

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH*Unicuique suum Non praevalerunt*

Forty-eighth year, number 16 (2392)

Vatican City

Friday, 17 April 2015

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee at First Vespers of the Second Sunday in Easter

## The face of mercy

The Holy Door will be opened on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception



Santi Buglioni, "The seven works of mercy: welcoming pilgrims" (16th c., Pistoia, Ospedale del Ceppo)

### Happy Birthday Benedict XVI



Benedict XVI turned 88 years old on Thursday, 16 April. Among the celebrations, Pope Francis offered morning Mass for his predecessor, praying "that the Lord sustain him and grant him much joy and happiness".

Mercy is "the very foundation of the Church's life". There is need to proclaim it anew to the men and women of today, with renewed zeal and pastoral action. Thus, Pope Francis has chosen to celebrate a Holy Year of Mercy: an "extraordinary time of grace" and a "return to the basics", as the Pope called it in his Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus*, which was consigned during Vespers on Saturday evening, 11 April, in the Vatican Basilica. "The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more", the Bishop of Rome explained, for the Church's "very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love".

The Jubilee will begin on 8 December, the 50th anniversary of the close of Vatican II, with the opening of the "door of mercy" in St Peter's and successively in papal basilicas and cathedrals, shrines and churches around the world as a "visible sign of communion for the whole Church". The motto of the Holy Year – which will conclude on 20 November 2016, the Solemnity of Christ the King – comes from the Gospel: "Merciful like the Father". Essential parts of the Jubilee will be: pilgrimage, spiritual and corporal works of mercy, the sacrament of penance and indulgence.

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### A synthesis of the Christian Faith

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

This is a synthesis of the Christian faith: the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee of Mercy, which Pope Francis recently announced. And this is because, as we read at the beginning, mercy is the very heart of the revelation which culminates in Jesus of Nazareth, the face of the Father and of his love, *Misericordiae Vultus*. The papal document is meaningfully addressed to all who desire to read it, without distinction, and its wish is that "the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present" in the midst of mankind.

This Extraordinary Jubilee – which will begin on 8 December 2015 and will close on 20 November 2016 – is bookended by liturgical events which should be understood in the light of mercy: the liturgical memorial of the Immaculate Conception and the

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On the centenary of the martyrdom of the Armenians

## Without memory wounds will fester

At the General Audience

### Creativity and courage



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*To the Summit of the Americas*

### A new order of peace

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"Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!". Pope Francis gave this warning on Sunday morning, 12 April, in the Vatican Basilica during the Mass commemorating the centenary of the martyrdom of the Armenians – widely considered "the first genocide of the 20th century", citing the 2001 Common Declaration by John Paul II and Karekin II. On this occasion St Gregory of Narek was also proclaimed Doctor of the Church. In recalling the senseless slaughter of the Armenian people in 1915, the Pope once again denounced the "general and collective indifference" that exists today concerning the kind of genocide aimed at "our defenceless brothers and sisters", who, he said, "on account of their faith in Christ or their ethnic origin, are publicly and ruthlessly put to death – decapitated, crucified, burned alive – or forced to leave

their homeland". The Pontiff stated that evil "never comes from God" and cruelty "can find absolutely no justification in his Holy Name". No matter what, though, divine mercy will always fill "this abyss".

In a message he consigned to the patriarchs and the President of the Republic of Armenia at the end of Mass, the Pope called for a "path of reconciliation" among peoples, especially between Armenians and Turks. He appealed to "all who are Heads of State and of International Organizations" calling them "to oppose such crimes with a firm sense of duty, without ceding to ambiguity or compromise". The Pope again addressed a greeting to the Armenian community at the Regina Caeli recited at the conclusion of the liturgical rite on the Sunday of Orthodox Easter.

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## A synthesis of the Christian Faith

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Sunday of Christ the King. The opening feast of the Holy Year recalls God's action from the very beginning – that he “did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil”. So he turned his gaze to Mary, preserving her from original sin – and the closing recalls the lordship of Christ, and that of his mercy, over all the universe.

Within this framework of the history of salvation Pope Francis chose to mark the beginning of the Holy Year during the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, because the Church “feels a great need to keep this event alive”, an event with which “the Church entered a new phase of her history”. There is, he says, “a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way”, as Montini previously said, to Jean Guittin in 1950: “What does the truth serve, if the men of our time don't understand it?”.

Pope Francis recalled in his bull words that set Vatican II at the centre of this ancient and yet ever new message: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy” and thus “show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by compassion and goodness toward her separated children”, John XXIII said at the opening of Vatican II.

Half a century after one of the greatest Christian assemblies ever celebrated, Pope Francis remembers it as a “new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning”. He then makes reference to the short book by Hans Urs von Balthasar published in 1952, *Razing the Bastions*: “The walls which too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way” and “to bear witness to their faith” in Christ, the one Lord “with greater enthusiasm and conviction”.

Now is a favourable time to return to the essential and transform every Christian community into an “oasis of mercy”, shattering indifference, practicing works of corporal and spiritual mercy, rediscovering the beauty of confession and molding our lives, being open to encountering men and women of other religions. As pilgrims on a journey towards a goal to which everyone, perhaps even unconsciously, aspires, we shall – without fear – “allow God to surprise us”.

G.M.V.

## AUDIENCES

Friday, 10 April

Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, titular Archbishop of Thibica, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Archbishop Róbert Bezák, CSSR, Archbishop emeritus of Trnava, Slovakia

Archbishop Mouradian Kissag, Primate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Argentina, with his entourage

H.E. Mr Giorgi Margvelashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, with his entourage

Prof. Andrea Riccardi, Founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio

Ms Maria Cristina Perceval, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations, with Ms Zainab Bangura Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr Julienne Lusenge, President of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development

Saturday, 11 April

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

Archbishop Antonio Guido Filipazzi, titular Archbishop of Sutri, Apostolic Nuncio in Indonesia

## VATICAN BULLETIN

H.E. Mr Daniele Mancini, Ambassador of Italy, for the presentation of his Letters of Credence

Monday, 13 April

Archbishop Carlos José Nájuez of Córdoba, Argentina

## CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Antoine Scopelliti, OSST, of Ambatondrazaka, Madagascar. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (11 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jean de Dieu Raelison as Bishop of Ambatondrazaka, Madagascar. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Corniculana and Auxiliary of Antananarivo, Madagascar (11 Apr.).

Bishop de Dieu Raelison, 51, was born Arivonimamo, Madagascar. He was ordained a priest on 7 September 1996. He was ordained a bishop on 13 June 2010, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Corniculana and Auxiliary of Antananarivo.

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Dante Gustavo Braida as Auxiliary Bishop of Mendoza, Argentina, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Tanudaia. Until now he has been Vicar General of the Diocese of Reconquista, Argentina (11 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Braida, 46, was born in Reconquista, Argentina. He was ordained a priest on 21 April 1996. He has served in parish ministry and as: diocesan assessor for the Vo-

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## The Council of Cardinals at work

Reform of the Vatican media and the issue of accountability in the Church with regard to abuse are two of the themes addressed in detail during Pope Francis' meeting with the Council of Cardinals (C9), which began Monday, 13 April. Fr Federico Lombardi, Director of the Holy See Press Office, briefed accredited journalists before the C9 concluded its work on Wednesday, 15 April. Fr Lombardi indicated that the Pontiff was present at all of the Council's sessions except that of Wednesday

morning, highlighting that the cardinals dedicated a large portion of their time to the general matter of the reform of the Roman Curia. Much consideration was given to methodologies for reaching, by the end of 2016, a meaningful point in the preparation of the new Apostolic Constitution. The secretary of the Council re-read the more than 60 statements made during February's Consistory. In addition to general matters, there was specific consideration regarding the establishment of two large dicasteries, one for charity, justice and peace, and one for the laity, family and life. The Director then spoke about media reform, as the committee has just finished reviewing the matter. This committee, whose months of discussions were led by Lord Chris Patten, must now create a second commission which will lay out the restructuring of the Vatican's information sector on the basis of the final report which the committee has provided to the Pope and his colleagues. The report outlines “a rather broad and general plan” rather than “specific operative decisions”, Fr Lombardi stated. Therefore the Pontiff has been asked to appoint a commission to further study, articulate and implement a plan consistent with the committee's recommendations.

Regarding the issue of accountability, Fr Lombardi reported what Cardinal Seán O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston and member of the C9, had proposed in answer to an expectation of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of

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## The Ambassador of Italy presents his credentials

H.E. Mr Daniele Mancini was born in Rome on 22 December 1952. He is married and holds a degree in political sciences. After beginning his diplomatic career in 1978, he served as secretary of legation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1978-81); first secretary in Baghdad (1981-83); first secretary in Paris (1983-87); first secretary and then counsellor in Islamabad (1987-88); counsellor at the Cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1988-93); first counsellor in Washington, D.C. (1993-98); first counsellor of the Permanent Representation to NATO, Brussels (1998-2000); office head at NATO-UEO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000-01); first counsellor and then plenipotentiary to the General Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic (2001-04); vice-director general for European countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004-05); ambassador in Bucharest (2005-08); diplomatic counsellor of the Ministry of Economic Development and director for international relations (2008-11); ambassador in New Delhi (2013-15).



