

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Friday, 22 May 2015

At the General Audience Francis asks fathers and mothers to take back their full role as educators

Return from exile

A new appeal on behalf of persecuted Christians and an invitation to pray for the Church in China

"It is time for fathers and mothers to return from their exile — for they have exited themselves from their children's upbringing — and to fully resume their educational role". This was the Pope's declaration at the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 20 May. Continuing his series of catecheses on the family, he spoke to the crowds — many of them families — about the importance of parents as educators. The following is an English translation of the Pope's catechesis, which was delivered in Italian.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, I would like to welcome you because I saw among you many families, Good morning to all the families! Let us continue to reflect on the family. Today we will pause to reflect on an essential characteristic of the family, the natural vocation to educate children so they may grow up to be responsible for themselves and for others. What we heard from the Apostle Paul, at the start, is very beautiful: "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col 3:20-21). This is a wise rule: children should be raised to listen to their parents and obey their parents, who, in turn, should not order them around in a negative way, so as not to discourage the children. Children, indeed, must grow without becoming discouraged, step

by step. If you parents say to your children: "Let's climb this ladder" and you take them by the hand and, step by step, help them climb, things will go well. But if you say: "Go up!" — "But I can't" — "Go!" — this is called provoking your children, asking them to do things they don't have the ability to do. That is why the relationship between parents and children must be one of wisdom, of a great balance. Children, obey your parents, this pleases God. And you parents, don't provoke your children by asking of them things they can't do. And this needs to be done so that children can grow up to be responsible for themselves and for others.

It would seem like an obvious statement, there are difficulties still in our times. It is hard to educate when parents only see their children in the evening, when they come home tired from work. Well, those who are fortunate enough to work! It is even more difficult for parents who are separated, who are weighed down by their condition: the poor dears, they have had real hardships, they have separated and frequently the child is taken hostage and the

Keith Haring, *Untitled (United family)*, 1989

er speak well of their father, even though they are not together, and the father speak well of their mother. For separated parents this is very important and very difficult, but they can do it.

Above all, the question is: how should we educate? What tradition do we have today to pass on to our children?

Intellectual "critics" of every kind have silenced parents in countless ways, in order to protect the younger generations from the damage — real or presumed — of family education. The family stands accused, among other things, of being authoritarian, of favoritism, of conformism, of the emotional repression that generates conflict.

In fact, a rift has opened up between the family and society, between the family and school, the educational pact today has been broken; and thus, the educational alliance between society and the family is in crisis because mutual trust has been undermined. There are many symptoms. For example, at school relationships between parents and teachers have been compromised. At times there is tension and mutual distrust; and naturally, the consequences fall on the children. On the other hand, the number of

father speaks ill of the mother, and the mother speaks ill of the father, and so much harm is done. But I say to separated parents: never, never, never take your child hostage! You separated because of many difficulties and reasons, life has given you this trial, but the children should not be the ones to carry the weight of this separation, they should not be used as hostages against the other spouse, they should grow up hearing their moth-

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Clouds, walls and the world



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Canonization of four women religious

The secret of saints

On Sunday Pope Francis canonized four women, all 19th century nuns who worked in education: St Marie Alphonsine and St Mary of Jesus Crucified both from Palestine; St Jeanne Émilie de Villeneuve from France; and St Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception from Italy.

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Fifty years after *Nostra Aetate*

A dream becomes reality

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People before all else

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Friday, 15 May

Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Members of the Episcopal Conference of the Central African Republic, on a visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*:

– Archbishop Dieudonné Nzabalanga, CSSp, of Bangui

– Bishop Cyr-Nestor Yapaupa of Alindao with Bishop emeritus Peter Marzinkowski, CSSP

– Bishop Edouard Mathos of Bambari

– Bishop Dennis Kofi Agbenyadzi, SMA, of Berberati

– Bishop Nestor-Désiré Nongo-Aziagbia, SMA, of Bossangoa

– Bishop Armando Umberto Gianni, OFM Cap., of Bouar

– Bishop Albert Vanbuel, SDB, of Kaga-Bandoro with Coadjutor Bishop Tadeusz Kusy, OFM

– Bishop Guerrino Perin, MCCJ, of Mbaiki

H.E. Mr Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, with his entourage

H.E. Mr Daniel Ramada Piendibene, Ambassador of Uruguay, on a farewell visit

Saturday, 16 May

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, Archbishop of Genoa, Italy, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Major Penitentiary of the Apostolic Penitentiary, with Bishop Krzysztof Józef Nykiel, Regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary

Archbishop Alberto Bottari de Castellino, titular Archbishop of Oderzo, Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary

With the President of Ecuador



On Tuesday morning, 28 April, Pope Francis received in audience in the study of the Paul VI Hall, the President of the Republic of Ecuador, H.E. Mr Rafael Correa Delgado, and his entourage

Archbishop Nicola Girasoli, titular Archbishop of Egnazia Appula, Apostolic Nuncio in Trinidad and Tobago, in Antigua and Barbuda, in The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, Grenada, in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, in Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname; Apostolic Delegate in the Antilles

H.E. Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, with his entourage

Mr Jean-Baptiste de Franssu, President of the Superintendence Council of the Institute for the Works of Religion (IOR)

CHANGES IN THE EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Edwin Coloço of Aurangabad, India. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (13 May).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ambrose Rebello as Bishop of Aurangabad, India. Until now he has been chancellor and vicar general of the said Diocese (13 May).

Bishop-elect Rebello, 66, was born in Nirmal, India. He studied philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest on 22 April 1979. He has served in parish ministry and as: director of the Diocesan Pastoral Centre; chancellor and vice-director of the Education Society of the Diocese of Aurangabad.

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Patrick McKinney, from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, as Bishop of Nottingham, England. Until now he has been parish priest of Our Lady and All Saints Parish in Stourbridge (14 May).

Bishop-elect McKinney, 61, was born in Birmingham, England. He holds a licence in Sacred Theology. He was ordained a priest on 29 July 1978. He has served in parish ministry and as: teacher of fundamental theology and rector of St Mary's Seminary, Oscott; episcopal vicar for the northern area of the Archdiocese of Birmingham; vicar forane of the Dudley Deanery.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Salvatore Nunnari of Cosenza-Bisignano, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (15 May).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Francescantonio Nolè, OFM Conv., as Bishop of Cosenza-Bisignano, Italy. Until now he has been Bishop of Tursi-Lagonegro (15 May).

Bishop Nolè, 66, was born in Potenza, Italy. He made his solemn profession for the Order of Friars Minor Conventual on 1 November 1971 and was ordained a priest on 2

September 1973. He was ordained a bishop on 10 December 2000, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Tursi-Lagonegro.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Delio Lucarelli of Rieti, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (15 May).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Domenico Pompili as Bishop of Rieti, Italy. Until now he has been undersecretary of the Italian Episcopal Conference and head of the National Office for Social Communications (15 May).

Bishop-elect Pompili, 51, was born in Rome, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 6 August 1988. He holds a doctorate in moral theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: private secretary to the Bishop of Anagni-Alatri; director of the diocesan office for social communications; episcopal vicar for pastoral ministry; assistant for the coordination of the diocese's Catholic Action; secretary of the communication and culture foundation; member of the administrative council of *Avvenire*; professor of moral theology at the Istituto Teologico Leoniano.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Dariusz Buras, from the clergy of Tarnów, Poland, as Apostolic Administrator of the Apostolic Administration of Atyrau, Kazakhstan. Until now he has been parochial vicar of Oslo Cathedral, Norway (16 May).

Bishop-elect Buras, 43, was born in Skrzyszów, Poland. He holds a licence in spiritual theology. He was ordained a priest on 30 May 1998 and served in parish ministry. He worked as a *Fidei donum* priest in Ternopil, Ukraine, and in Atyrau, Kazakhstan, then as spiritual director of the Interdiocesan Major Seminary of Karaganda. On his return to Poland he was appointed spiritual director of the centre for missionary formation in Warsaw; head of continuing formation for the priests from Tarnów in Norway.

The Holy Father appointed Fr James Massa, from the clergy of Brooklyn, USA, as Auxiliary Bishop of said Diocese, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Bardstown, USA. Until now he has been moderator of the Diocesan Curia and administrator of Holy Name Parish, Brooklyn, USA (20 May).

