responsible cooperation on the part of all: political authorities, the scientific community, the business world and civil society. Positive examples are not lacking; they demonstrate that genuine cooperation between politics, science and business can achieve significant results.

At the same time we believe that “human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good and making a new start” (*Laudato Si'*, 205). This conviction leads us to hope that, whereas the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, “humanity at the dawn of the 21st century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities” (*ibid.*, 165). If this is to happen, the economy and politics need to be placed at the service of peoples, with the result that “human beings, in harmony with nature, structure the entire system of production and distribution in such a way that the abilities and needs of each individual find suitable expression in social life”. Far from an idealistic utopia, this is a realistic prospect which makes the human person and human dignity the point of departure and the goal of

United Nations' directors greet the Holy Father

### One human village

“This is the time when a lot is being done in order to make the UN more fit and even more relevant than ever”. Ms Sahle-Work Zewde, Director-General, thus greeted the Holy Father, welcoming him to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). She also recalled the Pope's “historic address” in September at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It was a message, which she said, “set the tone, even before world leaders started engaging in the post-2015 goals”. This, she said, is a “testament to the vital mission you share with the UN mainly to build a better world for all and a more peaceful planet”.

Zewde also underlined the sustainable development goals “which opened an era of hope and expectations and also an opportunity for a general partnership in our global village of one human village”. This year, she continued, “will certainly be remembered as one of the rare times when concerted and extraordinary global efforts were made to contribute to the betterment of humanity”.

Mr Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, echoed this sentiment, thanking the Pope for *Laudato Si'*, in which he called for the improvement of the conditions of the poor. In Africa, Mr Clos continued, there are a variety of challenges such as increasingly large megalopolises and the concentration of extreme poverty. In this sense, the Executive Director knows that Pope Francis and the Holy See support and will continue to support the fight for better conditions for the poor in the cities.



Lastly, Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, underlined how the Pope's voice “carries a renewed sense of urgency that the world needs to hear and is hearing”. “As both a leader of faith and of our global community”, he said, “your voice reaches across many boundaries [and] you have spoken to the challenges of our time with compassion, clarity and empathy”. Francis, he said, has “shown unwavering commitment to confronting injustice, inhumanity”, he said. In *Laudato Si'*, “you share a vision of the world where people and nature can live in harmony”. And “you remind each of us of our responsibility and obligation to do what our conscience tells us is right”.

## At the United Nations

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everything (cf. *Address to Popular Movements*, 9 July 2015).

This much-needed change of course cannot take place without a substantial commitment to education and training. Nothing will happen unless political and technical solutions are accompanied by a process of education which proposes new ways of living. A new culture. This calls for an educational process which fosters in boys and girls, women and men, young people and adults, the adoption of a culture of care – care for oneself, care for others, care for the environment – in place of a culture of waste, a “throw-away culture” where people use and discard themselves, others and the environment. By promoting an “awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of the future to be shared with everyone”, we will favour the development of new convictions, attitudes and lifestyles. “A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal” (*Laudato Si'*, 202). We still have time.

Many are the faces, the stories and the evident effects on the lives of the thousands of persons whom the culture of deterioration and waste has allowed to be sacrificed before the idols of profits and consumption. We need to be alert to one sad sign of the “globalization of indifference”: the fact that we are gradually growing accustomed to the suffering of others, as if it were something normal (cf. *Message for World Food Day*, 16 October 2013, 2), or even worse, becoming resigned to such extreme and scandalous kinds of “using and discarding” and social exclusion as new forms of slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution and trafficking in organs. “There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty aggravated by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever” (*Laudato Si'*, 25). Many lives, many stories, many dreams have been shipwrecked in our day. We cannot remain indifferent in the face of this. We have no right.

Together with neglect of the environment, we have witnessed for some time now a rapid process of urbanization, which in many cases has unfortunately led to a “disproportionate and unruly growth of many cities which have become unhealthy to live in [and] inefficient” (*ibid.*, 44). There we increasingly see the troubling symptoms of a social breakdown which spawns “increased violence and a rise in new forms of social aggression, drug trafficking, growing drug use by young people, loss of identity” (*ibid.*, 46), a lack of rootedness and social anonymity (cf. *ibid.*, 149).

Here I would offer a word of encouragement to all those working on local and international levels to ensure that the process of urbanization

becomes an effective means for development and integration. This means working to guarantee for everyone, especially those living in outlying neighbourhoods, the basic rights to dignified living conditions and to land, lodging and labour. There is a need to promote projects of city planning and maintenance of public areas which move in this direction and take into consideration the views of local residents; this will help to eliminate the many instances of inequality and pockets of urban poverty which are not simply economic but also, and above all, social and environmental. The forthcoming Habitat-III Conference, planned for Quito in October 2016, could be a significant occasion for identifying ways of responding to these issues.

In a few days, Nairobi will host the 10th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. In 1967, my predecessor Pope Paul VI, contemplating an increasingly interdependent world and foreseeing the current reality of globalization, reflected on how commercial relationships between States could prove a

fundamental element for the development of peoples or, on the other hand, a cause of extreme poverty and exclusion (*Populorum Progressio*, 56-62). While recognizing that much has been done in this area, it seems that we have yet to attain an international system of commerce which is equitable and completely at the service of the battle against poverty and exclusion. Commercial relationships between States, as an indispensable part of relations between peoples, can do as much to harm the environment as to renew it and preserve it for future generations.

It is my hope that the deliberations of the forthcoming Nairobi Conference will not be a simple balancing of conflicting interests, but a genuine service to the care of our common home and the integral development of persons, especially those in greatest need. I would especially like to echo the concern of all those groups engaged in projects of development and health care – including those religious congregations which serve the poor and those most excluded – with regard to

agreements on intellectual property and access to medicines and essential health care. Regional free trade treaties dealing with the protection of intellectual property, particularly in the areas of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, should not only maintain intact the powers already granted to States by multilateral agreements, but should also be a means for ensuring a minimum of health care and access to basic treatment for all. Multilateral discussions, for their part, should allow poorer countries the time, the flexibility and the exceptions needed for them to comply with trade regulations in an orderly and relatively smooth manner. Interdependence and the integration of economies should not bear the least detriment to existing systems of health care and social security; instead, they should promote their creation and good functioning. Certain health issues, like the elimination of malaria and tuberculosis, treatment of so-called orphan diseases, and neglected sectors of tropical medicine, require urgent political attention, above and beyond all other commercial or political interests.

Africa offers the world a beauty and natural richness which inspire praise of the Creator. This patrimony of Africa and of all mankind is constantly exposed to the risk of destruction caused by human selfishness of every type and by the abuse of situations of poverty and exclusion. In the context of economic relationships between States and between peoples, we cannot be silent about forms of illegal trafficking which arise in situations of poverty and in turn lead to greater poverty and exclusion. Illegal trade in diamonds and precious stones, rare metals or those of great strategic value, wood, biological material and animal products, such as ivory trafficking and the relative killing of elephants, fuels political instability, organized crime and terrorism. This situation too is a cry rising up from humanity and the earth itself, one which needs to be heard by the international community.

In my recent visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, I expressed the desire and hope that the work of the United Nations and of all its multilateral activities may be “the pledge of a secure and happy future for future generations. And so it will, if the representatives of the States can set aside partisan and ideological interests, and sincerely strive to serve the common good” (*Address to the UN*, 25 September 2015).

Once again I express the commitment of the Catholic community, and my own, to continue to pray and work so that the fruits of regional cooperation, expressed today in the African Union and the many African agreements on commerce, cooperation and development, may be vigorously pursued and always take into account the common good of the sons and daughters of this land.

May the blessing of the Most High be with each of you and your peoples. Thank you.



### The bridge between Nairobi and Paris

MAURIZIO FONTANA

The embrace of the Kenyan people during the Mass celebrated at the University campus gave Pope Francis a new vigour. Energized by the contagious enthusiasm of the hundreds of thousands of people who were gathered in the city parks, and after a short rest in the nunciature, the Pope visited St Mary's School on Thursday afternoon, 26 November. On the large sports field of the middle school and high school, owned by the archdiocese, his schedule included a meeting with clergy, men and women religious and seminarians. Around 8,000 people welcomed Pope Francis as he arrived at 3:45 pm in his open popemobile, an opportunity permitted by a short window of sun amidst the stormy weather.

Moved by the displays of affection shown by the faithful, the Pope gave a lengthy speech off

the cuff, in which, as a loving father, he offered advice to all of the consecrated.

Before leaving the school, the Pope affectionately greeted a group of sick children. He then traveled 11 kilometres by car to the UN headquarters in Nairobi (UNON), where one of the most important scheduled meetings of the trip took place. At the headquarters, which also houses the offices of two UN programmes, one for the environment (UNEP) and the other for development (UN-Habitat), the Pope forcefully reaffirmed the fundamental concepts of *Laudato Si'*, considering also that many of the issues raised are particularly sensitive in the context of the African continent. Right at the continent's centre, for example, there is the immense basin of the Congo River, one of the lungs of the earth which must be preserved.



In Kangemi the Pope recalls that every person is more important than the god of money

# Values not quoted in the stock exchange

Decent housing, drinking water, energy and basic services for every family

*Pope Francis' last day in Kenya began with a meeting with the poor in the Kangemi neighbourhood. The Pontiff visited the Nairobi slum on Friday morning, 27 November, where he addressed its residents in Spanish. The following is the English text of the Pope's address.*

Thank you for welcoming me to your neighbourhood. I thank Archbishop Kivuva and Fr Pascal for their kind words. I feel very much at home sharing these moments with brothers and sisters who, and I am not ashamed to say this, have a special place in my life and my decisions. I am here because I want you to know that your joys and hopes, your troubles and your sorrows, are not indifferent to me. I realize the difficulties which you experience daily! How can I not denounce the injustices which you suffer?

First of all, though, I would like to speak about something which the language of exclusion often disregards or seems to ignore. It is the wisdom found in poor neighbourhoods. A wisdom which is born of the "stubborn resistance" to that which is authentic (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 112), to Gospel values which an opulent society, anaesthetized by unbridled consumption, would seem to have forgotten. You are able "to

weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome" (*ibid.*, 149).

The culture of poor neighbourhoods, steeped in this particular wisdom, "has very positive traits, which can offer something to these times in which we live; it is expressed in values such as solidarity, giving one's life for others, preferring birth to death, providing Christian burial to one's dead; finding a place for the sick in one's home, sharing bread with the hungry (for 'there is always room for one more seat at the table'), showing patience and strength when faced with great adversity, and so on" (Equipo de Sacerdotes para las Villas de Emergencia, Argentina, *Reflexiones sobre urbanización y la cultura villera*, 2010). Values grounded in the fact that each human being is more important than the god of money. Thank you for reminding us that another type of culture is possible.

I want in the first place to uphold these values which you practice, values which are not quoted in the stock exchange, and have no market price. I congratulate you, I accompany you and I want you to know that the Lord never forgets you. The path of Jesus began on the peripheries, it goes *from* the poor and *with* the poor, towards others.

To see these signs of good living that increase daily in your midst in no way entails a disregard for the dreadful injustice of urban exclusion. These are wounds inflicted by minorities who cling to power and wealth, who selfishly squander while a growing majority is forced to flee to abandoned, filthy and run-down peripheries.

This becomes even worse when we see the unjust distribution of land (if not in this neighbourhood, certainly in others) which leads in many cases to entire families having to pay excessive and unfair rents for utterly unfit housing. I am also aware of the serious problem posed by faceless "private developers" who hoard areas of land and even attempt to appropriate the playgrounds of your children's schools. This is what happens when we forget that "God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone" (*Centesimus Annus*, 31).

One very serious problem in this regard is the lack of access to infrastructures and basic services. By this I mean toilets, sewers, drains, refuse



collection, electricity, roads, as well as schools, hospitals, recreational and sport centres, studios and workshops for artists and craftsmen. I refer in particular to access to drinking water. "Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity" (*Laudato Si'*, 30). To deny a family

*"We need to go beyond the mere proclamation of rights which are not respected in practice, to implementing concrete and systematic initiatives capable of improving the overall living situation"*

water, under any bureaucratic pretext whatsoever, is a great injustice, especially when one profits from this need.

This situation of indifference and hostility experienced by poor neighbourhoods is aggravated when violence spreads and criminal organizations, serving economic or political interests, use children and young people as "cannon fodder" for their ruthless business affairs. I also appreciate the struggles of those women who fight heroically to protect their sons and daughters from these dangers. I ask God that the authorities may embark, together with you, upon the path of social inclusion, education, sport, community action, and the protection of families, for this is the only guarantee of a peace that is just, authentic and enduring.

These realities which I have just mentioned are not a random combination of unrelated problems. They are a consequence of new forms of colonialism which would make African countries "parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel" (*Ecclesia in Africa*, 52). Indeed, countries are frequently pressured to adopt policies typical of the culture of waste, like those aimed at lowering the birth rate, which seek "to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized" (*Laudato Si'*, 50).

In this regard, I would propose a renewed attention to the idea of a respectful urban integration, as opposed to elimination, paternalism, indifference or mere containment. We need integrated cities which belong to everyone. We need to go beyond the mere proclamation of rights which are not respected in practice, to implementing concrete and systematic initiatives capable of improving the overall living situation, and planning new urban developments of good quality for housing future generations. The social and environmental debt owed to the poor of cities can be paid by respecting their sacred right to the "three Ls": Land, Lodging, Labour. This is not a question of philanthropy; rather it is a moral duty incumbent upon all of us.

I wish to call all Christians, and their pastors in particular, to renew their missionary zeal, to take initiative in the face of so many situations of injustice, to be involved in their neighbours' problems, to accompany them in their struggles, to protect the fruits of their communitarian labour and to celebrate together each victory, large or small. I realize that you are already doing much, but I ask you to remember this is not just another task; it may instead be the most important task of all, because "the Gospel is addressed in a special way to the poor" (Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bishops of Brazil*, 11 May 2007, 3).