On Saturday morning, 11 April, Pope Francis received H.E. Daniele Mancini, Ambassador of Italy, for the presentation of Letters by which he is accredited to the Holy See

General Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic (2001-04); vice-director general for European countries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2004-05); ambassador in Bucharest (2005-08); diplomatic counsellor of the Ministry of Economic Development and director for international relations (2008-11); ambassador in

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WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH  
Unicuique suum  Non praevalent

Vatican City  
cd.english@ossrom.va  
www.osservatoreromano.va

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN  
Editor-in-Chief

Giuseppe Fiorentino  
Assistant Editor

Mary M. Nolan  
Editor

Editorial office  
via del Pellegrino, 00120 Vatican City  
telephone +390669899300, fax +3906698983675

TIPOGRAFIA VATICANA EDITRICE  
L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

don Sergio Pellini s.n.b.  
Director General

Photo Service  
photo@ossrom.va www.photo.va  
Advertising Agency  
Il Sole 24 Ore S.p.A.  
System Comunicazione Pubblicitaria  
Via Monte Rosa 91, 20149 Milano  
segreteria@redazione.ossrom.va

Subscription rates: Italy - Vatican: € 58,00; Europe: € 100,00 - US\$ 148,00; Latin America, Africa, Asia: € 100,00 - US\$ 160,00 - £ 88,00; Oceania, North America: € 160,00 - US\$ 240,00 - £ 130,00.  
Management Office: phone +390669899480; fax +390669898164; e-mail subscriptions@ossrom.va.  
For India: The weekly English Edition of L'Osservatore Romano is published and distributed in India by Camel International Publishing House, Cotton Hill, Tiruvandur - 695 014, Kerala-India; phone: +9147232723; fax: +9147232809; e-mail: cpb@india.ossrom.va.  
For North America: L'Osservatore Romano (USPS 06-490) is published fifty times per year (weekly, except third week in August and last week in December) by Our Sunday Visitor, L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46730. Periodicals Postage Pending at Huntington, IN, and additional mailing offices, USA - phone: 800-348-2440 ext. 237; fax: 866-897-7330 - e-mail: osssales@ossrom.va.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Our Sunday Visitor, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46730

At the General Audience Pope Francis speaks about the complementarity of man and woman

## Creativity and courage

*"Men and women need to speak to one another more, listen to each other more, get to know one another better, love one another more", because marriage and family is a serious matter. The Holy Father focused his catechesis on the complementarity of male and female, on Wednesday, 15 April, at the General Audience in St Peter's Square. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis which was given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

Today's catechesis is dedicated to an aspect central to the theme of the family: the great gift that God gave to humanity with the creation of man and woman and with the sacrament of marriage. This catechesis and the next one will treat the difference and complementarity between man and woman, who stand at the summit of divine creation; then the two after that will be on other topics concerning marriage.

Let us begin with a brief comment on the first narrative of creation, in the Book of Genesis. Here we read that God, after having created the universe and all living beings, created his masterpiece, the human being, whom He made in his own image: "in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27), so says the Book of Genesis.

And as we all know, sexual difference is present in so many forms of life, on the great scale of living beings. But man and woman alone are made in the image and likeness of God: the biblical text repeats it three times in two passages (26-27): man and woman are the image and likeness of God. This tells us that it is not man alone who is the image of God or woman alone who is the image of God, but man and woman as a couple who are the image of God. The difference between man and woman is not meant to stand in opposition, or to subordinate, but is for the sake of communion and generation, always in the image and likeness of God.

Experience teaches us: in order to know oneself well and develop harmoniously, a human being needs the reciprocity of man and woman. When that is lacking, one can see the consequences. We are made to listen to one another and help one another. We can say that without the mutual enrichment of this relationship – in thought and in action, in affection and in work, as well as in faith – the two cannot even understand the depth of what it means to be man and woman.

Modern contemporary culture has opened new spaces, new forms of freedom and new depths in order to enrich the understanding of this difference. But it has also introduced many doubts and much skepticism. For example, I ask myself, if the so-

called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. Yes, we risk taking a step backwards. The removal of difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution. In order to resolve the problems in their relationships, men and women need to speak to one another more, listen to each other more, get to know one another better, love one another more. They must treat each other with respect and cooperate in friendship. On this human basis, sustained by the grace of God, it is possible to plan a lifelong marital and familial union. The marital and familial bond is a serious matter, and it is so for everyone not just for believers. I would urge intellectuals not to leave this theme aside, as if it had to become secondary in order to foster a more free and just society.

God entrusted the earth to the alliance between man and woman: its failure deprives the earth of warmth and darkens the sky of hope. The signs are already worrisome, and we see them. I would like to indicate, among many others, two points that I believe call for urgent attention.



*With families of victims of the plane crash in the French Alps*



*With the husband and daughter of Asia Bibi, the Christian woman condemned to death in Pakistan*

The first. There is no doubt that we must do far more to advance women, if we want to give more strength to the reciprocity between man and woman. In fact, it is necessary that woman not only be listened to more, but that her voice carry real weight, a recognized authority in society and in the Church. The very way Jesus considered women in a context less favourable than ours, because women in those times were relegated to second place. Jesus considered her in a way which gives off a powerful light, which enlightens a path that leads afar, of which we have only covered a small stretch. We have not yet understood in depth what the feminine genius can give us, what woman can give to society and also to us. Maybe women see things in a way that complements the thoughts of men. It is a path to follow with greater creativity and courage.

A second reflection concerns the topic of man and woman created in the image of God. I wonder if the crisis of collective trust in God, which does us so much harm, and makes us pale with resignation, incredulity and cynicism, is not also connected to the crisis of the alliance between man and woman. In fact the biblical account, with the great symbolic fresco depicting the

earthly paradise and original sin, tells us in fact that the communion with God is reflected in the communion of the human couple and the loss of trust in the heavenly Father generates division and conflict between man and woman.

The great responsibility of the Church, of all believers, and first of all of believing families, which derives from us, impels people to rediscover the beauty of the creative design that also inscribes the image of God in the alliance between man and woman. The earth is filled with harmony and trust when the alliance between man and woman is lived properly. And if man and woman seek it together, between themselves, and with God, without a doubt they will find it. Jesus encourages us explicitly to bear witness to this beauty, which is the image of God.

### SPECIAL GROUPS

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Ireland, Denmark, Norway, China, Indonesia, Nigeria, Canada and the United States. Upon you and your families I invoke the peace and joy of the Risen Lord!

I send a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. In this Easter Season, I encourage you to be true witnesses of the Resurrection in your families and in your daily environments: Dear *young people*, especially you students of the Sant'Elisabetta School in Rome, remember that mercy is God's most beautiful gift; dear *sick people*, allow yourselves to be consoled by the heavenly Father; and you, dear *newlyweds*, live out your love imitating the merciful love of Jesus.

Schedule presented for 6 June visit

### The Pontiff in Sarajevo

The celebration of Mass and a long series of meetings will articulate Pope Francis' visit to Sarajevo on 6 June. The schedule of the eighth international journey of the pontiff was announced on Tuesday morning, 14 April, by the Holy See Press Office, and simultaneously presented at a conference held in the Bosnian capital.

The Pope is scheduled to depart from Rome's Fiumicino Airport at 7:30 am and land an hour-and-a-half later at Sarajevo International Airport, where an official welcome will take place. The welcome ceremony will be held in the square facing the Presidential Palace. Then Pope Francis will make a courtesy

visit to the Presidency of the Republic and meet with the Authorities, during which the Pope will deliver the first of the five addresses on the agenda.

At about 11:00 he will celebrate Mass in the Kosovo Stadium with the Catholic community. The morning will conclude with a lunch with the Bishops of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the papal entourage at the Apostolic Nunciature.

In the afternoon, Francis will speak to priests, men and women religious and seminarians in the cathedral. He will then preside at



an ecumenical and interreligious meeting at the Franciscan International Student Centre. The Pope's last activities will be greeting young people in the John Paul II diocesan youth centre, before attending the farewell ceremony at the Sarajevo airport. For his return to Rome that evening, the Pontiff is expected to arrive at Ciampino airport.

Physicians and informed consent

## The dilemma of paternalism

CARLO PETRINI

A recent court decision has signaled a radical change in the doctor-patient relationship in the U.K. On 1 October 1999, Nadine Montgomery, a diabetic woman, gave birth to a baby boy at Bellshill Maternity Hospital in Glasgow. Pregnant women with diabetes are more likely to have a foetus which is larger than the norm, and thus have

Appeal of the local Churches

### No more destruction in Aleppo



"We listened to the cries of the widows and the laments of the children and we saw the panic on the faces of the people". This is the shocking cry of the immense suffering by the Heads of Churches and Christian communities of Aleppo, after the city was heavily bombed last week, during the celebration of Orthodox Holy Week and Easter, celebrated on Sunday, 12 April. In a statement entitled: "Is it the time of the Resurrection of the Savior or the funeral of his disciples?", Christian leaders wrote of the suffering of the people of Aleppo during Holy Week and the days following Easter. "During the Easter period, our city and our people suffered intense pain, anguish and discomfort, during the night when neighborhoods in the city were hit with rocket-propelled grenades, with a destructive capacity that we had never heard or seen before".

Words full of anguish and bewilderment. It is a testimony to the crude and terrifying reality that seems to be taking shape right before our eyes. "We went, we saw and we cried: bodies pulled out from the rubble, shreds attached to the walls and blood mixed with the soil of the homeland! Dozens of martyrs of every religion and confession, wounded and maimed, men and women, the elderly and children".

approximately a 10% higher risk of an obstructed labour.

This complication arose in the case of Sam, the child in question, who suffers a severe neurological disability as a result. His mother claimed that, had Dr Dina McLellan, who attended the delivery, correctly informed her of the possible risks, she would have chosen a caesarean section over a natural birth. The obstetrician, on the other hand, determined it correct not to advise the woman, as the risk was low. On appeal, the Court upheld the decision in favour of Sam's mother, who was awarded over five million pounds. The 11 March 2015 decision of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom marks a turning point: the *British Medical Journal* called it a landmark decision in overcoming medical paternalism.

Until now in the U.K. a physician's decision regarding what information to provide to a patient was based on a 1985 decision in the *Sidaway* case. That decision provided for the application of the so-called *Bolam* test, according to which a doctor is considered not negligent "if his conduct is accepted by a responsible body of medical opinion". The reference is therefore a matter of the prevailing opinion among physicians. Under the new

decision, however, the perspective has been reversed: The doctor must no longer conform his/her practise to that accepted as proper by a responsible body of medical opinion, but must instead act from the patient's point of view.

Thus, the doctor must ask him/herself: "Does the patient understand the risk of the treatment I am recommending?"; "What kinds of risks would a reasonable person in my patient's condition want to know about?"; "What information on possible alternatives might he or she reasonably want to know?"; "Have I taken reasonable care to ensure that the patient has received the information that he or she would likely deem important?".

In the decision, the Supreme Court judges also observe that the doctor must provide the information without waiting for the patient to ask for it, because "there is something unreal about placing the onus of asking upon a patient who may not know that there is anything to ask about". The Court also considers that some physicians may claim they have no time for a lengthy conversation with the patient: the Court responds that "even those doctors who have less skill or inclination for communication, or who are more hurried, are obliged to



pause and engage in the discussion which the law requires".

