

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH

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Forty-ninth year, number 15 (2442)

Vatican City

Friday, 15 April 2016

Pope Francis asks the faithful to pray for his visit to refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos

Closeness and solidarity

And he recalls that the Church is not for the perfect but for disciples

Francis will travel on Saturday, 16 April, to the island of Lesbos to express closeness and solidarity both to displaced peoples and to the people of Greece, who are so generous in their welcome. At the Wednesday General Audience on 13 April, the Holy Father asked the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square to accompany him "with prayers, invoking the light and strength of the Holy Spirit and the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

We have heard the Gospel account of the call of Matthew. Matthew was a "publican", namely, a tax collector on behalf of the Roman Empire, and for this reason was considered a public sinner. But Jesus calls Matthew to follow him and to become his disciple. Matthew accepts, and invites Jesus along with the disciples to have dinner at his house. Thus an argument arises between the Pharisees and the disciples of Jesus over the fact that the latter sit at the table with tax collectors and sinners. "You cannot go to these people's homes!", they said. Jesus does not stay away from them, but instead goes to their houses and sits beside them; this means that they too can become his disciples. It is likewise true that being Christian does not

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At the Regina Caeli

With nets overflowing



Ann Chapin, "Jesus appears on the shore" (2015, detail)



June and September

Two papal visits to the Caucasus

Francis will visit Armenia from 24 to 26 June and, he will travel to Georgia and Azerbaijan from 30 September to 2 October. A statement released by the Holy See Press Office on Saturday morning, 9 April, announced that the Pope has decided to go to Armenia, accepting invitations from His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, from civil authorities and from the Catholic Church. At the same time, accepting an invitation from His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia, and the civil and religious authorities of Georgia and Azerbaijan, the Holy Father will make an apostolic visit in the Caucasus.

On the Apostolic Exhortation 'Amoris Laetitia'

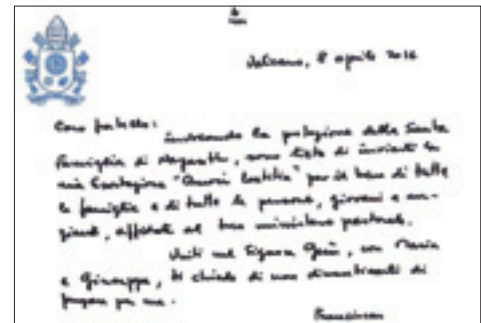
For the good of all

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

It's been a while since a papal text has raised as much anticipation and excitement as this one. It is the fruit of a journey for the family that Pope Francis began with his Pontificate. And this rather long document will not disappoint expectations in its breadth, tenderness and language: all elements which contribute to the novelty of its background, in the vital continuity of the Christian tradition, on a matter of interest not only to Catholics. It's also the first time a single text has incorporated the ideas expressed by the majority of two synodal assemblies.

The purpose of the exhortation on the "joy of love" is emphasized by the Pontiff in a very brief handwritten note to bishops. The chirograph indicates that the text is "for the good of all the families and persons, young and old". The circumstances are unusual and confirm once again how much the family means to Francis, the "Missionary Pope". The multifarious nature of the subject matter is clearly emphasized in the Exhortation, acknowledging Synod's reflections that "there is no stereotype of the ideal family", so much as a veritable "mosaic made up of many different realities".

The synodal document takes this variegated situation into account. It is a choral text that expresses with great equilibrium a common journey, according to a method almost as ancient as the Church herself. The text is inspired by ancient principles: the indulgent love (*synkatábasis*) of God, described by the Fathers of



The chirograph sent by Pope Francis to bishops along with the text of the Apostolic Exhortation 'Amoris Laetitia'

the Church in order to express God's attention and embrace of the ever imperfect human condition; the solicitude and parables of Jesus, the Lord whom the liturgy calls "friend of men"; and the principle of the "seeds of the *Logos*" which one must strive to recognize as present in every human reality.

The expansive text touches on many points: from a view of Scripture to the current situation of families, the text expounds on the teachings of the Church and

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To the Papal Foundation

Works of mercy

Summary of 'Amoris Laetitia'

The joy of love

The Jubilee Audience on almsgiving

Look them in the eye



VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 7 April

H.E. Mr Tihomir Orešković, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, with his wife and entourage

Archbishop Giuseppe Pinto, titular Archbishop of Anglona, and Apostolic Nuncio in the Philippines

H.B. Gregorios III Laham, Patriarch of Antioch for Greek-Melkites, Syria

Archbishop Georges Pontier of Marseilles, France, President of the Episcopal Conference of France, with: Bishop Pascal Delannoy of Saint-Denis, Vice President; Archbishop Pierre-Marie Carré of Montpellier, Vice President; Msgr Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, Secretary General

Friday, 8 April

Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura

Saturday, 9 April

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, PSS, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops

NEW DIOCESE

The Holy Father established the new Diocese of Rayagada, India, with territory taken from the Diocese of Berhampur, making it a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar. The Holy Father also appointed Fr Apinara Senapati, CM, as the first Bishop of Rayagada. Until now he has been parish priest and headmaster of the high school of Derapathar, Guwahati (11 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Senapati, 55, was born in Surada, India. He holds a Master's in both economics and in philosophy. He made his solemn vows on 10 May 1989 for the Congregation of the Mission and was ordained a priest on 28 November 1990. He has served in parish ministry and as: formator and lecturer at the minor seminary of St Vincent de Paul in Barpada and as master of novices.

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Anthony Kwami Adanuty of Keta-Akatsi, Ghana. It was presented in accord with can.

401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (7 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Emmanuel Fianu, SVD, of Ho, Ghana, as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of the Diocese of Keta-Akatsi (7 Apr.).

Bishop Fianu, 58, was born in Tegbi, Ghana. He was ordained a priest on 14 July 1985. He was ordained a bishop on 29 August 2015, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Ho.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Donald Thériault from his office as Military Ordinary for Canada. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (8 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Scott McCaig, CC, as Military Ordinary for Canada. Until now he has been Superior General of the Companions of the Cross, Canada (8 Apr.).

Bishop-elect McCaig, 50, was born in Duncan, British Columbia, Canada. He holds a licence in history and a Master of Divinity. In 1990 he made his first promises for the Companions of the Cross and was ordained a priest on 3 June 1995. He has served in parish ministry and as: member of the execut-

ive council of the Companions; and director of formation.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Antonio Ángel Algora Hernando of Ciudad Real, Spain. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (8 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Gerardo Melgar Viciosa as Bishop of Ciudad Real. Until now he has been Bishop of Osma-Soria, Spain (8 Apr.).

Bishop Melgar Viciosa, 67, was born in Cervatos de la Cueva, Spain. He was ordained a priest on 20 June 1973. He was ordained a bishop on 6 July 2008, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Osma-Soria.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Polito Rodríguez Méndez from the clergy of Barinas, as Bishop of San Carlos de Venezuela, Venezuela. Until now he has been Undersecretary of the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela (8 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Rodríguez Méndez, 48, was born in Santa Bárbara, Venezuela. He was ordained a priest on 31 July 1999. He holds a degree in moral theology, a Master's in university teaching and a doctorate in educational science from the Fermín

Toro University of Venezuela. He has served in parish ministry and as: diocesan director for youth pastoral ministry; diocesan vicar for pastoral ministry; professor and rector of the diocesan Seminary of Nuestra Señora del Pilar.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Luis Horacio Gómez González from his office as Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Gaitán, Colombia. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (8 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Raúl Alfonso Carrillo Martínez from the clergy of Zipaquirá, as Vicar Apostolic of Puerto Gaitán, Colombia, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Afufenia. Until now he has been parish priest and Moderator of the Curia (8 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Carrillo Martínez, 51, was born in Ubaté, Colombia. He was ordained a priest on 14 May 1990. He holds a degree in pastoral theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: a missionary in Magangué; diocesan delegate for the missions; formator and treasurer at the Major Seminary of San José de Zipaquirá; member of the diocesan council for economic affairs and vicar forane.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Gianrico Ruzza from the clergy of Rome as Auxiliary Bishop of Rome, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Subaugusta. Until now he has been parish priest of St Robert Bellarmino Parish (8 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Ruzza, 53, was born in Rome, Italy. He holds a licence in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 16 May 1987. He has served in parish ministry and as: assistant and vice-rector of the Pontifical Major Seminary of Rome; rector of the Church of San Lorenzo de' Speziali in Miranda; director of the office for the clergy of the Vicariate of Rome; assistant to the Eucharistic communities; president of the administrative council of the Interdiocesan Institute for the Support of the clergy; prefect of the sixth Prefecture.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Ramón del Hoyo López of Jaén, Spain. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (9 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop

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With the President of Croatia


On Thursday, 7 April, the Holy Father received in audience the President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, H.E. Mr Tihomir Orešković, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States.

The cordial discussions made manifest the good existing relations between the Holy See and the Republic of Croatia, of which the President's visit is a significant expression. Confirmation was given of the common wish to continue constructive dialogue on themes of bilateral interest regarding relations between the ecclesial and civil communities. Mention was also made of the importance of Blessed Alojzije Stepinac to the Croatian faithful, and the condition of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina was also noted.

In the broad exchange of views on international and regional matters, particular concern was expressed regarding the humanitarian crisis of refugees from the Middle East, as well as the situations of conflict that affect various regions of the world, and acts that seek to weaken the foundations of civil co-existence.



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General Audience catechesis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

render us flawless. Like Matthew the tax collector, each of us trusts in the grace of the Lord regardless of our sins. We are all sinners, we have all sinned. By calling Matthew, Jesus shows sinners that he does not look at their past, at their social status, at external conventions, but rather, he opens a new future to them. I once heard a beautiful saying: "There is no saint without a past nor a sinner without a future". This is what Jesus does. There is no saint without a past nor a sinner without a future. It is enough to respond to the call with a humble and sincere heart. The Church is not a community of perfect people, but of disciples on a journey, who follow the Lord because they know they are sinners and in need of his pardon. Thus, Christian life is a school of humility which opens us to grace.

Such behaviour is not understood by those who have the arrogance to believe they are "just" and to believe they are better than others. Hubris and pride do not allow one to recognize him- or herself as in need of salvation, but rather prevent one from seeing the merciful face of God and from acting with mercy. They are a barrier. Hubris and pride are a barrier that prevents a relationship with God. Yet, this is precisely Jesus' mission: coming in search of each of us, in order to heal our wounds and to call us to follow him with love. He says so explicitly: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (v. 12). Jesus presents himself as a good physician! He proclaims the Kingdom of God, and the signs of its coming are clear: He heals people from disease, frees them from fear, from death, and from the devil. Before Jesus, no sinner is excluded – no sinner is excluded! Because the healing power of God knows no infirmity that cannot be healed; and this must give us confidence and open our heart to the Lord, that he may come and heal us.

By calling sinners to his table, he heals them, restoring to them the vocation that they believed had been lost and which the Pharisees had forgotten: that of being guests at God's banquet. According to the prophecy of Isaiah: "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.... It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation'" (25:6, 9).

When the Pharisees see only sinners among the invited, and refuse to be seated with them, Jesus to the contrary reminds them that they too are guests at God's table. Thus, sitting at the table with Jesus means being transformed and saved by him. In the Christian community the table of Jesus is twofold: there is the table of the Word and there is the table of the Eucharist (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21). These are the medicines with which the Divine Physician heals us and nourishes us. With

the first – the Word – He reveals himself and invites us to a dialogue among friends. Jesus was not afraid to dialogue with sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes.... No, he was not afraid: he loved everyone! His Word permeates us and, like a scalpel, operates deep in the heart so as to free us from the evil lurking in our life. At times this Word is painful because it discloses deception, reveals false excuses, lays bare hidden truths; but at the same time it illuminates and purifies, gives strength and hope; it is an invaluable tonic on our journey of faith. The Eucharist, for

its part, nourishes us with the very life of Jesus, like an immensely powerful remedy and, in a mysterious way, it continuously renews the grace of our Baptism. By approaching the Eucharist we are nourished of the Body and Blood of Jesus, and by entering us, Jesus joins us to his Body!