Dear neighbours, dear brothers and sisters, let us together pray, work and commit ourselves to ensuring that every family has dignified housing, access to drinking water, a toilet, reliable sources of energy for lighting, cooking and improving their homes; that every neighbourhood has streets, squares, schools, hospitals, areas for sport, recreation and art; that basic services are provided to each of you; that your appeals and your pleas for greater opportunity can be heard; that all can enjoy the peace and security which they rightfully deserve on the basis of their infinite human dignity.

*Mungu awabariki!* God bless you!

And I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me.

Testimony from the slum

## Surviving on a dollar a day

*"Karibu. Karibu Nymbani. Karibu. Karibu Nyumbani. Welcome. Welcome home". Archbishop Martin Kuvava, President of Caritas Kenya, thus welcomed Pope Francis to St Joseph the Worker Church, situated in the centre of the informal settlements in Kangemi. The Catholic church, he explained, serves the poor, living in several of Kangemi's slums.*

Then Pamela Akwede, a resident of one of the slums, took the floor, expressing her dream that the slums will be improved so as to upgrade security and shelter for all.

"People in informal settlements live together as family, in unity and solidarity", Ms Akwede said. "We see communities practicing their fundamental cultures with different ethnic groups sharing and participating as one unit". A resident of any informal settlement, she highlighted, "survives on less than a dollar a day, but is able to access fresh agricultural produce from the market all the way from the rural areas". However, she said slums in Kenya "have poor health and sanitation services" and lack access to water.

Francis reminds young people that fanaticism and tribalism are paths of destruction

# Corruption robs us of joy and peace

*The final public event of the papal visit in Kenya was the meeting with young people in the Kasarani Stadium on Friday morning, 27 November. After a brief introduction in English, the Pontiff spoke off the cuff in Spanish. The following is a translation of his address.*

Thank you for the rosary which you prayed for me! Thank you for your presence and your enthusiasm. Thank you, Lynette and Manuel, for your reflections.

There is a deeper question behind all the questions which Lynette and Manuel asked me: "Why do there have to be divisions, fighting, wars, death, fanaticism and destructiveness among young people? Why do we have this thirst for self-destruction? In the first pages of the Bible, after all those wonderful things God did, a brother kills his brother. The spirit of evil leads to destructiveness; the spirit of evil leads us to disunity, to tribalism, to corruption, to drug addiction.... It leads us to destruction through fanaticism.

Manuel asked me: "What can be done to prevent ideological fanaticism from robbing us of a brother or a friend?" There is a word which might seem uncomfortable, but I don't want to avoid it because you yourselves already used it: you used it when you brought me all the rosaries which you prayed for me. The Bishop used it too, when he introduced you and said that you prepared for my visit with *prayer*. The first thing I would say, then, is that a man or a woman loses the best part of themselves, of their humanity, when they stop praying, because then they feel all-powerful, because then they don't feel the need to ask help from the Lord in the face of all these tragedies.

Life is full of problems, but there are two ways to look at problems. You can see them as an obstacle, something which ruins you and holds you back, or else you can see them as an opportunity. It's up to you. Do I see this problem as the path to ruin, or as an opportunity to better myself, my own situation and that of my family, my community, my country?

Dear young friends, we don't live in the clouds; we live in this world. And this world is full of problems, of temptations to go down the wrong path. But there is something which all of you have, something you will have for a while, and that is the ability to choose which path you want to take, which of these two things you want to choose. Will I let myself be overcome by problems or will I to turn my problems into new opportunities, and win in the end?

Some of the problems you raised are real challenges. So that is my first question: do you want to overcome these challenges, or let yourselves be overcome by them? Are you going to be like those athletes who come here to the stadium in order to win, or like those who sold out, let the other side win, and



then pocketed the money? You decide!

One of the challenges Lynette mentioned is *tribalism*. Tribalism destroys a nation; tribalism is when you keep your hands behind your back, a stone in each one, ready to hurl against someone else. Tribalism is overcome only with the *ear*, the *heart* and the *hand*. With the *ear*, by listening: What is your culture? Why are you the way you are? Why does your tribe have this custom or way of doing things? Does your tribe feel superior or inferior? With the *heart*: After hearing your answer with my ears, I open my heart and hold out my hand so we can keep talking. Unless you dialogue and listen to one another, there will always be tribalism eating away at society like woodworms. Yesterday – you are celebrating it today – was

set aside as a day of prayer and reconciliation. I would now ask all of you young people, and you, Lynette and Manuel, to come here, to hold hands with one another. Let us stand up and take each other's hand as a sign of opposition to tribalism. We are all one nation! Let us all be one nation! That is the way we should feel, where our heart should be. Overcoming tribalism is more than just lifting up our hands today; it is a desire but also a decision. Overcoming tribalism calls for daily effort. It is something we do with our *ear*: listening to others; with our *heart*: being open to others; and with our *hands*: holding out a hand to others.... And now let us hold hands with one another.... "No to tribalism!"

Another question that Lynette asked was about *corruption*. Deep

down, she was asking me: "Can corruption be justified simply because everyone is involved in wrongdoing, everyone is corrupt? How can we be Christians and fight the evil of corruption?"

I remember, in my own country, a young person, about 20 years old, who wanted to get involved in politics. He studied, he was enthusiastic, he went from place to place, and he got a job in a government office. One day he had to make a decision about purchasing something. He had three estimates, so he reviewed them and he chose the best one. Then he went to his boss to have it approved. "Why did you choose this one?" "Because it was best for the country's finances." "No, no, you have to choose the one which will put more money in your pocket!". This young person told his boss: "I got into politics to help my country!", and the boss's answer was: "I got into politics to steal!". This is just one example. There is corruption not just in politics but in every institution, even in the Vatican. Corruption is something which creeps in. It's like sugar: it's sweet, we like it, it goes down easily. And then? We get sick! We come to a nasty end! With all that easy sugar we end up as diabetics, and our country becomes diabetic!

Whenever we take a bribe, or pocket a kickback, we destroy our heart, we destroy our personality, we destroy our country. Please, don't get used to the taste of this "sugar" which is corruption. "But Father, I see corruption everywhere, I see so many people selling themselves for a handful of money without any concern for the lives of others...". As in everything, you have to make a start. If in your heart you don't like corruption, if you do not want corruption in your life in your country, then start now! If you don't start, your neighbour won't start either. Corruption also steals our joy. It robs us of peace. A corrupt person is not at peace.

Once in my city – this is a true story – a man died. Everybody knew he was a big crook. A few days later, I asked what the funeral was like. One lady who had a good sense of humour told me: "Father, they couldn't even close the coffin, because he tried to bring with him all the money he had stolen!". Whatever you steal by corruption will stay behind and somebody else will use it. But it will also stay behind – and we need to keep this in mind – in the hearts of all those men and women who were hurt by your example of corruption. It will stay behind in all the good you could have done but never did. It will stay behind in the children who are sick or hungry because the money that was meant for them was used for your own enjoyment, because you were corrupt. Dear young people, corruption is not the way to life. It is a path which leads to death.

## Burning in hope

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

The secret that the Pope shared with the thousands of young people who met in the Kasarani Stadium in Nairobi sums up his entire message for Kenya. Indeed, Bergoglio said, he carries a rosary and a small Way of the Cross in his pocket, because these small objects remind him of the one true help on life's journey, derived from constant prayer and contemplation of the Passion of Jesus – which was a failure in the eyes of men, but which culminated in the Resurrection. This is why the Pontiff doesn't lose hope, notwithstanding myriad difficulties.

The Pope held a lengthy dialogue with the young people, setting aside his prepared text to offer heartfelt responses to their concerns, improvising in Spanish just as he had done earlier in the meeting with 8,000 nuns, men and women religious and priests. Right after the meeting with youth he met with bishops in a conference room at the stadium.

The two gatherings there were unnumbered by protocol and were preceded by his visit to Kangemi, one of the capital's poor neighbourhoods. And thus, the Pope's three days in Kenya, the initial destination of his first journey to Africa, came to a close.

Why is there evil, fanaticism, tribalism and corruption? The young people's questions intersected with the Pope's reflections, with his meditation, and with the message he launched, aimed not only at Kenya and Africa. The questions in fact are timeless and the difficulties are widespread. Even in the Vatican there are cases of corruption, the Pontiff stated. With a powerfully effective image he compared this danger, which runs rampant in politics, to the sugary sweetness that leads to a serious illness, because the path of corruption leads to death.

The address that Pope Francis delivered in Kangemi directed a



## With young people

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There was also a question about *how to use the communications media* to spread Christ's message of hope and to help people see how right it is. The primary means of communication is the word, a gesture, a smile. The first gesture of communication is going up to someone, seeking their friendship. If you speak well of one another, if you laugh, if you draw close to one another as brothers and sisters even though you belong to different tribes, if you are close to those in need, the poor, the lonely, the elderly whom no one visits.... If you are close to them, those little signs of communication are more influential than any television network.

In answering all these questions, I said something which I hope can help you. Turn often to Jesus in prayer; ask the Lord to give you the strength to eliminate tribalism, and to be brothers and sisters to one another. Pray for the courage not to be corrupted, to want to treat one another as brothers and sisters with a smile, a good word, a gesture of help, by your closeness.

Manuel too, in his witness talk, asked some hard questions. I'm concerned about the first thing he said: "What can we do to stop the *recruitment* of our family and friends? What can we do to make them come home? To answer this, we need to know why a young person, full of dreams and hopes, would want to be recruited or try to be recruited. He leaves his family, his friends, his tribe, his country. He cuts himself off from life because he learns to kill.... This is a question which you will also have to ask your leaders. If a young person, if a boy or girl, if a man or a woman, has no job, and cannot study, what can he or she do? They can get involved in crime, or forms of addiction, or even kill themselves – in Europe, they do not publish statistics on suicides – or they can sign up for something which gives them a purpose in life, however deceptive....

The first thing we have to do to prevent a young person from being recruited, or attempting to recruit, is *education and employment*. If a young person does not have work, what future is in store for him or her? That is where the idea of being recruited comes from. If a young person has no chance to receive an education, or even a little training for ordinary jobs, what can he or she do? That's where the danger lies! It is a danger for society, one bigger than ourselves, even bigger than the country, because it depends on an international system which is unjust, which is centred on economy and not people, on mammon, the god of money. What can I do to help them or to make them come back? First of all, pray. But pray hard! God is more powerful than any recruitment campaign. Then what? Speak to that person with affection, with kindness, with love and patience. Invite him to see a football game, to take a walk, be part of the group. Don't leave him out. This is the first thing that comes to my mind.

Certainly, there are – and this is your second question – there are some ways of acting which are harmful, where we run after fleeting pleas-

ures but end up getting hurt. The question you asked me, Manuel, sounds like the question of a theology professor: "How can we realize that God is our Father? How can we see God's hand in the tragedies of life? How we find God's peace?". This question is asked by men and women the world over in one way or another. And they don't come up with an answer. There are some questions to which, no matter how hard we try, we never seem to find an answer. "How can I see the hand of God in one of life's tragedies?". There is only one answer: no, there is no answer. There is only a way: *to look to the Son of God*. God delivered his Son to save us all. God let himself get hurt. God let himself be destroyed on the cross. So when the moment comes when you don't understand, when you're in despair and the world is tumbling down all around you, *look to the cross!* There we see the failure of God; there we see the destruction of God. But there we also see a challenge to our faith: the challenge of hope. Because that story didn't end in failure. There was the *resurrection*, which made all things new.

I'll tell you a secret – but aren't you hungry? It's already noon! No? – well then, I'll tell you a secret. In my pocket I always carry two things: a rosary, to pray, and something else which may seem a little odd.... What is it? It's the story of God's failure: it is a little Way of the Cross, the story of how Jesus suffered from the time he was condemned to death until his burial. With these two things, I try to do my best. But thanks to these two things I don't lose hope.

One final question from Manuel, our "theologian": "What do you have to say to those young people who have not experienced love in their own families? How can they move beyond this?". Everywhere there are young people who were abandoned, either at birth or later on, by their family, their parents, and so they have never known the love of a family. That is why families are so important. Protect the family! Defend it always. All around us, there are not only abandoned children, but also abandoned elderly persons, who have no one to visit them, to show them affection.... How do you overcome this negative experience of being abandoned, of not being loved? There is only one remedy: to give what you have not received. If you have not received understanding, then show understanding to others. If you have not received love, then show love to others. If you have known loneliness, then try to be close to others who are lonely. Flesh is cured with flesh! And God took flesh in order to heal us. So let us do the same with others.

Well, then, before the referee blows the whistle for the end of the game, I think it is time to conclude. I thank you from my heart for being here and for letting me speak to you in my mother tongue.... I thank you for all those rosaries you prayed for me. And please, keep praying for me, because I need it very much! Now, before we leave, I ask you please to stand, all of you, and together we can pray to our heavenly Father, who only has one flaw: he can't help but be our Father!

Our Father....

The Pope recognizes Uganda's concern for refugees

## A test of our humanity

*Upon his arrival in Uganda shortly after 5 pm local time on Friday, 27 November, the Pope went to the State House in Entebbe, where he paid a courtesy visit to the President of the Republic, Mr Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, and met with authorities and the diplomatic corps. After a brief introduction by the President, the Pope gave the following address in English.*

Mr President,  
Honourable Members of Government,  
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
My Brother Bishops,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for your gracious welcome, and I am happy to be in Uganda. My visit to your country is meant above all to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the canonization of the Uganda Martyrs by my predecessor, Pope Paul VI. But I hope that my presence here will also be seen as a sign of friendship, esteem and encouragement for all the people of this great nation.

The Martyrs, both Catholic and Anglican, are true national heroes. They bear witness to the guiding principles expressed in Uganda's motto – *For God and My Country*. They remind us of the important role that faith, moral rectitude and commitment to the common good have played, and continue to play, in the cultural, economic and political life of this country. They also remind us that, despite our different beliefs and convictions, all of us are called to seek the truth, to work for justice and reconciliation, and to respect, protect and help one another as members of our one human family. These high ideals are particularly demanded of men and women like yourselves, who are charged with ensuring good and transparent governance, integral human development, a broad participation in national life, as well as a wise and just distribution of the goods which the Creator has so richly bestowed upon these lands.