The decision, however, also offers at least three exceptions to the duty to inform. The first concerns cases in which the patient him/herself asks not to be informed; the second concerns cases in which providing the information could pose a risk to the patient's health; and the third concerns emergency situations in which the patient is unconscious, in which case the doctor has the duty to intervene immediately, independent of informed consent.

The Patriarch of Moscow's message for Orthodox Easter

## Service is spiritual heroism

The sacrifice in itself – the basis of spiritual heroism – is the highest expression of love. The Patriarch of Moscow Kirill underlined this in his message for Orthodox Easter, which the Orthodox celebrated on Sunday, 12 April. "How are we to imitate the Saviour? What sort of spiritual heroism can we apply to the realities of modern-day life?" Kirill asked. "Today, when we utter the word 'heroism,' an image often arises in peoples' minds of a legendary warrior, a historical figure or famous hero from the past. Yet the meaning of spiritual heroism lies not in the acquisition of resounding fame or the gain of universal recognition", he explained. Through spiritual deeds "immutably linked to our inner endeavours and the limiting of oneself, we can know by experience what true and perfect love is, for the willingness to sacrifice oneself, which lies at the foundation of all spiritual deeds, is the highest manifestation of this feeling".

All the faithful are called to "the feat of active love embed-

ded in losing oneself in service to our neighbour, and even more so to those who especially need our support: the suffering, the sick, the lonely and the downcast. If this law of life, which is so clearly manifested and expressed in the earthly life of the Saviour, becomes the inheritance of the majority, then people will be truly happy". Indeed, in serving others, the Patriarch continued, "we gain incomparably more than we give: the Lord then enters our hearts and by communicating with divine grace all of human life is changed. As there can be no holiness without labour, as there can be no Resurrection without Golgotha, so too without spiritual feats the genuine spiritual and moral transformation

of the human person is impossible". When spiritual heroism "becomes the substance not only of the individual but of an entire people", it acquires "enormous spiritual strength".

## Council of Cardinals

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Minors, over which he presides. It is a matter of having appropriate procedures and ways to evaluate and address not so much cases of abuse of minors – for which there are already rules in place – but cases of 'abuse of office' or the failure to report abuse, in particular by people with the responsibility to do so, such as priests, bishops, religious superiors or others. Fr Lombardi emphasized that "there is no precise plan or document, but the issue was explicitly placed on the drawing board and there is an intention to find ways to proceed" in this regard.

The next meetings of the Cg have been scheduled to take place from 8 to 10 June, from 14 to 16 September, and from 10 to 12 December.



At the Regina Caeli the Pope speaks of doubting Thomas

# The mark of the nails

*"In the mark of the nails" Thomas found the decisive proof that he was loved, that he was expected, that he was understood". These were the Pope's remarks at the Regina Caeli on 12 April. The following is a translation of his reflection, which was expressed in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

Today is the eighth day after Easter, and the Gospel according to John documents for us the two appearances of the Risen Jesus to the Apostles gathered in the Upper Room, where on the evening of Easter Thomas was absent, and eight days later, he was present. The first time, the Lord showed them the wounds to his body, breathed on them and said: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21). He imparts his same mission, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But that night Thomas, who did not want to believe what the others witnessed, was not there. "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side", he said, "I will not believe" (cf. Jn 20:25). Eight days later – which is precisely today – Jesus returned to stand among them and turned immediately to Thomas, inviting him to touch the wounds in his hands and his side. He faced his incredulity so that, through the signs of the passion, he was able to reach the fullness of faith in the Paschal Mystery, namely faith in the Resurrection of Jesus.

Thomas was one who was not satisfied and seeks, intending to confirm himself, to have his own personal experience. After initial resistance and apprehension, in the end even he was able to believe, even though through effort, he came to believe. Jesus waited for him patiently and offered himself to the difficulties and uncertainty of the last to arrive. The Lord proclaimed "blessed", those who believe without seeing (cf. v. 29) the first of which is Mary his Mother. He also met the needs of the doubting disciple: "Put your finger here, and see my hands..." (v. 27). In the redeeming contact with the wounds of the Risen One, Thomas showed his own wounds, his own injuries, his own lacerations, his own humiliation; in the print of the nails he found the decisive proof that he was loved, that he was expected, that he was understood. He found himself before the Messiah filled with kindness, mercy, tenderness. This was the Lord he was searching for, he, in the hidden depths of his being, for he had always known He was like this. And how many of us are searching deep in our heart to meet Jesus, just as He is: kind, merciful, tender! For we know, deep down, that He is like this. Having rediscovered personal contact with Christ who is amiable and mercifully patient, Thomas understood the profound significance of his Resurrection and, intimately transformed, he declared his full and

total faith in Him exclaiming: "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). Beautiful, Thomas' expression is beautiful!

He was able to "touch" the Paschal Mystery which fully demonstrated God's redeeming love (cf. Eph 2:4). All of us too are like Thomas: on this second Sunday of Easter we are called to contemplate, in the wounds of the Risen One, Divine Mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines on the darkness of evil and of sin. The upcoming *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* will be an intense and extended time to welcome the immeasurable wealth of God's love and mercy, the Bull of Indiction for which I promulgated yesterday evening here, in St Peter's Basilica. That Bull begins with the words: "*Misericordiae Vultus*": Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's Mercy. Let us keep our gaze turned to Him, who always seeks us, waits for us, forgives us; so merciful, He is not afraid of our wretchedness. In his wounds He heals us and forgives all of our sins. May the Virgin Mother help us to be merciful with others as Jesus is with us.

*After the Regina Caeli, the Pope said:*

Dear brothers and sisters, I cordially greet all of you faithful from Rome and you who have come from so many parts of the world. I greet

the pilgrims from the Diocese of Metuchen in the United States, the Handmaids of the Child Jesus from Croatia, the Daughters of Divine Charity, the parish groups from Forlì and Gravina in Puglia and all the young men and young women present, especially students from "Figlie di Gesù" school in Modena, those from "Liceo Verga" in Adriano and the confirmands from Palestrina. I greet the pilgrims who attended the Holy Mass presided at by the Cardinal Vicar of Rome in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, the centre of devotion to Divine Mercy.

I greet the Neocatechumenal communities of Rome, who today are beginning a special mission in the city's squares to pray and bear witness to the faith.

I address a cordial greeting to the faithful of the Eastern Churches who, in accordance with their calendar, are celebrating Holy Pascha today. I join in their joy of proclaiming the Risen Christ: *Christós anésti!* Let us greet our brothers and sisters of the East with applause on this day of their Easter, everyone!

I also address a heartfelt greeting to the Armenian faithful, who came



Stained glass depicting doubting Thomas

to Rome and attended Holy Mass with the presence of my brothers, the three Patriarchs, and numerous Bishops.

In the past weeks, many messages of Easter greetings have come to me from every part of the world. With gratitude I reciprocate them to all. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the children, the elderly, the families, dioceses, parish and religious communities, the entities and the many associations, who wanted to show me affection and closeness. Please continue to pray for me!

I wish a happy Sunday to all of you. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

Holy Father's address to the Patriarchal Synod of the Armenian Catholic Church

## A history of faith and resurrection

*On Thursday morning, 9 April, Pope Francis received members of the Patriarchal Synod of the Armenian Catholic Church. The following is a translation of his address, which was given in Italian.*

Your Beatitudes,  
Your Excellencies,

I greet you fraternally and I thank you for this meeting which is taking place shortly before this coming Sunday's celebration in the Vatican Basilica. We shall raise prayers of Christian suffrage for the sons and daughters of your beloved people, who were victims about 100 years ago. We shall invoke Divine Mercy to help us all, in love through truth and justice, to heal every wound and to hasten concrete gestures of reconciliation and peace among the Nations who are still unable to reach a reasonable consensus on the interpretation of these sad events.

In you and through you I greet the priests, men and women religious, seminarians and the faithful laity of the Armenian Catholic Church: I know that very many have accompanied you here to Rome in these days, and that many more will be spiritually united with us, from the countries in the Diaspora, such as the United States, Latin America, Europe, Russia, Ukraine, and the Mother Land. I think with sadness particularly of



those zones, such as that of Aleppo – "the martyr city" as the Bishop told me – which 100 years ago were a safe haven for the few survivors. These regions, in this last period, have witnessed Christians, not only Armenians, in permanent danger.

Your people, whom tradition recognizes as the first to convert to Christianity in 301, has a 2000-year-old history and safeguards an admirable legacy of spirituality and culture, besides the capacity to rise again after the many persecutions and trials to which it has been subjected.

I invite you to always cultivate feelings of gratitude to the Lord, for having been able to remain faithful to Him even in the most difficult periods. It is also important to ask God for the gift of wis-

dom of heart: the commemoration of the victims of 100 years ago indeed sets before us the darkness of the *mysterium iniquitatis*. One can only understand it with this attitude.

As the Gospel says, from it the depths of man's heart the darkest forces can burst out, capable of systematically planning the annihilation of his brother, of considering him an enemy, an adversary, or even an individual devoid of human dignity itself. However, for believers the question of evil done by man introduces the mystery of participating in the redeeming Passion: many sons and daughters of the Armenian nation were able to pronounce the name of Christ at the point of pouring out their blood, or to face starvation in their interminable forced exodus.

The agonizing pages of your people's history continue, in a certain sense, the Passion of Jesus, but the seed of his Resurrection is planted in each one of them. May you Pastors never fail in your commitment to teach the lay faithful how to read reality with new eyes, in order to be able to say every day: my people is not only one that suffers for Christ, but above all one that is risen in Him. For this reason it is important to remember the

The Holy Father commemorates the centenary of the slaughter of the Armenian people at Mass in the Vatican Basilica

## Without memory wounds fester

*"Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!". The Pope said this on Sunday, 12 April, in the Vatican Basilica during the Mass celebrating the centenary of the martyrdom of the Armenians and proclaiming St Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church. At the start of Mass Pope Francis gave a greeting, the following of which is the English text.*

Dear Armenian Brothers and Sisters, Dear Brothers and Sisters.

On a number of occasions I have spoken of our time as a time of war, a third world war which is being fought piecemeal, one in which we daily witness savage crimes, brutal massacres and senseless destruction. Sadly, today too we hear the muffled and forgotten cry of so many of our defenceless brothers and sisters who, on account of their faith in Christ or their ethnic origin, are publicly and ruthlessly put to death – decapitated, crucified, burned alive – or forced to leave their homeland.