Bishop-elect Massa, 54, was born in Jersey City, USA. He holds a doctorate in systematic theology. He was ordained a priest on 25 October 1986. He has served in parish ministry and as: chaplain and professor at the Kansas Newman College; professor at the national seminary and at the seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington; executive director of the ecumenical and inter-

religious committee of the US Episcopal Conference; consultant of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, professor at the St Joseph Seminary, New York.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Witold Mroziowski, from the clergy of Brooklyn, USA, as Auxiliary Bishop of said Diocese, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Walla Walla, USA. Until now he has been parish priest of the Holy Cross Parish in Maspeth, USA.

Bishop-elect Mroziowski, 49, was born in Augustow, Poland. He holds a doctorate in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 29 June 1991. He has served in parish ministry and in 1992 he was posted to America where he served the Polish Community. Incardinated in Brooklyn Diocese he worked as: administrator; judge at the diocesan tribunal; co-ordinator of the Polish apostolate; adjunct promoter of justice for criminal cases; member of the presbyteral council and defender of the bond.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

The Holy Father appointed Fr Timothy Radcliffe, OP, as Consultant of the said Council. Until now he has been a Head of the Las Casas Institute of Blackfriars for study on social justice and human rights, Oxford (16 May).

START OF MISSION

Msgr Fernando Chica Arellano began his mission as Permanent Observer to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to the Director of the FAO on 10 March, to the Executive Director of the WFP on 18 March, and the President of the IFAD on 5 May.

CARDINAL TAKES POSSESSION

On 17 May, Cardinal Daniel Fernando Sturla Berhouet, SDB, Archbishop of Montevideo, Italy, took possession of the Title of Santa Galla, Circonvallazione Ostiense.


NECROLOGY

Archbishop Geraldo Majela de Castro, O. Praem, Archbishop emeritus of Montes Claros, Brazil, at age 84 (14 May).

Archbishop André Lacrampe, Inst. del Prado, Archbishop emeritus of Besançon, France, at age 73 (15 May).

Bishop Dominik Tóth, titular Bishop of Ubaba, Auxiliary emeritus of Bratislava-Trnava, Slovakia, at age 89 (16 May).

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Vatican City
cd.english@ossrom.va
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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 +390669898675

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@dirizionesystem@ilsole24ore.com

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Andrea Mantegna, "Trigram of Christ between
Sts Anthony of Padua and Bernardino" (1452)

Return from exile

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

so-called "experts" has multiplied, and they have assumed the role of parents in even the most intimate aspects of education. With regard to emotional life, personality and development, rights and duties, these "experts" know everything: objectives, motivations, techniques. And parents must simply listen, learn and adapt. Deprived of their role, they often become overly apprehensive and possessive of their children, to the point of never correcting them: "You cannot correct the child". They tend to entrust them more and more to the "experts", even in the most delicate and personal aspects of their lives, putting themselves alone in a corner; and thus parents today run the risk of excluding themselves from the lives of their children. And this is very grave! Today there are cases like this. I am not saying that it always happens, but there are cases. The teacher will admonish the child at school and send a note to the parents. I remember a personal anecdote. Once, when I was in the fourth grade, I said a bad word to the teacher and the teacher, being a good woman, called my mom. She came the next day, they spoke together, and then I was called. And my mother explained to me in front of the teacher that what I had done was bad, that I shouldn't have done it; but my mother did it with such sweetness and she asked me to apo-

logize to the teacher in front of her. I did it and then I was glad that I did: the story had a happy ending. But that was only the first chapter! When I got home, the second chapter began... Imagine today if a teacher were to do something of the kind, the next day the parents, or one of the two, would seek to admonish her, because the "experts" say that children should not be reproached like this. Things have changed! That is why parents should not exclude themselves from their children's education.

It is clear that this approach is not good: it is not harmony, it is not dialogue, and rather than fostering cooperation between the family and other educational agencies, schools, gymnasiums... it counteracts it.

How did we get to this point? There is no doubt that parents or, better yet, certain past educational models had their limitations, there is no doubt. But it is also true that there are mistakes that only parents are allowed to make, because they can compensate for them in a way that is impossible for anyone else. On the other hand, as we well know, life has become stingy with the time for talking, reflecting and facing oneself. Many parents are "sequestered" by work – mom and dad



have to work – and by worries, uncomfortable with the new needs of their children and with the complexity of modern life – which is the way it is and we must accept it as it is – and they find themselves as if paralyzed by the fear of making a mistake. The problem, however, is not just talking. Superficial "dialogue" does not lead to a true meeting of mind and heart. Let us ask instead: do we seek to understand "where" our children really are in their journey? Where is their soul, do we really know? And above all: do we want to know? Are we convinced that they, in reality, aren't waiting for something else?

Christian communities are called to offer support to the educational mission of families, and they do this first of all with the light of the Word of God. The Apostle Paul recalls the reciprocity of duties between parents and children: "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" (Col 3:20-21). At the foundation of everything is love, that which God gives us, which "is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Cor 13:5-7). Even the best families need support, and it takes a lot of patience to support one another! But such is life. Life is not lived in a laboratory, but in reality. Jesus himself experienced a family upbringing.

Also in this case, the grace of the love of Christ leads to the fulfillment of what is inscribed in human nature. How many astounding examples we have of Christian parents filled with human wisdom! They show that a good family upbringing is the backbone of humanity. Its radiance in society is the source that allows us to fill in the gaps, wounds and voids in parenthood that affect less fortunate children. This radiance can work real miracles. And in the Church these miracles happen every day!

I hope that the Lord bestows on Christian families the faith, freedom and courage necessary for their mission. If family education rediscovers the pride of its leadership, many things will change for the better, for uncertain parents and for disappointed children. It is time for fathers and mothers to return from their exile – for they have exiled themselves from their children's upbringing – and to fully resume their educational

role.

We hope that the Lord gives this grace to parents: to not exile themselves from the education of their children. And this can only be done with love, tenderness and patience.

SPECIAL GROUPS

Brothers and sisters, this coming Sunday we will celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost. Let us pray to God that he send the gifts of his Spirit so that we may become courageous witnesses of Christ and of his Gospel. From my heart I bless you all.

On 24 May, Catholics in China will implore with devotion Our Lady, Help of Christians, venerated in the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai. In the statue which towers above the Shrine, we see Mary who holds her Son high, presenting Him to the world with arms opened wide in a gesture of love and mercy. We too will ask Mary to help Catholics in China to always be credible witnesses of this merciful love among their fellow citizens and to live spiritually united to the rock of Peter upon whom the Church is built.

The Italian Bishop's Conference has proposed throughout the dioceses, on the occasion of the eve of Pentecost, remembrance of our many brothers and sisters who have been exiled or killed for the sole fact that they are Christian. They are martyrs. I hope that this moment of prayer increases awareness that religious freedom is an inalienable human right, and increases sensitivity for the drama of persecuted Christians in our time and that there will be an end to this unacceptable crime.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including those from Great Britain, Finland, Norway, South Africa, China, India, Korea, Canada and the United States of America. In a special way, I greet these young musicians, you played well! Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke an abundance of joy and peace in the Lord Jesus. God bless you all!

I address a special thought to *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. Today we celebrate the liturgical memory of St Bernardino of Siena. May his love for the Eucharist point you, dear *young people*, to the centrality of God in your life; may it encourage you, *sick people*, to face moments of suffering with serenity; and stimulate you, dear *newlyweds*, to found your family on the love of God.



Fifty years after *Nostra Aetate*

A dream becomes reality

TIMOTHY MICHAEL DOLAN

Our gathering is particularly providential as we celebrate the golden jubilee of the inspired document of the Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, a teaching that dramatically transformed Jewish-Catholic relations. We Catholics sometimes quip that our Jewish neighbors pay more attention to Vatican statements than we do! Both of us have paid attention to *Nostra Aetate*, thank God, and friendship between us has never been stronger. The Pontiff for over 50% of the half-century since that inspired document was Pope – now Saint – John Paul II, for whom the worldwide Jewish community has a deep reverence. Four months after his death in 2005, I travelled with four other bishops and about a half-dozen rabbis on a very moving trip to Poland and Rome. In the Eternal City, we were running late, and our guide announced that, because we were going to be tardy for our appointment at the Synagogue in Rome, we would have to skip our prayer at the tomb of John Paul II. “The hell we are” – and I quote – protested the six rabbis. To stand before his tomb in St Peter’s Basilica, bishops and rabbis hands joined, was a pinnacle of our journey.