Concluding that dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus reminds them of a word of the prophet Hosea (6:6): "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice'" (Mt 9:13). Addressing the people of Israel, the prophet reproaches them because the prayers they raised were but empty and incoherent words. Despite God's covenant and mercy, the people often lived with a "façade-like" religiosity, without living in depth the command of the Lord. This is why the prophet emphasized: "I desire mercy", namely



the loyalty of a heart that recognizes its own sins, that mends its ways and returns to be faithful to the covenant with God. "And not sacrifice": without a penitent heart, every religious action is ineffective! Jesus also applies this prophetic phrase to human relationships: the Pharisees were very religious in form, but were not willing to sit at the table with tax collectors and sinners; they did not recognize the opportunity for mending their ways and thus for healing; they did not place mercy in the first place: although being faithful guardians of the Law, they showed that they did not know the heart of God! It is as though you were given a parcel with a gift inside and, rather than going to open the gift, you look only at the paper it is wrapped in: only appearances, the form, and not the core of the grace, of the gift that is given!

Dear brothers and sisters, all of us are invited to the table of the Lord. Let us make our own this invitation and sit beside the Lord together with his disciples. Let us learn to look with mercy and to recognize each of them as fellow guests at the table. We are all disciples who need to experience and live the comforting word of Jesus. We all need to be nourished by the mercy of God, for it is from this source that our salvation flows. Thank you!

SPECIAL GREETINGS

Next Saturday [16 April] I shall go to the island of Lesbos, through which in recent months a great number of refugees have passed. I shall go, with my Brothers Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople, and Ieronymos, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, in order to express closeness and solidarity both to the displaced people and to the citizens of Lesbos and to all the people of Greece, who are so generous in their welcome. I ask you, please, to accompany me with prayers, invoking the light and strength of the Holy Spirit and the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary.

I greet the English-speaking visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly the pilgrims from England, Scotland, The Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, China, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Lord, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I offer a special greeting to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. May the Easter message continue to enable us to experience the astonishment of the disciples at Emmaus: dear *young people*, the Lord Jesus alone knows how to respond completely to the aspirations of happiness and goodness in your lives; dear *sick people*, there is no greater consolation in your suffering than the certainty of the Resurrection of Christ; and may you, dear *newlyweds*, live your marriage in concrete adherence to Christ and to the Gospel teaching.

The fourteenth session of meetings of the Council of Cardinals

During the 14th session of meetings of the Council of Cardinals, which convened on Monday, 11 April, the final proposal regarding a new apostolic constitution for the Pope's consideration began to take shape. At the three-day session the cardinals continued to discuss several dicasteries of the Curia, in particular the Congregations for Divine Worship, for the Causes of Saints and for the Doctrine of the Faith. Also the previously finalized texts regarding the new dicasteries ("laity, family, life" and "justice, peace, migration", which also includes charity and health pastoral care) were reviewed and now await the Pope's final decision. Lastly, criteria for collecting information for the appointment of new bishops and for the role of apostolic nuncios was reviewed. Cardinal Pell, Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy, and Cardinal O'Malley President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, presented updates relative to the work of their dicasteries.

The Pope participated in all meetings except the one held during Wednesday's General Audience. Past meetings of the council were held: 1-3 October and 3-5 December 2013; 17-19 February, 27-30 April, 1-4 July, 15-17 September and 9-11 December 2014; 9-11 February, 13-15 March, 8-10 June, 14-16 September and 10-12 December 2015; and 8-9 February 2016. Further meetings have been scheduled this year for 6-8 June, 12-14 September and 12-14 December.



To the Papal Foundation the Pontiff recalls that charity is a reflection of God's love

Works of mercy

Sharing Christ's mercy with those who "are spiritually and materially in need through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, with that spirit of generosity and tenderness that reflects God's immeasurable goodness". Pope Francis addressed the Papal Foundation on Friday morning, 8 April, in the Clementine Hall. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's address.

Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends in Christ,

I am pleased to welcome all of you, the Members, Trustees and Stewards of St Peter of *The Papal Foundation*, as you return to the Vatican for your annual pilgrimage. It is a great joy

for me to be with you again, and to express my profound appreciation for your generosity to me and to the Church throughout the world. In the name of all those who are assisted through your charitable works, I say thank you.

This year your pilgrimage takes place within the Jubilee of Mercy,

during which we contemplate the mystery of mercy, that wellspring of joy, serenity and peace, upon which our salvation depends (cf. *Misericordiae Vultus*, 2). We are called by Christ to share this mercy with those who are spiritually and materially in need through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, with that spirit of generosity and tenderness that reflects God's immeasurable goodness.

As Members, Trustees, and Stewards of *The Papal Foundation*, the works of mercy are at the heart of your mission. Through your generous support of diocesan, parish and community projects, as well as through providing scholarships, you assist many people to further respond to the local needs of their

communities and to undertake ever more fruitfully their own works of mercy. In this way, your charity reverberates throughout the world, offering new initiatives that help to extend the merciful embrace of the Father.

I pray that these days of pilgrimage have been for you a new impetus to holiness, and that you have experienced the gift of God's mercy. St Paul reminds us to never grow tired of doing good (cf. Gal 6:9; 2 Thess 3:13). May the Father sustain you in your good works, but above all may he lead you to an ever deeper faith and experience of his unending love. Know that my prayers and blessing go with you, and, please, do not forget to pray for me.



Papal Foundation donates 10 million dollars

The Papal Foundation is giving more than \$10 million for charitable work around the world: Nine million dollars will be used to finance more than 128 projects and \$760,000 will go to scholarships for priests, religious and lay people studying in Rome. The Foundation's President, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, presented these figures in his greeting to the Pope. At the same time the Cardinal promised to donate \$10,000 to the Pope's charities. Since 1990 the Papal Foundation has donated more than \$106 million.

'Cor Unum' responds to the Pope's appeal

Mission Ukraine

During the Regina Caeli on Sunday, 3 April, Pope Francis announced an extraordinary initiative for those suffering the consequences of violence in Ukraine. Thus a collection will be taken up in churches throughout Europe on Sunday, 24 April. Proceeds from the collection will be matched by an equal sum to be made available by the Pontiff himself, and will benefit the residents of affected areas and internally displaced people. The Pontifical Council 'Cor Unum' has been charged with the task of evaluating and approving the technical management of the funds, according to plans scrutinized locally by a special commission. A mission in Ukraine has been planned for the end of April by Msgr Giampietro Dal Toso, Secretary of the Dicastery.



Daily life in bombarded areas of western Ukraine (ANSA)

Francis denounces human trafficking

Crimes against humanity

"The grave issue of modern slavery and human trafficking", which "continues to be a scourge throughout the world today", is a true "crime against humanity". Pope Francis addressed the issue of human trafficking in a message to Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Organization, for a conference held in New York on Thursday, 7 April.

In the text – which was written in English – the Pontiff expressed his satisfaction with the initiative of the "Santa Marta Group", an alliance of police and Catholic bishops from around the world who work in civil society to eradicate human trafficking and guarantee pastoral care for victims. The group met for the first time in April 2014 in the Domus Sanctae Marthae. On that occasion the Pontiff called human trafficking an open wound for contemporary society. The group also met in December 2014 in London and in October 2015 in Madrid.

In his message, Francis expressed his gratitude to the member-States of the UN and to other governing bodies, both



civic and religious, which are "committed to combatting this crime against humanity". He also encouraged these organizations to "strengthen the bonds of cooperation and communication which are essential to ending the suffering of the many men, women and children who today are enslaved and sold as if they were a mere commodity". In this way, he writes, "solutions and preventative measures can be promoted which will allow this evil to be addressed at every level of society".

The recently-approved Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030, also addresses human trafficking. It reads: "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure

the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms" (n. 8.7). Similarly, the Pope also expressed his wish that "the dignity of every person" should remain at the centre of the discussion, recognizing "in all your endeavours a true service to the poorest and most marginalized of society, who too often are forgotten and have no voice".

Lastly the Pontiff assured Archbishop Auza and all the conference participants "of the steadfast commitment of the Catholic Church to fight against this crime and to care for all its victims, I offer the promise of my prayers that Almighty God may bless and guide your efforts".

At the Regina Caeli the Pope recalls that the presence of the Risen Jesus transforms everything

With nets overflowing

And he appeals for the liberation of people seized in war zones

The Gospel episode of the miraculous catch is an invitation to experience "the presence of the Risen Jesus" which "transforms everything", Pope Francis said at the Regina Caeli on Sunday morning, 10 April, in St Peter's Square. The following is a translation of the catechesis which he gave in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today's Gospel recounts the third apparition of the Risen Jesus to the disciples, with the account of the miraculous catch on the shore of the lake of Galilee (cf. Jn 21:1-19). The narrative is situated in the context of the everyday life of the disciples, who returned to their land and to their work as fishermen, after the shocking days of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord. It was difficult for them to understand what had taken place. Even though everything seemed finished, Jesus "seeks" his disciples once more. It is He who goes to seek them. This time he meets them at the lake, where they have spent the night in their boats catching nothing. The nets appear empty, in a certain sense, like the tally of their experience with Jesus: they met him, they left everything to follow him, full of hope... and now? Yes, they saw he was risen, but then they were thought: "He went away and left us... It was like a dream...".

So it is that at sunrise Jesus presents himself on the lakeshore; however they do not recognize him (cf. v. 4). The Lord says to those tired and disappointed fishermen: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some" (v. 6). The disciples trust in Jesus and the result is an incredibly abundant catch. At this point John turns to Peter and says: "It is the Lord!" (v. 7). Right away Peter throws himself into the water and swims to the shore, toward Jesus. In that exclamation: "It is the Lord!", there is all the enthusiasm of the Paschal faith, full of joy and wonder, which



sharply contrasts with the disappearance, the dejection, the sense of powerlessness that had accumulated in the disciples' hearts. The presence of the Risen Jesus transforms everything: darkness has become light, futile work has again become fruitful and promising, the sense of weariness and abandonment give way to a new impetus and to the certainty that He is with us.

From that time, these same sentiments enliven the Church, the Community of the Risen One. All of us are the community of the Risen One! At first glance it might sometimes seem that the darkness of evil and the toil of daily living have got the upper hand, the Church knows with certainty that the now everlasting light of Easter shines upon those who follow the Lord Jesus. The great message of the Resurrection instills in the hearts of believers profound joy and invincible hope. Christ is truly risen! Today too, the Church continues to make this joyous message resound: joy and hope continue to flow in hearts, in faces, in gestures, in words. We Christians are all called to communicate this message of resurrection to those we meet, especially to those who suffer, to those who are alone, to those who find themselves in precarious conditions, to the sick, to refugees, to the marginalized. Let us make a ray of

the light of the Risen Christ, a sign of his powerful mercy, reach everyone.

May he, the Lord, also renew in us the Paschal faith. May he render us ever more aware of our mission at the service of the Gospel and of our brothers and sisters; may he fill us

with his Holy Spirit so that, sustained by the intercession of Mary, with all the Church we may proclaim the greatness of his love and the abundance of his mercy.

After praying the Regina Caeli with the faithful, the Holy Father said:

Dear brothers and sisters, in the hope given to us by the Risen Christ, I renew my appeal for the liberation of all people who have been seized in areas of armed conflict; in particular I would like to remember the Salesian priest Tom Uzunnalil, abducted in Aden, Yemen on 4 March.

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from various parts of the world.

I thank the parish choirs for their presence; some of them have lent their service in recent days in St Peter's Basilica. Thank you very much! I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivereda!*

The Holy Father's condolences

Tragic fire at an Indian temple

Five people have been arrested in connection with the tragic fire at Puttingal Temple in Kerala, India, on 10 April. Sunday's blaze killed 112 and wounded 380. The flames broke out during a pyrotechnic display, when a firework landed on explosives, triggering a massive fire and showering of debris on the crowd that was trying to escape.

Pope Francis expressed his condolences and closeness to the families of the victims in a telegram, signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State. In his message, the Pope assured prayers for all those involved and for the relief efforts underway.