Today too we are experiencing a sort of genocide created by general and collective indifference, by the complicit silence of Cain, who cries out: "What does it matter to me? Am I my brother's keeper?" (cf. Gen 4:9; *Homily in Redipuglia*, 13 September 2014).

In the past century our human family has lived through three massive and unprecedented tragedies. The first, which is widely considered "the first genocide of the twentieth century" (John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001), struck your own Armenian people, the first Christian nation, as well as Catholic and Orthodox Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Greeks. Bishops and priests, religious, women and men, the elderly and even defenceless children and the infirm were murdered. The remaining two were perpetrated by Nazism and Stalinism. And more recently there have been other mass killings, like those in Cambodia, Rwanda, Burundi and Bosnia. It seems that humanity is incapable of putting a halt to the shedding of innocent blood. It seems that the enthusiasm generated at the end of the Second World War has dissipated and is now disappearing. It seems that the human



family has refused to learn from its mistakes caused by the law of terror, so that today too there are those who attempt to eliminate others with the help of a few and with the complicit silence of others who simply stand by. We have not yet learned that "war is madness", "senseless slaughter" (cf. *Homily in Redipuglia*, 13 September 2014).

Dear Armenian Christians, today, with hearts filled with pain but at the same time with great hope in the risen Lord, we recall the centenary of that tragic event, that immense and senseless slaughter whose cruelty your forebears had to endure. It is necessary, and indeed a duty, to honour their memory, for whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester. Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!

I greet you with affection and I thank you for your witness.

With gratitude for his presence, I greet Mr Serz Sargsyan, the President of the Republic of Armenia.

My cordial greeting goes also to my brother Patriarchs and Bishops: His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians; His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, His

Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics; and Catholicosates of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Patriarchate of the Armenian Catholic Church.

In the firm certainty that evil never comes from God, who is infinitely good, and standing firm in faith, let us profess that cruelty may never be considered God's work and, what is more, can find absolutely no justification in his Holy Name. Let us continue this celebration by fixing our gaze on Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, victor over death and evil!



## Jesus fills the abyss

*The following is the English text of the Pope's homily.*

St John, who was in the Upper Room with the other disciples on the evening of the first day after the Sabbath, tells us that Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you!" and he showed them his hands and his side (Jn 20:19-20); he showed them his wounds. And in this way they realized that it was not an apparition: it was truly him, the Lord, and they were filled with joy.

On the eighth day Jesus came once again into the Upper Room and showed his wounds to Thomas, so that he could touch them as he had wished to, in order to believe and thus become himself a witness to the Resurrection.

To us also, on this Sunday which St John Paul II wished to dedicate to Divine Mercy, the Lord shows us, through the Gospel, his wounds. They are *wounds of mercy*. It is true: the wounds of Jesus are wounds of mercy. "With his stripes we are healed" (Is 53:5).

Jesus invites us to behold these wounds, to touch them as Thomas did, to heal our lack of belief. Above all, he invites us to enter into the mystery of these wounds, which is the mystery of his merciful love.

Through these wounds, as in a light-filled opening, we can see the entire mystery of Christ and of God: his Passion, his earthly life – filled with compassion for the weak and the sick – his incarnation in the womb of Mary. And we can retrace the whole history of salvation: the prophecies – especially about the Servant of the Lord, the Psalms, the Law and the Covenant; to the liberation from Egypt, to the first Passover and to the blood of the slaughtered lambs; and

again from the Patriarchs to Abraham, and then all the way back to Abel, whose blood cried out from the earth. All of this we can see in the wounds of Jesus, crucified and risen; with Mary, in her *Magnificat*, we can perceive that, "His mercy extends from generation to generation" (cf. Lk 1:50).

Faced with the tragic events of human history we can feel crushed at times, asking ourselves, "Why?". Humanity's evil can appear in the world like an abyss, a great void: empty of love, empty of goodness, empty of life. And so we ask: how can we fill this abyss? For us it is impossible; only God can fill this emptiness that evil brings to our hearts and to human history. It is Jesus, God made man, who died on the Cross and who fills the abyss of sin with the depth of his mercy.

St Bernard, in one of his commentaries on the Canticle of Canticles (Sermon 61, 3-5; *Opera Omnia*, 2, 150-151), reflects precisely on the mystery of the Lord's wounds, using forceful and even bold expressions which we do well to repeat today. He says that "through these sacred wounds we can see the secret of [Christ's] heart, the great mystery of love, the sincerity of his mercy with which he visited us from on high".

Brothers and sisters, behold the way which God has opened for us to finally go out from our slavery to sin and death, and thus enter into the land of life and peace. Jesus, crucified and risen, is the way and his wounds are especially full of mercy.

The saints teach us that the world is changed beginning with the conversion of one's own heart, and that this happens through the mercy of God. And so, whether faced with my own sins or the great tragedies of the world, "my conscience would be distressed, but it would not be in turmoil, for I would recall the wounds of the Lord: 'he was wounded for our iniquities' (Is 53:5). What sin is there so deadly that it cannot be pardoned by the death of Christ?" (*ibid.*).

Keeping our gaze on the wounds of the Risen Jesus, we can sing with the Church: "His love endures forever" (Ps 117:2); eternal is his mercy. And with these words impressed on our hearts, let us go forth along the paths of history, led by the hand of our Lord and Saviour, our life and our hope.



Pope Francis proclaims St Gregory of Narek Doctor of the Church

# From sorrow to reconciliation

*On the occasion of the centenary of Metz Yeghern and the proclamation of St Gregory of Narek as Doctor of the Church, the Holy Father consigned the following message to the Patriarchs and the President of the Armenian Republic at the end of Mass on 12 April in the Vatican Basilica.*

Dear Armenian Brothers and Sisters, A century has passed since that horrific massacre which was a true martyrdom of your people, in which many innocent people died as confessors and martyrs for the name of Christ (cf. John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001). Even today, there is not an Armenian family untouched by the loss of loved ones due to that tragedy: it truly was "Metz Yeghern", the "Great Evil", as it is known by Armenians. On this anniversary, I feel a great closeness to your people and I wish to unite myself spiritually to the prayers which rise up from your hearts, your families and your communities.

Today is a propitious occasion for us to pray together, as we proclaim St Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church. I wish to express my deep gratitude for the presence here today of His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, and His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX, Patriarch of Cilicia of Armenian Catholics.

St Gregory of Narek, a monk of the tenth century, knew how to express the sentiments of your people more than anyone. He gave voice to the cry, which became a prayer, of a sinful and sorrowful humanity, oppressed by the anguish of its powerlessness, but illuminated by the splendour of God's love and open to the hope of his salvific intervention, which is capable of transforming all things. "Through his strength I wait with certain expectation believing with unwavering hope that... I shall be saved by the Lord's mighty hand and... that I will see the Lord himself in his mercy and compassion and receive the legacy of heaven" (St Gregory of Narek, *Book of Lamentations*, XII).

Your Christian identity is indeed ancient, dating from the year 301, when St Gregory the Illuminator guided Armenia to conversion and baptism. You were the first among nations in the course of the centuries to embrace the Gospel of Christ. That spiritual event indelibly marked the Armenian people, as well as its culture and history, in which martyrdom holds a preeminent place, as attested to symbolically by the sacrificial witness of St Vardan and his companions in the fifth century.

Your people, illuminated by Christ's light and by his grace, have overcome many trials and sufferings, animated by the hope which comes from the Cross (cf. Rm 8:31-39). As St John Paul II said to you, "Your

history of suffering and martyrdom is a precious pearl, of which the universal Church is proud. Faith in Christ, man's Redeemer, infused you with an admirable courage on your path, so often like that of the Cross, on which you have advanced with determination, intent on preserving your identity as a people and as believers" (*Homily*, 21 November 1987).

This faith also accompanied and sustained your people during the tragic experience one hundred years ago "in what is generally referred to as the first genocide of the 20th century" (John Paul II and Karekin II, *Common Declaration*, Etchmiadzin, 27 September 2001). Pope Benedict XV, who condemned the First World War as a "senseless slaughter" (*AAS*, IX [1917], 429), did everything in his power until the very end to stop it, continuing the efforts at mediation already begun by Pope Leo XIII when confronted with the "deadly events" of 1894-96. For this reason, Pope Benedict XV wrote to Sultan Mehmed V, pleading that the many innocents be saved (cf. *Letter of 10 September 1915*) and, in the Secret Consistory of 6 December 1915, he declared with great dismay, "*Miserima Armenorum gens ad interitum prope ducitur*" (*AAS*, VIII [1915], 519).

It is the responsibility not only of the Armenian people and the universal Church to recall all that has taken place, but of the entire human family, so that the warnings from this tragedy will protect us from falling into a similar horror, which offends against God and human dignity. Today too, in fact, these conflicts at times degenerate into unjustifiable violence, stirred up by exploiting ethnic and religious differences. All who are Heads of State and of International Organizations are called to oppose such crimes with a firm sense of duty, without ceding to ambiguity or compromise.

## A history of faith and resurrection

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

past, but to draw from it new sap to nourish the present with the joyous message of the Gospel and with the witness of charity. I encourage you to support the permanent formation process of priests and consecrated people. They are your primary collaborators: communion between you and them will be strengthened by the exemplary fraternity that they perceive within the Synod and with the Patriarch.

Our grateful thoughts go at this time to those who are working to alleviate in some measure the tragedy your ancestors suffered. I think especially of Pope Benedict XV who intervened through Sultan Mehmed V to put an end to the massacre of Armenians. This Pontiff was a great friend of the Christian East: he

May this sorrowful anniversary become for all an occasion of humble and sincere reflection, and may every heart be open to forgiveness, which is the source of peace and renewed hope. St Gregory of Narek, an extraordinary interpreter of the human soul, offers words which are prophetic for us: "I willingly blame myself with myriad accounts of all the incurable sins, from our first forefather through the end of his generations in all eternity, I charge myself with all these voluntarily" (*Book of Lamentations*, LXXII). How striking is his sense of universal solidarity! How small we feel before the greatness of his invocations: "Remember, [Lord,...] those of the human race who are our enemies as well, and for their benefit accord them pardon and mercy... Do not destroy those who persecute me, but reform them, root out the vile ways of this world, and plant the good in me and them" (*ibid.*, LXXXIII).