Now, I admit that what immediately comes to mind would be two things: one, the theological advances in Jewish-Catholic understanding under John Paul II, and, two, the candid dialogue over the neuralgic issues that arose during his 26-year pontificate. This prestigious center of Jewish theology would be well aware of John Paul’s proposition that we Jews and Christians now return to the conversation rudely interrupted in 70 A.D., when Roman soldiers leveled Jerusalem, scattering both Jews and Christians in a diaspora still with us, and take up again such profound questions as covenant, election, Israel’s special and unique place in God’s revelation, the Law, and how the two of us are to relate as children of Abraham and people of the Book. The

A knight and rabbi

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York conferred the title of Knight of St Sylvester on Rabbi Arthur Schneier on Monday, 27 April. The ceremony took place in the residence of the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Bernardito Auza. Schneier, 85, is the founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation and a Holocaust survivor. Last year he met Pope Francis during the papal visit to the Holy Land. He had previously met Paul VI and John Paul II. Cardinal Dolan underlined that this honour is a sign of Pope Francis’ appreciation for Schneier’s work in favour of religious freedom and international justice.



acceptance of that invitation from John Paul has resulted in a promising flourishing of Jewish-Catholic scholarship.

Likewise are we all cognizant of the radioactive issues the Polish Pope never dodged, tender topics such as the Good Friday Prayers, the somber and tragic legacy of Christian anti-semitism, the role of the Holy See during the Shoah, Vatican diplomatic recognition of the State of Israel, or even flashy episodes like the proposed cross and convent at Auschwitz, the movie “The Passion of the Christ,” and the visit of Kurt Waldheim to Rome.

Instead of elaborating on those two admittedly worthwhile areas, I would dare suggest that Pope John Paul II realized the dream of *Nostra Aetate* in a much more substantive and innovative way: by trusting the Jewish community enough to invite them into what was indeed the number one priority of his pontificate: to recover the primacy of the spiritual. Simply put, John Paul II believed that the most mortal toxin infecting the human project was the denial of God’s sovereignty, even existence, and that the Church’s most natural allies in facing this challenge were the Jews. Humanity’s preference of late, to “get along just fine without God”, – to use Rabbi Jonathan Sax’s definition of secularism – was deadly, and must be reversed. The Pope believed that the Jewish community would share his sense of urgency.

Let me try to explain... John Paul II took literally the dictum of the psalmist that “only in God is my soul at rest,” and that, as our scriptures reveal unremittingly, any attempt to seek absolute peace, meaning, and purpose in anyone or anything else besides God was a recipe for chaos and frustration.

It was Billy Graham who would observe that the revival of humanity’s empty and exhausted soul became John Paul’s mission, and this Pontiff was convinced our “elder brothers and sisters,” as he called you, were our most valued partners in this endeavor. He came upon this drive to recover the primacy of the spiritual in the human enterprise very naturally. The high-octane Catholicism of his beloved Poland saw God’s design and presence everywhere. Poland’s own tragic history taught Karol Wojtyła that faith alone would never fail. His Poland had literally been erased from maps in the late 19th century, and, while

its status may have been restored after World War I, it was left in the dirt. So young Karol Wojtyła turned to your psalms: “Whoever trusts in God is like Mt Zion, unshakeable, it stands forever.” He himself lost everything – his mother, his sister, his brother – a physician who succumbed to an epidemic while treating others – and his father, by the time he was in his early twenties. With the rest of Poland he cried as he watched the Luftwaffe swarm over his country on September 1, 1939, and lived in daily danger for six bleak years, watching Jewish friends and his own classmates in the secret seminary in Krakow disappear nightly. Early one morning, coming home from work in the chemical factory, he was hit by a truckload of Nazi soldiers and left for dead on the side of the road.

Things did not get better, as Poland lost the war twice, when the jackboots of Hitler’s thugs were replaced by those of Stalin’s, as the climate of enforced, oppressive “living without God” continued to smother Poland.

Is it any wonder that his first words on the balcony of St Peter’s Basilica were those repeated so often by the God of Israel, and by His Son, Jesus, “Be not afraid!”

John Paul II’s cause, then, was to rally Catholics, Christians, and Jews to shout “We want God!” For what had been squandered was a sense of awe at the very mystery of God, a mystery at the soul of Judaism and Christianity. Our visions have been blotted; skepticism and cynicism dominate our discourse; all is at the mercy of manipulation by our self-willfulness; and the pleasure principle has ended up robbing us of joy. Man had become a puzzle for technicians to solve, not a mystery for poets to love and embrace.

Nostra Aetate tells us that all peoples comprise a single community, and have a single origin ... one also is their final goal: God. His Providence, His goodness, His saving designs extend to all. For Jews and Christians, our belief in God has certain implications, which John Paul believed impel Jews and Christians to work together.

One would be our insistence on the dignity of the human person,

created, according to Genesis, in God’s own image and likeness, made, so says the psalmist, “little less than a god.” Two would be the sanctity of every human life, never a means to an end but an end in itself. Three would be an allegiance to God’s Law, truths, as John Paul commented at Sinai, “written on the human heart before engraved in stone,” not to be contradicted by self-will or popular demand.

Four would be solidarity, a sense that we’re all in this together, and that we’re much better off sticking together and looking out for each other than we are locked-up in our own comfort. Fifth would be a mutual world view. Jews and Catholics share the same glasses. Simply put, history is His-story! The history of salvation, in which Jews and Christians believe, is, in fact the history of the world. Both John Paul and

The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York

The Cardinal-Archbishop of New York held a conference dedicated to 50 years of *Nostra Aetate*, the Conciliar decree on dialogue with non-Christians. The meeting, which took place at the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue in the Jewish Theological Seminary was realized in collaboration with the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue of the University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome, and with the Russell Berrie Foundation. Published here are excerpts.

Rabbi Joshua Heschel would remind us that “coincidence” is the term that non-believers use instead of “providence!” And, like Heschel, evident in the title of his great book *John Paul II* was convinced that the human story is not so much the recounting of our search for God, but of God’s search for us.

So, Pope John Paul II could become a pilgrim, like Abraham, reminding the world of its real story, its genuine identity, as God’s creation, unfolding according to His plan.

This optic common to Jews and Christians makes us, as John Paul often commented, “a blessing to one another.” Together, we share our eye glasses with others, so all can see history to be “His”-story, that human dignity and life are enhanced, not shackled, when we proclaim, “We want God,” that each of us is called to renew the Exodus, allowing the Lord to free us from slavery and death to freedom and life, as we celebrate each spring at Passover and Easter.

It was Theodor Herzl a century ago who understood that anti-semitism is proof that something is seriously flawed in the culture of the West. George Weigel again: “When the fever chant of anti-semitism spikes upward, it is always the sign that the patient ... is in mortal danger ... in no small part because it has forgotten the biblical roots of the Western civilizational enterprise”.

To the Bishops of the Central African Republic the Pope points to the path of forgiveness and reconciliation

How to respond to hatred and violence

When hatred and violence are perpetrated "we are called to respond with forgiveness and love". Pope Francis wrote this in his address he consigned to the Bishops of the Central African Republic on Friday, 15 May. The Bishops were in Rome for their 'ad Limina Apostolorum' visit. The following is a translation of the text, which the Holy Father consigned to them in French.

Dear Brother Bishops,

It is a great joy for me to receive you on the occasion of your *ad limina* visit, my welcome is all the more fraternal and affectionate with the knowledge that your communities have been experiencing a difficult and painful situation for too many months. Our meeting is the occasion to strengthen even more the bonds of communion that exist between your local Churches and the Church of Rome. I want you to know how attentive I am to the events that you are experiencing, and how much my personal prayers and the prayer of the universal Church accompany you.

I sincerely thank Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, President of your Conference, for the words and testimony he addressed to me on your behalf. I hope that this pilgrimage to the sources of faith gives you comfort and encouragement to carry out your pastoral ministry. May the intercession of St Peter and St Paul obtain for you the necessary graces to gather and lead the flock that the Lord has entrusted to you.

I would like you to convey to all the people of the Central African Republic the assurance of my closeness. I know the sufferings they have lived through and are still experiencing, as well as the innumerable testimonies of faith and fidelity that Christians have rendered to the Risen Christ on many occasions. I am particularly sensitive to all that your communities have done in favour of people who are victims of violence and refugees.