The severity of the tragedy is due to carelessness by the organizers of the pyrotechnic show, who had not obtained the proper permit. The annual event has a large following in the area. According to local authorities, the organizers did not request a permit to hold the show much less to warehouse the large quantity of explosive material inside the sacred complex in contact with the public.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who went to New Delhi with a team of medical specialists, said that "there are no words to describe the catastrophe".

A powerful explosion, which was heard as far as a kilometre away, was caused by a firework that hit the warehouse where there were about 150 kilos of firecrackers and other types of fireworks. Eyewitnesses said it was a chilling scene. The explosion caused immediate power outages and the crowd did not know which way to flee. Several were trampled trying to escape, but many were hit by the pieces of the building that had collapsed in flames.

This tragedy happened during the electoral campaign for the mid-May elections for the Legislative Assemblies. According to analysts, victims are typically compensated with a total of 1.2 million rupees (15,000 euro), from both the central government and the authorities of Kerala. Local authorities have also announced an inquiry commission which is due to report within six months.

Video message for the Worldwide Prayer Network

Just compensation for small farmers



"Thank you, small farmer. What you do is essential for the life of all". Pope Francis thus begins his video message for April on the website of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (apostleshipofprayer.org). In Spanish, the Pontiff speaks about his universal prayer intention for the month of April: small farmers. In the video, which has subtitles in six different languages, the Holy Father asks: "As a person, as a child of God, you deserve a decent life. But I wonder: how is your work compensated?". He continues by highlighting that "the earth is a gift from God. It is not right to exploit it for the benefit of just a few, depriving the great majority of their rights and benefits". Accompanied by images of farmers toiling in fields, the Pope concludes: "Please consider adding your voice to mine in this prayer: that small farmers may receive just compensation for their invaluable work".

Apostolic Exhortation presented by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

Good news for families

The following is the English text by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops for the presentation of the Holy Father's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Amoris Laetitia", on love in the Family.

LORENZO BALDISSERI

I am happy and honoured to present the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, which Pope Francis signed on 19 March, the Solemnity of St Joseph, and which is made public today. First of all, it is a pleasure to express my deep gratitude to the Holy Father for having given the Church this valuable document on love in the family. I would like to thank all who in various ways have offered their contribution; in particular, the Synod Fathers of the two Assemblies, the General Relator and the Special Secretary, the Pontifical Council for the Family and its President.

For *Amoris Laetitia* to be released in the very midst of the Jubilee of Mercy is significant. The text refers to this three times, and directly cites the Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus* six times. The document crowns the two years of work of the Synod, whose broad reflection has included all dimensions of the family institution, which today suffers from severe crises throughout the entire world. Human societies, marked by conflict and violence, need reconciliation and pardon starting with their vital core: the family. The Jubilee of Mercy is truly good news for families of every continent, especially those which are wounded and humiliated.

The title

The title *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) is in continuity with that of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG): from the joy of the Gospel to the joy of love in the family. The synodal process has presented the

design of the polyhedron previously used in *Evangelii Gaudium* (cf. 236). In fact, the results of the Synod Fathers' work brings together the diversity of experiences and points of view of the particular Churches. Disputes between different opinions took place with freedom and openness, which allowed an almost unanimous outcome to be achieved.

The principle according to which "time is greater than space" (EG, 222-225; AL, 3, 261) suggests that time is needed and there are different ways to find the best solutions to the different situations. In this regard, the Exhortation says: "Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it" (AL, 3). For example, the text refers to three prime situations in which the passage of time is necessary: in preparation for marriage (cf. AL, 205-216); in the education of children (cf. AL, 261); in mourning a death in the family (cf. AL, 255).

The key to reading

In full harmony with the Jubilee period that the Church is living, a suitable key for reading the document is "the logic of pastoral mercy" (AL, 307-312). The Holy Father clearly affirms the doctrine of marriage and the family, especially in ch. III, and he proposes it as an indispensable ideal. Referring to young people, he states: "In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the

for "the Lord's mercy, which spurs us on to do our best" (AL, 308).

The structure

The Exhortation is made up of nine chapters, subdivided into 325 paragraphs with 391 notes and the final prayer to the Holy Family. The Holy Father explains the development of the document (cf. AL, 6): the prologue, inspired by Sacred Scripture (ch. I), gives the appropriate tone to the document and leads to considering the current situation of families (ch. II), in light of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family (ch. III). He then treats love in marriage (ch. IV) which becomes fruitful in the family (chap. V); this is the heart of the document. Some pastoral perspectives follow for building solid and fruitful families according to God's plan (ch. VI) and to improve the education of children (ch. VII). Chapter VIII is an invitation to mercy and pastoral discernment when facing situations that do not fully meet the ideal that the Lord proposes. The Exhortation concludes with some guidelines on family spirituality (ch. IX).

In the introduction, Pope Francis himself explains the reason for the inevitable length of the text. Reflecting the synodal journey, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation would necessarily include not only the questions strictly connected to the family, but also a wide variety of related topics. The length and detail of the text require leisurely – not necessarily continuous – reading and various readers may select ac-

ording to their specific interests (cf. AL, 7).

The sources

Amoris Laetitia is a further outstanding expression of the pontificate of Pope Francis; it is a splendid synthesis and points towards further horizons. The fundamental basis of the Exhortation is made up of the final documents of the two synodal assemblies on the family: 52 citations from the *Synod Report (Relatio Synodi)* 2014 and 84 from the *Final Report (Relatio Finalis)* 2015, for a total of 136. In this way the Holy Father attributes great importance to collegial and synodal work, welcoming it and integrating it.

Furthermore, the text makes numerous references to the Fathers of the Church (St Leo the Great and St Augustine), to medieval and modern theologians (St Thomas, cited 19 times; St Dominic, Blessed Jordan of Saxony; Alexander of Hales; St Ignatius of Loyola, three times; St Robert Bellarmine; St John of the Cross); to contemporary authors (Joseph Pieper, Antonin Sertillanges, Gabriel Marcel, Erich Fromm, St Thérèse of Lisieux, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Mario Benedetti, Martin Luther King). Among the documents of previous Popes are mentioned, for example: *Casti Connubii* of Pius XI; *Mystici Corporis Christi* of Pius XII; *Humanae Vitae* of Blessed Paul VI (twice directly plus four times in other documents cited in the text); the *Catechesis on Human Love* (23 times) and *Familiaris Consortio* (21 times + 6) of St John Paul II; *Deus Caritas Est* of Benedict XVI (9 times + 1). The Second Vatican Council is well cited (22 times + 6), as is *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (13 times + 2). Moreover, in addition to the citations of *Evangelii Gaudium* (16 + 1), there are 50 citations from Pope Francis' catecheses on the family at general audiences. Finally, other documents of the Holy See are cited 12 times and documents of Episcopal Conferences 10 times.

Worth noting are the expressions the Holy Father uses to acknowledge the relevance of the work undertaken over two years by the Bishops of the whole world with their Churches, when he says "I support" (AL, 297), "I am in agreement with" (AL, 299), "I consider very fitting" (AL, 302). He refers explicitly to the Synod or to the Synod Fathers about 20 times.

Some highlights

1) In an era of global crisis in which families often suffer, the Exhortation takes a positive look at the beauty of married love and the family. The space dedicated to love and to its fertility, particularly in chapters IV and V, is an original contribution, both for the overall content and for the way of presenting it. Each expression of love in St Paul's hymn to love (1 Cor 13:4-7) is a spiritual and existential meditation on the life of spouses, sketched with



In the Holy See Press Office

To clearly reaffirm not "the ideal" of the family, but its rich and complex reality, in order to reflect on love in the family together with the women and men of our time. With this purpose in mind, on 19 March, the Solemnity of St Joseph, Pope Francis signed the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. The highly anticipated document was presented in the Holy See Press Office on Friday morning, 8 April. The panel was made up of Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops; Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, OF, Archbishop of Vienna; and a married couple, Francesco Miano and Giuseppina De Simone, both professors of philosophy.

beauty of the family by speaking of love. This constitutes the foundation of the family institution, because God is love among Persons, he is Trinity and not solitude. In this document, the Holy Father deepens the "gospel of marriage and the family" (AL, 89) and offers concrete pastoral orientations which, in continuity with the previous EG, take on new dynamism and value.

"The various interventions of the Synod Fathers, to which I paid close heed, made up, as it were, a multifaceted gem" (AL, 4) – writes the Holy Father, evoking the geometric

Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God's plan in all its grandeur... Today, more important than the pastoral care of failures is the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages and thus to prevent their breakdown" (AL, 307). On the other hand, the Pope does not overlook the fragility of families and even their failure. From *Evangelii Gaudium* (n. 44): "Without detracting from the evangelical ideal, there is a need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively appear", making room



Isabel Naude, "Family Picnic"

wise insight, by an experienced spiritual guide who encourages growth in conjugal love.

2) The Bishop has the task of leading the People of God, following the example of Jesus the Good Shepherd who "calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (Jn 10:3). The pastoral ministry of the Bishop also involves the exercise of judicial power. The Holy Father has defined this through the two Motu Proprio, *Mitis iudex Dominus Iesus* e *Mitis et Misericors Iesus*, as follows: "With these, I wished to make clear that the Bishop himself in the Church over which he has been appointed shepherd and head, is by that very fact the judge of those faithful entrusted to his care" (AL, 244). It follows that the Bishop, through the priests and properly trained pastoral workers, makes appropriate services available to whoever are experiencing family difficulties, crisis and failure.

3) Like any pastor, Pope Francis addresses his paternal care to the "immense variety of concrete situations" (AL, 300). Therefore, he says: "it is understandable that neither the Synod nor the Exhortation could be expected to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases" (*ibid*). Since – as the Synod has affirmed – "the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases", it is necessary to proceed with "a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases" (*ibid*).

The baptized living in a second marriage must be integrated and not excluded. In this regard the Exhortation is very clear: "Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services, which necessarily requires discerning which of the various forms of exclusion currently practised ... can be surmounted" (AL, 299).

To accompany and integrate people who live in these so-called "irregular" situations, pastors need to look them in the face one by one. The document says that "priests have the duty to 'accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop'" (AL, 300). In this process of discernment, it will be useful to make "an examination of conscience through moments of reflection and repentance. The divorced and remarried should ask themselves: how did they act towards their children when

the conjugal union entered into crisis; whether or not they made attempts at reconciliation; what has become of the abandoned party; what consequences the new relationship has on the rest of the family and the community of the faithful; and what example is being set for young people who are preparing for marriage" (*ibid*). Discernment takes place through "conversation with the priest, in the internal forum, [and] contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow" (*ibid*).

4) From the perspective of fulfilling the ideal of marriage, the Exhortation has put great emphasis on the preparation of engaged couples for the sacrament, in order to provide "the help they need to receive the sacrament worthily and to make a solid beginning of life as a family" (AL, 207). The Pope states that, in this preparation, it is necessary to draw from the doctrinal beliefs and the precious spiritual resources of the Church as well as to have recourse to "practical programmes, sound advice, proven strategies and psychological guidance" (AL, 211).

The Exhortation also signals the need for this journey to continue after the celebration, especially in the first years of married life. The Pope reminds the newly married couple that "marriage is not something that happens once for all.... Their gaze now has to be directed to the future that, with the help of God's grace, they are daily called to build" (AL, 218).

5) The document states that "the Fathers also considered the specific situation of a merely civil marriage or, with due distinction, even simple

cohabitation, noting that 'when such unions attain a particular stability, legally recognized, are characterized by deep affection and responsibility for their offspring, and demonstrate an ability to overcome trials, they can provide occasions for pastoral care with a view to the eventual celebration of the sacrament of marriage'" (AL, 293).

6) In accompanying the frailties and treating the wounds, the principle of gradualness in pastoral care reflects divine teaching: how God cares for all his children, beginning with the weakest and furthest away, so "the Church turns with love to those who participate in her life in an imperfect manner" (AL, 78) because they all have to be integrated into the life of the ecclesial community (cf. AL, 297). The Pope states, in fact, that "no one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!" (*ibid*).