May God grant that the people of Armenia and Turkey take up again the path of reconciliation, and may peace also spring forth in Nagorno Karabakh. Despite conflicts and tensions, Armenians and Turks have lived long periods of peaceful coexistence in the past and, even in the midst of violence, they have experienced times of solidarity and mutual help. Only in this way will new generations open themselves to a better future and will the sacrifice of so many become seeds of justice and peace.

For us Christians, may this be above all a time of deep prayer. Through the redemptive power of Christ's sacrifice, may the blood which has been shed bring about



Miniature of Gregory of Narek (1173)

the miracle of the full unity of his disciples. In particular, may it strengthen the bonds of fraternal friendship which already unite the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. The witness of many defenceless brothers and sisters who sacrificed their lives for the faith unites the diverse confessions: it is the ecumenism of blood, which led St John Paul II to celebrate all the martyrs of the 20th century together during the Jubilee of 2000. Our celebration today also is situated in this spiritual and ecclesial context. Representatives of our two Churches are participating in this event to which many of our faithful throughout the world are united spiritually, in a sign which reflects on earth the perfect communion that exists between the blessed souls in heaven. With brotherly affection, I assure you of my closeness on the occasion of the canonization ceremony of the martyrs of the Armenian Apostolic Church, to be held this coming 23 April in the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, and on the occasion of the commemorations to be held in Antelias in July.

I entrust these intentions to the Mother of God, in the words of St Gregory of Narek:

"O Most Pure of Virgins, first among the blessed,

Mother of the unshakeable edifice of the Church,

Mother of the immaculate Word of God, (...)

Taking refuge beneath your boundless wings which grant us the protection of your intercession, we lift up our hands to you,

and with unquestioned hope we believe that we are saved".

(*Panegyric of the Theotokos*)

From the Vatican, 12 April 2015

Franciscus



Looking forward to the Year of Mercy

## A time of reawakening

*The Holy Father presided at First Vespers of the Second Sunday of Easter in the Vatican Basilica on Saturday evening, 11 April. On this occasion the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee was consigned and read. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily, which was delivered in Italian.*

The greeting of the Risen Christ to his disciples on the evening of Easter, "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19), continues to resound in us all. Peace, especially during this Easter season, remains the desire of so many people who suffer unprecedented violence of discrimination and death simply because they bear the name "Christian". Our prayer is all the more intense and becomes a cry for help to the Father, who is rich in mercy, that he may sustain the faith of our many brothers and sisters who are in pain. At the same time, we ask for the grace of the conversion of our own hearts so as to move from indifference to compassion.

St Paul reminds us that we have been saved through the mystery of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is the Reconciler, who is alive in our midst offering the way to reconciliation with God and with each other. The Apostle recalls that, notwithstanding the difficulties and the sufferings of life, the hope of salvation which the love of Christ has sown in our hearts nonetheless continues to grow. The mercy of God is poured out upon us, making us just and giving us peace.

Many questions in their hearts: why a Jubilee of Mercy today? Simply because the Church, in this time of great historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. This is not the time to be distracted; on the contrary, we need to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential. This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's mercy (cf. Jn 20:21-23). For this reason, the Holy Year must keep alive the desire to know how to welcome the

numerous signs of the tenderness which God offers to the whole world and, above all, to those who suffer, who are alone and abandoned, without hope of being pardoned or feeling the Father's love. A Holy Year to experience strongly within ourselves the joy of having been found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has come in search of us because we were lost. A Jubilee to receive the warmth of his love when he bears us upon his shoulders and brings us back to the Father's house. A year in which to be touched by the Lord Jesus and to be transformed by his mercy, so that we may become witnesses to mercy. Here,

then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because this is the time for mercy. It is the favourable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation.

May the Mother of Divine Mercy open our eyes, so that we may comprehend the task to which we have been called; and may she obtain for us the grace to experience this Jubilee of Mercy as faithful and fruitful witnesses of Christ.

## Consigning the Bull

"The Church, in this time of great historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. This is not the time to be distracted; on the contrary, we need to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential". On Saturday afternoon, 11 April, Pope Francis underlined this at First Vespers, in the Vatican Basilica. On the Second Sunday of Easter, the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of mercy was consigned and read aloud. With this act, the Pontiff took a step towards the Holy Door which will be opened on 8 Decem-

ber, highlighting that mercy is the "architrave" of the Church.

The Pontiff – who invoked the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the support of the Mother of God – bestowed the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee on 12 prelates: Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Archbishop of St Peter's Basilica; Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Archbishop of the Basilica of St John Lateran; Cardinal Santos Abril y Castelló, Archbishop of the Basilica of St Mary Major; Cardinal James Michael Harvey, Archbishop of the Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls; Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches; Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops; Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, from Hong Kong and Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, who represented the East; Bishop Barthélemy Adoukonou, originally from Benin and Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture, representing Africa; Msgr Khaled Ayad Boshay of the Patriarchal Church of Alexandria for Copts, representing the Eastern Churches; and Msgr Francesco Di Felice and Msgr Leonardo Spapienza, Apostolic Protonotaries.



Misericordiae Vultus

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy



FRANCIS  
BISHOP OF ROME  
SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD  
TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER  
GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE

1. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person, reveals the mercy of God.

2. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a well-spring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to a hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

3. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an *Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy* as a special time for the Church; a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.

The Holy Year will open on 8 December 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This liturgical feast day recalls God's action from the very beginning of the history of mankind. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. So he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. Eph 1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man's Re-

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee Year

# The face of mercy

deemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. I will have the joy of opening the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On that day, the Holy Door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instils hope.

On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome – that is, the Basilica of St John Lateran – will be opened. In the following weeks, the Holy Doors of the other Papal Basilicas will be opened. On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local Church, at the cathedral – the mother Church of the faithful in any particular area – or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a *Door of Mercy* will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year. At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any Shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion.

4. I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to

men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.

We recall the poignant words of St John XXIII when, opening the Council, he indicated the path to follow: "Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity .... The Catholic Church, as she holds high the torch of Catholic truth at this Ecumenical Council, wants to show herself a loving mother to all; patient, kind, moved by our compassion and goodness toward her separated children."<sup>5</sup> Blessed Paul VI spoke in a similar vein at the closing of the Council: "We prefer to point out how charity has been the principal religious feature of this Council ... the old story of the Good Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the Council ... a wave of affection and admiration flowed from the Council over the modern world of humanity. Errors were condemned, indeed, because charity demanded this no less than did truth, but for individuals themselves there was only admonition, respect and love. Instead of depressing diagnoses, encouraging remedies, instead of direful predictions, messages of trust issued from the Council to the present-day world. The modern world's values were not only respected but honoured, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed .... Another point we must stress is this: all this rich teaching is channelled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need."<sup>6</sup>

With these sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for



Rembrandt, "Return of the Prodigal Son" (1668, detail)

the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers in cooperating with the work of salvation wrought by Christ, lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.<sup>7</sup>

5. The Jubilee Year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016. On that day, as we seal the Holy Door, we shall be filled, above all, with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity for having granted us an extraordinary time of grace. We will entrust the life of the Church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!

6. "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way."<sup>8</sup> St Thomas Aquinas' words show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: "O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness...<sup>9</sup> Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

"Patient and merciful." These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God's nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: "He forgives all your iniquity,

he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy" (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: "He secures justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin" (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds .... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground" (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality through which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for his child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

7. "For his mercy endures forever." This is the refrain repeated after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God's revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God's history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually "for his mercy endures forever," as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm – the "Great Hallel," as it is called – in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: "He forgives all your iniquity,



Francesco d'Antonio, "Visiting the sick" (15th century, Florence, Oratorio dei Buonominati di San Martino)

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## The face of mercy

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Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: "for his mercy endures forever."

8. With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in the face of sin-

ners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. Mt 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. Mt 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. Mt 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need. When he came upon the widow of Naim taking her son out for burial, he felt great compassion for the immense suffering of this grieving mother, and he gave back her son by raising him from the dead (cf. Lk 7:15). After freeing the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus entrusted him with this mission: "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you" (Mk 5:19). The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector's booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector,

whom Jesus chose – against the hesitation of the disciples – to become one of the Twelve. St Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: *miserando atque eligendo*.<sup>7</sup> This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto.

9. In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter's question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: "I do not say seven times, but seventy times seventy times" (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the "ruthless servant," who, called by his master to return a huge amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master

cancel his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, "Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, "So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart" (Mt 18:35).

This parable contains a profound teaching for all of us. Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardonning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle's exhortation: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger" (Eph 4:26). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy as an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7): the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in this Holy Year.

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

10. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church "has an endless desire to show mercy."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal. On the other hand, sad to say, we must admit that the practice of mercy is waning in the wider culture. In some cases the word seems to have dropped out of

use. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

11. Let us not forget the great teaching offered by St John Paul II in his second Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, which at the time came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise. There are two passages in particular to which I would like to draw attention. First, St John Paul II highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today's cultural milieu: "The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of 'mercy' seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it (cf. Gen 1:28). This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy ... And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God."<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, St John Paul II pushed for a more urgent proclamation and witness to mercy in the contemporary world: "It is dictated by love for man, for all that is human and which, according to the intuitions of many of our contemporaries, is threatened by an immense danger. The mystery of Christ ... obliges me to proclaim mercy as God's merciful love, revealed in that same mystery of Christ. It likewise obliges me to have recourse to that mercy and to beg for it at this difficult, critical phase of the history of the Church and of the world."<sup>10</sup> This teaching is more pertinent than ever and deserves to be taken up once again in this Holy Year. Let us listen to his words once more: "The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy – the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer – and when she brings people close to the sources of the Saviour's mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser."<sup>11</sup>

12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is abso-



Frank Wesley, "The Forgiving Father" (1954-1958)



The Master of Alkmaar, "The works of mercy" (1504, Alkmaar, Church of St Lawrence)

lutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of one's self. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

13. We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord's words: *Merciful like the Father*. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36). It is a programme of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus's command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. Lk 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.

14. The practice of *pilgrimage* has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. Similarly, to reach the Holy Door in Rome or in any other place in the world, everyone, each according to his or her ability, will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice. May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.