Your task is difficult, but it touches the very mystery of Jesus Christ, dead and risen. It is when evil and death seem to triumph that the hope of a renewal founded on Christ emerges. It is when hatred and violence are unleashed, that we are called – and we find the strength through the power of the Cross and the grace of Baptism – to respond with forgiveness and love. Even if, unfortunately, it has not always been so in the recent events you have experienced, it is a sign that the Gospel has not yet penetrated all places and depths of the heart of the People of God to the point of changing reactions and behaviours. Your Churches are of recent evangelization, and your principal mission is to pursue the work just begun. Therefore, you must not feel discouraged in the storm you are passing through, but on the contrary, you must find the source of renewed enthusiasm and dynamism in faith and hope. Today this exhorta-

tion of the Apostle St Paul to Timothy is addressed to you: "As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5). Christian formation and a deepening of the faith at all levels are therefore priorities for you, so that the Gospel may effectively permeate the life of the baptized, for the good not only of the Christian communities, but of the whole society of the Central African Republic. Many are involved in this educational work, and I would like to pay tribute to the indispensable role assured by the catechists who generously offer their time and often their resources. The significant part of the mission assured by *fidei donum* priests also deserves to be underscored. May they be earnestly acknowledged for coming to share their ministry in such difficult conditions.

However, Brother Bishops, you play an irreplaceable role in the process of institutional transition underway, by recalling and witnessing the fundamental values of justice, truth, and integrity that are at the base of every renewal, by promoting dialogue and peaceful coexistence among the members of the different religions and ethnic groups, thereby fostering reconciliation and social cohesion, which is key for the future. I particularly appreciate your effort in this area, and I invite you to continue in this direction, while taking care to increasingly cultivate unity of thought and of action among yourselves.

You are called to form the conscience of the faithful and likewise that of all the people because your voice is heard and respected by all. This is the most appropriate way for you to take your rightful place in the present evolutions, avoiding entering directly in political disputes. However, by forming and encouraging the laity – convinced in the faith and solidly formed in the Social Doctrine of the Church – to engage in the political debate and to



assume responsibilities, which is their role, little by little you will transform society according to the Gospel and prepare a happy future for your people.

In order to take up again and pursue the proclamation of the Gospel, it is necessary that you have at heart the need to take care of and strengthen your priests, for whom you must be attentive fathers. A Bishop's closeness to his priests is important, because it allows him to dialogue with them in truth, to perceive what is most appropriate for each one and to foresee and remedy weaknesses. Sometimes sanction is certainly necessary but it is the last resort, and the door must always be open to mercy. Initial formation at the Seminary and vocational discernment are necessary. In addition to intellectual, spiritual and communal formation, particular attention must be given to their human and emotional formation, so that future priests are capable of living their commitment to celibacy, in which no compromise is acceptable. May those responsible in the Seminary be thanked for what they have accomplished. I ask you also to promote the unity of the *presbyterium* around you, and to foster, in particular among the youth, prayer, permanent formation and spiritual support. You must be models of unity and perfection in the practice of priestly virtues for your priests. I thank the priests of the Central African Republic for their dedication and the witness they render, in situations that are often difficult. I ex-

hort them to courageously renew their gift of self to Christ in a radical way, fleeing from the temptations of the world and being faithful to their commitments.

I would also like to thank the consecrated men and women, who remain close to afflicted populations. Their dedication is praiseworthy and irreplaceable. How many works of charity have been accomplished by the numerous Religious Congregations, be it in the field of education, care, or human promotion, even though the needs are immense! I pray that men and women religious may find in this Year of Consecrated Life genuine spiritual comfort, and the occasion for a deepening of their vocation and of their union with Christ. It is good to always foster harmony among the Institutes and diocesan entities, in order to render to the world the best witness of unity and love.

My attention goes finally to the families, who are the first victims of violence and who are too often destabilized or destroyed because of the estrangement of a member, bereavement, poverty, discord and separation. I express my closeness and affection to them. Not only are families the privileged place for the proclamation of the faith, the practice of Christian virtues, and the cradle of numerous priestly and religious vocations, but they are also settings "for learning and applying the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation" (*Africae Munus*, n. 43) of which your country is in such great need. It is of primary importance that the family be protected and defended "so that it may offer society the service expected of it, that of providing men and women capable of building a social fabric of peace and harmony" (*ibid.*). I cannot but encourage you to give marriage all the pastoral care and attention it deserves, and not to be discouraged in face of resistance caused by cultural traditions, human weakness or the new ideological colonization that is spreading everywhere. I also thank you for your participation in the work of the Synod that will be held in Rome next October, and I ask you for your prayers for this intention.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I entrust you all, as well as the priests, consecrated persons, catechists and the lay faithful of your dioceses to the protection of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of Peace, and I give you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

Audience granted to the President of the Romania

On Friday morning, 15 May, the Holy Father received in audience in the Vatican Apostolic Palace the President of Romania, H.E. Mr Klaus Werner Iohannis, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussions, which took place on the 25th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Romania on 15 May 1990, the parties focused on bilateral relations characterised by fruitful collaboration, as well as the relations between the State authorities and the local Catholic communities, and the good co-existence of minorities. Attention then turned to issues regarding various regions in the world.





On the 70th anniversary of Pax Christi International

Pax Christi International met in Bethlehem from 13-17 May "to open anew their hearts to Christ and to see their union in him as their greatest offering to the communities they serve" so that "the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity". This is Pope Francis' hope, expressed in a message, signed by Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, sent to the 150 delegates from 30 nations gathered in the Holy Land celebrating the 70th anniversary of the foundation of Pax Christi. "Pilgrims on the Path to Peace" was the theme of their meeting. According to members, Bethlehem was chosen "as a symbol of Pax Christi's commitment to peace and reconciliation". Fr Renato Sacco, the organization's coordinator in Italy, indicated that today their message is "to make non-violence not passiveness but a duty" which requires "courage and also martyrdom". Fr Sacco believes in the importance of "standing up personally and never accepting the logic of war, violence or of environmental destruction".

Concert in the Paul VI Hall for the Pope's charities

Those who sow joy

Refugees, homeless men and women, the elderly and disabled. These were the guests seated in the front rows – seats normally allocated for officials and authorities – at a two-hour concert held in the Paul VI Hall on Thursday, 14 May. Numbering 2,000, this group was touched to receive a ticket for this concert which raised funds for Pope Francis' charitable works.



Attendance was free, however those not in the reserved seating were encouraged to make an offering in a white envelope which was then to be handed to Archbishop Konrad Krajewski or Msgr Diego Giovanni Ravelli, the Almoner and head of the Office of Papal Charities, respectively.

The Giuseppe Verdi Philharmonic Orchestra of Salerno and the Choir of the Diocese of Rome performed songs from the "Divine Comedy" – as a tribute to Dante Alighieri on the 750th anniversary of his birth – in addition to Easter songs. The orchestra was directed

by Israeli conductor Daniel Oren and the choir was led by Msgr Marco Frisina. The concert was entitled: "For the poor and with the poor" because – as Pope Francis pointed out to the concert's musicians and organizers on Wednesday morning before the General Audience – it was created "to sow joy". "And as believers", the Pope said, "we have the joy of the Father who loves us all and the joy of being able to create [a feeling of] brotherhood with all. You are sowing this joy now with this concert". "The seed will stay in the souls of all and will do much good for everyone".

Audience with the President of the State of Palestine

Dialogue is a path to peace

On 16 May, the Holy Father received in audience Mr Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, who was accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States. President Abbas attended Sunday's canonization of two Palestinian nuns, for which he thanked the Holy Father.

During the cordial discussions, great satisfaction was expressed for the accord reached on the text of a comprehensive Agreement between the Parties on various essential aspects of the life and activity of the Catholic Church in Palestine, to be signed in the near future. Attention then turned to the peace process with Israel, and hope was expressed that direct negotiations between the Parties be resumed in order to find a just and lasting resolution to the conflict.

To this end the wish was reiterated that, with the support of the international Community, Israelis and Palestinians may take with determination courageous decisions to promote peace. Finally, with reference to the conflicts that afflict the Middle East, and in reaffirming the importance of combating terrorism, the need for interreligious dialogue was underlined.