Not limiting itself to so-called "irregular" situations, the Exhortation, therefore, opens up the wide horizon of undeserved grace and unconditional mercy for "everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves" (*ibid*).

In the face of the upheavals that are disrupting the world today, we discover the greatness of God and his love for all people who, constantly wounded, need to be welcomed and cared for by Christ, the Good Samaritan of humanity. From the awareness that God offers and gives mercy and that "the earthly city is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness, mercy and communion" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 6), emerges the need to go beyond the human horizon of justice with an impulse, a leap forward. This only comes from love, which becomes merciful in the face of human frailty, and is able to inspire courage and hope. The Apostolic Exhortation is set in this context. It touches the heart of the Gospel and heals the wounded person, with this expression: "Mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth" (AL, 311).

For the good of all

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

how they are translated in the everyday life of the faithful. It addresses the raising of children, offers "an invitation to mercy and the pastoral discernment of those situations that fall short of what the Lord demands of us", and discusses family spirituality. For the extent and richness of the text, evocative and appealing even in its reference to sources atypical to Papal documents, the Pope advises against "a rushed reading of the text", but instead encourages that it be read patiently and carefully.

Just as for the previous two great texts of his pontificate (*Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*), it is already foreseeable that *Amoris Laetitia* will raise interest and give rise to lively discussions, not only in the Church, particularly on the crucial aspects of integration and closeness to the faithful in difficult situations.

This interest is a good sign, just as good news is undoubtedly the message expressed by the Exhortation, consistent with the great Christian tradition and the renewal sought for it by the Council half a century ago.

G.M.V.

"Portrait of a family" (African-American art)



On Friday, 8 April, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held for the presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father, *Amoris Laetitia*: 'On Love in the Family'. The following is the English summary.

It is not by chance that *Amoris Laetitia* (AL), "The Joy of Love", the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "On Love in the Family", was signed on 19 March, the Solemnity of St Joseph. It brings together the results of the two Synods on the family convoked by Pope Francis in 2014 and 2015. The Exhortation often cites their Final Reports; documents and teachings of his Predecessors; and his own numerous catecheses on the family. In addition, as in previous magisterial documents, the Pope also makes use of the contributions of various Episcopal Conferences around the world (Kenya, Australia, Argentina...) and cites significant figures such as Martin Luther King and Erich Fromm. The Pope even quotes the film *Babette's Feast* to illustrate the concept of gratuity.

Introduction (1-7)

The Apostolic Exhortation is striking for its breadth and detail. Its 293 paragraphs are distributed over nine chapters. The seven introductory paragraphs plainly set out the complexity of a topic in urgent need of thorough study. The interventions of the Synod Fathers form a "multifaceted gem" (AL, 4), a precious polyhedron, whose value must be preserved. But the Pope cautions that "not all discussions of doc-



Habib Ayat, "Three with love" (2014)

trinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium". Indeed, for some questions, "each country or region ... can seek solutions better suited to its culture and sensitive to its traditions and local needs. For cultures are in fact quite diverse and every general principle ... needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied" (AL, 3). This principle of inculturation applies to how problems are formulated and addressed and, apart from the dogmatic issues that have been well defined by the Church's magisterium, none of this approach can be "globalized". In his address at the end of the 2015 Synod, the Pope said very clearly: "What seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous – almost – for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an

evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion".

The Pope clearly states that we need above all to avoid a sterile juxtaposition between demands for change and the general application of abstract norms. He writes: "The debates carried on in the media, in certain publications and even among the Church's ministers, range from an immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection or grounding, to an attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations" (AL, 2).

Chapter One

"In the light of the Word" (8-30)

Following this introduction, the Pope begins his reflections with the Holy Scriptures in the first chapter, which unfolds as a meditation on Psalm 128 (which appears in the Jewish wedding liturgy as well as that of Christian marriage). The Bible "is full of families, births, love stories and family crises" (AL, 8). This impels us to meditate on how the family is not an abstract ideal but rather like a practical "trade" (AL, 16), which is carried out with tenderness (AL, 28), but which has also been confronted with sin from the beginning, when the relationship of love turned into domination (cf. AL, 19). Hence, the Word of God "is not a series of abstract ideas but rather a source of comfort and companionship for every family that experiences difficulties or suffering. For it shows them the goal of their journey..." (AL, 22).

Chapter Two
"The experiences and challenges of families" (31-52)

Building on the biblical base in the second chapter the Pope considers the current situation of families. While keeping "firmly grounded in [the] reality" of family experiences (AL, 6), he also draws heavily on the final Reports of the two Synods. Families face many challenges, from migration to the ideological denial of differences between the sexes ("ideology of gender" AL, 56); from the culture of the provisional to the antibirth mentality and the impact of biotechnology in the field of procreation; from the lack of housing and work; from pornography and abuse of minors; from inattention to persons with disabilities, to lack of respect for the elderly; from the legal dismantling of the family, to violence against women. The Pope insists on concreteness, which is a key concept in the Exhortation. And it is concreteness, realism and daily life that make up the substantial difference between acceptable "theories" of interpretation of reality and arbitrary "ideologies".

Citing *Familiaris Consortio*, Francis states that "we do well to focus on concrete realities, since 'the call and the

demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history', and through these 'the Church can also be guided to a more profound understanding of the inexhaustible mystery of marriage and the family'" (AL, 30). Conversely, if we fail to listen to reality, we cannot understand the needs of the present or the movements of the Spirit. The Pope notes that rampant individualism makes it difficult today for one to give oneself generously to another (cf. AL, 33). Here is an interesting picture of the situation: "The fear of loneliness and the desire for stability and fidelity exist side by side with a growing fear of entrapment in a relationship that could hamper the achievement of one's personal goals" (AL, 34).

The humility of realism helps us to avoid presenting "a far too abstract and almost artificial, theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families" (AL, 36). Idealism does not allow marriage to be understood for what it is, that is, a "dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment". It is unrealistic to think that families can sustain themselves "simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace" (AL, 37). Calling for a certain "self-criticism" of approaches that are inadequate for the experience of marriage and the family, the Pope stresses the need to make room for the formation of the conscience of the faithful: "We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them" (AL, 37). Jesus proposed a demanding ideal but "never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery" (AL, 38).

Chapter Three

"Looking to Jesus:
The vocation of the family" (58-88)

The third chapter is dedicated to some essential elements of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family. This chapter is important because its 30 paragraphs concisely depict the vocation of the family according to the Gospel and as affirmed by the Church over time. Above all, it stresses the themes of indissolubility, the sacramental nature of marriage, the transmission of life and the education of children. *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II, *Humanae Vitae* of Paul VI, and *Familiaris Consortio* of John Paul II are widely quoted.

The chapter provides a broad view and touches on "imperfect situations" as well. We can read, in fact: "Discernment of the presence of 'seeds of the Word' in other cultures (cf. *Ad Gentes*, 11) can also apply to the reality of marriage and the family. In addition to true natural marriage, positive elements exist in the forms of marriage found in other religious traditions", even if, at times, obscurely" (AL, 77). The reflection also includes the "wounded families" about whom the Pope – quoting

the Final Report of the 2015 Synod extensively – says that "it is always necessary to recall this general principle: 'Pastors must know that, for the sake of truth, they are obliged to exercise careful discernment of situations'" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 84). The degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases and factors may exist which limit the ability to make a decision. Therefore, while clearly stating the Church's teaching, pastors are to avoid judgements that do not take into account the complexity of various situations, and they are to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience and endure distress because of their condition" (AL, 79).

Chapter Four

"Love in marriage" (89-164)

The fourth chapter treats love in marriage, which it illuminates with St Paul's Hymn to Love in the First Letter to the Corinthians 13:4-7. This opening section is truly a painstaking, focused, inspired and poetic exegesis of the Pauline text. It is a collection of brief passages carefully and tenderly describing human love in absolutely concrete terms. The quality of psychological introspection that marks this exegesis is striking. The psychological insights enter into the emotional world of spouses – positive and negative – and the erotic dimension of love. This is an extremely rich and valuable contribution to Christian married life. This is unprecedented in previous papal documents.

This section digresses briefly from the more extensive, perceptive treatment of the day-to-day experience of married love which the Pope refuses to judge against ideal standards: "There is no need to lay upon two limited persons the tremendous burden of having to reproduce perfectly the union existing between Christ and his Church, for marriage as a sign entails 'a dynamic process... one which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God'" (AL, 122). On the other hand, the Pope forcefully stresses



Kōlode Oshinowo, "The Family" (2009)

the fact that conjugal love by its very nature defines the partners in a richly encompassing and lasting union (AL, 123), precisely within that "mixture of enjoyment and struggles, tensions and longings, annoyances and pleasures" (AL, 126) which indeed make up a marriage.

The chapter concludes with a very important reflection on the "transformation of love", because "longer life spans now mean that close and exclusive relationships must last for four, five or even six decades; consequently, the initial decision has to be frequently renewed" (AL, 163). As physical appearance alters, the loving attraction does not lessen but changes as sexual desire can be transformed over time into the desire for togetherness and mutuality: "There is no guarantee that we will feel the same way all through life. Yet if a couple can come up with a shared and lasting life project, they can love one another and live as one until death do them part, enjoying an enriching intimacy" (AL, 163).

Chapter Five

"Love made fruitful" (165-198)

The fifth chapter is entirely focused on love's fruitfulness and procreation. It speaks in a profoundly spiritual and psychological manner about welcoming new life, about the waiting period of pregnancy, about the love of a mother and a father. It also speaks of the expanded fruitfulness of adoption, of welcoming the contribution of families to promote a "culture of encounter", and of family life in a broad sense which includes aunts and uncles, cousins, relatives of relatives, friends. *Amoris Laetitia* does not focus on the so-called "nuclear family" because it is very aware of the family as a wider network of many relationships. The spirituality of the sacrament of marriage has a deeply social character (cf. AL, 187). And within



Henry Moore, "Family group" (1949)

this social dimension the Pope particularly emphasizes the specific role of the relationship between youth and the elderly, as well as the relationship between brothers and sisters as a training ground for relating with others.

Chapter Six

"Some pastoral perspectives" (199-258)

In the sixth chapter the Pope treats various pastoral perspectives that are aimed at forming solid and fruitful families according to God's plan. The chapter uses the Final Reports of the two Synods and the catecheses of Pope Francis and Pope John Paul II extensively. It reiterates that families should not only be evangelized, they should also evangelize. The Pope regrets "that ordained ministers often lack the training needed to deal with the complex problems currently facing families" (AL, 202). On the one hand, the psycho-affective formation of seminarians needs to be improved, and families need to be more involved in formation for ministry (cf. AL, 203); and on the other hand, "the expression 'safe sex' conveys "a negative attitude towards the natural procreative finality of sexuality, as if an eventual child were an enemy to be protected against. This way of thinking promotes narcissism and aggressivity in place of acceptance" (AL, 283).

The Pope then deals with the preparation of the engaged for marriage; with the accompaniment of couples in the first years of married life, including the issue of responsible parenthood; and also with certain complex situations and crises, knowing that "each crisis has a lesson to teach us; we need to learn how to listen for it with the ear of the heart" (AL, 292). Some causes of crisis are analysed, among them a delay in maturing affectively (cf. AL, 299).

Mention is furthermore made of accompanying abandoned, separated or divorced persons. The Exhortation stresses the importance of the recent reform of the procedures for marriage annulment. It highlights the suffering of children in situations of conflict and concludes: "Divorce is an evil and the increasing number of divorces is very troubling. Hence, our most important pastoral task with regard to families is to strengthen their love, helping to heal wounds and working to prevent the spread of this drama of our times" (AL, 246). It then touches on the situations of a marriage between a Catholic and a Christian of another denomination (mixed marriages), and between a Catholic and someone of another religion (disparity of cult). Regarding families with members with homosexual

tendencies, it reaffirms the necessity to respect them and to refrain from any unjust discrimination and every form of aggression or violence. The last, pastorally poignant part of the chapter, "When death makes us feel its sting", is on the theme of the loss of dear ones and of widowhood.