My visit is also meant to draw attention to Africa as a whole, its promise, its hopes, its struggles and its achievements. The world looks to Africa as the continent of hope. Uganda has indeed been blessed by God with abundant natural resources, which you are challenged to administer as responsible stewards. But above all, the nation has been blessed in its people: its strong families, its young and its elderly. I look forward to my meeting tomorrow with the young, for whom I will have words of encouragement and challenge. How important it is that they be given hope, opportunities for education and gainful employment, and above all the opportunity to share fully in the life of society. But I also wish to mention the blessing which you have in the elderly.



They are the living memory of every people. Their wisdom and experience should always be valued as a compass which can enable society to find the right direction in confronting the challenges of the present with integrity, wisdom and vision.

Here in East Africa, Uganda has shown outstanding concern for welcoming refugees, enabling them to rebuild their lives in security and to sense the dignity which comes from earning one's livelihood through honest labour. Our world, caught up in wars, violence, and various forms of injustice, is witnessing an unprecedented movement of peoples. How we deal with them is a test of our humanity, our respect for human dignity, and above all our solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need.

Although my visit is brief, I hope to encourage the many quiet efforts being made to care for the poor, the sick and those in any kind of trouble. It is in these small signs that we see the true soul of a people. In so many ways, our world is growing closer; yet at the same time we see with concern the globalization of a "throwaway culture" which blinds us to spiritual values, hardens our hearts before the needs of the poor, and robs our young of hope.

As I look forward to meeting you and spending this time with you, I pray that you, and all the beloved Ugandan people, will always prove worthy of the values which have shaped the soul of your nation. Upon all of you I invoke the Lord's richest blessings.

*Mungu awabariki!* (God bless you!)

In Namugongo the Pope speaks of the message of the Uganda martyrs

# An ecumenism of blood

On Saturday morning, 28 November, Pope Francis visited the Anglican and Catholic shrines in Namugongo, where the 24 Uganda martyrs were killed between 1885 and 1887. Following his visit to the Anglican shrine in the morning, the Pope celebrated Mass in memory of the martyrs, in the large natural park that surrounds the Catholic shrine. The following is the English text of the homily which the Holy Father gave in Italian.

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

From the age of the Apostles to our own day, a great cloud of witnesses has been raised up to proclaim Jesus and show forth the power of the Holy Spirit. Today, we recall with gratitude the sacrifice of the Uganda martyrs, whose witness of love for Christ and his Church has truly gone "to the end of the earth". We remember also the Anglican martyrs whose deaths for



Christ testify to the ecumenism of blood. All these witnesses nurtured the gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives and freely gave testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ, even at the cost of their lives, many at such a young age.

We too have received the gift of the Spirit, to make us sons and daughters of God, but also so that we may bear witness to Jesus and make him everywhere known and loved. We received the Spirit when we were reborn in Baptism, and we were strengthened by his gifts at our Confirmation. Every day we are called to deepen the Holy Spirit's presence in our life, to "fan into flame" the gift of his divine love so that we may be a source of wisdom and strength to others.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift which is meant to be shared. It unites us to one another as believers and living members of Christ's mystical Body.

We do not receive the gift of the Spirit for ourselves alone, but to build up one another in faith, hope and love. I think of Sts Joseph Mkasa and Charles Lwanga, who after being catechized by

*"Every day we are called to deepen the Holy Spirit's presence in our life, to fan into flame" the gift of his divine love so that we may be a source of wisdom and strength to others"*

others, wanted to pass on the gift they had received. They did this in dangerous times. Not only were their lives threatened but so too were the lives of the younger boys under their care. Because they had tended to their faith and deepened their love of God, they were fearless in bringing Christ to oth-

ers, even at the cost of their lives. Their faith became witness; today, venerated as martyrs, their example continues to inspire people throughout the world. They continue to proclaim Jesus Christ and the power of his Cross.

If, like the martyrs, we daily fan into flame the gift of the Spirit who dwells in our hearts, then we will surely become the missionary disciples which Christ calls us to be. To our families and friends certainly, but also to those whom we do not know, especially those who might be unfriendly, even hostile, to us. This openness to others begins first in the family, in our homes where charity and forgiveness are learned, and the mercy and love of God are made known in our parents' love. It finds expression

## In front of the tree of torture

MAURIZIO FONTANA

It was a true pilgrimage to the places of martyrdom. The Pope's first stop was on Friday evening, 27 November, in Munyonyo, the place in which the king had ordered the massacre of Christians and where he had several killed. Those who were persecuted were made to walk 26 kilometres: a Calvary, marked by beatings, abuse and ridicule. The Pope's pilgrimage concluded on the hill of Namugongo, where the massacre was carried out: the martyrs were tortured, dismembered, wrapped in bundles of wood and burned alive.

Francis is the first Pope to have visited Munyonyo. And the next day, Saturday, 28 November, he visited the Anglican shrine in Namugongo, which was recently expanded. Welcomed by Anglican Archbishop Stanley Ntagali along with other Anglican clergy from the area, he unveiled a commemorative plaque. Accompanied to the place of the martyrdom where today sculptors have depicted the tragic scene of the atrocities done to Christians, Francis was clearly moved, as he knelt down to

pray in front of the "tree of torture".

Taking his leave from the Anglican community, the Pope travelled to the Catholic shrine. During the three-kilometre trip, he witnessed the growing enthusiasm surrounding his visit and indeed the incalculable number of people gathering to greet him was truly impressive. In Namugongo — the destination of pilgrims throughout the year and of a great national pilgrimage on 3 June, the liturgical feast of St Charles Lwanga — there was a constant stream of people seeking to enter the shrine even after the Mass had begun.

"Papa Francesco, we love you", a boy repeated many times, as he watched the Holy Father pass by only a few metres away. A crying woman said to him: "We are happy, intensely



happy that the Pope has come to see us!". As the dozens of concelebrating bishops processed through the aisles that wrapped around the lake to the altar, a girl prayed aloud: "Peace, peace, peace. We need peace and tranquility".

to in our care for the elderly and the poor, the widowed and the orphaned.

The witness of the martyrs shows to all who have heard their story, then and now, that worldly pleasures and earthly power do not bring lasting joy or peace. Rather, fidelity to God, honesty and integrity of life, and genuine concern for the good of others bring us that peace which the world cannot give. This does not diminish our concern for this world, as if we only look to the life to come. Instead, it gives purpose to our lives in this world, and helps us to reach out to those in need, to cooperate with others for the common good, and to build a more just society which promotes human dignity, defends God's gift of life and protects the wonders of nature, his creation and our common home.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the legacy which you have received from the Uganda martyrs — lives marked by the power of the Holy Spirit, lives which witness even now to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This legacy is not served by an occasional remembrance, or by being enshrined in a museum as a precious jewel. Rather, we honour them, and all the saints, when we carry on their witness to Christ, in our homes and neighbourhoods, in our workplaces and civil society, whether we never leave our homes or we go to the farthest corner of the world.

May the Uganda martyrs, together with Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for us, and may the Holy Spirit kindle within us the fire of his divine love!

*Omukama Abaase Omukisa! (God bless you!)*

Francis asks catechists to be not only wise teachers but also sage witnesses

## A holy work

On the parvis of the Shrine of Munyonyo on Friday afternoon, 27 November, the Pontiff met with catechists and teachers of Uganda. The following is the English text of the discourse he delivered in Italian.

Dear Catechists and Teachers, Dear Friends,

I greet you with affection in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Teacher.

"Teacher!". What a beautiful name this is! Jesus is our first and greatest teacher. St Paul tells us that Jesus gave his Church not only apostles and pastors, but also teachers, to build up the whole body in faith and love. Together with the bishops, priests and deacons who are ordained to preach the Gospel and care for the Lord's flock, you, as catechists, play an outstanding part in bringing the Good News to every village and homestead in your country. You were chosen for the ministry of catechesis.

I wish before all else, to thank you for the sacrifices which you and your families make, and for the zeal and devotion with which you carry out your important task. You teach what Jesus taught, you instruct adults and help parents to raise their children in the faith, and you bring the joy and hope of eternal life to all. Thank you for your dedication, your example, your closeness to God's people in their daily lives, and all the many ways you plant and nurture the seeds of faith throughout this vast land. Thank you especially for teaching our children and young people how to pray. For teaching children how to pray is a fine and important work.

I know that your work, although rewarding, is not easy. So I encourage you to persevere, and I ask your bishops and priests to support you with a doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral formation capable of making you ever more effective in your outreach. Even when

the task seems too much, the resources too few, the obstacles too great, it should never be forgotten that yours is a holy work. I want to emphasize this: yours is a holy work. The Holy Spirit is present wherever the name of Christ is proclaimed. He is in our midst whenever we lift up our hearts and minds to God in prayer. He will give you the light and strength you need! The message you bring will take root all the more firmly in people's hearts if you are not only a teacher but also a witness. This too is very important: you must be teachers, but this is not enough; you also have to be witnesses. Your example should speak to everyone of the beauty of prayer, the power of mercy and forgiveness, the joy of sharing in the Eucharist with all our brothers and sisters.

The Christian community in Uganda grew strong through the witness of the martyrs. They testified to the truth which sets men free; they were willing to shed their blood to be faithful to what they knew was good and beautiful and true. We stand here today in Munyonyo at the place where



King Mwanga determined to wipe out the followers of Christ. He failed in this, just as King Herod failed to kill Jesus. The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness could not overcome it (cf. Jn 1:5). After seeing the fearless testimony of St Andrew Kagwa and his companions, Christians in Uganda became even more convinced of Christ's promises.

May St Andrew, your patron, and all the Ugandan catechist martyrs, obtain for you the grace to be wise teachers, men and women whose every word is filled with grace, convincing witnesses to the splendour of God's truth and the joy of the Gospel! Witnesses of holiness. Go forth without fear to every town and village in this country, to spread the good seed of God's word, and trust in his promise that you will come back rejoicing, with sheaves full from the harvest. I ask all of you, dear catechists, to pray for me, but also to have your children pray for me.

*Omukama Abaase Omukisa! (God bless you!)*



## True heroes

Half a century ago the martyrs of Uganda were canonized. They were young nobles who had converted to the Christian faith and were brutally slain during a period of barbaric persecution (1884-1887). This group of both Catholics and Anglicans was canonized during the Council by Paul VI, the Pontiff who, five years later, visited the sites of their martyrdom in Uganda. Likewise Francis, his Successor, at the high point of his journey to Africa, once again spoke about the ecumenism of blood.

In his first speech before the civil authorities and the diplomatic corps, Pope Francis immediately spoke about the Catholic and Anglican martyrs, whom he defined as true national heroes who embodied what would later become Uganda's motto, "For God and My Country". From where he stood in Entebbe the Pontiff intentionally broadened his gaze to the whole of Africa, stating that today it is seen by many as "the continent of hope", despite the difficulties that arise above all from violence and various forms of injustice.

After leaving Kenya the Pope had arrived in Entebbe to a warm official welcome, after which he went to Munyonyo, one of the sites where Christians were executed, and then to Kampala. By then evening had fallen but the dozens of kilometres along the Pontiff's route were dotted with light from the candles of the hundreds of thousands who thronged at the roadsides to welcome him, even if only for a fleeting moment. There was a festive meeting at Munyonyo with catechists, whom he urged to be teachers, but especially witnesses, like the martyrs.

The Pope dedicated the heart of his visit in Uganda to the martyrs, before his final meetings and the time that he had set aside to spend with the sick at the House of Charity founded by Cardinal Nsubuga. First, welcomed by the Anglican bishops, he stopped at the place of martyrdom where an impressive museum now stands. He then celebrated Mass in the Catholic Shrine of Namugongo for the 50th anniversary of the canonization of the martyrs, whose witness has truly reached all corners of the earth, in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The example of the martyrs, especially how they lived and "fan[ed] into flame" the gift of the Spirit, must inspire Christians, because in this way we will surely become the missionary disciples which Christ calls us to be. This must be done first and foremost in families, which the Pope recalled many times throughout these days, and in everyday life. It is certainly not an escape from the world but "instead, it gives purpose to our lives in this world", and it helps us to build a more just society which excludes no one and which protects creation.

The martyrs' legacy, however, "is not served by an occasional remembrance, or by being enshrined in a museum as a precious jewel", Pope Bergoglio said. Because truly, "we honour them, and all the saints, when we carry on their witness to Christ, in our homes and neighbourhoods, in our workplaces and civil society, whether we never leave our homes or we go to the farthest corner of the world".

G.M.V.

G.M.V.



The Holy Father encourages the youth of Uganda to fight hatred and evil

# When a wall becomes a horizon

*Francis' Saturday afternoon events on 28 November began at the former airstrip of Kololo, where he met with the youth of Uganda. Setting aside his prepared text, the Pontiff spoke extemporaneously, responding to questions that arose from the moving testimony of two young people. Below is the English text of his discourse.*

[In English:] Good afternoon! Good afternoon!

Thank you for being here.

I shall speak in my native tongue.

[In Spanish:] I listened with a sad heart to what Winnie and Emmanuel told us. But as I was listening, I started to think: "Can a negative experience prove meaningful in our lives? The answer is "Yes!" Both Emmanuel and Winnie had bad experiences. Winnie thought she had no future, that life had put up a wall in front of her, and yet Jesus helped her to realize that in life a great miracle can take place: a wall can turn into a horizon, a horizon which opens up the future before me.

Greetings to the Pope

## He who forgave his captors

Before speaking to the youth, the Pope heard the testimonies of two young people. The first, 24-year-old Winnie Nansumba, was born and lives with HIV. Despite her experience with the disease and other challenges she has had to face, she thanks God that she has managed to develop a positive attitude, and uses her story "to teach, inspire and create positive change". Young people need to work together, she said, "to adopt new practices and behaviours that will help each one of us play their role in the fight against HIV". Indeed, she clarified, "Young people living with HIV need care, love and support instead of sympathy, pity and rejection".