Joint Statement of the Bilateral Commission of the Holy See and the State of Palestine at the conclusion of the Plenary Meeting

On 13 May 2015, the Bilateral Commission of the Holy See and the State of Palestine, which is working on a Comprehensive Agreement following on the Basic Agreement, signed on 15 February 2000, held a Plenary Session in the Vatican to acknowledge the work done at an informal level by the joint technical group following the last official meeting held in Ramallah at the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine on 6 February 2014.

The talks were chaired by Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for the Holy See's Relations with States, and by Ambassador Rawan Sulaiman, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs of the State of Palestine.

The discussions took place in a cordial and constructive atmosphere. Taking up the issues already examined at an informal level, the Commission noted with great satisfaction the progress achieved in formulating the text of the Agreement, which deals with essential aspects of the life and activity of the Catholic Church in Palestine.

Both Parties agreed that the work of the Commission on the text of the Agreement has been concluded, and that the agreement will be submitted to the respective authorities for approval ahead of setting a date in the near future for the signing.

The members of the Delegation of the Holy See were:

1. Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States;
2. Archbishop Giuseppe Lazarotto, Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine;
3. Archbishop Antonio Franco, Apostolic Nuncio;
4. Fr Lorenzo Lorusso, Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches;
5. Msgr Alberto Ortega, Official of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State;
6. Fr Emil Salayta, Judicial Vicar of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The members of the Palestinian Delegation were:

1. Ambassador Rawan Sulaiman, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs;
2. Ambassador Issa Kassissich, Representative of the State of Palestine to the Holy See;
3. Mr Ammar Hijazi, Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral Affairs;
4. Mr Azem Bishara, Juridical Counsellor of the PLO.

"Today we are here with our friends in need. We embrace them". Accompanying the guests of honour were volunteers from *Caritas* of the Diocese of Rome, from the Community of Sant'Egidio, from the Jesuit Refugee Services of Rome, from the Order of Malta, from UNITALSI and from St Peter's Circle.

In addition to Papal Charities, sponsors of the concert included the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, the Pontifical Council for Culture and the San Matteo Foundation in memory of Cardinal Van Thuân.

Dialogue between the Pope and consecrated men and women of the Diocese of Rome

Clouds, walls and the world

Pope Francis met with the consecrated men and women of the Diocese of Rome on Saturday, 16 May in the Paul VI Hall. The following is a translation of the transcript of the question-and-answer session, which transpired in Italian.

The first question was asked by Sr Fulvia Sieni, an Augustinian sister from the convent of the 'Santi Quattro Coronati' [Four Crowned Saints]: "Monastic life is a delicate balance between hiddenness and visibility, seclusion and involvement in diocesan life, prayerful silence and words that proclaim. How can an urban monastery enrich the spiritual life of the diocese and other forms of consecrated life, allow itself to be enriched by them, remaining steadfast in its monastic prerogatives?"

You speak of a delicate balance between hiddenness and visibility. I would say more: a *tension* between being hidden and being visible. The monastic vocation is this tension, tension in the fundamental sense, the tension of fidelity. Balance can be intended as "let us balance, as much here, as much there...". On the other hand, tension is God's call to a hidden life and God's call to make oneself visible in a certain way. But how should this visibility and how should this hidden life be? This is the tension that you live in your soul. This is your vocation: you are women "in tension": in tension between this attitude of seeking the Lord and being hidden in the Lord, and this call to give a sign. The convent walls are not enough to give the sign. I received a letter, six or seven months ago, from a cloistered nun who had begun to work with the poor, in the foyer; and then she went out to work outside with the poor; and then went further and further, and at the end she said: "My cloister is the world". I responded to her: "Tell me, dear, do you have a portable grate?". This is a mistake.

Number of women religious growing in England and Wales

Nuns on the rise

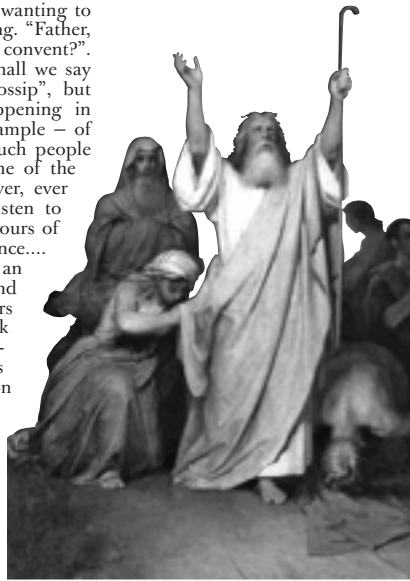
In 2014 the number of women entering convents in England and Wales hit a 25-year high. This figure confirms the positive trend of recent years which bodes well for the future. The website of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales announced this on 23 April, noting that just 10 years ago the number of women religious entering convents hit an all time low at just seven.

However since 2004 there has been a steady increase, reaching 45 last year. "Religious life", the website says, "is an attractive choice for an increasing number of educated and dynamic young and older women". Sr Cathy Jones of the Religious Life Vocations Promoter at the National Office for Vocation, explained this change: Young

Another mistake is not wanting to hear anything, see anything. "Father, can news come into the convent?". It must! But not the – shall we say – news about media "gossip", but news about what is happening in the world, news – for example – of war, of illness, of how much people are suffering. For this, one of the things that you must never, ever give up is the time to listen to the people! Even in the hours of contemplation, of silence....

Some monasteries have an answering service and people call, ask for prayers for this or that: this link with the world is important! In some monasteries they watch the television news: I don't know, this is discerned according to the rules of each monastery. In others the newspaper is received, it is read; in others this link is made in another way. But this link with the world is always important: to know what is happening. Because your vocation is not a refuge; it is precisely going onto the battlefield, it is fighting, it is knocking at the heart of the Lord for that city. It is like Moses, who held up his hands, praying, while the people fought (cf. Ex 17:8-13).

So many graces come from the Lord in this tension between the hidden life, prayer and hearing the news of the people. In this, prudence, discernment, will enable you to understand how much time to allot to one thing, how much time to another. There are also monasteries which spend a half hour a day, an hour a day giving food to those who come asking for it; and this does not run counter to being hidden in God. It is a service; it is a smile. A nun's smile opens the heart! A nun's smile is more filling than bread for those who come!



Ivan Kramskoy, "The prayer of Moses" (1861)

This week, it is up to you to feed a half hour of your time to the poor, who may ask for a sandwich as well. This one, the other: this week it's up to you to smile to those in need! Do not forget this. A nun who doesn't smile is missing something.

In the monastery there are problems, challenges – like there are in every family – small struggles, some jealousy, this one or the other.... And this can help us understand how people in families suffer, the struggle in the families when a husband and wife argue or when there is jealousy, when families separate.... When you too experience this kind of trial – they happen everywhere – feel that that is not the way and offer it to the Lord by seeking a path of peace inside the monastery, so that the Lord may bring peace in families, among peoples.

"But tell me, Father, we often read that in the world, in the city, there is corruption; can there also be corruption in the monasteries?". Yes, when one loses one's memory. The memory of the vocation, of the first encounter with God, of the charisma that founded the monastery. When this memory is lost and the soul begins to be worldly, one thinks worldly things and one loses that zeal of the prayer of intercession for the people. You said a really beautiful, beautiful phrase: "The monastery is present in the city, God is in the city and we hear the city's noise". Those noises are the sounds of life, the sounds of problems, the sounds of so many people going to work, returning from work, people who think, who love...; all of these noises must spur you on in the struggle with God, to have that same courage that Moses had. Remember when Moses was sad because the people took the wrong path. The Lord lost his patience and said to Moses: "I shall destroy this people! But fear not, I will place you at the head of another people".

What did Moses say? "No! If you destroy this people, destroy me too!" (cf. Ex 32:9-14). This link with your people is the city. Say to the Lord: "This is my city, and my people. They are my brothers and my sisters". This means giving one's life for the people. This delicate balance, this delicate tension means all of this.

I don't know how it is for you Augustinians of the 'Santi Quattro': is it possible to welcome people in the visiting room.... How many grates are there? Four or five? Or is there no longer a grate.... It is true that one can slide into imprudence, giving a lot of time to talking – St Thérèse says many things about this – but to see your joy, see the promise of prayer, of intercession, does so much good for people! And you, after chatting for a half hour, turn to the Lord. This is very important, very important! Because the cloister always needs this human connection. This is very important.