Chapter Seven

"Towards a better education of children" (259-290)

The seventh chapter is dedicated to the education of children: their ethical formation, the learning of discipline which can include punishment, patient realism, sex education, passing on the faith and, more generally, family life as an educational context. The practical wisdom present in each paragraph is remarkable, above all the attention given to those gradual, small steps "that can be understood, accepted and appreciated" (AL, 271).

There is a particularly interesting and pedagogically fundamental paragraph in which Francis clearly states that "obsession, however, is not education. We cannot control every situation that a child may experience.... If parents are obsessed with always knowing where their children are and controlling all their movements, they will seek to dominate space. But this is no way to educate, strengthen and prepare their children to face challenges. What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy" (AL, 266).

The notable section on education in sexuality is very expressively entitled: "The need for sex education". The need is there, and we have to ask "if our educational institutions have taken up this challenge ... in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialized and impoverished". Sound education needs to be carried out "within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving" (AL, 286). The text warns that the expression 'safe sex' conveys "a negative attitude towards the natural procreative finality of sexuality, as if an eventual child were an enemy to be protected against. This way of thinking promotes narcissism and aggressivity in place of acceptance" (AL, 283).

Chapter Eight

"Accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness" (291-312)

The eighth chapter is an invitation to mercy and pastoral discernment in situations that do not fully match what the Lord proposes. The Pope uses three very important verbs: accompanying, discerning and integrating, which are fundamental in addressing fragile, complex or irregular situations. The chapter has sections on the need for gradualness in pastoral care; the importance of discernment; norms and mitigating circumstances in pastoral discernment; and finally what the Pope calls the "logic of pastoral mercy".

Chapter eight is very sensitive. In reading it one must remember that "the Church's task is often like that of a field hospital" (AL, 291). Here the Holy Father grapples with the findings of the Synods on controversial issues. He reaffirms what Christian marriage is and adds that "some forms of union radically contradict this ideal, while others

realize it in at least a partial and analogous way". The Church therefore "does not disregard the constructive elements in those situations which do not yet or no longer correspond to her teaching on marriage" (AL, 292).

As far as discernment with regard to "irregular" situations is concerned, the Pope states: "There is a need 'to avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations' and 'to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience distress because of their condition'" (AL, 296). And he continues: "It is a matter of reaching out to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of participating in the ecclesial community, and thus to experience being touched by an 'unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous' mercy" (AL, 297). And further: "The divorced who have entered a new union, for example, can find themselves in a variety of situations, which should not be pigeon-holed or fit into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for a suitable personal and pastoral discernment" (AL, 298).

In this line, gathering the observations of many Synod Fathers, the Pope states that "the baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible, while avoiding any occasion of scandal.... Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services.... Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church.... This integration is also needed in the social and Christian upbringing of their children" (AL, 299).

In a more general vein, the Pope makes an extremely important statement for understanding the orientation and meaning of the Exhortation: "If we consider the immense variety of concrete situations, ... it is understandable that neither the Synod nor this Exhortation could be expected to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases. What is needed is simply a renewed encouragement to undertake a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases, one which would recognize that, since 'the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases', the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same" (AL, 300). The Pope develops in depth the needs and characteristics of the journey of accompaniment and discernment necessary for profound dialogue between the faithful and their pastors.

For this purpose the Holy Father recalls the Church's reflection on "mitigating factors and situations" regarding the attribution of responsibility and accountability for actions; and relying on St Thomas Aquinas, he focuses on the relationship between rules and discernment by stating: "It is true that general rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations. At the same time, it must be said that, precisely for that reason, what is part of a practical discernment in particular circumstances cannot be elevated to the level of a rule" (AL, 304).

The last section of the chapter treats

Presentation by the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna

Like a simple 'good evening'

The following is the English text by the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna, of the speech given at the press conference held for the presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father "Amoris Laetitia", on Friday, 8 April.

CHRISTOPH SCHÖNBORN

The evening of 13 March 2013, the first words of the newly-elected Pope Francis to the people gathered in St Peter's Square and throughout the world were: "Buona sera" – "Good evening". The language and style of Pope Francis' new text are as simple as this greeting. The Exhortation is not quite as brief as this simple salutation, but is similarly close to reality. In these 200 pages Pope Francis speaks about "love in the family", and does so in such a concrete and simple way, with words that warm the heart like that *good evening* of 13 March 2013. This is his style, and it is his hope that aspects of life are spoken about in the most concrete way possible, especially with regard to the family, one of the most elementary realities of life.

It must be said that the documents of the Church often do not

belong to one of the most accessible literary genres. This text of the Pope's is readable, and those who are not dissuaded by its length will find joy in its concreteness and realism. Pope Francis speaks about families with a clarity that is not easy to find in the magisterial documents of the Church.

Before entering into the text itself I would like to say, in a very personal way, why I read it with joy, gratitude and always with strong emotion. In the ecclesial discourse on marriage and the family there is often a tendency, perhaps unconscious, to discuss these realities of life on the basis of two separate tracks. On the one hand there are marriages and families that are "regular", that correspond to the rules, where everything is "fine" and "in order", and then there are the "irregular" situations that represent a problem. Already the very term "irregular" suggests that such a distinction can be made very clearly.

Those, therefore, who find themselves on the side of the "irregular" families, must live with the fact that the "regular" families are on the other side. I am personally aware of how difficult that is for those who

come from a "patchwork" family, due to the situation of my own family. The discourse of the Church in this regard may cause harm and can give the sensation of exclusion.

Pope Francis' Exhortation is guided by the phrase "It is a matter of reaching out to everyone" (AL, 297) as this is a fundamental understanding of the Gospel: we are all in need of mercy! "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone" (Jn 8:7). We are all, regardless of the marriage or family situation in which we find ourselves, are *journeying*. Even a marriage in which everything is "going well" is journeying. It must grow, learn, and overcome new phases. It knows sin and failure, and needs reconciliation and new beginnings, even in old age (cf. AL, 297).

Pope Francis has succeeded in speaking about all situations without cataloguing them, without categorising, with that outlook of fundamental benevolence that is associated with the heart of God, with the eyes of Jesus that exclude no-one (cf. AL 297), that welcome all and grant the "joy of the Gospel" to all. This is why reading *Amoris Laetitia* is so comforting. No one must feel

condemned, no one is scorned. In this climate of welcome, the discourse on the Christian vision of marriage and the family becomes an invitation, an encouragement, to the joy of love in which we can believe and which excludes no one, truly and sincerely no one. For me *Amoris Laetitia* is, first and foremost, a "linguistic event", as was *Evangelii Gaudium*. Something has changed in ecclesial discourse. This change of language was already perceptible during the Synod process. Between the two Synods of October 2014 and October 2015, it may clearly be seen how the tone became richer in esteem, as if the different situations in life had simply been accepted, without being immediately judged or condemned. In *Amoris Laetitia* this tone of language continues. Before this there is obviously not only a linguistic choice, but rather a profound respect when faced with every person who is never firstly a "problematic case" in a "category", but rather a unique person, with his story and his journey with and towards God. In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis said that we must take off our shoes before the sacred ground of others (EG, 36). This fundamental attitude runs throughout the Exhortation. And it also provides the most profound reason for the other two key words, to *discern* and to *accompany*. These words apply not only to the so-called "irregular situation" (Pope Francis underlines this "so-called") but rather for all people, for every marriage and for every family. Indeed, we are all journeying and we are all in need of "discernment" and "accompaniment".

My great joy as a result of this document resides in the fact that it coherently overcomes that artificial, superficial, clear division between "regular" and "irregular", and subjects *everyone* to the common call of the Gospel, according to the words of St Paul: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all" (Rom 11:32).

This pervasive principle of "inclusion" clearly troubles some people. Does this not favour relativism? Does the frequently evoked mercy not become permissiveness? Does there no longer exist the clarity of limits that must not be exceeded, situations that must objectively be defined as irregular or sinful? Does this Exhortation favour a certain laxity, a sense that "anything goes"? Is Jesus' mercy not instead often severe and demanding?

To clarify thus: Pope Francis leaves no doubt regarding his intentions or our task: "As Christians, we can hardly stop advocating marriage simply to avoid countering contemporary sensibilities, or out of a desire to be fashionable or a sense of helplessness in the face of human and moral failings. We would be depriving the world of values that we can and must offer. It is true that there is no sense in simply decrying present-day evils, as if this could change things. Nor it is helpful to try to impose rules by sheer author-

Summary of the Exhortation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

"The logic of pastoral mercy". To avoid misunderstandings, Pope Francis strongly reiterates: "To show understanding in the face of exceptional situations never implies dimming the light of the fuller ideal, or proposing less than what Jesus offers to the human being. Today, more important than the pastoral care of failures is the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages and thus to prevent their breakdown" (AL, 307).

The overall sense of the chapter and of the spirit that Pope Francis wishes to impart to the pastoral work of the Church is well summed up in the closing words: "I encourage the faithful who find themselves in complicated situations to speak confidently with their pastors or with other lay people whose lives are committed to the Lord. They may not always encounter in them a confirmation of their own ideas or desires, but they will surely receive some light to help them better understand their situation and discover a path to personal growth. I also encourage the Church's pastors to listen to them with sensitivity and serenity, with a sincere desire to understand their plight and their point of view, in order to help them live better lives and to recognize their proper place in the Church" (AL, 312).

On the "logic of pastoral mercy", Pope Francis emphasizes: "At times we find it hard to make room for God's unconditional love in our pastoral activity. We put so many

conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel" (AL, 311).

Chapter Nine "The spirituality of marriage and the family" (313-325)

The ninth chapter is devoted to marital and family spirituality, which "is made up of thousands of small but real gestures" (AL, 315). The Pope clearly states that "those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union" (AL, 316).

Everything, "moments of joy, relaxation, celebration, and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection" (AL, 317). He then speaks of prayer in the light of Easter, of the spirituality of exclusive and free love in the challenge and the yearning to grow old together, reflecting God's fidelity (cf. AL, 319). And finally the spirituality of care, consolation and incentive: the Pope teaches that "all family life is a 'shepherding' in mercy. Each of us, by our love and care, leaves a mark on the life of others" (AL, 322). It is a profound "spiritual experience to contemplate our loved ones with the eyes of God and to see Christ in them" (AL, 323).

In the final paragraph the Pope affirms: "No family drops down

from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love.... All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse. Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together.... May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us" (AL, 325).

The Apostolic Exhortation concludes with a Prayer to the Holy Family.

* * *

As can readily be understood from a quick review of its contents, the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* seeks emphatically to affirm not the "ideal family" but the very rich and complex reality of family life. Its pages provide an open-hearted look, profoundly positive, which is nourished not with abstractions or ideal projections, but with pastoral attention to reality. The text is a close reading of family life, with spiritual insights and practical wisdom useful for every human couple or persons who want to build a family. Above all, it is patently the result of attention to what people have lived over many years. The Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*: On Love in the Family indeed speaks the language of experience and of hope.



Absalon Marticio, "Family" (1999)

ity. What we need is a more responsible and generous effort to present the reasons and motivations for choosing marriage and the family, and in this way to help men and women better to respond to the grace that God offers them" (AL, 35).

Pope Francis is convinced that the Christian vision of marriage and the family also has an unchanged force of attraction. But it demands "a healthy dose of self-criticism": "We also need to be humble and realistic, acknowledging that at times the way we present our Christian beliefs and treat other people has helped contribute to today's problematic situation" (AL, 36). "We have also proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families. This excessive idealization, especially when we have failed to inspire trust in God's grace, has not helped to make marriage more desirable and attractive, but quite the opposite" (AL 36). I would like to relate here an experience of last October's Synod: as far as I know, two of the 13 "circuli minores" started their work by first hearing an account from each participant of his own family situation. It soon emerged that almost all the bishops or other participants in the "circulus minor" had encountered, in their families, the themes, concerns and "irregularities" that we, in the Synod, have discussed in a rather too abstract way. Pope Francis invites us to speak about our own families "as they are". And here the magnificent aspect of the Synod journey and of its continuation with Pope Francis: this sober realism of families "as they are" does not take us far at all from the ideal! On the contrary, Pope Francis succeeds, in the work of both Synods, to offer a positive outlook to families, profoundly rich in hope. But this encouraging outlook on families requires that "pastoral conversion" we find in *Evangelii Gaudium*. The following text from *Amoris Laetitia* outlines this "pastoral conversion": "We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond and giving meaning to marital life. We find it difficult to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment than as a

lifelong burden. We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them" (AL, 37).