The Lord Jesus shows us the steps of the pilgrimage to attain our goal: "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Lk 6:37-38). The Lord asks us above all *not to*

*judge and not to condemn*. If anyone wishes to avoid God's judgement, he should not make himself the judge of his brother or sister. Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgement and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment and our presumption to know everything about him. But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to *forgive* and to *give*. To be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God. To be generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity.

*Merciful like the Father*, therefore, is the "motto" of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me" (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God's mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

15. In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the

wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the *spiritual works of mercy*: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these "little ones," Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled ... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of

St John of the Cross: "as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love."<sup>12</sup>

16. In the Gospel of Luke, we find another important element that will help us live the Jubilee with faith. Luke writes that Jesus, on the Sabbath, went back to Nazareth and, as was his custom, entered the synagogue. They called upon him to read the Scripture and to comment on it. The passage was from the Book of Isaiah where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to those in captivity; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Is 61:1-2). A "year of the Lord's favour" or "mercy": this is what the Lord proclaimed and this is what we wish to live now. This Holy Year will bring to the fore the richness of Jesus' mission echoed in the words of the prophet: to bring a word and gesture of consolation to the poor, to proclaim liberty to those bound by new forms of slavery in modern society, to restore sight to those who can see no more because they are caught up in themselves, to restore dignity to all those from whom it has been robbed. The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith Christians are called to offer by their witness. May the words of the Apostle accompany us: He who does acts of mercy, let him do them with cheerfulness (cf. Rom 12:8).

17. The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy. How many pages of Sacred Scripture are appropriate for meditation during the weeks of Lent to help us rediscover the merciful face of the Father! We can repeat the words of the prophet Micah and make them our own: You, O Lord, are a God who takes away iniquity and pardons sin, who does not hold your anger forever, but are pleased to show mercy. You, Lord, will return to us and have pity on your people. You will trample down our sins and toss them into the depths of the sea (cf. 7:18-19).

The pages of the prophet Isaiah can also be meditated upon concretely during this season of prayer, fasting, and works of charity: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break

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every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, here I am. If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your desire with good things, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not" (58:6-11).

The initiative of "24 Hours for the Lord," to be celebrated on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Fourth Week of Lent, should be implemented in every diocese. So many people, including the youth, are returning to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; through this experience they are rediscovering a path back to the Lord, living a moment of intense prayer and finding meaning in their lives. Let us place the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the centre once more in such a way that it will enable people to touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace.

I will never tire of insisting that confessors be authentic signs of the Father's mercy. We do not become good confessors automatically. We become good confessors when, above all, we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. Let us never forget that to be confessors means to participate in the very mission of Jesus to be a concrete sign of the constancy of divine love that pardons and saves. We priests have received the gift of the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins, and we are responsible for this. None of us wields power over this Sacrament; rather, we are faithful servants of God's mercy through it. Every confessor must accept the faithful as the father in the parable of the prodigal son: a father who runs out to meet his son despite the fact that he has squandered away his inheritance. Confessors are called to embrace the repentant son who comes back home and to express the joy of having him back again. Let us never tire of also going out to the other son who stands outside, incapable of rejoicing, in order to explain to him that his judgment is severe and unjust and meaningless in light of the father's boundless mercy. May confessors not ask useless questions, but like the father in the parable, interrupt the speech prepared ahead of time by the prodigal son, so that confessors will learn to accept the plea for help and mercy gushing from the heart of every penitent. In short, confessors are called to be a

sign of the primacy of mercy always, everywhere, and in every situation, no matter what.

18. During Lent of this Holy Year, I intend to send out *Missionaries of Mercy*. They will be a sign of the Church's maternal solicitude for the People of God, enabling them to enter the profound richness of this mystery so fundamental to the faith. There will be priests to whom I will grant the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See, so that the breadth of their mandate as confessors will be even clearer. They will be, above all, living signs of the Father's readiness to welcome those in search of his pardon. They will be missionaries of mercy because they will be facilitators of a truly human encounter, a source of liberation, rich with responsibility for overcoming obstacles and taking up the new life of Baptism again. They will be led in their mission by the words of the Apostle: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all" (Rom 11:32). Everyone, in fact, without exception, is called to embrace the call to mercy. May these Missionaries live this call with the assurance that they can fix their eyes on Jesus, "the merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God" (Heb 2:17).

I ask my brother Bishops to invite and welcome these Missionaries so that they can be, above all, persuasive preachers of mercy. May individual dioceses organize "missions to the people" in such a way that these Missionaries may be heralds of joy and forgiveness. Bishops are asked to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their people so that the time of grace offered by the Jubilee Year will make it possible for many of God's sons and daughters to take up once again the journey to the Father's house. May pastors, especially during the liturgical season of Lent, be diligent in calling back the faithful "to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace" (Heb 4:16).

19. May the message of mercy reach everyone, and may no one be indifferent to the call to experience mercy. I direct this invitation to conversion even more fervently to those whose behaviour distances them from the grace of God. I particularly have in mind men and women belonging to criminal organizations of any kind. For their own good, I beg them to change their lives. I ask them this in the name of the Son of God who, though rejecting sin, never rejected the sinner. Do not fall into the terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that, in comparison with money, anything else is devoid of value or dignity. This is nothing but an illusion! We cannot take money with us into the life beyond. Money does not bring us happiness. Violence inflicted for the sake of amassing riches soaked in blood makes one neither powerful nor immortal. Everyone, sooner or later, will be subject to God's judgment, from which no one can escape.

The same invitation is extended to those who either perpetrate or participate in corruption. This festering wound is a grave sin that cries out

to heaven for vengeance, because it threatens the very foundations of personal and social life. Corruption prevents us from looking to the future with hope, because its tyrannical greed shatters the plans of the weak and tramples upon the poorest of the poor. It is an evil that embeds itself into the actions of everyday life and spreads, causing great public scandal. Corruption is a sinful hardening of the heart that replaces God with the illusion that money is a form of power. It is a work of darkness, fed by suspicion and intrigue. *Corruptio optimi pessima*, St Gregory the Great said with good reason, affirming that no one can think himself immune from this temptation. If we want to drive it out from personal and social life, we need prudence, vigilance, loyalty, transparency, together with the courage to denounce any wrongdoing. If it is not combated openly, sooner or later everyone will become an accomplice to it, and it will end up destroying our very existence.

This is the opportune moment to change our lives! This is the time to allow our hearts to be touched! When confronted with evil deeds, even in the face of serious crimes, it is the time to listen to the cry of innocent people who are deprived of their property, their dignity, their feelings, and even their very lives. To stick to the way of evil will only leave one deluded and sad. True life is something entirely different. God never tires of reaching out to us. He is always ready to listen, as I am too, along with my brother bishops and priests. All one needs to do is to accept the invitation to conversion and submit oneself to justice during this special time of mercy offered by the Church.

20. It would not be out of place at this point to recall the relationship between *justice* and *mercy*. These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law. Justice is also understood as that which is rightly due to each individual. In the Bible, there are many references to divine justice and to God as "judge". In these passages, justice is understood as the full observance of the Law and the behaviour of every good Israelite in conformity with God's commandments. Such a vision, however, has not infrequently led to legalism by distorting the original meaning of justice and obscuring its profound value. To overcome this legalistic perspective, we need to recall that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God's will.

For his part, Jesus speaks several times of the importance of faith over and above the observance of the law. It is in this sense that we must understand his words when, reclining at table with Matthew and other tax collectors and sinners, he says to the Pharisees raising objections to him, "Go and learn the meaning of 'I desire mercy not sacrifice.' I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9:13). Faced with a vision

of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups – the just and sinners – Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation. One can see why, on the basis of such a liberating vision of mercy as a source of new life, Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees and the other teachers of the law. In an attempt to remain faithful to the law, they merely placed burdens on the shoulders of others and undermined the Father's mercy. The appeal to a faithful observance of the law must not prevent attention from being given to matters that touch upon the dignity of the person.

The appeal Jesus makes to the text from the book of the prophet Hosea – "I desire love and not sacrifice" (6:6) – is important in this regard. Jesus affirms that, from that time onward, the rule of life for his disciples must place mercy at the centre, as Jesus himself demonstrated by sharing meals with sinners. Mercy, once again, is revealed as a fundamental aspect of Jesus' mission. This is truly challenging to his hearers, who would draw the line at a formal respect for the law. Jesus, on the other hand, goes beyond the law; the company he keeps with those the law considers sinners makes us realize the depth of his mercy.

The Apostle Paul makes a similar journey. Prior to meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, he dedicated his life to pursuing the justice of the law with zeal (cf. Phil 3:6). His conversion to Christ led him to turn that vision upside down, to the point that he would write to the Galatians: "We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified" (2:16).

Paul's understanding of justice changes radically. He now places faith first, not justice. Salvation comes not through the observance of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, who in his death and resurrection brings salvation together with a mercy that justifies. God's justice now becomes the liberating force for those oppressed by slavery to sin and its consequences. God's justice is his mercy (cf. Ps 51:11-16).

21. Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. The experience of the prophet Hosea can help us see the way in which mercy surpasses justice. The era in which the prophet lived was one of the most dramatic in the history of the Jewish people. The kingdom was tottering on the edge of destruction; the people had not remained faithful to the covenant; they had wandered from God and lost the faith of their forefathers. According to human logic, it seems reasonable for God to think of rejecting an unfaithful people; they had not observed their pact with God and therefore deserved just punishment: in other words, exile. The prophet's words attest to this: "They shall not return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria



"Works of mercy" (12th century, Baptistry in Parma)

shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me" (Hos 11:5). And yet, after this invocation of justice, the prophet radically changes his speech and reveals the true face of God: "How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy" (11:8-9). St Augustine, almost as if he were commenting on these words of the prophet, says: "It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy."<sup>13</sup> And so it is. God's anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever.

If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. We must pay close attention to what St Paul says if we want to avoid making the same mistake for which he reproaches the Jews of his time: For, "being ignorant of the righteousness that comes

from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rom 10:3-4). God's justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God's judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life.

22. A Jubilee also entails the granting of *indulgences*. This practice will acquire an even more important meaning in the Holy Year of Mercy. God's forgiveness knows no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. Mt 5:48), yet we feel the

heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state. Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger than even this. It becomes *indulgence* on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin. The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father's mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ's redemption, so that God's love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in His merciful "indulgence."