The last question is: how can a monastery enrich the spiritual life of the diocese and other forms of consecrated life, allow itself to be enriched by them, remaining steadfast in its monastic prerogatives? Yes, the diocese: pray for the bishop, for the auxiliary bishops and for the priests. There are good confessors everywhere! Some not so good.... But there are good ones! I know of priests who go to the monasteries to hear what a nun says, and it does so much good for the priests. Pray for the priests. In this delicate balance, in this delicate tension there is also prayer for priests. Think of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Pray for the priests, but also listen to the priests, listen to them when they come, during those minutes in the visiting room. Listen. I know so very many priests who – allow me the word – vent when speaking with a cloistered nun. And then the smile, a few words and the assurance of the sister's prayer renew them and they return to the parish happy. I don't know if I've answered....

The second question was asked by Iwona Langa, a woman consecrated to the 'Ordo virginum' [Order of Virgins], from the Ain Karim family home: "Marriage and Christian virginity are two ways of fulfilling the vocation of love. Fidelity, perseverance, unity of heart, are commitments and challenges both for Christian spouses and for us, consecrated people: how can we illuminate each other's path, for one another, and journey together toward the Kingdom?"

As the first nun, Sr Fulvia Sieni, was – let's say – "in prison", this other sister is ... "on the street". Both carry the Word of God to the city. She asked a good question: "Is marital love and love in consecrated life the same love?". Does it have those qualities of perseverance, fidelity, unity of heart? Are there commitments and challenges? This is why consecrated women say they are brides of the Lord. They marry the Lord. I had an uncle whose daugh-

St Jeanne Émilie de Villeneuve

Jeanne Émilie de Villeneuve was born in Toulouse, France on 9 March 1811, the third daughter of Count Jean Baptiste M. Louis de Villeneuve and Jeanne Gabrielle Rosalie d'Avessens. She was baptized two days later on 11 March 1811. She grew up in an environment of profound faith. From her earliest years, Jeanne Émilie was instilled with a strong sense of duty and responsibility, as well as an openness to the needs of others. The formation she received from her mother and the work of her father, who managed an agricultural estate, and the family's proximity to Hauterive a Castres, where nascent industrialization was beginning to cause suffering and hardships to families contributed to Jeanne opening her heart to her future mission: helping those who lived in material and spiritual poverty.

In 1836, she realized her deep desire to be consecrated completely to God and to her brothers and sisters. In the beginning, her mission was in her city. Professing her religious vows, she decided to dedicate herself completely to the salvation of the poorest souls and began plans to establish a Congregation in mission territories. Jeanne Émilie's desire to work for the salvation of the poor and the needy was formalized on 22 July 1846, when she opened the first shelter in Castres. Then in December 1847 her dream to establish a foreign mission became a reality. Jeanne Émilie placed her new Congregation under the protection of Mary Immaculate.

During the General Chapter on 6 September 1851, she asked to be replaced as Superior General. Her wish was granted, albeit with difficulty. At the end of August 1854, the cholera epidemic which had been spreading throughout France appeared for the first time in Castres. On 27 September Jeanne Émilie felt the first symptoms of the sickness that would claim her life on 2 October. She was the last victim of the cholera outbreak in the city. She was beatified in Castres on 5 July 2009.



St Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception

Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception (in the world: Adelaide Brando) was born in Naples on 1 May 1856, the daughter of Giovanni Giuseppe Brando and Concetta Marrazzo. She was baptized on the day of her birth in the Church of St Liborio. She received first Holy Communion on 8 December 1864, and on 25 December 1868, at the tender age of 12, she made a vow of perpetual virginity. Her wish was to be a "victim" consecrated entirely to the Lord, as well as a reparatrix. She felt called to consecrated life and expressed her desire to enter the Order of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (Sacramentine Nuns) in Naples. In 1876, she received the religious habit and took the name Sr Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception.

Sr Maria Cristina saw in the Eucharistic Jesus the Victim perennially sacrificed to his Father in reparation and expiation. St Ludovico da Casoria and the Servant of God Michelangelo Longo da Marigliano were of great help and comfort to her. On 22 November 1884, at the invitation of the Provost of Casoria, Canon Domenico Magliano (brother of Cardinal Luigi Magliano, Secretary of State of Pius XI), Sr Maria Cristina Brando moved to the

Magliano property in Casoria with her sisters, and then to the present mother house on Via G. D'Anna, where she built a magnificent neo-Gothic shrine to the Blessed Sacrament. On 16 August 1903, the Religious Institute took the official name "Sisters Expiatory Victims of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament". The Con-



gregation which she founded is dedicated to the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the promotion of divine worship; the education of poor children; catechesis and teaching; in child care, as well as various other works of charity.

Sr Maria Cristina died on the morning of 20 January 1906 after receiving the Sacraments. She was beatified by St John Paul II on 27 April 2003.



Pope Francis canonizes four women religious in St Peter's Square on the Seventh Sunday of Easter

The secret of saints

Abiding in Christ, joined to him like branches to the vine, even amid obstacles

On Sunday, 17 May, Pope Francis canonized four women religious, all 19th century nuns who worked in education. St Marie Alphonse and St Mary of Jesus Crucified were from Palestine; St Jeanne Émilie de Villeneuve was a French nun; and St Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception was from Italy. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily.

The Acts of the Apostles have set before us the early Church as she elects the man whom God called to take the place of Judas in the college of the Apostles. It is has to do not with a job, but with service. Indeed, Matthias, on whom the choice falls, receives a mission which Peter defines in these words: "One of these men... must become a witness with us to his resurrection", the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:21-23). In this way Peter sums up what it means to be part of the Twelve: it means to be a witness to Jesus' resurrection. The fact that he says "with us" brings us to realize that the mission of proclaiming the risen Christ is not an individual undertaking: it is to be carried out in common, with the apostolic college and with the community. The Apostles had a direct and overwhelming experience of the resurrection; they were eyewitnesses to that event. Thanks to their authoritative testimony, many people came to believe; from faith in the risen Lord, Christian communities were born and are born continually. We too, today, base our faith in the risen Lord on the witness of the Apostles, which has come down to us through the mission of the Church. Our faith is firmly linked to their testimony, as to an unbroken chain which spans the centuries, made up not only by the successors of the Apostles, but also by succeeding generations of Christians. Like the Apostles, each one of Christ's followers is called to become a witness to his resurrection, above all in those human settings where forgetfulness of God and human disorientation are most evident.

If this is to happen, we need to remain in the risen Christ and in his love, as the First Letter of St John has reminded us: "He who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16). Jesus had repeated insistently to his disciples: "Abide in me... Abide in my love" (Jn 15:4, 9). This is the secret of the saints: abiding in Christ, joined to him like branches to the vine, in order to bear much fruit (cf. Jn 15:1-8). And this fruit is none other than love. This love shines forth

in the testimony of Sr Jeanne Émilie de Villeneuve, who consecrated her life to God and to the poor, the sick, the imprisoned and the exploited, becoming for them and for all a concrete sign of the Lord's merciful love.

A relationship with the risen Jesus is — so to speak — the "atmosphere" in which Christians live, and in which they find

the strength to remain faithful to the Gospel, even amid obstacles and misunderstandings. "Abiding in love": this is what Sr Maria Cristina Brando also did. She was completely given over to ardent love for the Lord. From prayer and her intimate encounter with the risen Jesus present in the Eucharist, she received strength to endure suffering and to give herself, as bread which is

broken, to many people who had wandered far from God and yet hungered for authentic love.

An essential aspect of witness to the risen Lord is unity among ourselves, his disciples, in the image of his own unity with the Father. Today too, in the Gospel, we heard Jesus' prayer on the eve of his passion: "that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jn 17:21). From this eternal love through the Father and the Son, poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), our mission and our fraternal communion draw strength; this love is the ever-flowing source of our joy in following the Lord along the path of his poverty, his virginity and his obedience; and this same love calls us to cultivate contemplative prayer. Sr Mariam Baouardy experienced this in an outstanding way. Poor and uneducated, she was able to counsel others and provide theological explanations with extreme clarity, the fruit of her constant converse with the Holy Spirit. Her docility to the Holy Spirit made her also a means of encounter and fellowship with the Muslim world. So too, Sr Marie Alphonse Danil Ghattas came to understand clearly what it means to radiate the love of God in the apostolate, and to be a witness to meekness and unity. She shows us the importance of becoming responsible for one another, of living lives of service one to another.