Pope Francis speaks of a profound trust in the hearts and the nostalgia of men. He expresses this very well in his reflection on education. Here we perceive the influence of the great Jesuit tradition in education in personal responsibility. He refers to two contrary dangers: "laissez-faire" and the obsession with controlling and dominating everything. On the one hand it is true that "Families cannot help but be places of support, guidance and direction.... Vigilance is always necessary and neglect is never beneficial" (AL, 260).

But vigilance can also become excessive: "Obsession, however, is not education. We cannot control every situation that a child may experience.... If parents are obsessed with always knowing where their children are and controlling all their movements, they will seek only to dominate space. But this is no way to educate, strengthen and prepare their children to face challenges. What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy" (AL, 261). I consider this

thought on education very enlightening in connection with the pastoral practice of the Church. Indeed, precisely in this sense Pope Francis often returns to the issue of trust in the conscience of the faithful: "We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them" (AL, 37). The great question, obviously, is this: how do we form consciences? How do we arrive at what is the key concept of all this great document, the key to correctly understanding Pope Francis' intentions: "personal discernment", especially in difficult and complex situations? "Discernment" is a central concept in Ignatian exercises. Indeed, these must help to discern the will of God in the concrete situations of life. It is discernment that grants a person a mature character, and the Christian path should be of help in reaching this personal maturity: not forming automatons, externally conditioned and remote-controlled, but people who have matured in their friendship with Christ. Only when this personal "discernment" is mature is it also possible to arrive at "pastoral discernment"; which is important especially in "those situations that fall short of what the Lord demands of us" (AL, 6). The eighth chapter refers to this "pastoral discernment", a chapter likely to be of great interest not only to ecclesial public opinion, but also to the media.

I should however mention that Pope Francis has described Chapters 4 and 5 as central, not only in terms of their position but also their content. "We cannot encourage a path of fidelity and mutual self-giving without encouraging the growth, strengthening and deepening of conjugal and family love" (AL, 89). These two central chapters of *Amoris Laetitia* will probably be skipped by many people keen to arrive at the so-called "hot potatoes", the critical points. As a pedagogic expert, Pope Francis knows well that nothing attracts and motivates as strongly as the positive experience of love. "To speak of love" (AL, 89) clearly brings great joy to Pope Francis, and he speaks about love with great vivacity, comprehensibility and empathy. The fourth chapter is a broad-ranging comment on the "Hymn to charity" in the 13th chapter of the First Letter to the Corinthians. I recommend meditation on these pages to all. They encourage belief in love (cf. Jn 4:16) and trust in its strength. It is here that

growth, another key word in *Amoris Laetitia*,

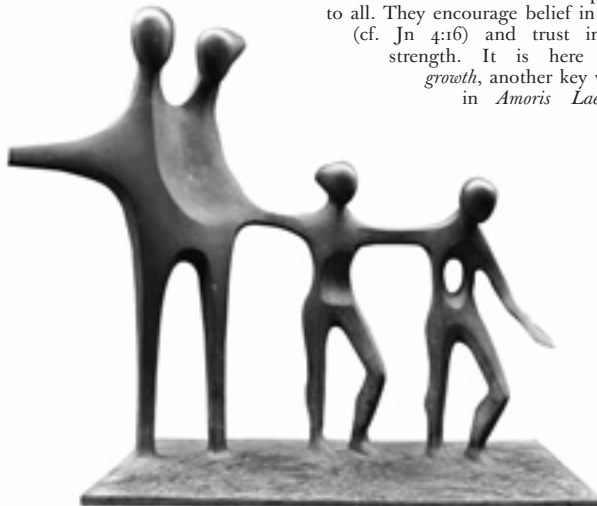
finds its main location: in no other place does it manifest itself so clearly, but it can also turn cold. I can only invite you to read and enjoy this wonderful chapter. I think it is important to indicate one aspect: Pope Francis speaks here, with rare clarity, of the role of the *passions*, passions, emotion, eros and sexuality in married and family life. It is not by chance that Pope Francis reconnects here with St Thomas Aquinas, who attributes an important role to the passions, while modern society, often puritanical, has discredited or neglected them.

It is here that the title of the Pope's exhortation finds its fullest expression: "*Amoris Laetitia*"! Here we understand how it is possible to "discover the dignity and beauty of a marriage" (AL, 205). But here it is made painfully visible how much harm wounds to love can cause, and how lacerating the experience of a failed relationship can be. Therefore it is unsurprising that it is largely the eighth chapter that has attracted attention and interest. Indeed, the question of how the Church treats these wounds, of how she treats the failure of love, has become for many a test question to understand whether the Church is truly the place where God's Mercy can be experienced.

This chapter owes much to the intense work of the two Synods, to the extensive discussions in the arenas of public and ecclesial opinion. Here the fruitfulness of Pope Francis' method is shown. He expressly wished for an open discussion on the pastoral accompaniment of complex situations, and has been able to fully base this on the two texts that the two Synods presented to him to show the possibility of "accompanying, discerning and integrating weakness" (AL, 291).

Pope Francis explicitly makes his own the declarations that both Synods presented to him: "the Synod Fathers reached a general consensus, which I support" (AL, 297). With regard to those who are divorced and civilly remarried, he states: "I am in agreement with the many Synod Fathers who observed that ... the logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care.... Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always..." (AL, 299).

But what does this mean in practice? Many rightly ask this question. The definitive answers are found in *Amoris Laetitia*, paragraph 300. These answers certainly offer material for further discussions, but they also provide an important clarification and an indication of the path to follow. "If we consider the immense variety of concrete situations ... it is understandable that neither the Synod nor this Exhortation could be expected to provide a new set of general rules, canonical in nature and applicable to all cases". Many expected such rules, and they will be disappointed. What is possible? The Pope says clearly: "What is possible is simply a renewed encouragement to undertake a responsible personal and pastoral discernment of particular cases".



Jorge Alarcón, "Family" (1970)

Visit of the Secretary of the Congregation for Eastern Churches

Do not forget Syria

Jesuit Archbishop Cyril Vasil', Secretary of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, spoke to the Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops in Tartus, Syria, on Thursday, 17 March. Melkite Catholic Patriarch Gregory III Laham, president of the Assembly, and Syrian Catholic Patriarch Ignace Youssif III Younan, vice president, also participated. Archbishop Vasil' expressed the solidarity and closeness of Pope Francis and the entire Catholic Church to the country's ecclesial communities, their pastors, priests, men and women religious, and their faithful afflicted by much death and destruction. The Assembly was one of the principle events of the Archbishop's pastoral visit to the Middle Eastern country from 12 to 17 March. He was accompanied by Fr Max Cappa-

bianca, an official of the Dicastery, and Archbishop Mario Zenari, Apostolic Nuncio in Syria, one of the few diplomats who did not abandon Syria after the conflict broke out. They were accompanied by Msgr Thomas Habib, counsellor of the Nunciature. The Secretary also brought the warm greeting of Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, and encouraged the bishops to guide their flocks at this difficult time for the country. He understood their suffering in seeing young people leave, unable to see a future for themselves and their families. Thus, he thanked the bishops for their witness. "I am here", he said, "in the first place to thank you for your perseverance and your patience, for the closeness to our Cath-

olic faithful. The meaning of my visit is to show that the universal Church does not forget you, that you are in the heart of the Church". Indeed, he added, "we bear your suffering with you". The Secretary recalled meeting priests, men and women religious and lay faithful in Yabroud, Damascus and Tartus, and praying with them. These encounters allowed him to come face to face with their actual situations, with their hardships, hopes and challenges.

"It is important", Archbishop Vasil' continued, "for the Church to be close to the people in this situation of war, because people are not wounded only exteriorly". Consider the deaths suffered by so many families, who are wounded "above all interiorly". They need the "messengers of hope of a God who never abandons us".

The prelate then invited the bishops to be close to their clergy and to invest in relationships with them, by organizing meetings, spiritual retreats, common projects, and to reserve special attention for married priests who experience the difficulties of all the families and who risk feeling unappreciated. He emphasized the willingness of the Congregation for Eastern Churches to offer its concrete support as a sign of the Pope's love and that of the entire Church.

The Secretary of the Dicastery also reflected on emigration, not wishing to judge those who decide to leave the country but also recalling that it is necessary to do all that



Interreligious prayer meeting in Tartus

is possible to enable people to stay. "We believe that one day there will no longer be war. We must be convinced that Christians are and always will be at home in this beautiful country of Syria. It is important to make the Social Doctrine of the Church known among our faithful and to encourage them to invest in the future of this country, to create jobs, to give families the opportunity to earn their living with their own hands".

After observing how the war has lacerated the social fabric in a country accustomed to seeing people of different religions and confessions peacefully coexist, the Prelate concluded his address by encouraging hope: because the Catholic Church believes in the action of the Holy Spirit in all people, even in those who do not share the Christian faith.

The Archbishop had begun his journey on Sunday, 13 March, in Sednaya, north of Damascus, where he visited a Melkite-Catholic seminary, then an abandoned Orthodox monastery, and an ancient Greek Orthodox monastery. On Monday, 14 March, he went to Yabroud, where he met with the children of a Greek-Melkite school and visited the cathedral for a prayer service accompanied by Greek-Melkite and Syro-Catholic singing. He finished the day with a meeting at the bishopric with the clergy and religious.

On Tuesday, 15 March, at the Melkite Patriarchate, Archbishop Vasil' met with the clergy of Damascus and of the Eastern eparchies of Syria, had lunch at the Apostolic Nuncio, and greeted representatives of various charities and assistance organizations, including members of *Caritas* and of the Jesuit Refugee Service, among others. Wednesday, 16 March, was spent in meetings with priests, as well as men and women religious of Tartus and northern Syria. There were approximately 80 people in attendance, including Trappist, Carmelite and Franciscan communities, sisters of the Sacred Heart and of Perpetual Succour, and diocesan clergy, the major part of whom are Maronite and Melkite.

The meetings with priests and religious were especially appreciated, allowing them to share with a representative of the Pope the suffering and joy, the anguish and hope which enlivens the faithful of this most ancient Church in Syria.



Visit to Yabroud

Like a simple 'good evening'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

How this personal and pastoral discernment can and should be is the theme of the entire section of *Amoris Laetitia* constituted of paragraphs 300-312. In the 2015 Synod, in the Appendix to the statements by the *Circulus germanicus*, is an *Itinerarium* of discernment, of the examination of conscience that Pope Francis has made his own.

"What we are speaking of is a process of accompaniment and discernment which "guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God". But Pope Francis also recalls that "this discernment can never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church".

Pope Francis mentions two erroneous positions. One is that of excessive rigour: "a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in 'irregular' situations, as if they were stones to throw at people's lives. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to hiding behind the Church's teachings" (*AL*, 205). On the other hand, the Church must certainly never "desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God's plan in all its grandeur" (*AL*, 207).

Naturally this poses the question: what does the Pope say in relation to access to the sacraments for people who live in "irregular" situations? Pope Benedict had said that "easy recipes" do not exist (*AL*, 298, note 333). Pope Francis reiterates the need to carefully discern the situation, in keeping with St John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio* (1984) (*AL*, 298). "Discernment must help to find possible ways of responding to God and growing in the midst of limits. By thinking that everything is black and white, we sometimes close off the way of grace and of growth, and discourage paths of sanctification which give glory to God" (*AL*, 205). He also reminds us of an important phrase from *Evangelii Gaudium*, 44: "A small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties" (*AL*, 304). In the sense of this *via caritatis* (*AL*, 306), the Pope affirms, in a humble and simple manner in a note (351), that the help of the sacraments may also be given "in certain cases". But for this purpose he does not offer us case studies or recipes, but instead simply reminds us of two of his famous phrases: "I

want to remind priests that the confessional should not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy" (*EG*, 44), and the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (*EG*, 47).