Also bearing witness was Emmanuel Odokonyero who was among 41 students of the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary who, on 11 May 2003, were abducted by rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army. He recounted the hardships he faced during his 3 months of captivity, including starvation, poor shelter, and various forms of torture as well as seeing many of his classmates killed. It was "by God's grace" that he managed to escape, and he asked that everyone "pray for the remaining 11 seminarians and all those in captivity that the Almighty God strengthen, protect and lead them back to us". As for his captors, he said that his "heart has found love, forgiveness, peace and joy" because "Jesus Christ broke the power of death by suffering on the Cross".

When we have a negative experience – and many people here, many of us here, have had negative experiences – it is always possible to open up a horizon, to open it up by the power of Jesus. Today, Winnie has turned her depression, her bitterness, into hope. This is not magic; it is the work of Jesus, because Jesus is the Lord. Jesus can do anything. Jesus himself suffered the most negative experience of all: he was insulted, he was rejected, and he was killed. But by God's power Jesus rose from the dead. He can do the same for each of us, with our negative experiences, because he is Lord.

I can imagine – let us all try to imagine – how Emmanuel suffered when he saw his classmates tortured and killed. Emmanuel was brave, he took heart. He knew that if they found him on the day he escaped, they would kill him. He took a risk, he trusted in Jesus and he escaped. And today, 14 years later, here he is, a graduate in administrative sciences. There is always a way. Our life is like a seed: to live, we have to die; at times even physically, like Emmanuel's companions, like Charles Lwanga and the Ugandan martyrs. But this death brings life, a life for all. If I turn something negative into something positive, I win! But that can only happen with the grace of Jesus. Do you believe this? ... I don't hear anything... Do you believe this? [the young people respond: *Yes!*] Are you ready to change everything negative in your life into something positive? [*Yes!*]



Are you ready to turn hatred into love? [*Yes!*] Are you ready to want to turn war into peace? [*Yes!*] Never forget that you are a people of martyrs, that the blood of martyrs runs through your veins, and that is why you have the faith and the life which are yours. And this faith and this life, beautiful as they are, make this "the pearl of Africa".

It looks like the microphone was not functioning properly. Sometimes we don't function so well either. Yes or no? [*Yes!*] And when we don't function well, to whom should we go to ask for help? I can't hear! Louder! To Jesus! Jesus can change your life. Jesus can tear down all the walls in your path. Jesus can make your life a form of service to others.

Some of you may ask me: "Is

there a magic wand for all this?" If you want Jesus to change your life, just ask him for help. And this is called praying. Do you understand this? Pray! Let me ask you: do you pray? Really? Pray to Jesus, because he is the Saviour. Never stop praying! Prayer is the most powerful weapon a young person has. Jesus loves us. Let me ask you: does Jesus love some people and not others? [*No!*] Does Jesus love everyone? [*Yes!*] Does Jesus want to help everyone? [*Yes!*] Well then, open the door of your heart and let him come in! Let Jesus in to your life. And when Jesus enters your life, he is going to fight for you. He is going to fight all those problems that Winnie mentioned. He is going to fight depression and AIDS. Ask him to help you overcome these situations, but always keep fighting. Fight with hope and with prayer. Are you ready to fight? [*Yes!*] Are you ready to desire the best for yourselves? [*Yes!*] Are you ready to pray, to ask Jesus to help you in the fight? [*Yes!*]



Pray to Jesus because he alone is Lord. And because in the Church we are not orphans, but have a Mother, pray to our Mother. And what is our Mother's name? [*Mary!*] Louder! [*Mary!*]

Thank you very much for listening. I thank you because you want to turn the negative into the positive; because you want to fight evil with Jesus at your side; and above all, because you want to keep praying. And now I invite you to join me in praying to our Mother for her protection. Can we do this? [*Yes!*] All together? [*Yes!*]

And please, one last request. Pray for me, I need it. Don't forget to pray for me!

*The following is the English text of Pope Francis' prepared speech, which was consigned to the young people of Uganda.*

*Omukama Mulungi!* (God is good!)  
*[Obudde bwonna!]* (For ever and ever!)

Dear Young Friends,

I am happy to be here and to share these moments with you. I greet my brother bishops and the civil authorities present, and I thank Bishop Paul Ssemogerere for his words of welcome. The testimonies of Winnie and Emmanuel confirm my impression that the Church in Uganda is alive with young people who want a better future. Today, if you will allow me, I want to confirm you in your faith, encourage you in your love, and in a special way, strengthen you in your hope.

Christian hope is not simply optimism; it is much more. It is rooted in the new life we have received in Jesus Christ. St Paul tells us that hope will not disappoint us, because God's love was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit at our baptism (cf. Rom 5:5). This hope enables us to trust in Christ's promises, to trust in the power of his love, his

There is a third thing which I want to tell you. All of us are in the Church, we belong to the Church. Right? [*Yes!*] And the Church has a Mother. What is her name? I can't hear you... [*Mary!*] Pray to Mother Mary. When a child falls, he feels sorry for himself, and starts crying and looks for his mother. When we have a problem, the best thing that we can do is go to our Mother and pray to her. Right? [*Yes!*] Do you pray to Our Lady, to our Mother? [*Yes!*]

So then, three things: overcome problems; change the negative into the positive; and pray. Pray to Jesus who can do everything, to Jesus who comes into our hearts and changes our life, to Jesus who came to save me and who gave his life for me.

An appeal to all of Africa

# Do not forget the poor

*After meeting with young people on Saturday afternoon, 28 November, Pope Francis paid a visit to the House of Charity of Nalukolongo, where he gave a brief greeting. The following is the English text of his address, which he delivered in Italian.*

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your warm welcome. I wanted very much to visit this House of Charity, which Cardinal Nsubuga founded here in Nalukolongo. This is a place which has always been associated with the Church's outreach to the poor, the handicapped, the sick. Here, in early times, slave children were ransomed and women received religious instruction. I greet the Good Samaritan Sisters who carry on this fine tradition, and I thank them for their years of quiet and joyful service in this apostolate. And, Jesus is present here, because he said that he would always be present among the poor, the sick, convicts, the destitute, those who suffer. Jesus is here.

I also greet the representatives of the many other apostolic groups who serve the needs of our brothers and sisters in Uganda. Above all, I greet the residents of this home and others like it, and all who benefit from these works of Christian charity. For this is a home. Here you can find love and care; here you can feel the presence of Jesus, our brother, who loves each of us with God's own love.

Today, from this Home, I appeal to all parishes and communities in Uganda – and the rest of Africa – not to forget the poor, not to forget the poor! The Gospel commands us to go out to the peripheries of society, and to find Christ in the suffering and those in need. The Lord tells us, in no uncertain terms, that is what he will judge us on! How sad it is when our societies allow the elderly to be rejected or neglected! How wrong it is when the young are exploited by the modern-day slavery of human trafficking! If we look closely at the world around us, it



seems that, in many places, selfishness and indifference are spreading. How many of our brothers and sisters are victims of today's throwaway culture, which breeds contempt above all towards the unborn, the young and the elderly!

As Christians, we cannot simply stand by, stand by watching what is happening, without doing anything. Something must change! Our families need to become ever more evident signs of God's patient and merciful love, not only for our children and elders, but for all those in need. Our parishes must not close their doors, or their ears, to the cry of the poor. This is the royal road of Christian discipleship. In this way we bear witness to the Lord who came not to be served, but to serve. In this way we show that people count

more than things, that who we are is more important than what we possess. For in those whom we serve, Christ daily reveals himself and prepares the welcome which we hope one day to receive in his eternal kingdom.

Dear friends, by simple gestures, by simple prayerful actions which honour Christ in the least of his brothers and sisters, we can bring the power of his love into our world, and truly change it. I thank you once more for your generosity and love. I will remember you always in my prayers and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I commend all of you to the loving protection of Mary, our Mother, and I give you my blessing.

*Omukama Abakuume!* (God protect you!)

## The symbol of the Good Samaritan

The House of Charity is a symbol of the Catholic Church's numerous works of charity for the poor. Bishop Robert Muhiirwa, President of the Episcopal Commission for Health Pastoral Care, thus welcomed the Holy Father to the home for the disabled and the elderly, known as the Bakateyamba's Home. The home is run by the Good Samaritan Sisters, founded by the first Ugandan Cardinal, the late Emanuel Kiwanuka Nsubuga. It was started in 1978 and currently has 102 guests. "The home", the Bishop said, "cares for people without discrimination and currently has 45 male and 57 female inhabitants. Sixty-four of these are Catholics, 35 are Protestants and three are Muslims". The guests are from a variety of countries including: Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and South Sudan. The youngest person is 11 and the oldest is 107.

## Francis encourages youth to fight hatred and evil

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

forgiveness, his friendship. That love opens the door to new life. Whenever you experience a problem, a setback, a failure, you must anchor your heart in that love, for it has the power to turn death into life and to banish every evil.

So this afternoon I would invite you, first of all, to pray for this gift to grow within you, and for the grace to become messengers of hope. There are so many people around us who experience deep anxiety and even despair. Jesus lifts these clouds, if we allow him to.

I would also like to share with you a few thoughts about some of the obstacles which you may encounter on our journey of hope. All of you want a better future, employment, health and prosperity. This is good. You want to share your gifts, your aspirations and your enthusiasm with others, for the good of the nation and of the Church. This too is very good. But when you see poverty, when you experience a lack of opportunity, when you experience failure in your lives, sometimes a feeling of despair can grow. You can be tempted to lose hope.

Have you ever seen a little child who stops in front of a dirty puddle on the path ahead of him? A puddle

he cannot leap over or go around? He may try but then he stumbles and gets soaked. Then, after many attempts, he calls out to his father, who takes his hand and swings him over to the other side. We are like that child. Life presents us with many dirty puddles. But we don't have to overcome all those problems and hurdles on our own. God is there to take our hand, if only we call on him.

What I am saying is that all of us have to be like that little child, even the Pope! For it is only when we are small and humble that we are not afraid to call out to our Father. If you have experienced his help, you know what I am speaking about. We need to learn to put our hope in him, knowing that he is always there for us. He gives us confidence and courage. But – and this is important – it would be wrong not to share this beautiful experience with others. It would be wrong for us not to become messengers of hope for others.

There is one particular puddle which can be frightening to young people who want to grow in their friendship with Christ. It is the fear of failing in our commitment to love, and above all, failing in that great and lofty ideal which is Christian marriage. You may be afraid of failing to be a good wife and moth-

er, failing to be a good husband and father. If you are looking at that puddle, you may even see your weaknesses and fears reflected back to you. Please, don't give in to them! Sometimes these fears come from the devil who does not want you to be happy. No! Call out to God, extend your hearts to him and he will lift you in his arms and show you how to love. I ask young couples in particular to trust that God wants to bless their love and their lives with his grace in the sacrament of marriage. God's gift of love is at the heart of Christian marriage, not the costly parties which often obscure the deep spiritual meaning of this day of joyful celebration with family and friends.

Finally, one puddle that we all have to face is the fear of being different, of going against the grain in a society which puts increasing pressure on us to embrace models of gratification and consumption alien to the deepest values of African culture. Think about it! What would the Uganda martyrs say about the misuse of our modern means of communication, where young people are exposed to images and distorted views of sexuality that degrade human dignity, leading to sadness and emptiness? What would be the Uganda martyrs' reaction to the

growth of greed and corruption in our midst? Surely they would appeal to you to be model Christians, confident that your love of Christ, your fidelity to the Gospel, and your wise use of your God-given gifts can only enrich, purify and elevate the life of this country. They continue to show you the way. Do not be afraid to let the light of your faith shine in your families, your schools and your places of work. Do not be afraid to enter into dialogue humbly with others who may see things differently.

Dear young friends, when I look at your faces I am filled with hope: hope for you, hope for your country, and hope for the Church. I ask you to pray that the hope which you have received from the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire your efforts to grow in wisdom, generosity and goodness. Don't forget to be messengers of that hope! And don't forget that God will help you to cross whatever puddles you meet along the way!

Hope in Christ and he will enable you to find true happiness. And if you find it hard to pray, if you find it hard to hope, do not be afraid to turn to Mary, for she is our Mother, the Mother of Hope. Finally, please, do not forget to pray for me! God bless you all!



The Pontiff asks the clergy and religious for remembrance, fidelity and prayer

## Three pillars

*At the end of a busy day, after meeting privately with the Bishops of Uganda at the offices of the Archdiocese of Kampala, Pope Francis arrived late Saturday afternoon, 28 November, in the cathedral of the capital to speak with the priests, religious and seminarians of the African country. The following is the English text of his extemporaneous address.*

[*In English:*] I gave the bishop in charge of consecrated life the message I wrote for you, so it can be published. With your pardon I will speak in my native tongue, since I don't speak English.

[*In Spanish:*] There are three things I want to tell you. First, in the book of Deuteronomy Moses keeps telling the people: "Don't forget!". And he repeats this at various times throughout the book: Don't forget! Don't forget all that God has done for his people!

So the first thing I want to tell you is this: ask for, and preserve, the grace of remembrance, of memory. I told the young people that the blood of the martyrs runs in the veins of the Catholics of Uganda. Don't ever forget that! That way you will keep the faith. The biggest enemy of remembrance is forgetfulness, but it is not the most dangerous one. The most dangerous enemy of remembrance is when we take for granted everything we have received, everything that has been passed down to us. The Church in Uganda must never let the memory of those martyrs fade. A martyr is a witness. To remain faithful to that memory, the Church in Uganda has to continue to bear witness; you must not just live off this legacy. Past glories were a beginning, but you are called to create future glories. This is what the Church asks of you. Be witnesses like the martyrs, who gave their lives for the Gospel.