To abide in God and in his love, and thus to proclaim by our words and our lives the resurrection of Jesus, to live in unity with one another and with charity towards all. This is what the four women Saints canonized today did. Their luminous example challenges us in our lives as Christians. How do I bear witness to the risen Christ? This is a question we have to ask ourselves. How do I abide in him? How do I dwell in his love? Am I capable of "sowing" in my family, in my workplace and in my community, the seed of that unity which he has bestowed on us by giving us a share in the life of the Trinity?

When we return home today, let us take with us the joy of this encounter with the risen Lord. Let us cultivate in our hearts the commitment to abide in God's love. Let us remain united to him and among ourselves, and follow in the footsteps of these four women, models of sanctity whom the Church invites us to imitate.



Appeal at the Regina Caeli

For an end to violence in Burundi

At the end of the celebration, the Pope appealed for an end to violence in Burundi before reciting the Regina Caeli in St Peter's Square. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian.

At the conclusion of this celebration, I want to greet all of you who have come to pay homage to the new Saints, particularly the official Delegations from Palestine, France, Italy, Israel, and Jordan. I greet with affection the Cardinals, Bishops, priests, as well as the spiritual daughters of the four Saints. Through their intercession, may the Lord grant a new missionary impulse to their respective countries. Inspired by their example of mercy, charity, and reconciliation, may the Christians of these lands look to the future with hope, continuing in the journey of solidarity and fraternal coexistence.

I extend my greetings to the families, parish groups, associations, and schools present, especially to con-

firms from the Archdiocese of Genoa. I address a special thought to the faithful of the Czech Republic, gathered at the shrine of Svätý Kopeček, near Olomouc, who today are remembering the 20th anniversary of St John Paul II's visit. Yesterday in Venice was the beatification of Fr Luigi Cabrolotto, pastor, educator, and founder of the Daughters of St Joseph. Let us give thanks to God for this exemplary pastor, who led an intense spiritual and apostolic life, totally dedicated to the good of souls.

I wish to invite all of you to pray for the beloved people of Burundi who are living through a delicate moment: May the Lord help all people to flee the violence and to act responsibly for the good of the nation.

With filial love let us turn now to the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, Queen of the Saints, and model for all Christians.

St Marie Alphonse Danil Ghattas

Marie Alphonse Danil Ghattas was born in Jerusalem on 4 October 1843 to a family which provided her with a sound Christian formation. She was baptized on 19 November with the name of Soultaneh Marie. After discerning the call to consecrated life, she entered the Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition in 1858, and on 30 June 1860 she received the habit, taking the name of Sr Marie Alphonse. In 1863 she made her religious profession. On 6 January 1874 in Bethlehem, the Virgin Mary appeared to her for the first time. Exactly one year later, she experienced a second apparition, in which Our Lady asked her to start a new religious family that was to be known as the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary. In July 1880, several young "Daughters of Mary", under the guidance of Fr Tannous, began to live a common life. According to the wishes of Our Lady, the new community was called "The Institute of the Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary". On 12 September 1880, Pope Leo XIII dispensed Sr Marie Alphonse from her vow of obedience to the Sisters of St Joseph and three years later, on 7 October 1883, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary. On 6 October, she received the religious habit, keeping her religious name Marie Alphonse. She made her religious profession on 7 March 1885. On 2 November 1887, the Rule of the Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary was approved, and received diocesan approval two years later. Already a Religious, Sr Marie Alphonse was admitted into the Third Order Dominicans in the Dominican Convent in Jerusalem on 4 October 1890, the Vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. On 25 March 1927 she returned to the house of the Father.



On 22 November 2009, she was beatified in the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. The Sisters of the Congregation of the Most Holy Rosary presently work in the Holy Land, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, and some Emirates of the Persian Gulf (Abu Dhabi, Sharjah), as well as in Rome.

St Mary of Jesus Crucified Baouardy

Mary of Jesus Crucified Baouardy was born into a Greek-Catholic family in Ibellin, Nazareth on 5 January 1846. She was given the name Mariam at her baptism. Orphaned at the age of two, she was adopted by her uncle who, in 1854, moved to Alexandria in Egypt. Without her knowledge, she was secretly engaged to be married at 12 years of age. In order to cancel the engagement she cut off her hair, provoking



the wrath of her aunt and uncle, who confined her to household servitude. Knowing the anguish that her aunt and uncle inflicted upon her, a former domestic servant invited her to renounce her faith. Mary immediately responded: "I am a daughter of the Roman, Catholic Apostolic Church". He responded by cutting her throat with a scimitar. Then, wrapped up in a sheet, she was abandoned in the street and left for dead. She woke up in a grotto, being cared for by a religious woman dressed in blue — Mariam said it was the Virgin — who foretold her future.

After recovering from her injuries, she worked for 13 years as a domestic servant in Alexandria, Jerusalem and Beirut. In 1862, she moved with the Naggair family to Marseilles, where

she discerned a vocation to the consecrated life. In 1865 she entered the Order of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition. The Congregation, however, did not allow her to make her religious profession, as they were frightened by her ecstasies and visions. Mariam, however, maintained that she was ill. On 29 March 1867 she manifested the stigmata. On 14 June 1867 she entered the Carmel of Pau, where on 27 Ju-

ly she received the habit and took the name Mary of Jesus Crucified. In 1870, she went to Mangalore to establish a monastery. Two years later, however, she returned to Pau due to misunderstandings which, together with powerful demonic attacks, constituted her great purification.

In 1872 Sr Mary wanted to her Superiors that the Lord revealed to her to establish a new Monastery in Bethlehem. She arrived there on 11 September 1875, assisted by the generosity of the architect Bertha Dartigaux. During the construction of the monastery, she fell and fractured her arm on 22 August 1878. Her arm failed to heal and became gangrenous. She died a holy death on 26 August. St John Paul II beatified her on 13 November 1983.

Clouds, walls and the world

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ter became a nun and he said: "Now I'm the Lord's father-in-law! My daughter is married to the Lord". There is a spousal dimension to women's consecration. In men's consecration as well: it is said that the bishop is the "bridegroom of the Church", because he stands in the place of Jesus, the bridegroom of the Church. But this female dimension – I will go somewhat outside of the question, in order to get back to it – of women is very important. Nuns are the icon of the Church and of Our Lady. Do not forget that the Church is female: it is not *he* the Church, but *she* the Church. And for this reason the Church is the bride of Jesus. So often we forget this; and we forget this maternal love of the nun, because the love of the Church is maternal; this maternal love of a nun, because the love of Our Lady is maternal. Fidelity, the expression of love of a consecrated woman, must mirror – not out of duty but connaturally – the fidelity, the love, the tenderness of Mother Church and the Mother Mary. A woman who does not enter this path, by consecrating herself, errs in the end. The maternity of a consecrated woman! Think a lot about this. As Mary is maternal and as the Church is maternal.

And you asked: how to illuminate each other's path, for one another, and journey toward the Kingdom? Mary's love and the love of the Church is a concrete love! Concreteness is the quality of this maternity of women, of nuns. Concrete love. When a nun begins to have ideas, too many ideas, too many ideas... What did St Thérèse do? What advice did St Thérèse, the great one, give to her superior? "Give her a steak and then we'll talk". To bring her back down to reality. Concreteness. The concreteness of love is very difficult. It's very difficult! And more so when one lives in community, because we all know the problems of communities: jealousy, gossip, that this superior is this, that the other is that... These are concrete things, but not good! The concreteness of goodness, of love, which forgives all! If one must tell a truth, say it to the person's face, but with love; pray before reprimanding and then ask the Lord that He go forth with the correction. It is concrete love! A nun cannot afford love in the clouds; no, love is concrete.