Is it an excessive challenge for pastors, for spiritual guides and for communities if the "discernment of situations" is not regulated more precisely? Pope Francis acknowledges this concern: "I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion" (*AL*, 308). However, he challenges this, remarking that "We put so many conditions on mercy that we empty it of its concrete meaning and real significance. That is the worst way of watering down the Gospel" (*AL*, 311).

Pope Francis trusts in the "joy of love". Love is able to find the way. It is the compass that shows us the road. It is both the goal and the path itself, because God is love and love is from God. Nothing is more demanding than love. It cannot be obtained cheaply. Therefore, no one should be afraid that Pope Francis invites us, with *Amoris Laetitia*, to take too easy a path. The road is not an easy one, but it is full of joy!

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 7 April

The lifeblood

The Church needs the witness of martyrs, of “consistent” Christians who “live their life in earnest”. In his reflection during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning, Pope Francis pondered the vital lymph of the Church, the “lifeblood” which carries her forth day by day: testimony.

His meditation was inspired by the liturgy of the day, beginning with the first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles (5:27-33), which presents “a passage from this long narrative” that began when John and Peter healed “the lame man who was at the beautiful door of the temple”. Everyone, the Pontiff recalled, “saw this healing”, and no one could deny that it was exceptional, because “everyone knew this 40-year-old man”. Yet the leaders, the priests, were angry and forbade the Apostles “to teach, to preach in

raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior... and we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him”. We have to say: “How courageous!”. Francis then remarked: “This Peter has nothing to do with Thursday’s Peter, nothing!”. This Peter is “a Peter full of strength, who testifies”.

But that courageous testimony has consequences: “At hearing these things they – the leaders, the high priests – become angry and want to put him to death”. After all, the Pope explained, “Christian testimony” follows “the same path as Jesus: giving one’s life. In one way or another, true testimony puts life at stake”.

At this point the Pontiff delved into the concept of testimony, beginning with a question: “Why had Peter become so strong in his testimony?”. After healing the lame man, the Apostle said: “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard”. In other words, Francis explained, “consistency between life and what we see and hear, is precisely where testimony begins”. But, he added, Christian testimony has another feature: “it is not only about the one who gives it: Christian testimony is always done in pairs”. St Peter explains this: “we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit”. Thus, “without the Holy Spirit there is no Christian testimony. Because Christian testimony, Christian life, is a grace that the Lord gives us with the Holy Spirit” and “without the Spirit we cannot bear witness”. Consistency is a fundamental characteristic: “a witness is one who is consistent in what he says, what he does and what he has received, that is, the Holy Spirit”.

One such understanding also comes from the Gospel (Jn 3:31-36). In this regard the Pope recalled the passage in which Jesus speaks to a disciple who comes to him by night. Jesus states that the one who is sent by God “speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit”. Likewise, “the one who comes from heaven... testifies to what he has seen and heard”. This is the very testimony of Jesus: “He testifies to what he has seen and heard with the Spirit whom he gives to his disciples”. This, the Pope explained, “is Christian courage, this is testimony”.

This testimony, the Pope said, is what we find in “our martyrs today, so many forced from their land, displaced, slaughtered, persecuted”. They “have the courage to profess Jesus right up to the moment of death”. But it is also the testimony “of those Christians who live their life in earnest and say: ‘I cannot do this, I cannot do harm to another; I

cannot cheat; I cannot live life halfway; I must give my testimony’”. It all boils down to a single concept: testimony is saying what in faith “is seen and heard, namely, the Risen Jesus”, with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So often, Francis added, “in difficult times throughout history” it has been said: “Today the country needs heroes”. On a similar note we can ask: “What does the Church need today?”. The answer is: “witnesses, martyrs”, those “everyday saints”, those who “live ordinary life with consistency”, but also those who have the courage to be “witnesses to the very end, unto death”. They all are “the lifeblood of the Church”. They are, the Pope continued, “the ones who lead the Church forward, witnesses; those who testify that Jesus is risen, that Jesus lives, and they testify with consistency in life and with the gift of the Holy Spirit”.

In conclusion the Pontiff prayed “that the Lord give us, all of us, this courage and above all faithfulness to the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us”.

Monday, 11 April

Clinging to the written word

What matters to Jesus is a person’s life, not a framework of laws and words: the slaying of Stephen and Joan of Arc, the death of many other innocent people throughout history and even the suicide of Judas remind us of how much harm can be done by “a heart closed to the Word of God, closed to the truth”. The Pope spoke about this during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning.

In the first reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles (6:8-15), Francis explained, “we hear the passage regarding the dispute involving Stephen and the judgement” against him. “Some of the doctors of the law, the learned scribes, arose to dispute Stephen”, the Pope recalled. “But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke”. Indeed, “Stephen was anointed by the Holy Spirit and had the very wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and he spoke with strength, with the same wisdom that Jesus had. But it was God, who spoke with authority, the authority that comes from God, the authority that comes from the Holy Spirit”.

Having nothing to set against him, Francis continued, those who belonged to the synagogue “instigated several men” to unjustly accuse Stephen of having spoken “blasphemous words against Moses and God”. Thus, unable to dialogue with him and open their heart to the truth, “they immediately took the path of slander”. The Acts recount that Stephen was seized and led before the Sanhedrin and that false witnesses were also presented against him.

The story of Stephen, the Pope noted, is significant: “A heart closed to the truth of God clings only to the truth of the law, of the written word – not just that of the law, but of the written word – and finds no

way out except lies, false witness, and death”. Jesus himself “had rebuked this attitude because the same thing had happened with the prophets of the Old Testament”. Jesus said to those people “that their fathers had killed the prophets, ‘and you build their monuments, their tombs’”. But their “response is more than hypocritical, it is cynical: ‘Had we lived in the time of our fathers, we would not have done the same’”. And thus, “they wash their hands and they judge themselves pure”. But their “heart is closed to the Word of God, it is closed to the truth, it is closed to God’s messenger who brings prophecy to enable the People of God to go forward”.

“It saddens me”, Francis shared, “when I read that passage in the Gospel of Matthew, when Judas repented and went to the priests and said ‘I have sinned’, and wanted to give back the silver pieces”. They responded to him: “What is that to us? See to it yourself!”. They had “a closed heart in regard to this poor, penitent man who didn’t know what to do”. They told him: “See to it yourself”. Thus Judas “went and hanged himself”.

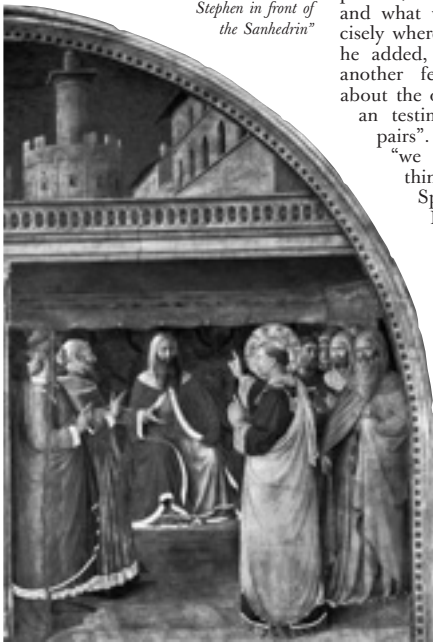
Then, “what did they do when Judas hanged himself? They spoke and said: ‘poor man’”. Those 30 pieces of silver then, “are blood money, and cannot enter the temple”. In essence, they were “the learned scribes” and so they followed “this rule, this one, this one...”.

To them, the Pope emphasized, “a person’s life wasn’t important”, nor was “Judas’ remorse: the Gospel says that he repented and returned”. But to them what mattered was “only their framework of laws and the many words and the many things that they had built”. It is precisely the “hardness of their heart, the stupidity of heart of these people who, since they were unable to withstand the truth of Stephen, sought testimony and false witnesses to judge him: Stephen’s fate is marked like that of the prophets and like that of Jesus”.

This way of doing things “repeats” over time, Francis said. “It did not happen only in the early times of the Church”. Indeed, he said, “history tells of many people who are killed, judged, even though innocent: judged with the Word of God against the Word of God”. Consider “the witch hunts or Joan of Arc” and also “many others who were burned, condemned because they did not ‘adjust’ themselves, according to the judges, to the Word of God”.

Before concluding, the Pope pointed to “the model of Jesus who, in order to be faithful and to obey the word of the Father, ended up on the cross”. Francis again evoked the image of Jesus’ great tenderness in calling the disciples of Emmaus: “foolish men, and slow of heart”. Thus, in conclusion, Francis asked the Lord “to look, with the same tenderness, at the small or great foolishness of our heart, to caress us”, while calling us “foolish men, and slow of heart”, and may he begin to explain things to us”.

Beato Angelico, “St Stephen in front of the Sanhedrin”



Jesus’ name”. They ordered Jesus’ name never to be used, using “this man” instead. They stated: “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us”. They were challenged by a reality that “everyone was facing. Everyone knew the lame man for many years, and now they see him dancing for joy, praising God, because he has been healed”.

Peter stood before them, “strong in his testimony”. The Pope then recalled, by contrast, the different attitude Peter had taken when he denied Christ: “let us think about the cowardly Peter”, Francis said, on “the night of Holy Thursday, when, filled with fear, he denied the Lord three times”. On the contrary, in this new circumstance the Apostle affirms: “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers

VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Amadeo Rodríguez Magro as Bishop of Jaén. Until now he has been Bishop of Plasencia, Spain (9 Apr.).

Bishop Rodríguez Magro 70, was born in San Jorge de Alor, Portugal. He was ordained a priest on 14 June 1970. He was ordained a bishop on 31 August 2003, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Plasencia.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Thomas Paulsamy as Bishop of Dindigul, India. Until now he has been parish priest of St Anthony's Church in Kallukuzhy, India (11 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Paulsamy, 64, was born in Poolampatty, India. He was ordained a priest on 25 May 1997. He has served in parish ministry and as vicar general of the Diocese of Tiruchirappalli.

JUSTICE AND PEACE

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Silvano Maria Tomasi, CS, titular Archbishop of Asolo, Apostolic Nuncio, as a member of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (9 Apr.).

RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Christophe Pierre, titular Archbishop of Gunela, as Apostolic Nuncio in the United States of America. Until now he has been Apostolic Nuncio in Mexico (12 Apr.).

PAPAL LEGATE

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, as his Papal Legate to the National Congress of Lithuania on Mercy, to be held in Vilnius from 6 to 8 May 2016.

START OF MISSION

On 15 February, Archbishop Luigi Bianco, titular Archbishop of Falerone, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Djibouti with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic.

On 11 March, Archbishop Vito Rallo, titular Archbishop of Alba, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Morocco with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.M. Mohammed VI, King of Morocco.

NECROLOGY

Archbishop Jaime Pedro Gonçalves, Archbishop emeritus of Beira, Mozambique, at age 79 (6 Apr.).

Bishop Lucas Martínez Lara of Matehuala, Mexico, at age 73 (9 Apr.).



Pontiff's Mass for the Aletti Center

The path of service

The path of a Christian is not that of a climber or of those who follow the money god and look for occasions to strut about in front of others: witnessing to Jesus calls for lowliness, humiliation, even persecution and suffering. Pope Francis reflected on this during a Mass he celebrated in the Redemptoris Mater Chapel of the Vatican on Friday afternoon, 8 April. The event marked two occasions: the 25th anniversary of the Ezio Aletti Study and Research Center, founded by Jesuit Marko Ivan Rupnik immediately after the fall of the Eastern European communist regimes, and the 20th anniversary of the Špidlík Center for Ecumenical Understand-

ing, named after Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík. The numerous concelebrants included Fr Rupnik (author, among other things, of the mosaics that enrich the chapel in the Apostolic Palace) and the Jesuit Milan Žust (superior of the religious community of the Aletti Center). Approximately 80 people were present.