To be witnesses – and this is the second thing I want to say – we need to be faithful. Faithful to remembrance, faithful to our vocation, faithful to apostolic zeal. Fidelity means persevering on the path of holiness. Perhaps here in Uganda there are some dioceses with many priests and others with few. Fidelity means telling the bishop that you are willing to go to another diocese which needs missionaries. And that is not easy. Fidelity means persevering in our vocation. Here I think in a special way of the example of fidelity which the Sisters of the House of Charity gave me: fidelity to the poor, the sick, those in greatest need, because that is where we find Christ. Uganda was watered by the blood of martyrs, witnesses. Today, it still needs to be watered, in order to rise to new challenges, new forms of witness, new missions. Otherwise, the great treasure you possess will be lost and the "Pearl of Africa" will end up like a museum piece, because this is the way the devil attacks us – slowly but surely. Here I am speaking not only to priests but to religious as well. What I said to the priests had to do in a

special way with the problem of *missionary spirit*: that dioceses with many priests should offer some to those with less clergy; in this way Uganda will keep alive the missionary spirit.

Remembrance means fidelity, and fidelity is only possible with prayer. Once a religious or a priest stops praying or prays too little, because he says he has too much work, he has already begun to lose his memory; she has already begun to lose her fidelity. Prayer also means humility. The humility to see our confessor regularly and to confess our sins. You cannot limp with both legs! We religious and priests cannot lead a double life. If you sin, ask God's forgiveness! But don't keep covering up those things that God does not love, don't hide your lack of fidelity, don't put your memory in a drawer.

Remembrance amid new challenges, fidelity to memory and fidelity to prayer – a prayer which al-

which invites us to look to *new beginnings*. This Advent we are also preparing to cross the threshold of the extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy which I have called for the whole Church.

As we approach the Jubilee of Mercy, I would ask you two questions. First: *who are you*, as priests or future priests, and as consecrated persons? In one sense, the answer is an easy one: surely you are men and women whose lives have been shaped by a "personal encounter with Jesus Christ" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 3). Jesus has touched your hearts, called you by name, and asked you to follow him with an undivided heart in the service of his holy people.

The Church in Uganda has been blessed, in its short yet venerable history, with a great cloud of witnesses – lay faithful, catechists, priests and religious – who forsook everything for the love of Jesus: homes, families, and, in the case of

realities closest to us. I pray especially for the beloved people of Burundi, that the Lord may awaken in their leaders and in society as a whole a commitment to dialogue and cooperation, reconciliation and peace. If we are to accompany those who suffer, then like the light passing through the stained glass windows of this Cathedral, we must let God's power and healing pass through us. We must first let the waves of his mercy flow over us, purify us, and refresh us, so that we can bring that mercy to others, especially those on the peripheries.

All of us know well how difficult this can be. There is so much work to be done. At the same time, modern life also offers so many distractions which can dull our consciences, dissipate our zeal, and even lure us into that "spiritual worldliness" which eats away at the foundations of Christian life. The work of conversion – that conversion which is the heart of the Gospel of Jesus (cf. Mk 1:15) – must be carried out each day, in the battle to recognize and overcome those habits and ways of thinking which can fuel spiritual complacency. We need to examine our consciences, as individuals and as communities.

As I mentioned, we are entering the season of Advent, which is a time of new beginnings. In the Church we like to say that Africa is the continent of hope, and with good reason. The Church in these lands is blessed with an abundant harvest of religious vocations. This evening I would offer a special word of encouragement to the young seminarians and religious present. The Lord's call is a source of joy and a summons to serve. Jesus tells us that "it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks" (Lk 6:45). May the fire of the Holy Spirit purify your hearts, so that you can be joyful and convincing witnesses to the hope of the Gospel. You have a beautiful word to speak! May you always speak it, above all, by the integrity and conviction of your lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, my visit to Uganda is brief, and today was a very long day! But I consider our meeting tonight to be the crowning of this beautiful day when I was able to go as a pilgrim to the Shrine of the Uganda Martyrs at Namugongo, and to meet with the many young people who are the future of the nation and our Church. Truly I leave Africa with great hope in the harvest of grace which God is preparing in your midst! I ask all of you to pray for an outpouring of apostolic zeal, for joyful perseverance in the calling you have received, and, above all, for the gift of a pure heart ever open to the needs of all our brothers and sisters. In this way the Church in Uganda will truly prove worthy of its glorious heritage and face the challenges of the future with sure hope in Christ's promises. I will remember all of you in my prayers, and I ask you, please, to pray for me!



ways begins with the acknowledgment that we are sinners. With these three pillars, the "Pearl of Africa" will continue to be a pearl and not just an empty word. May the Martyrs who gave this Church its strength help you to persevere in remembrance, fidelity and prayer. And I ask you, please, remember to pray for me. Thank you very much

Now, I invite you to pray together a "Hail Mary" to Our Lady.

*The following is the English text of the Pope's prepared text, which was consigned to the clergy, religious, and seminarians of Uganda.*

Dear Brother Priests, Religious and Seminarians,

I am happy to be with you, and I thank you for your cordial welcome. I especially thank the speakers for bearing witness to your hopes and concerns, and, above all, the joy which inspires you in your service to God's people in Uganda.

I am pleased, too, that our meeting takes place on the eve of the First Sunday of Advent, a season

of the martyrs, their own lives. In your own lives, whether in the priestly ministry or in your religious consecration, you are called to carry on this great legacy, above all with quiet acts of humble service. Jesus wants to use you to touch the hearts of yet other people: he wants to use your mouths to proclaim his saving word, your arms to embrace the poor whom he loves, your hands to build up communities of authentic missionary disciples. May we never forget that our "yes" to Jesus is a "yes" to his people. Our doors, the doors of our churches, but above all the doors of our hearts, must constantly be open to God's people, our people. For that is who we are.

A second question I would ask you tonight is: *What more are you called to do* in living your specific vocation? Because there is always more that we can do, another mile to be walked on our journey.

God's people, indeed all people, yearn for new life, forgiveness and peace. Sadly, there are many troubling situations in our world for which we must pray, beginning with

Pope Francis encourages authorities to persevere on the path of reconciliation

# Do not fear others

After the welcome ceremony at the airport of Bangui, the Central African Republic on Sunday morning, 29 November, the Pope travelled to the Presidential Palace for a courtesy visit with H.E. Ms Catherine Samba-Panz, the interim Head of State. The Holy Father made the first stretch of his journey in a covered vehicle until, at approximately 20 km from his destination, he climbed aboard the open popemobile so as to better greet the Central Africans who awaited him. After arriving in the sunny courtyard of the palace at 11:20 am, the Pontiff had a private meeting with Ms Samba-Panz. They then returned to the courtyard, where the Authorities and Leaders of the State had gathered, along with the Diplomatic Corps. The President officially welcomed the Pope, who then gave an address in French. The following is the English text.



Madam Interim President,  
Distinguished Authorities,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Representatives of International  
Organizations,  
My Brother Bishops,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be here with you. I would first like to express my appreciation for your warm hospitality and to thank Madam Interim President for her kind words of welcome. I was touched, Madam President, by what you said, and I thank you very much for this very gracious Christian witness. In this place, which is in some sense the home of all Central Africans, I am pleased to express, through you and the other authorities of the country present, my affection and spiritual closeness

to all your fellow citizens. I would like also to greet the members of the Diplomatic Corps and the representatives of the International Organizations, whose work recalls the ideal of solidarity and cooperation which needs to be cultivated between peoples and nations.

As the Central African Republic progressively moves, in spite of difficulties, towards the normalization of its social and political life, I come to this land for the first time, following my predecessor St John Paul II. I come as a pilgrim of peace and an apostle of hope. For this reason, I express my appreciation of the efforts made by the different national and international authorities, beginning with Madam Interim President, to guide the country to this point. It is my fervent wish that the various national consultations to be held in

coming weeks will enable the country to embark serenely on a new chapter of its history.

To brighten the horizon, there is the motto of the Central African Republic, which translates the hope of pioneers and the dream of the founding fathers: Unity-Dignity-Labour. Today, more than ever, this trilogy expresses the aspirations of each Central African. Consequently, it is a sure compass for the authorities called to guide the destiny of the country. Unity, dignity, labour! Three very significant words, each of which represents as much a building project as a unending programme, something to be ceaselessly crafted.

First unity. This, we know, is a cardinal value for the harmony of peoples. It is to be lived and built up on the basis of the marvellous diversity of our environment, avoiding

the temptation of fear of others, of the unfamiliar, of what is not part of our ethnic group, our political views or our religious confession. Unity, on the contrary, calls for creating and promoting a synthesis of the richness which each person has to offer. Unity in diversity is a constant challenge, one which demands creativity, generosity, self-sacrifice and respect for others.

Then, dignity. This moral value is rightly synonymous with the honesty, loyalty, graciousness and honour which characterize men and women conscious of their rights and duties, and which lead them to mutual respect. Each person has dignity. I was interested to learn that Central Africa is the country of "Zo kwe zo", the country where everybody is somebody. Everything must be done to protect the status and dignity of the human person. Those who have the means to enjoy a decent life, rather than being concerned with privileges, must seek to help those poorer than themselves to attain dignified living conditions, particularly through the development of their human, cultural, economic and social potential. Consequently, access to education and to health care, the fight against malnutrition, and efforts to ensure decent housing for everyone must be at the forefront of a development concerned for human dignity. In effect, our human dignity is expressed by our working for the dignity of our fellow man.

Finally, labour. It is by working that you are able to improve the lives of your families. St Paul tells us that "children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children" (2 Cor 12:14). The work of parents expresses their love for their children. And you again, Central Africans, can improve this marvellous land by wisely exploiting its many resources. Your country is located in a region considered to be one of the two lungs of mankind on account of its exceptionally rich biodiversity. In this regard, echoing my Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, I would like particularly to draw the attention of everyone, citizens and national leaders, international partners and multinational societies, to their grave responsibility in making use of environmental resources, in develop-

Before his arrival the Holy Father became known as 'watokua ti siriri'

## A herald of peace

DEUDONNÉ NZAPALAINGA\*

When we learned the news of the Holy Father's visit it seemed as if we were living a dream. We were then far, very far from imagining that this could happen to us in the Central African Republic. Nothing had presaged it.

For three years, in fact, the dug-out canoe of the Central African Republic has been navigating troubled waters, far from the shores of peace and safety. Caught between warring militias, many people have had to leave their homes to seek refuge in displacement camps or in the bush. Despair and poverty have pitched their tents in the midst of families and people, awaiting an end to their troubles which is yet to come. A small country among the smallest, our frail State has long been at the heart of Pope Francis' prayers and attention. Indeed during the Angelus back in 2013, the Pontiff asked for prayers for the Central African Republic. As a result, the people felt a strong sense of solidarity and comfort.

In choosing the Central African Republic as one of the destinations of his first visit to the continent, the Holy Father has chosen the small, the weak; he has chosen the poor man who cries out and whom the Lord hears. We are all moved by this attention. The population's general enthusiasm expresses our deep joy. Since the announcement of the Pope's visit I have visited many of our neighbourhoods and met our different communities. I have seen this joy.

I have witnessed how the project of this visit is good news not only for Catholics but also for some Central Africans. Protestants, Muslims and our compatriots who are still attached to the religion of our ancestors

feel involved and are rising to the occasion. In districts such as Km5 and Boy-rabe, where there is a Muslim majority, banners have been unfurled welcoming the one who is increasingly becoming known here as the "watokua ti siriri", the "herald of peace". When I went to the displacement camps or the relatively peaceful districts, armed men and innocent people are awaiting the Pope's visit with great hope.

When the Holy Father comes here he will find a poor country, a country sadly lacking financial resources, where people have lost everything and are faced with violence. But, today, he will find a population that is lively in spite of it all, people increasingly ready to dedicate their time, skills and their poverty, to ensure that the Pontiff is given a simple and dignified reception.

In one camp for displaced war victims which I visited, a journalist asked a young man about what would happen if the Holy Father were to cancel his visit to the Central African Republic. The young man answered: "Sir, if the Holy Father were to cancel his visit to us we would be devastated and even under the ground". These most simple words express the general sentiment of the Central African population. Today Central Africans have disarmed their hearts and their spirits. They are ready to receive Pope Francis. We are convinced that God will speak to us through the Pope.

The Holy Father is coming to take us by the hand in order to help us climb out of the tomb into which we have fallen.

\*Archbishop of Bangui, Central African Republic

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The Holy Father to Evangelical communities

## Hatred tears humanity apart

*On Sunday afternoon, 29 November, after having lunch with the bishops of the Central African Republic, the Pope met with Evangelical communities at the headquarters of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology of Bangui. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's discourse, which he gave in Italian following greetings given by the Dean and the President of the Evangelical Alliance of Central Africa.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am happy to be able to meet you in this Faculty of Evangelical Theology. I thank the Dean of the Faculty and the President of the Evangelical Alliance of Central Africa for their kind words of welcome. With fraternal affection I greet each of you and, through you, all the members of your communities. All of us are here in the service of the risen Lord who assembles us today; and, by virtue of the common baptism we have received, we are sent to proclaim the joy of the Gospel to men and women of this beloved country of Central Africa.

For all too long, your people have experienced troubles and violence, resulting in great suffering. This makes the proclamation of the Gospel all the more necessary and urgent. For it is Christ's own flesh which suffers in his dearest sons and



daughters: the poorest of his people, the infirm, the elderly, the abandoned, children without parents or left to themselves without guidance and education. There are also those who have been scarred in soul or body by hatred and violence, those whom war has deprived of everything: work, home and loved ones.

God makes no distinctions between those who suffer. I have often called this the *ecumenism of blood*. All our communities suffer indiscriminately as a result of injustice and the blind hatred unleashed by the devil. Here I wish to express my closeness and solidarity to Pastor Nicholas, whose home was recently ransacked and set on fire, as was the meeting-place of his community. In

these difficult circumstances, the Lord keeps asking us to demonstrate to everyone his tenderness, compassion and mercy. This shared suffering and shared mission are a providential opportunity for us to advance together on the path of unity; they are also an indispensable spiritual aid. How could the Father refuse the grace of unity, albeit still imperfect, to his children who suffer together and, in different situations, join in serving their brothers and sisters?