23. There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates us to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God's most important

attributes. Israel was the first to receive this revelation which continues in history as the source of an inexhaustible richness meant to be shared with all mankind. As we have seen, the pages of the Old Testament are steeped in mercy, because they narrate the works that the Lord performed in favour of his people at the most trying moments of their history. Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are "Merciful and Kind." This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open.

I trust that this Jubilee Year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

24. My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God's tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of his love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the *Ark of the Covenant* between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from "generation to generation" (Lk 1:50).

We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the *Salve Regina*, a prayer ever ancient and new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes towards us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.

Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life. I am especially thinking of the great apostle of mercy, St Faustina Kowalska. May she, who was called to enter the depths of divine mercy, intercede for us and obtain for us the grace of living and walking always according to the mercy of God and with an unwavering trust in his love.

25. I present, therefore, this Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of throwing open the doors of his heart and repeats that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God's mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The Church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people approach it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old" (Ps 25:6).

Given in Rome, at St Peter's, on 11 April, the Vigil of the Second Sunday of Easter, or Sunday of Divine Mercy, in the year of our Lord 2015, the third of my Pontificate.

Franciscus

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Opening Address of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, 11 October 1962, 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Speech at the Final Public Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 7 December 1965. <sup>4</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 30, a. 4.

<sup>6</sup> 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time. This Collect already appears in the eighth century among the eucharological texts of the Gelasian Sacramentary (1198).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Homily 22: CCL*, 122, 149-151.

<sup>8</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> No. 2.

<sup>10</sup> St John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Words of Light and Love*, 57.

<sup>13</sup> *Homilies on the Psalms*, 76, 11.

# VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

cations Apostolate; formator at *La Encarnación* interdiocesan seminary; member of the presbyteral council and of the college of consultors.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Matthias U Shwe of Taunggyi, Myanmar. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (12 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Basilio Athai as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of Taunggyi, Myanmar. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Tasaccora and Auxiliary Bishop of the said Archdiocese (12 Apr.).

Bishop Athai, 58, was born Kyekadaw, Myanmar. He was ordained a priest on 1 April 1984. He was ordained a bishop on 18 November 2008, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Tasaccora and Auxiliary of Taunggyi, Myanmar.

## EASTERN CHURCHES

The Holy Father appointed Bishop François Eid, OMM, Bishop emeritus of Le Caire for Maronites, Egypt, as Apostolic Visitor for the Maronite faithful in Bulgaria, Greece and Romania. Until now he has been Procurator of the Maronite Patriarch to the Holy See (13 Apr.).

Bishop Eid, 71, was born in Mtolleh, Egypt. He was ordained a priest on 28 August 1971. He was ordained a bishop on 11 February 2006, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Le Caire, Egypt.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Yasser Rasmi Hanna Al-Ayyash of the Archeparchy of Petra and Filadelfia for Greek-Melkites, Jordan. It was presented in accord with can. 210 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (14 Apr.).

## ROMAN CURIA

On 13 April, the Holy Father appointed the following Cardinals, created and made public at the Consistory of 14 February 2015, as members of the Dicastries of the Roman Curia:

1) the *Council of Cardinals and Bishops of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State*: Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura;

2) the *Congregation for the Doctrine*: Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, Archbishop of Valladolid, Spain;

3) the *Congregation for the Eastern Churches*: Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM, Archbishop of Addis Ababa Ethiopia; Cardinal Edoardo Menichelli, Archbishop of Ancona-Osimo, Italy;

4) the *Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*: Cardinal Dominique Mam-

berti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura;

5) the *Congregation for the Causes of Saints*: Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura;

6) the *Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*: Cardinal John Atcherley Dew, Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand; Cardinal Pierre Nguyễn Văn Nhơn, Archbishop of Hanoi, Vietnam; Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok, Thailand; Cardinal Arlindo Gomes Furtado, Bishop of Santiago de Cabo Verde, Cape Verde; Cardinal Soane Patita Paini Mafi, Bishop of Tonga, Tonga;

7) the *Congregation for the Clergy*: Cardinal Manuel José Macário do Nascimento Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon, Portugal; Cardinal Alberto Suárez Inda, Archbishop of Morelia, Mexico;

8) the *Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*: Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, SDB, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar; Cardinal Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet, SDB, Archbishop of Montevideo, Uruguay;

9) the *Congregation for Catholic Education*: Cardinal José Luis Lacunza Maestrojuán, OAR, Bishop of David, Panama;

10) the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*: Cardinal John Atcherley Dew, Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand;

11) the *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*: Cardinal Pierre Nguyễn Văn Nhơn, Archbishop of Hanoi, Vietnam; Cardinal Alberto Suárez Inda, Archbishop of Morelia, Mexico;

12) the *Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"*: Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento, Italy; Cardinal Arlindo Gomes Furtado, Bishop of Santiago de Cabo Verde, Cape Verde; Cardinal Soane Patita Paini Mafi, Bishop of Tonga, Tonga;

13) the *Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People*: Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, CM, Archbishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Cardinal Francesco Montenegro, Archbishop of Agrigento, Italy;

14) the *Pontifical Council for Healthcare Workers*: Cardinal Edoardo Menichelli, Archbishop of Ancona-Osimo, Italy;

15) the *Pontifical Council for Culture*: Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, SDB, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar; Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, Archbishop of Valladolid, Spain; Cardinal José Luis Lacunza Maestrojuán, OAR, Bishop of David, Panama;

16) the *Pontifical Council for Social Communications*: Cardinal Manuel José Macário do Nascimento Clemente, Patriarch of Lisbon, Portugal; Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok, Thailand;

17) the *Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization*: Cardinal Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet, SDB, Archbishop of Montevideo, Uruguay.

## VATICAN CITY

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Luigi Mistò as Secretary of the Administration of the Secretariat for the Economy. Until now he has been Secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA) (14 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Mauro Rivella as Secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (14 Apr.).

## RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Fr Paolo Rocco Gualtieri as Apostolic Nuncio in Madagascar, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Sagona. Until now he has been a Counsellor to the said Nunciature (13 Apr.).

## NECROLOGY

Bishop João Alves dos Santos, OFM Cap., of Paranaguá, Brazil, at age 58 (9 Apr.).

Cardinal Roberto Tucci, SJ, at age 93 (14 Apr.). \*See next week's edition for the biography and the Pope's telegram.

## Audience with the President of the Slovak Republic



On Thursday, 9 April, Pope Francis received the President of the Slovak Republic, H.E. Mr Andrej Kiska, who subsequently met with Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States.

The meeting was held shortly before the 25th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the then Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, which took place on 19 April 1990 following John Paul II's visit to the country. During their cordial discussions, satisfaction was expressed for the good bilateral relations sealed by the Agreements in force, and by the fruitful dialogue between the Church and the civil authorities.

The conversation then turned to the current international context, with particular attention to the challenges affecting certain areas of the world, especially the Middle East, and the importance of the protection of the dignity of the human person.

## Audience with the President of the Republic of Georgia



On Friday morning, 10 April, Pope Francis received the President of Georgia, H.E. Mr Giorgi Margvelashvili, who subsequently met with Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussion they expressed appreciation of the development of bilateral relations, and spoke about various themes of mutual interest, with particular reference to the positive contribution of the local Catholic community in the fields of charitable activity and education.

As the conversation continued, they touched on the concern regarding the tensions that affect the region and, with emphasis on the importance of full respect for international law, the hope was expressed that every solution may be sought through peaceful negotiation between the interested Parties. Finally, mention was made of Georgia's recent achievements regarding its role in Europe.

# Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Monday, 13 April

The courage to be bold

The Holy Spirit alone gives us the “strength to proclaim Jesus Christ up to the final testimony”. And the Spirit “comes from whatever place, like the wind”. In his homily during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, Pope Francis addressed the theme of “Christian courage” which is a “grace given by the Holy Spirit”.

His reflection began from a passage taken from the Acts of the Apostles (4:23-31), which comes after a long narrative “that begins with a miracle that Peter and John perform: the healing of the lame man who lay at the gate of the temple, seeking alms”. The Pope recalled the entire episode and pointed out that Peter looked at the lame man “and said: I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have: arise and walk”. The man was healed; the people were amazed “and praised God”. Thus “Peter seized the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ: to proclaim Jesus Christ”.

At that point, Francis explained, the priests found themselves in difficulty: they sent several men to arrest Peter and John, who were perceived as “uneducated, common men”. The two apostles “were in prison that evening”. The following day the priests decided to “forbid speaking in Jesus’ name, preaching this doctrine”. But they continued. Moreover, Peter, “who spoke for both of them”, stated: “Even were it is right to obey you rather than God: we shall obey God!”. And he added those words “that we have heard so many times: ‘we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard’”.

Thereafter the Pontiff returned to the passage offered in the day’s Liturgy, which tells that when the two were released, they went to report to the community “what the chief priests and the elders had said to them”, and when the people heard this, they all “lifted their voices together to God” and began to pray, retracing the stages of salvation history up to Jesus. And “when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness”.

The Pontiff focused on this last word, “boldness”, indicating that we read in that common prayer: “And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants” not to escape but “to speak thy word with all boldness”. These are instructions for every Christian: “We could say”, Francis underscored, that “today too, the message of the Church is the message of the path of boldness, the path of Christian courage”. In fact, he explained, that word “could be translated as ‘courage’, ‘boldness’, ‘freedom of speech’, ‘not being afraid to say things’”. It is “parrhesia”. The two Apostles “have passed from fear to boldness, speaking freely”.

The Pope’s reflection came full circle with the re-reading of the passage from the Gospel according to John (3:1-8), regarding the “somewhat mysterious dialogue between



Henry Ossawa Tanner, “Study for Nicodemus Visiting Jesus” (1899)

Jesus and Nicodemus about the “second birth”. At this point the Pontiff asked: “In this whole story, who is the real protagonist? In this itinerary of boldness, who is the real protagonist? Peter, John, the lame man who was healed, the people who heard, the priests, soldiers? Nicodemus, Jesus?”. And the answer was: “The real protagonist is actually the Holy Spirit. Because he is the only one capable of giving us this grace of courage to proclaim Jesus Christ”.