Following the liturgy of the day, the Pontiff continued the reflection which he had begun in Masses he recently celebrated at Santa Marta, expanding on the concept of Christian testimony. As emphasized in a passage from the Acts of the Apostles – which recounts the incarceration of Peter and John after

healing the lame man in Jerusalem – this testimony relies on the grace of the Holy Spirit. No one can bear testimony alone. Together with the Spirit a Christian will also be able to withstand insults and persecution in addition to teaching and proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ.

The Pope explained that we needn't consider a sort of masochistic spirituality which welcomes suffering and pain, but rather, we should recognize and make our own the spirituality of the Kingdom of God. It is the spirituality which we meet in Jesus, which never takes the path of accretion: when they want to make him king, Jesus withdraws to the mountain. His example is that of humbling, of emptying, of service: only those who follow him on this path can find peace and happiness. For this reason, even those who are not called to experience persecution, who do not shed their blood for the faith, who live silently, without judging, in meekness, do not gain but lose. Because on a hypothetical "balance sheet", testimony is always given at a loss. After all, one isn't a Christian in order to gain positions in the eyes of the world.

The lesson, the Pontiff concluded, comes from Mary. In this regard Francis recounted that he loves to recite the Rosary before an icon of the Madonna with Child, in which Mary seems to be at the centre, but in reality she is using her hands as a sort of step on which Jesus can climb down so as to be one of us. The centre is always Jesus who humbles himself to walk with mankind, which is called to follow along the same path of service.

Founder of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity dies

A hidden life

Rev. James H. Flanagan, the founder of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT), passed into eternal life on Holy Thursday, 24 March 2016, at the age of 91. The National Catholic Register entitled his obituary, "The most influential Catholic you have never heard of", because, as Carrie Gress writes, in a world drowning in the cult of celebrities, "Fr Flanagan sought out anonymity and a hidden life", instead "touching the lives of so many through the ministries of SOLT priests, consecrated and lay people". Presently, there are 150 priests and religious brothers, 120 religious sisters, and hundreds of lay faithful in SOLT, serving in 13 different countries around the world.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts on 29 May 1924, Fr Flanagan attended the University of Notre Dame on a football scholarship in the 1940s. His time at Notre Dame was interrupted by his entry into the Navy in 1943 during World War II, after which he served in the Pacific war zone as a Navy frogman. Following the end of the war, Flanagan completed his studies in South Bend before entering the seminary for the

Archdiocese of Boston.

During his time in seminary, Fr Flanagan already felt inspired to begin the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity – a community comprised of priests, religious and lay faithful, devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary and serving together in mission on ecclesial teams. Following his ordination and five years of ministerial service in the Archdiocese of Boston, Fr Flanagan was granted permission to depart Boston in order to found SOLT in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 1958.

Surrounded by members of his community, Fr Flanagan passed away peacefully early on Holy Thursday morning immediately following the recitation of the Luminous Mysteries of the Holy Rosary. According to Fr Peter Marsalek, General Priest Servant for the SOLT community, "It was a great providential source of consolation that our beloved founder, who was so dedicated to the priesthood and Eucharist, would pass away on Holy Thursday, the day on which we cel-



brate the institution of both of these great sacraments." Bishop Michael Mulvey of Corpus Christi, and Ordinary of the SOLT community, celebrated the funeral Mass for Fr Flanagan in Mora, New Mexico, in the same place where Flanagan began SOLT in 1958.



Stained glass of John Wesley, Founder of the Methodists, preaching at Moorfields

Pope to the World Methodist Council

Differences are no obstacle

"Although differences remain", Catholics and Methodists are called to offer "a common witness to the world". Pope Francis shared these thoughts with members of the World Methodist Council, the Methodist Council of Europe and the Methodist Church in Britain, whom he addressed on Thursday, 7 April, in the Apostolic Palace. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's address.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer warm greetings to you in this Easter season, as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord who enlightens the whole world. I wish to thank you for the kind words addressed to me. We come together united in the faith that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised him from the dead. This baptismal faith makes us truly brothers and sisters. I greet also the bodies that you represent: the World Methodist Council, the Methodist Council of Europe and the Methodist Church in Britain.

I was pleased to learn of the opening of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome. It is a sign of our growing closeness, and particularly of our shared desire to overcome all that stands in the way of our full communion. May the Lord bless the work of the office and make it a place where Catholics and Methodists can encounter one another and grow in appreciation of one another's faith, whether they be groups of pilgrims, those training for ministry, or those who guide their communities. May it also be a place where the progress achieved through our theological dialogue is made known, celebrated, and advanced.

Almost 50 years have passed since our joint commission began its work. Although differences remain, ours is a dialogue based on respect and fraternity, one which enriches both our communities. The document currently being prepared, which should be published later this year, clearly witnesses to this. Building on the Methodist acceptance of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, it has as its theme "The Call to Holiness". Catholics and Methodists have much to learn from one another in how we understand holiness and how it can be lived out. We both must do what

we can to ensure that members of our respective congregations meet regularly, come to know one another, and encourage one another to seek the Lord and his grace. When we read the Scriptures, either alone or in a group, but always in an atmosphere of prayer, we open ourselves to the Father's love, given in his Son and in the Holy Spirit. Even where differences remain between our communities, these can

and must become the impetus for reflection and dialogue.

John Wesley, in his *Letter to a Roman Catholic*, wrote that Catholics and Methodists are called to "help each other on in whatever ... leads to the Kingdom". May the new common statement encourage Methodists and Catholics to help one another in our lives of prayer and devotion. In the same letter, Wesley

also wrote, "if we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we may love alike". It is true that we do not as yet think alike in all things, and that on issues regarding ordained ministries and ethics, much work remains to be done. However, none of these differences constitute such an obstacle as to prevent us from loving in the same way and offering a common witness to the world. Our lives of holiness must always include a loving service to the world; Catholics and Methodists together are bound to work in different ways in order to give concrete witness to the love of Christ. When we serve those in need, our communion grows.

In today's world, afflicted by so much evil, it is more than ever vital that as Christians we offer a joint witness inspired by the light of Easter, becoming a sign of the love of God, which in the resurrection of Jesus is victorious. May this love, also through our humble and courageous service, reach the hearts and lives of our many brothers and sisters who are looking for such love even without knowing it. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57).

The Vice President's greeting

"Migrants and refugees are a special challenge to us in today's society", Gillian Kingston, Vice President *ad interim* of the World Methodist Council, said in her greeting at the beginning of the audience. The response, she said, is the "Gospel of Mercy".

Speaking in English, Kingston, who is from Ireland, recalled the Holy Father's election as pope in March 2013. Methodists were gathered in Rio de Janeiro for a meeting of their Council's Steering Committee. When they learned of his election, they wrote him a letter of congratulations. "We expressed our joy", she said, "that you had taken the name of Francis, honouring a saint from a time before the division of the western Church".

Then Kingston touched on the experience of the Second Vatican Council and the fact that Methodists were the first to respond to the invitation to enter into bilateral dialogue. Since 1967, she explained, every five

years a progress report is made. The upcoming report, "The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory", will be presented at the next council meeting scheduled in Houston, Texas in September. "Its title touches on perhaps the most important goal among the 'People Called Methodist': holiness, holiness of personal life and of family relationships, and holiness in social concern and action", she explained.

Lastly the Vice President underlined that on a number of occasions, the Holy Father has "reminded Christians that we must exercise a radical hospitality in a world which ranks individual rights above corporate responsibility, places profit before people, and is driven by a privatized spirituality. In many places, Catholics and Methodists have found themselves working together as they seek to discern and to respond practically to the 'signs of the times'". Thus, "we share your concern about 'global indifference'".

The Holy Sepulchre to be restored before the beginning of 2017

Due to urgent need, the Holy Sepulchre will soon be restored. As reported on the website of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land on 22 March, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Armenian Apostolic leaders gathered together to bless the newly installed scaffolding. The Christians in charge of the Basilica of the Resurrection recently gave the green light to in-depth studies on the possibility of restoring the tomb of Christ. A conference was then held in Athens in early March, to take stock of the situation and organize a plan for the necessary restoration. Work is scheduled to be finished by the beginning of



2017. The staff will be composed of about 30 specialists from several departments of the National Technical University of Athens. The project foresees the conservative restoration during which the shrine will be dismantled and then returned to its current position. During the restoration, the Holy Sepulchre will remain open to the faithful for worship. On 10 April, Petra, the Jordanian press agency, announced that the court of King Abdullah II sent an official letter to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III, declaring his intention to contribute financially to the restoration.

At the Jubilee Audience Francis explains the meaning and value of giving alms to those in need

Look them in the eye

It "might seem simple to give alms, but we must be careful not to empty this gesture of its importance". These were the words of Pope Francis to the faithful gathered for the Jubilee Audience in St Peter's Square on Saturday, 9 April. Almsgiving, he said, "is a gesture of love that is directed at those we meet: it is a gesture of sincere attention to those who approach us and ask for our help". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he gave in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

The Gospel passage we have heard allows us to discover an essential aspect of mercy: *almsgiving*. It might seem simple to give alms, but we must be careful not to empty this gesture of its importance. Indeed, the term "alms", derives from the Greek and actually means "mercy". Therefore, almsgiving must carry with it all the richness of mercy. And as mercy has a thousand paths, a thousand ways, thus almsgiving is expressed in many ways, in order to

den or an annoyance from which to free ourselves in haste. How many people justify their not giving alms by saying: "What kind of person is this? If I give him something perhaps he will go buy wine to get drunk". If he gets drunk, it is because he sees no alternatives! And you, what do you do in secret, that no one sees? Yet you judge that poor man who asks you for a coin for a glass of wine? I like to recall the episode of the elderly Tobit who, after receiving a large sum of money, called his son and instructed him, saying: "Give alms... to all who live uprightly [...]. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you" (Tob 4:7-8). These are very wise words that help us understand the value of almsgiving.

Jesus, as we heard, gave us an irreplaceable lesson in this regard. In the first place, he asks us not to give alms in order to be praised and admired by people for our generosity: do so in such a way that your right hand does not know what your left

hand is doing (cf. Mt 6:3). It is not appearances that count, but the capacity to stop in order to look in the face of that person asking for help. We can each ask ourselves: "Am I able to stop and look in the face, in the eye of that person who is asking me? Am I able?". Thus, we must not identify almsgiving with the simple coin offered in haste, without looking at the person and without stopping to talk so as to understand what he or she truly needs. At the same time, we must distinguish between the poor and the various forms of begging that do not render a good service to the truly poor.

Thus, almsgiving is a gesture of love that is directed at those we meet: it is a gesture of sincere attention to those who approach us and ask for our help, done in secret where God alone sees and understands the value of the act performed.

Giving alms must be for us too something that is a sacrifice. I re-



SPECIAL GREETINGS

In this Jubilee Year, let us ask for the grace to focus a more attentive look of love on the people we help, to stop beside them, and in this way we will discover that there is more joy in giving than in receiving.

I greet the English-speaking visitors attending today's Audience, particularly the pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Dublin. In the joy of the Risen Lord, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I greet the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. May this Holy Year be lived with special intensity. Dear *young people*, especially you young people from the Profession of Faith of the Diocese of Tivoli, may you always be faithful to your Baptism with a consistent testimony of life; dear *sick people*, in particular the members of UNITALSI from Lombardy and from Campania, may the light of Easter illuminate you and comfort you in your suffering; and you, dear *newlyweds*, may you draw from the Paschal Mystery the courage to be leaders in the Church and in society, contributing to the construction of the culture of love.



alleviate the hardship of those who are in need.

The duty to give alms is as ancient as the Bible. Sacrifice and almsgiving were two duties that a devout person had to comply with. There are two important passages in the Old Testament where God demands special attention for the poor, who at times are destitute, strangers, orphans and widows. In the Bible this continuous refrain – the needy, the widow, the stranger, the sojourner, the orphan – is recurrent. Because God wants his people to watch over these brothers and sisters of ours; moreover, I would say that they are at the very centre of the message: to praise God through sacrifice and to praise God through almsgiving.

Along with the obligation to remember them, a precious direction is also given: "you shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him" (Dt 15:10). This means, first of all, that charity requires an attitude of inner joy. Offering mercy cannot be a bur-