Dear brothers and sisters, the lack of unity among Christians is a scandal, above all because it is contrary to God's will. It is also a scandal when we consider the hatred and violence which are tearing humanity apart, and the many forms of opposition which the Gospel of Christ encounters. I appreciate the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation existing between the Christians of your country, and I encourage you to continue on this path of common service in charity. It is a witness to Christ which builds up unity.

With increasing intensity and courage, may you add to perseverance and charity, a commitment to prayer and common reflection, as you seek to achieve greater mutual understanding, trust and friendship in view of that full communion for which we firmly hope.

I assure you of my prayerful support along the path of fraternal charity, reconciliation and mercy, a path which is long, yet full of joy and hope.

I ask the Lord Jesus to bless all of you! May he bless your communities, and our Church as well! I ask you to pray for me. Thank you very much.

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ment decisions and projects which in any way affect the entire planet. The work of building a prosperous society must be a cooperative effort. The wisdom of your people has long understood this truth, as seen in the proverb: "The ants are little, but since they are so many, they can bring their hoard home".

It is no doubt superfluous to underline the capital importance of upright conduct and administration on the part of public authorities. They must be the first to embody consistently the values of unity, dignity and labour, serving as models for their compatriots.

The history of the evangelization of this land and the sociopolitical history of this country attest to the commitment of the Church in promoting the values of unity, dignity and labour. In recalling the pioneers of evangelization in the Central African Republic, I greet my



Visit to a refugee camp

## We are all brothers and sisters

*Late Sunday morning, 29 November, after the meeting with Uganda's leaders and diplomatic corps in Bangui, Francis visited the Saint Sauveur parish, which has burgeoned inside of a refugee camp. The Pontiff was welcomed by Amélie Bero on behalf of the internally displaced people and, in particular, those of the parish and of the St John XIII Centre. "Despite your numerous commitments", she said, "you were ready to come and share our joy and our pain, our anguish and our hope". Bero then underlined that the Pope's visit to the country could bring reconciliation, lasting peace and happiness throughout the territory. The following is a translation of the greeting Francis expressed in Italian to those present.*

I greet all of you who are here. I want to tell you that I read what the children wrote here [on posters]: "peace", "forgiveness", "unity", and so many things ... "love". We must work and pray and do everything possible for peace. But without love, without friendship, without tolerance, without forgiveness, peace is not possible. Each one of us must do something. I wish peace to you, to you and to all Central Africans, great peace among you. That you may live in peace in whatever

place, ethnicity, culture, religion or social status. Everyone in peace! Everyone! Because we are all brothers and sisters. I would like everyone to say together: "We are all brothers and sisters". [The people repeat: "We are all brothers and sisters"]. For this reason, because we are all brothers and sisters, we want peace. I will give you the Lord's blessing. May the Lord bless you: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Pray for me! Pray for me, do you hear? [1s!].

## The Pontiff arrives in the Central African Republic

brother bishops, who now carry on this work. With them, I express once more the readiness of the local Church to contribute even more to the promotion of the common good, particularly by working for peace and reconciliation. I do not doubt that the Central African authorities, present and future, will work tirelessly to ensure that the Church enjoys favourable conditions for the fulfilment of her spiritual mission. In this way she will be able to contribute increasingly to "promoting the good of every man and of the whole man" (*Populorum Progressio*, 14), to use the felicitous expression of my predecessor, Bl. Paul VI, who 50 years ago was the first Pope of modern times to come to Africa, to encourage and confirm the continent in goodness at the dawn of a new age.

For my part, I express my appreciation for the efforts made by the international community, represented here by the Diplomatic Corps

and the members of the various Missions of the International Organizations. I heartily encourage them to continue along the path of solidarity, in the hope that their commitment, together with the activity of the Central African authorities, will help the country to advance, especially in the areas of reconciliation, disarmament, peacekeeping, health care and the cultivation of a sound administration at all levels.

To conclude, I would like to express once more my joy to visit this marvellous country, located in the heart of Africa, home to a people profoundly religious and blessed with so much natural and cultural richness. Here I see a country filled with God's gifts! May the Central African people, its leaders and its partners, always appreciate the value of these gifts by working ceaselessly for unity, human dignity and a peace based on justice. May God bless you all! Thank you.

Francis opens the Holy Door of the Cathedral in Bangui

# Lay down the instruments of death

*The opening of the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Bangui was the focal event of the papal journey to Africa. On Sunday afternoon, 29 November, the First Sunday of Advent, Francis celebrated Mass for the inauguration of the Jubilee of Mercy in the Central African Republic. The following is the English text of his homily, which was given in Italian.*

On this first Sunday of Advent, the liturgical season of joyful expectation of the Saviour and a symbol of Christian hope, God has brought me here among you, in this land, while the universal Church is preparing for the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which we inaugurated here today. I am especially pleased that my pastoral visit coincides with the opening of this Jubilee Year in your country. From this cathedral I reach out, in mind and heart, and with great affection, to all the priests, consecrated men and women, and pastoral workers of the nation, who are spiritually united with us at this moment. Through you, I would greet all the people of the Central African Republic: the sick, the elderly, those who have experienced life's hurts. Some of them are perhaps despairing and listless, asking only for alms, the alms of bread, the alms of justice, the alms of attention and goodness. All of us are looking for God's grace, for the alms of peace.

But like the Apostles Peter and John on their way to the Temple, who had neither gold nor silver to give to the paralytic in need, I have come to offer God's strength and power; for these bring us healing, set us on our feet and enable us to embark on a new life, to "go across to the other side" (cf. Lk 8:22).

Jesus does not make us cross to the other side alone; instead, he asks us to make the crossing with him, as each of us responds to his or her own specific vocation. We need to realize that making this crossing can

only be done with him, by freeing ourselves of divisive notions of family and blood in order to build a Church which is God's family, open to everyone, concerned for those most in need. This presupposes closeness to our brothers and sisters; it implies a spirit of communion. It is not primarily a question of financial means; it is enough just to share in the life of God's people, in ac-

counting for the hope which is in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15), in testifying to the infinite mercy of God who, as the Responsorial Psalm of this Sunday's liturgy makes clear, is "good [and] instructs sinners in the way" (Ps 24:8). Jesus teaches us that our heavenly Father "makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good" (Mt 5:45). Having experienced forgiveness ourselves, we must forgive oth-

ers in turn. This is our fundamental vocation: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

One of the essential characteristics of this vocation to perfection is the love of our enemies, which protects us from the temptation to seek revenge and from the spiral of endless retaliation. Jesus placed special emphasis on this aspect of the Christian testimony (cf. Mt 5:46-47). Those who evangelize must therefore be first and foremost practitioners of forgiveness, specialists in reconciliation, experts in mercy. This is how we can help our brothers and sisters to "cross to the other side" – by showing them the secret of our strength, our hope, and our joy, all of which have their source in God, for they are grounded in the certainty that he is in the boat with us. As he did with the apostles at the multiplication of the loaves, so too the Lord entrusts his gifts to us, so that we can go out and distribute them everywhere, proclaiming his reassuring words: "Behold, the days are coming when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 33:14).

In the readings of this Sunday's liturgy, we can see different aspects of this salvation proclaimed by God; they appear as signposts to guide us on our mission. First of all, the happiness promised by God is presented as justice. Advent is a time when we strive to open our hearts to receive the Saviour, who alone is just and the sole Judge able to give to each his or her due. Here as elsewhere, countless men and women thirst for respect, for justice, for equality, yet see no positive signs on the horizon. These are the ones to whom he comes to bring the gift of his justice (cf. Jer 33:15). He comes to enrich our personal and collective histories, our dashed hopes and our sterile yearnings. And he sends us to proclaim, especially to those oppressed by the powerful of this world or weighed down by the burden of their sins, that "Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it shall be called, 'The Lord is our righteousness'" (Jer 33:16). Yes, God is righteousness; God is justice. This, then, is why we Christians are called in the world to work for a peace founded on justice.

The salvation of God which we await is also flavoured with love. In preparing for the mystery of Christmas, we relive the pilgrimage which prepared God's people to receive the Son, who came to reveal that God is not only righteousness, but also and above all love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8). In every place, even and especially in those places where violence, hatred, injustice and persecution hold sway, Christians are called to give witness to this God who is love. In encouraging the priests, consecrated men and woman, and committed laity



The Pope's words at the start of the Liturgy

## In the spiritual capital of the world

*Before opening the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Bangui, the Pope spoke briefly, off the cuff, in Italian and Spanish. The following is a translation of his words.*

Today Bangui becomes the spiritual capital of the world. The Holy Year of Mercy starts early in this land of Africa. A land which has suffered for years from war and hatred, lack of understanding, lack of peace; in this land of sufferings there are many countries bearing the cross of war.

Bangui now becomes the spiritual capital of prayer for the Father's mercy. Let us all implore peace, mercy, reconciliation, forgiveness and love. For Bangui, for the entire Central African Republic, for the whole world, for those countries experiencing war, let us ask for peace! Now, all together, let us ask for love and peace. All together: *Doyé Siriri!*

And with this prayer we now inaugurate the Holy Year, here, today, in this spiritual capital of the world!

## A prelude to the Jubilee of Mercy

MAURIZIO FONTANA

Today Bangui became the "spiritual capital of the world!". Pope Francis' impassioned announcement is also one for the entire Church as she prepares for the Jubilee. Opening the Holy Door here, in a lacerated city, in one of the world's poorest countries, is not only a gesture of closeness for this tormented people, but is also a lesson that resonated many times throughout his journey in Africa: Christians cannot forget the poor. Naturally, the Mass that the Pontiff celebrated in the evening of 29 November in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception was also marked by words of peace and reconciliation.

Francis arrived aboard the pope-mobile shortly before 5 pm local

time in the garden in front of the church rectory. Vested in purple, the liturgical colour of the First Sunday of Advent, he climbed the steps of the Cathedral for the Mass. On the parvis were the concelebrants: the cardinals of the entourage, Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga of Bangui, the Central African Bishops, and Archbishop Franco Coppola, Nuncio in the Central African Republic.

Technical difficulties interfered with the transmission of the Pope's words outside the Cathedral, but the thousands who gathered in the square were able to see his actions on the jumbotron, while many others managed to hear his voice by way of the live radio broadcast of the event.

The Pope approached the door of the Cathedral and according to

ritual exhorted: "Open the doors of justice". After entering the church, which was decorated for the occasion with its columns draped in yellow and white, the Pope celebrated Mass for the Central African priests, men and women religious, and seminarians. The Liturgy was said in French (with the Preface and the Eucharistic Prayer in Latin) and was accompanied by a choir that sang in Sango, the national language. The prayers of the faithful were dedicated to the Pope and to Advent preachers that they may proclaim Christian hope, to governments and those who fight for a more fraternal world, to the sick, the exiled, to orphans and widows, and to consecrated people that they may revive the ardour of their witness.



The Pope calls Central African youth to have courage, to forgive and work for peace

## Be resilient and courageous

On Saturday evening, 29 November, from the parvis of the Cathedral of Bangui, Pope Francis opened the prayer vigil of the Central African youth. Before hearing several confessions and imparting the blessing, the Pontiff improvised an address in response to the witness of one the young people present. The following is the English text of his discourse which was given in Italian.

Dear Young Friends,

I greet all of you with affection. Your friend who spoke in your name said that your symbol is the banana tree, because it is a symbol of life: banana trees keep growing, they spread, they bear fruit which always gives nourishment and strength. Banana trees are also resilient. I think this tells us clearly that the road before you at this difficult time of war, hatred and division: it is the road of resilience.

Your friend said that some of you want to leave home. Fleeing from life's challenges is never a solution! It is necessary to be resilient, to have the courage to resist, to fight for what is right! Those who flee do not have the courage to give life. Banana trees give life, they spread and keep giving new life because they are resilient, they remain, they stay put. Some of you will say: "But Father, what can we do? How can we be resilient?" Let me tell you two or three things that may be helpful for you, in order to be resilient.

First of all, *prayer*. Prayer is powerful! Prayer conquers evil! Prayer makes you draw near to God who is all-powerful. Let me ask you a question: Do you pray? I can't hear you! [the young people respond: *Yes!*]. Don't forget this!

Second, *work for peace*. Peace is not a document which gets signed and then filed away. Peace is built day by day! And peace is crafted; it is the work of our hands; it is built up by the way we live our lives. But someone may say: "Tell me, Father, how can I build peace? How can I be a peacemaker?". First: never hate anyone. If someone wrongs you, seek to forgive. No hatred! Much forgiveness! Let us all say this together: "No hatred! Much forgiveness!". [all repeat in Sango]. And if hatred does not dwell in your heart, if you forgive, then you will be a winner. Because you will win the hardest battle in life; you will win in love. And from love comes peace.

Do you want to be winners or losers in life? What do you want? [We want to be winners!] But we only win if we take the road of love. The road of love. Can we love our enemies? Yes! Can we forgive those who do us wrong? Yes! So, through love and forgiveness, you will be winners. With love you will win in life and you will always give life. Love will never make you losers.

Now I wish you all the best. Think of the banana tree. Think of resilience in the face of problems. Fleeing, going away is not a solution. You must be courageous. Have you understood what it means to be



courageous? Courageous in forgiving, courageous in loving, courageous in building peace. Is that right? [*Yes!*] Let's say it together! "Courageous in love, in forgiveness, in building peace".

Dear young people of Central Africa, I'm very happy that I met you. Today we opened this Door. It is a sign of the Door of God's Mercy. Trust in God! Because he is merciful; he is love; he is capable of giving you peace. That is why I told you at the beginning to pray: we need to pray in order to be resilient, to love and not to hate, to be peacemakers.

Thank you for coming. Now I'm going to go in and hear some of your confessions.

Are your hearts ready to be resilient? Yes or no? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to work for peace? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to forgive? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts open to reconciliation? [*Yes!*] Are your hearts ready to love this beautiful country of yours? [*Yes!*] And now let me go back to the very first thing. Are your hearts ready to pray? [*Yes!*]

I ask you also to pray for me, so that I can be a good bishop, a good Pope. Will you promise to pray for me? [*Yes!*]

And now I will give my blessing to you and your families. A blessing and a prayer, that the Lord will give you his love and his peace.