It is the “courage to proclaim” that “distinguishes us from simple proselytism”. The Pope explained: “We did not advertise” to have “more ‘associates’ in our ‘spiritual company’”. This “is not needed, it is not Christian”. Instead, “what Christians do is to proclaim with courage; and proclaiming Jesus Christ fosters, through the Holy Spirit, that astonishment that makes us go forth”. Therefore, “the real protagonist in all of this is the Holy Spirit”, to the point that – as the Acts of the Apostles read – when the disciples ended their prayer, the place where they were gathered was shaken and they were all filled with the Spirit. It was, Francis stated, “like a new Pentecost”.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the protagonist, such that Jesus says to Nicodemus that he can be reborn but that “the wind blows where it wants and you hear its voice, but you do not know where it comes from nor where it goes. Whoever is born by the Holy Spirit is like this”. Hence, the Pontiff explained, “it is precisely the Holy Spirit that changes us, that comes from whatever place, like the wind”. Moreover, “the Holy Spirit alone gives us the strength to change our attitude, to change the history of our life, to change our belonging”. It is the Holy Spirit himself who gave strength to the two Apostles, two “uneducated, common men”, to “proclaim Jesus Christ up to the final testimony: martyrdom”.

Here, then, is the lesson for every believer: “the path of Christian courage is a grace given by the Holy Spirit”. There are indeed “so many paths we could take, which even give us a certain courage”, for which one could say: “Look what a brave decision they made!”. All of this, however, “is an instrument of something greater: the Spirit”. And “if the Spirit isn’t there, we can do many things, a great deal of work, but it is pointless.

For this reason, the Pope concluded, the Church “prepares us to receive the Holy Spirit”. Now, “in the celebration of the mystery of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, we can remember all of salvation history”, which is also “our own salvation history”, and we can “ask for the grace to receive the Spirit, that he give us true courage to proclaim Jesus Christ”.

Tuesday, 14 April

Harmony, poverty and patience

There are three types of grace to ask for Christian communities: harmony, poverty and grace. During Tuesday’s Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis continued his reflection on the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus – at the heart of the Liturgy of the Word – and dedicated his homily to the theme of “rebirth”, which for the Church signifies “being reborn in the Spirit”.

The Bishop of Rome reconnected to the Readings of the day before, recalling that they invited us to reflect “on one of the many transformations” that the Spirit performs: that of giving courage, transforming man “from cowardly and fearful” to “brave, with a strength of courage to proclaim Jesus, without fear”. From the individual, the Pope went on to consider “what the Spirit does in a community”.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles (4:32-37) describes the first Christian communities. It almost seems to describe an ideal world: “all were friends, everyone put everything together, no one argued”. The narrative, Francis explained, is “like a review, as if life stopped for a bit and the Spirit of God allowed us to see what he could do in a community, how a community could be transformed: a diocesan community, a parish or religious community, a family community”.

In this description the Pope highlighted two characteristic signs of “rebirth in a community”. The first is harmony: “the community of believers was of one heart and soul”. In other words, those reborn by the Spirit have “the grace of unity, of harmony”. The Holy Spirit is “the only One who can give us harmony” for “he too is the harmony between the Father and Son”. The second element is that of the “common good”. Scripture reads: “there was

not a needy person among them, no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common”.

Here the Pope underscored that these two aspects were simply “one step” along the path of the reborn community which, in fact, also begins to experience “problems”. There is, for example, the case of the “marriage of Ananias and Sapphira”, who “tried to cheat the community” after entering it. This kind of negative experience can also happen in our day: it is similar, Francis explained, to the “benefactors who approach the Church, enter to help her and use the Church for their business”. Then there is the “persecution”, which Jesus speaks about, and in which regard the Pontiff recalled “the last of the Beatitudes in Matthew: ‘Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you on my account... Rejoice’. Francis also recalled that Jesus “promises so many beautiful things, peace, abundance: ‘You will receive a hundredfold by cause of persecution’”.

All of this returns “in the first community reborn by the Holy Spirit”, to whom Peter explains: “Brethren do not be surprised about this persecution, this fire which breaks out among you”. In the “image of fire”, the Pontiff remarked, we again find that of the “fire that purifies gold”. In other words, the “gold of a community reborn by the Holy Spirit is purified of difficulties, of persecution”.

Here the Pope introduced the third important element, recalling “Jesus’ advice”, given to those who find themselves “in the midst of difficulties, of persecution: ‘Have patience, for with patience you will save your lives, your souls’”. Thus, it is important to have “patience to withstand: withstand problems, withstand difficulties, withstand malicious gossip, slander, withstand illness, withstand the pain of losing a child, a wife, a husband, a mother, a father, ... patience”.

Thus, these are the three elements shown by a Christian community “reborn in the Holy Spirit, when it is a community that seeks harmony” and not internal strife, “when it seeks poverty”, and “not the accumulation of riches” – riches should in fact be put to service – and when it has patience, that is, when “it does not immediately become angry and feel offended in facing difficulties”, because “the servant of Yaweh, Jesus, is patient”.

The Pope concluded his reflection by exhorting everyone “in this second week of Easter” during which the paschal mysteries are celebrated, to “think of our communities”, be they diocesan, parish, family, or other types, to ask three kinds of grace: that “of harmony, which is more than unity”, that “of poverty” – which does not mean “misery”: indeed, Francis specified, those who have property “must manage it well for the common good and with generosity” – and lastly, that “of patience”. Thus, we need to understand that the grace to “be reborn in the Spirit” is not only a grace for “each one of us” but also for “our communities”.

The Pope's message for the seventh Summit of the Americas

# A new order of peace and justice

Pope Francis sent a message to the President of Panama on the occasion of the seventh Summit of the Americas. The message was read aloud by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, at the opening session on Friday, 10 April. The following is a translation of the Pope's message, which was written in Spanish.



To H.E. Mr Juan Carlos Varela  
Rodríguez,  
President of Panama

As you host the seventh Summit of the Americas, I wish to extend my cordial greeting to you and, through you, to all the Heads of State and of Government, as well as to all the Delegations attending. At the same time, I would like to express my closeness and my encouragement that through sincere dialogue, mutual collaboration, which unites efforts and overcomes differences, may be achieved on the journey toward the common good. I ask God that, by sharing common values in national or regional spheres, commitments of cooperation may be reached that realistically address problems and transmit hope.

I support the theme chosen for this Summit: "Prosperity with Equity: the Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas".

I am certain – as I expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* – that inequity, the unjust distribution of wealth and resources,



is a source of conflict and violence among peoples, for it presumes that the advancement of the few is built on the necessary sacrifice of others and that, in order to live with dignity, one must struggle against others (cf. nn. 52, 54). Well-being achieved in this way is unjust at its very root and attacks the dignity of the people. There are "basic necessities", such as land, employment and a home, and "public services", such as health, education, security, environment, from which no human being should be excluded.

This desire – which we all share – unfortunately is still far from being realized. Even now there continues to be unjust inequity, which offends people's dignity. The great challenge of our world is the globalization of solidarity and fraternity in place of the globalization of discrimination and indifference and, until an equitable distribution of wealth can be achieved, no solution will be found for the ills of our society (cf. *ibid.*, n. 202).

We cannot deny that many countries have experienced strong economic development in recent years,

however it is likewise true that others remain prostrate in poverty. Moreover, in emerging economies, much of the population has not benefited from the general economic advancement, frequently to the point that there is a greater gap between the rich and the poor. The "trickle-down" theory (cf. *ibid.*, n. 54) has proven to be wrong: it is not enough for the poor to gather the crumbs

*"The unjust distribution of wealth and resources, is a source of conflict and violence among peoples, for it presumes that the advancement of the few is built on the necessary sacrifice of others"*

that fall from the table of the rich. The need for direct action in favour of the most disadvantaged, attention to those such as the youngest members of a family, must be a priority for those who govern. The Church has always defended the advancement of individuals (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, n. 46), taking care of their needs and offering them the opportunity to develop.

I would also like to call attention to the problem of immigration. The immense disparity of opportunities

among some countries and others means that many people are obliged to leave their land, their family, becoming easy prey to human trafficking and slave labour, with neither rights nor access to justice.... In some cases, the lack of cooperation between States means many people are left outside the law and without the chance to assert their rights, forcing them into a position between being taken advantage of by others or resignation to becoming victims of abuse. They are situations in which, in order to protect fundamental rights, it is not enough to apply the law, whereby rules without compassion and mercy do not correspond to justice.

At times even within each country, scandalous and offensive differences are created, especially as regards the indigenous populations, in rural areas or on the outskirts of large cities. Without providing these people with an authentic defence against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, a constitutional State would lose its legitimacy.

Mr President, the efforts to build bridges, communication channels, relationships, to seek understanding, are never in vain. Panama's geographic position in the centre of the American continent making it the meeting point between north and south, between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, is surely a call, *pro mundi beneficio*, to generate a new order of peace and justice and to promote solidarity and cooperation while respecting the just autonomy of each nation.

With the hope that the Church may also be an instrument of peace and reconciliation among peoples, please accept my most cordial and heartfelt greeting.

From the Vatican, 10 April 2015.

Franciscus

Audience with heads of international organizations

## Stop violence against women and children



On Friday morning, 10 April, Pope Francis met with Maria Cristina Perceval, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations, as well as Leila Zerrougui of Algeria, Zainab Bangura of Sierra Leone and Julienne Lusenge of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ms Perceval told our newspaper that Pope Francis fully supports their commitment to respecting the human rights which are being violated around the world and joins those who work to stop violence against women and children amidst conflict.

Together these women spoke to the Pope about the culture of respect, reconciliation, tolerance and peace but also about prevention, protection and the need for punishment of those who are responsible for these crimes. Ms Perceval also underlined how during wars too often victims of violence are the weakest: children, women, the poor and ethnic and religious minorities. The Pontiff agreed that these victims must not be blamed or discriminated against, but rather reintegrated into families and into society.

## Twitter account surpasses 20 million followers

The Pope's Twitter handle, @Pontifex, has surpassed 20 million followers. This significant milestone was reached on Sunday, 12 April at 5:30 pm. People around the world follow the Pope's tweets in nine different languages: more than 8.5 million in Spanish, nearly 6 million in English, more than 2.5 million in Italian, more than 1.5 million in Portuguese, approximately 400,000 in Polish, 364,000 in French, 340,000 in Latin, 257,000 in German, and 196,000 in Arabic. His account was launched in December 2012, and in October 2013 he arrived at the 10 million mark in terms of followers.