*The following is the English text of the Pope's prepared address, which he consigned to the young people.*

Dear Young Friends,

Good evening! It is a great joy for me to be here with you this evening, as we enter upon a new liturgical year with the beginning of Advent. Is this not, for each one of us, an occasion to begin anew, a chance to "go across to the other side?" (cf. Lk 8:22).

During this, our meeting, I will be able to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with some of you. I encourage each of you to reflect on the grandeur of this sacrament, in which God comes to meet us personally. Whenever we ask, he comes

to us and helps us to "go across to the other side", to that side of our life where God forgives us and bathes us in his love which heals, soothes and raises up! The *Jubilee of Mercy*, which I just opened particularly for you, dear Central African and African friends, rightly reminds us that God is waiting for us, with arms wide open, as we see in the beautiful image of the Father who welcomes the prodigal son.

The forgiveness which we receive comforts us and enables us to make a new start, with trusting and serene hearts, better able to live in harmony with ourselves, with God and with others. The forgiveness which we receive enables us in turn to forgive others. There is always a need for this, especially in times of conflict and violence, as you know all too well. I renew my closeness to all those among you who have experienced sorrow, separation and the wounds inflicted by hatred and war. In such situations, forgiving those who have done us harm is, humanly speaking, extremely difficult. But God offers us the strength and the courage to become those artisans of reconciliation and peace which your country greatly needs. The Christian, as a disciple of Christ, walks in the footsteps of his Master, who on the Cross asked his Father to forgive those who were crucifying him (cf. Lk 23:34). How far is this sentiment from those which too often reign in our hearts! Meditating on the attitude and the words of Jesus, "Father, forgive them", can help to turn our gaze and convert our heart.

For many people, it is a scandal that God came to be one of us. It is a scandal that he died on a cross. Yes, it is scandalous: the scandal of the cross. The cross continues to scandalize. Yet it remains the one sure way: the way of the cross, the way of Jesus who came to share our life and to save us from sin (cf. *Meeting with Young Argentines*, 25 July 2013). Dear friends, this cross speaks to us of the closeness of God: he is with us, he is with each one of you, in your joys and in your trials.

Dear young people, the most precious good which we can have in

this life is our relationship with God. Are you convinced of this? Are you aware of the inestimable value that you have in God's eyes? Do you know that you are loved and accepted by him, unconditionally, as you are? (cf. *Message for the World Youth Day 2015*, 2). Devoting time to prayer and the reading of Scripture, especially the Gospels, you will come to know him, and yourselves, ever better. Today too, Jesus' counsel can illumine your feelings and your decisions. You are enthusiastic and generous, pursuing high ideals, searching for truth and beauty. I encourage you to maintain an alert and critical spirit in the face of every compromise which runs contrary to the Gospel message.

Thank you for your creative dynamism, which the Church greatly needs. Cultivate this! Be witnesses to the joy of meeting Jesus. May he transform you, strengthen your faith and help you to overcome every fear, so that you may embrace ever more fully God's loving plan for you! God wills the happiness of every one of his children. Those who open themselves to his gaze are freed from sin, from sorrow, from inner emptiness and from isolation (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). Instead, they can see others as brothers or sisters, accepting their differences and recognizing that they are a gift for all of us.

It is in this way that peace is built, day by day. It calls for setting out on the path of service and humility, and being attentive to the needs of others. To embrace this mindset, we need to have a heart capable of bending down and sharing life with those most in need. That is where true charity is found. In this way solidarity grows, beginning with small gestures, and the seeds of division disappear. In this way dialogue among believers bears fruit, fraternity is lived day by day and it enlarges the heart by opening up a future. In this way, you will be able to do so much good for your country. I encourage you to do so.

Dear young friends, the Lord is alive and he is walking at your side. When difficulties seem to abound, when pain and sadness seem to prevail all around you, he does not abandon you. He has left us the memorial of his love: the Eucharist and the sacraments, to aid our progress along the way and furnish the strength we need to daily move forward. This must be the source of your hope and your courage as you "go across to the other side" (cf. Lk 8:22), with Jesus, opening new paths for yourselves and your generation, for your families, for your country. I pray that you will be filled with this hope. May you be ever anchored in it, so that you can give it to others, to this world of ours so wounded by war and conflicts, by evil and sin. Never forget: the Lord is with you. He trusts you. He wants you to be missionary disciples, sustained in times of difficulty and trial by the prayers of the Virgin Mary and those of the entire Church. Dear young people of Central Africa, go forth! I am sending you out!

During the visit to the Mosque of Koudoukou

## Reject hatred and violence

*On Monday morning, 30 November, the final day of his visit to Africa, the Pope met the members of the Muslim community at the Mosque of Koudoukou. The following is the English text of the address Francis gave in Italian, after a greeting by the Imam.*

Dear Muslim friends, leaders and followers of Islam,

It is a great joy for me to be with you and I thank you for your warm welcome. In a particular way I thank Imam Tidiani Moussa Naïbi for his kind words of greeting. My Pastoral Visit to the Central African Republic would not be complete if it did not include this encounter with the Muslim community.

Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters. We must therefore consider ourselves and conduct ourselves as such. We are well aware that the recent events and acts of violence which have shaken your country were not grounded in properly religious motives. Those who

claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace. Christians, Muslims and members of the traditional religions have lived together in peace for many years. They ought, therefore, to remain united in working for an end to every act which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God and whose ultimate aim is to defend particular interests by any and all means, to the detriment of the common good. Together, we must say 'no' to hatred, 'no' to revenge and 'no' to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself. God is peace, God *salam*.

In these dramatic times, Christian and Muslim leaders have sought to rise to the challenges of the moment. They have played an important role in re-establishing harmony and fraternity among all. I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation for this. We can also call to mind the many acts of solidarity which Christians and Muslims have shown with regard to their fellow



citizens of other religious confessions, by welcoming them and defending them during this latest crisis in your country, as well as in other parts of the world.

We cannot fail to express hope that the forthcoming national consultations will provide the country with leaders capable of bringing Central Africans together, thus becoming symbols of national unity rather than merely representatives of one or another faction. I strongly urge you to make your country a welcoming home for all its children, regardless of their ethnic origin, political affiliation or religious confession. The Central African Republic, situated in the heart of Africa, with the cooperation of all her sons and daughters, will then prove a stimulus in this regard to the entire continent. It will prove a positive influence and help extinguish the smouldering tensions which prevent Africans from benefitting from that development which they deserve and to which they have a right.

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters, I invite you to pray and work for reconciliation, fraternity and solidarity among all people, without forgetting those who have suffered the most as a result of recent events.

May God bless you and protect you! *Salam alaikum!*

## Pope Francis opens the Holy Door in Bangui

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who, in this country live, at times heroically, the Christian virtues, I realize that the distance between this demanding ideal and our Christian witness is at times great. For this reason I echo the prayer of St Paul: "Brothers and sisters, may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men and women" (1 Thess 3:12). Thus what the pagans said of the early Christians will always remain before us like a beacon: "See how they love one another, how they truly love one another" (Tertullian, *Apology*, 39: 7).

Finally, the salvation proclaimed by God has an invincible power which will make it ultimately prevail. After announcing to his disciples the terrible signs that will precede his coming, Jesus concludes: "When these things begin to take place,

look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). If St Paul can speak of a love which "grows and overflows", it is because Christian witness reflects that irresistible power spoken of in the Gospel. It is amid unprecedented devastation that Jesus wishes to show his great power, his incomparable glory (cf. Lk 21:27) and the power of that love which stops at nothing, even before the falling of the heavens, the conflagration of the world or the tumult of the seas. God is stronger, more powerful, than all else. This conviction gives to the believer serenity, courage and the strength to persevere in good amid the greatest hardships. Even when the powers of Hell are unleashed, Christians must rise to the summons, their heads held high, and be ready to brave blows in this battle over which God

will have the last word. And that word will be one of love and peace!

To all those who make unjust use of the weapons of this world, I make this appeal: lay down these instruments of death! Arm yourselves instead with righteousness, with love and mercy, the authentic guarantors of peace. As followers of Christ, dear priests, religious and lay pastoral workers, here in this country, with its suggestive name, situated in the heart of Africa and called to discover the Lord as the true centre of all that is good, your vocation is to incarnate the very heart of God in the midst of your fellow citizens. May the Lord deign to "strengthen your hearts in holiness, that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" (1 Thess 3:13). Reconciliation, forgiveness, love and peace! Amen.

## On the path of peace

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

Pope Francis' visit was described by President Catherine Samba-Panza as a blessing from heaven and a victory of faith. It took little more than 26 hours to transform the Pope's visit to Africa into one of the most meaningful journeys of his papacy. Bergoglio was indeed able to show the world, by his mere presence (which many thought impossible), the need for reconciliation in a country struggling, with help from the international community, to heal the wounds inflicted by civil war and to escape crushing poverty.

The people of Central Africa understood and thus the Pontiff's passage along the dusty roads of Bangui was celebrated by crowds, swaying tree branches and colourful fabrics stretching along the streets. He was joyfully embraced by the city's Archbishop, Dieudonné Nzapalainga, along with refugees gathered at the Saint-Sauveur parish; he was welcomed in friendship by the Protestants of the theological faculty, and then by Muslims at the Mosque of Koudoukou. Pope Bergoglio recognized that these are difficult times, as he celebrated the closing Mass in a stadium brimming with people and assaulted by the sun. But faith in Jesus is a reality open to a definitive future that "even now is transforming our lives and the world around us". This could be seen in the gesture by the Pope who, to everyone's surprise, came down from the altar to exchange the sign of peace with the Imam of Bangui, who was present at the Mass in the Cathedral. "Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters", he emphasized in the Mosque: brothers and sisters who must reject violence and hatred, and "remain united in working for an end to every act which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God".

Pope Francis' journey to Africa came to a close with this leg of the itinerary which he so tenaciously wanted and which culminated in the unprecedented act of a pontiff opening a Holy Door outside of Rome. Indeed, with this symbol *par excellence* of the Jubilee, in the Cathedral of Bangui, for the Central African Republic, he expedited the opening of the Extraordinary Year of Mercy inducted for the 50th anniversary of the end of the Council.

And with this foretaste of the Jubilee celebration, this city in the heart of Africa which yearns for peace has become by the Pope's intention "the spiritual capital of the world". In a country where many are "listless, asking only for alms, the alms of bread, the alms of justice, the alms of attention and goodness", Francis added, "all of us are look-

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At the concluding Mass in Bangui the Pontiff asks Central Africans to be artisans of their country's renewal

## The other shore

He sends his greeting to the Ecumenical Patriarch on the Feast of St Andrew

*With the Mass celebrated in the stadium in Bangui on Monday morning, 30 November, the Pope concluded the first journey in Africa of his pontificate. The following is the English text of his homily, which he gave in Italian.*

We might be astonished, listening to this morning's first reading, by the enthusiasm and missionary drive of St Paul. "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Rom 10:15). These words inspire us to give thanks for the gift of the faith which we have received. They also inspire us to reflect with amazement on the great missionary effort which – not long ago – first brought the joy of the Gospel to this beloved land of Central Africa. It is good, especially in times of difficulty, trials and suffering, when the future is uncertain and we feel weary and apprehensive, to come together before the Lord. To come together, as we do today, to rejoice in his presence and in the new life and the salvation which he offers us. For he invites us to cross over to *another shore* (cf. Lk 8:22).

This *other shore* is, of course, eternal life, heaven, which awaits us. Looking towards the world to come has always been a source of strength for Christians, for the poor, for the least, on their earthly pilgrimage.

### The path of peace

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ing for God's grace, for the alms of peace".

After concluding the Mass for the First Sunday of Advent, the Pontiff introduced a Prayer Vigil which afterwards continued throughout the night, improvising with thousands of young people a dialogue on the need to reject evil and fight for good. Before withdrawing to hear the confessions of several teenaged boys and girls, the Pope made his customary request that they pray for him, that he may be a good bishop and a good Pope.

G.M.V.

Eternal life is not an illusion; it is not a flight from the world. It is a powerful reality which calls out to us and challenges us to persevere in faith and love.

But the more immediate *other shore*, which we are trying to reach, this salvation secured by the faith of which St Paul speaks, is a reality which even now is transforming our lives and the world around us. "Faith in the heart leads to justification" (Rom 10:10). Those who believe receive the very life of Christ, which enables them to love God and their brothers and sisters in a new way and to bring to bear a world renewed by love.

Let us thank the Lord for his presence and for the strength which he gives us in our daily lives, at those times when we experience physical and spiritual suffering, pain, and grief. Let us thank him for the acts of solidarity and generosity which he inspires in us, for the joy and love with which he fills our families and our communities, despite the suffering and violence we sometimes experience, and our fears for the future. Let us thank him for his gift of courage, which inspires us to forge bonds of friendship, to dialogue with those who are different than ourselves, to forgive those who have wronged us, and to work to build a more just and fraternal society in which no one is abandoned. In all these things, the Risen Christ takes us by the hand and guides us. I join you in thanking the Lord in his mercy for all the beautiful, generous and courageous things he has enabled you to accomplish in your families and communities during these eventful years in the life of your country.

The fact is that we have not yet reached our destination. In a certain sense we are in midstream, needing the courage to decide, with renewed missionary zeal, to pass to the *other shore*. All the baptized need to continually break with the remnants of the old Adam, the man of sin, ever ready to rise up again at the prompting of the devil. How often this happens in our world and in these times of conflict, hate and war! How easy it is to be led into selfishness, distrust, violence, destructiveness, vengeance, indifference to and

the exploitation of those who are most vulnerable....

We know that our Christian communities, called to holiness, still have a long way to go. Certainly we need to beg the Lord's forgiveness for our all too frequent reluctance and hesitation in bearing witness to the Gospel. May the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which has just begun in your country, be an occasion to do so. Dear Central Africans, may you look to the future and, strengthened by the distance you have already come, resolutely determine to begin a new chapter in the Christian history of your country, to set out towards new horizons, to put out into the deep. The Apostle Andrew, with his brother Peter, did not hesitate to leave everything at Christ's call: "Immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mt 4:20). Once again, we are amazed at the great enthusiasm of the Apostles. Christ drew them so closely to himself, that they felt able to do everything and to risk everything with him.

Each of us, in his or her heart, can ask the crucial question of where we stand with Jesus, asking what we have already accepted – or refused to accept – in responding to his call to follow him more closely. The cry of "those who bring good news" resounds all the more in our ears, precisely when times are difficult; that cry which "goes out through all the earth... to the ends of the earth" (Rom 10:18; cf. Ps 19:4). And it resounds here, today, in this land of Central Africa. It resounds in our hearts, our families, our parishes, wherever we live. It invites us to persevere in enthusiasm for mission, for that mission which needs new "bearers of good news", ever more numerous, generous, joyful and holy. We are all called to be, each of us, these messengers whom our brothers and sisters of every ethnic group, religion and culture, await, often without knowing it. For how can our brothers and sisters believe in Christ – St Paul asks – if the Word is neither proclaimed nor heard?

We too, like the Apostles, need to be full of hope and enthusiasm for

the future. The *other shore* is at hand, and Jesus is crossing the river with us. He is risen from the dead; henceforth the trials and sufferings which we experience are always opportunities opening up to a new future, provided we are willing to follow him. Christians of Central Africa, each of you is called to be, through perseverance in faith and missionary commitment, artisans of the human and spiritual renewal of your country. I underline, artisans of the human and spiritual renewal.

May the Virgin Mary who, by sharing in the Passion of her Son, now shares in his perfect joy, protect



you and encourage you on this path of hope. Amen.

*Before concluding the celebration and imparting the blessing, the Pontiff addressed wishes to Patriarch Bartholomew on the occasion of the Feast of St Andrew.*

Before giving the blessing, on this Feast of St Andrew, from here, in the heart of Africa, I would like to address my dearest brother, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. I offer him wishes of happiness and fraternity, and I ask that the Lord bless our sister Churches.

In a message to Patriarch Bartholomaios the Pope recalls the blood which has been shed in recent terrorist attacks

## A fraternal embrace

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, led a delegation on 30 November, to Istanbul for the feast of St Andrew. Accompanied by Bishop Farrell, Secretary of the Dicastery and Bishop Palmieri,

Undersecretary. The Cardinal took part at the celebration of Divine Liturgy presided by Patriarch Bartholomaios, Archbishop of Constantinople, at the Patriarchal Church of St George in the Phanar. Then Cardinal Koch met with the Ecumenical Patriarch

and members of the Synod Commission in charge of relations with the Catholic Church. The Holy Father's message was hand delivered to the Orthodox leader and read aloud at the celebration. The following is the English text.



To His Holiness Bartholomaios  
Archbishop of Constantinople  
Ecumenical Patriarch

Your Holiness, Beloved Brother in Christ,

A year has passed since we celebrated together, in the Patriarchal Church in the Phanar, the feast of St Andrew, the first-called Apostle and brother of St Peter. The occasion was a moment of grace which permitted me to renew and to deepen, in shared prayer and personal encounter, the bonds of friendship with you and with the Church over which you preside. It was with joy that I also experienced the vitality of a Church which unceasingly professes, celebrates and offers witness to faith in Jesus Christ, our one Lord and Saviour. I am pleased once again to send a delegation of the Holy See to the Patronal celebrations as a tangible sign of my fraternal affection and the spiritual closeness of the Church of Rome to Your Holiness, as well as to the members of the Holy Synod, the clergy, monks and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

In our profound communion of faith and charity, and grateful for all that God has accomplished for us, I recall the fiftieth anniversary on 7 December 2015 of the *Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration of Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I* which expressed the decision to remove from memory and from the midst of the Church the excommunications of 1054. The memory of the mutual sentences of excommunication, together with the offensive words, groundless reproaches, and reprehensible gestures on both sides, which accompanied the sad events of this period, represented for many centuries an obstacle to rapprochement in charity between Catholics and Orthodox. Attentive to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who prayed to the Father on the eve of his Passion that his disciples "may be one" (Jn 17:21), Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I consigned these painful memories to oblivion. Since then, the logic of antagonism, mistrust and hostility that had been symbolized by the mutual excommunications has been replaced by the logic of love and brotherhood, represented by our fraternal embrace.

While not all differences between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches were brought to an end, there now existed the conditions necessary to journey towards re-establishing the "full communion of faith, fraternal accord and sacramental life which existed among them during the first thousand years of the life of the Church" (*Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration*, 7 December 1965). Having restored a relationship of love and fraternity, in a spirit of mutual trust, respect and charity, there is no longer any impediment to Eucharistic communion which cannot be overcome through prayer, the purification of hearts, dialogue and the affirmation of truth. Indeed, where there is love in the life of the Church, its source and fulfilment is always to be found in Eucharistic love. So too the symbol of the fraternal embrace finds its most profound truth in the embrace of peace exchanged in the Eucharistic celebration.

In order to progress on our journey towards the full communion for which we long, we need continually to draw inspiration from the gesture of reconciliation and peace by our venerable predecessors Paul VI and Athenagoras I. At all levels and in every context of Church life, relations between Catholics and Orthodox must increasingly reflect the logic of love that leaves no room for the spirit of rivalry. Theological dialogue itself, sustained by mutual charity, must continue to examine carefully the questions which divide us, aiming always at deepening our shared understanding of revealed truth. Motivated by God's love, we must together offer the world a credible and effective witness to Christ's message of reconciliation and salvation.

The world today has great need of reconciliation, particularly in light of so much blood which has been shed in recent terrorist attacks. May we accompany the victims with our prayers, and renew our commitment to lasting peace by promoting dia-

logue between religious traditions, for "indifference and mutual ignorance can only lead to mistrust and unfortunately even conflict" (*Common Declaration*, Jerusalem 2014).

I wish to express my deep appreciation for Your Holiness's fervent commitment to the critical issue of care for creation, for which your sensitivity and awareness is an exemplary witness for Catholics. I believe that it is a hopeful sign for Catholics and Orthodox that we now celebrate together an annual Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1 September, following the longstanding practice of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In this regard, I assure you of my prayers for the important international meeting on the environment to be held in Paris at which you will participate.

Your Holiness, it is incumbent upon humanity to rediscover the

mystery of mercy, "the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 2). For this reason I have called for an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, a favourable time to contemplate the Father's mercy revealed fully in his Son, Jesus Christ, and to become ourselves an effective sign of God's love through our mutual pardon and works of mercy. It is providential that the anniversary of that historic *Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration* concerning the removal of the excommunications of 1054 occurs on the eve of the Year of Mercy. Following Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, Catholics and Orthodox today must ask pardon of God and one another for divisions that Christians have brought about in the Body of Christ. I ask you and all the faithful of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to pray that this Extraordinary Jubilee may bear the spiritual fruits for which we yearn. I willingly assure you of my prayers for the events that your Church will celebrate in the year to come, especially the Pan-Orthodox Great Synod. May this important occasion for all the Orthodox Churches be a source of abundant blessings for the life of the Church.

With fraternal affection in the Lord, I assure you of my spiritual closeness on the joyous feast of the Apostle Andrew, and I willingly exchange with Your Holiness an embrace of peace in the Lord Jesus.

From the Vatican, 30 November 2015

Franciscus

A new film about Francis

### The poor at the premier

On Tuesday, 1 December, in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall, the film *Chiamatemi Francesco* ["Call me Francis"] premiered before an audience that included a group of detainees from Rome's Rebibbia prison, who had received special permission, 100 refugees assisted by the Centro Astalli, along with the poor, the homeless, and the needy, as well as lay and religious volunteers who work in charity every day. The film was released in theatres in Italy on Thursday, 3 December. According to the Office of Papal Charities, at the Pope's invitation, all 7,000 tickets available were reserved exclusively for the poor and for volunteers, and distributed through Rome's parishes, associations and various charitable organizations.

The group of 7,000 was greeted late Tuesday afternoon by the papal almoner, Archbishop Konrad Krajewski. Before the projector began to spin, the Pontifical Swiss Guard band played several songs, and brief presentations were made by the film's producers, director and cast members, who had also attended the General Audience in St Peter's Square. As recounted by Pietro Valsecchi, one of the producers, "the premier was very exciting precisely because of the presence of so many poor people". I believe, he continued, "that this film can give a word of hope, trust and solidarity to the very least" which, according to the producer, includes young people who are confused and have no bearings".



Traditions of community in Africa

## The village as a family

RITA MBOSHU KONGO

In Africa one can become a member of a family in a number of ways in addition to biological birth, alliance, the blood pact, marriage, and so forth. In each one of these cases one becomes a real member of a specific family. To understand the nuances of the concept of an African family it is first of all necessary to analyze the way Africans envision the human person. According to the African view, man is fundamentally a bundle of relationships, from which he lives and toward which he tends. The person is perceived not only as an isolated individual, but as belonging to a community, a family, whose members are always in communion with those of the world of the afterlife, unseen, with whom they form a single identity: a world which, according to the African concept, is like an immense spider's web, a single thread of which it is impossible to touch without causing the whole community to vibrate. From the social viewpoint, therefore,



the young person perceives himself as a vital "member" of his or her community, perceiving himself as a "daughter or son of", who belongs to this or that other family, to this or that other clan, to this or that other tribe and to a specific village. This belonging to something larger stirs deep within the young person a strong sense of dependence and of a relationship with God, with others and with the world. Thus the greatness and fulfillment of African human beings consist not only in their rationality, but also in their relationality which makes them live and fulfill themselves. For the African the family is the natural environment in which each one comes into the world, acts, finds the necessary protection and security and, lastly, where even after earthly life, each person is assured of continuity through their lineage. In the exercise of this relationship, Africans find their freedom too, because if the experience of relationality is lived harmoniously it should not stifle freedom. The African family thus produces in the young person a strong feeling of "we", to the point

that young people can bind themselves to it, even relinquishing the ability to make personal judgements or to undertake anything new in their lives. They believe that in this "we" one finds order, security and happiness in the sense of absolute belonging. Thus abandoning one's family is seen as a disgrace. Hence the marriage covenant is not an act that concerns only the responsibility of a particular man and woman, but rather an alliance between two families, that of the bridegroom and that of the bride. This community dimension constitutes a defence and strengthens the marital bond in case difficulties arise within the couple. Every child that is born, even if brought up mainly by his or her parents, belongs in fact to the entire family, community and village, which is why one can say that all are responsible for the child's education. An African proverb says that when a baby is in the mother's womb he or she belongs to the whole family, but once born, the baby belongs to the whole village. The family continues to exercise its authority over the

young person even when he or she reaches adulthood, because the decisions taken by the community, even if they are to the disadvantage of the person concerned, must be respected and implemented by all. If on the one hand this attitude facilitates the exercise of authority, on the other, in many cases it makes people irresponsible: in order to act, they await the word of the Chief or the elders, to the point that when young people are to marry they are obliged to

leave the choice of their spouse to the elders, as if they were not the ones directly concerned. The consequence is that the young person's very existence is conceived of and lived by all as a community project, which is why life is a synthesis of the natural, cultural and spiritual values of the whole family, clan and village. In other words, he or she lives not for himself or herself but for and in the family. In the clan and in the tribe the individual is absorbed into and by the group, because this is what provides for all of his or her needs and is from birth what traces



his or her path for the future. Hence the young person is gradually trained and guided by the family, through a series of phases which little by little confer on him or her ever more demanding and extensive roles, until he or she reaches the point of taking on the fullest role, the one for which he or she has been destined: becoming a husband or wife and father or mother, to give continuity to the family for the survival of the clan. Indeed both the boy and the girl are under the obligation to marry in order to perpetuate the line of descent, which is why no one in his right mind can consider not marrying or refuse to have children. In fact children represent such an important value that impeding their birth is considered a crime. Thus for everyone marriage is a social duty, a factor of individual and collective survival, a sign of social and moral balance. What makes African marriage valid is not only consent, the fact of its being ratified and consummated, but also the observance

*"An African proverb says that when a baby is in the mother's womb he or she belongs to the whole family, but once born, the baby belongs to the whole village"*

of the stages dictated by African tradition: the knowledge and acceptance of both spouses, the alliance between their families sealed by the exchange of a dowry. We can therefore affirm that African marriage takes place in stages. Since, as has been seen, one of the fundamental aims of the African person is procreation, when a couple is sterile they are thought to have been struck by a curse, and fortune-tellers are consulted in the attempt to remove it but increasingly the couple resorts to medically-assisted procreation and therapeutic remedies.

Despite Africans' attachment to their cultural values, it should come as no surprise when they freely



choose celibacy for the Kingdom, in response to the personal call of Christ who invites them to follow him on the path of consecrated chastity. Religious celibacy is a commitment that gives rise to problems in all of the world's cultures, partly because it represents a challenge to human nature and requires a strenuous process of asceticism and lifelong discipline.

Today, young Africans who previously were educated in the family and for the family, now attend modern schools in towns and aspire to become independent of the family and no longer have any intention of being totally integrated into their communities, but instead aspire to maximize his or her own qualities and personality to enable themselves to be totally fulfilled in their feminine or masculine role. Among the many forces which aim to detach young people from the family traditions, what should be denounced above all are the so-called programmes for development and formation in reproductive health which often spread "the culture of death" in Africa. They are at the root of the libertine practise of individualism influenced by the trivializing of sexual relations which induces people to avoid the permanent and lasting commitment of marriage. These trends, which are strengthened by financial difficulties, are spreading in Africa too the culture of a declining birth rate. The proclamation of the Gospel of the family must not leave Africa in this situation of antinatalism and the servile imitation of these alienating practises. The Church must promote with determination an evangelization that resolves the strong dissemination of a culture of death, procured by voluntary abortion and sterilization, contrary to religious traditions. On this path, Africa runs the risk of completely losing its culture and of finding itself in the face of a serious breakdown of the family.

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