What is the concreteness of a consecrated woman. What is it like? You can find it in two passages of the Gospel. In the Beatitudes: they tell you what you have to do. Jesus, the plan of Jesus, is concrete. So often I think that the Beatitudes are the first Encyclical of the Church. It's true, because the entire plan is there. And then concreteness is found in the protocol by which we will all be judged: Matthew 25. The concreteness of the consecrated woman is there. With these two passages you can live the entire consecrated life; with these two rules, with these two concrete things, by doing these concrete things. By doing these concrete things you can also reach a level, a height of holiness and truly great prayer. But it takes

concreteness: love is concrete! And your love as women is a concrete maternal love. A mother never speaks ill of her children. But if you are a nun, in a convent or lay community, you have this maternal consecration and it is not permissible to speak ill of other sisters! No. Always excuse them, always! That passage of the autobiography of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus is beautiful, when she found that nun who hated her. What did she do? She smiled and went on. A smile of love. And what did she do when she had to accompany that sister who was always glum, because she limped with both legs and the poor thing was sick: what did she do? She did her best! She led her well and then even cut her bread for her, she did something more for her. But she never criticized her from behind! That destroys maternity. A mother who criticizes, who speaks ill of her children is not a mother! I believe you say "stepmother" in Italian.... She isn't a mother. I'll tell you this: love – and you see that marital love, too, is the same figure, the figure of the maternity of the Church – is concreteness. Concreteness. I recommend you do this exercise: read the Beatitudes often, and read Matthew 25 often, the Judgement protocol. This does much good for the concreteness of the Gospel. I don't know, are we finished here?

The third question was asked by Fr Gaetano Saracino, a Scalabrinian missionary priest at 'SS. Redentore' [Most Holy Redeemer] parish: "The gifts borne by the different charisms in this local Church are so rich with talents; how can we put them in common and make them fruitful? It is often also difficult, to simply communicate the various paths; we are not capable of joining forces among congregations, parishes, other pastoral organizations, associations and lay movements, as if there were almost competitiveness instead of shared service. Sometimes then, we consecrated people feel like 'stop-gaps'. How can we 'journey together'?"

I have been in that parish and I know what this revolutionary priest is doing: he does a good job! He works well! You started to speak about celebration. It is one of the things that we Christians forget. Celebration. Celebration is a theological category, it is also in the Bible. When you go home, take up Deuteronomy 26. There, Moses, on behalf of the Lord, says what the farmers must do every year: bring the first fruit of the harvest to the temple. Thus he says: "You go to the temple, bring the basket with the first fruit to offer it to the Lord in thanksgiving". And then? First, make remembrance. And he makes them recite a short creed: "A wandering Aramean was my father, God called him; we were slaves in Egypt, but the Lord freed us and gave us

this land..." (cf. Deut 26:5-9). First, remembrance. Second, give the basket to the man in charge. Third, thank the Lord. And fourth, go home and celebrate. Celebrate and invite those who do not have a family, invite slaves, those who are not free, invite your neighbour to the party too... Celebration is a theological category of life. Consecrated life cannot be lived without this festive dimension. But celebrating is not the same as making a racket, noise... Celebrating is what is in that passage that I cited. Remember: Deuteronomy 26. There is the end of a prayer: it is the joy of remembering all that the Lord has done for us; all that He has given me; even that fruit for which I worked and celebrate. In the communities, also in the parishes as in your case, where there is no celebration – when it is time to do so – something is lacking! They are too rigid: "Discipline does us good". Everything in order: children make Communion, beautiful, a good catechism is taught... But something is missing: the racket is missing, noise is missing, celebration is missing! The festive heart of a community is missing. Some spiritual writers say that the Eucharist too, the celebration of the Eucharist is a celebration: yes, it has a festive dimension in commemorating the death and Resurrection of the Lord. This is what I didn't want to leave out, because it wasn't exactly in your question, but in your inner reflection.

Then you spoke of the competitiveness between this parish and that, this congregation and that... One of the most difficult things for a bishop is keeping harmony in the diocese! And you say: "Are religious a stop-gap for the bishop?". Sometimes that may be the case... But I ask you another question: When you are made bishop, for example, – put yourself in the bishop's place – you have a parish with a good religious as parish priest: three years later the provincial comes and says to you: "I am changing this one and will send you another". The bishops too suffer from this attitude... sometimes – not always, because there are religious who enter into dialogue with the bishop. We have to do our part. "We had a chapter and the chapter decided this...". Many men and women religious spend life if not in chapters, then in verses. But they always spend it like this! I take the liberty of speaking like this, because I am a bishop and I am a religious. And I understand both sides and I understand the problems. It's true: unity among the diverse charisms, unity of the presbytery, unity with the bishop... This is not easy to find: each one pulls for his own interests, I'm not saying always, but there is this tendency, it's human... There is a bit of sin behind it, but that's how it is. That's how it is. This is why the Church, at this time, is thinking of offering an old document, of renewing it, on relationships between religious and the bishop. The 1994 Synod asked that it be reformed, the "Mutuae Relationes" (14 May 1978). Many years have passed and it hasn't been done. The relationship of religious with the bishop, with the diocese or with

Monday morning greeting to women religious

Peace among peoples



On Monday, 18 May, the Holy Father met with Carmelite Sisters from Bethlehem and the Middle East, and the Sisters of the Rosary, who had come for the Canonization Mass of Miriam of Jesus Crucified and Sr Marie Alphonisne Danil Ghattas. The following is a translation of the Pope's words which were delivered in Italian.

Good morning and thank you very much for your visit!

I am very happy about this pilgrimage of sisters for the canonization of the new saints. The President of the State of Palestine told me that a plane full of nuns departed from Jordan! The poor pilot.... Thank you very much!

I am going to give you a mission: pray to the two new saints for peace in your land, that this interminable war end and that there be peace among peoples. Pray too for persecuted Christians, driven from their homes, from their land and victims of a "white-glove" persecution: it may be hidden, but it is happening! Persecution "with white gloves" and terrorism "with white gloves". Pray a lot for peace. Now each of you, in her own language, pray the *Hail Mary* with me.



Zenone,
"Nuns in
the snow"

secular priests isn't easy. But one must be committed through common work. In the prefectures, how does one work on the pastoral level in this neighbourhood, in this all-togetherness? This is how the Church is made. The bishop must not use religious as a stopgap, but the religious must not use the bishop as if he were the head of a company employer. I don't know... But celebration, I would like to return to the principal matter: when there is community, without personal interests, there is always a spirit of celebration. I have seen your parish and it's true. You know how to do it! Thank you.

The fourth question was asked by Fr Gaetano Greco of the Tertiary Capuchins of Our Lady of Sorrows, chaplain of the 'Casal del Marmo' juvenile detention centre: "Consecrated life is a gift of God to the Church, a gift of God to his People. However, this gift is not always appreciated and valued in its identity and in its specificity. Communities, especially women's, in our local Church often have difficulty finding serious people to accompany them, formators, spiritual directors, confessors. How can this treasure be rediscovered? The face of consecrated life is 80 percent female. How is it possible to value the presence of women and in particular consecrated women in the Church?"

Fr Gaetano, in his reflection, while he was telling his story, spoke about that "two-to-three-week substitution" that he had to do at the detention centre for minors. He has been there for 45 years, I believe. He did this out of obedience. "Your place is there", his superior told him. And he obeyed him reluctantly. Then he saw that that act of obedience, that which the superior asked him, was God's will. Allow me, before responding to the question, to say a word about obedience. When Paul wants to tell us of the mystery of Jesus Christ, he uses this word; when he wants to say what the fruitfulness of Jesus Christ is like, he uses this word: "He became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (cf. Phil 2:8). He humbled himself. He obeyed. The mystery of Christ is a mystery of obedience, and obedience is fruitful. It's true that, like every virtue, like every theological place, it can be tempting to develop a disciplinary attitude. But obedience in consecrated life is a mystery. As I said that a consecrated woman is the icon of Mary and of the Church, we can say that obedience is the icon of the way of Jesus. When Jesus became incarnate

out of obedience, he became man out of obedience, until the cross and unto death. The mystery of obedience is not understood if not in the light of this way of Jesus. The mystery of obedience is to resemble Jesus on the journey that He wanted to take. And we see the fruit. I thank Fr Gaetano for his testimony on this point, because many words are said about obedience – the prior dialogue, yes, all of these things are good, they aren't bad – but what is obedience? Go to the Letter of Paul to the Philippians, Chapter 2: it is the mystery of Jesus. Only there can we understand obedience. Not in the general or provincial chapters: there it can be deepened, but to understand it, only in the mystery of Jesus.

Now let's move to the question: consecrated life is a gift, a gift of God to the Church. It's true. It's a gift of God. You speak of prophecy: it's a gift of prophecy. It is God present, God who wants to make himself present with a gift: He chooses men and women, but it is a gift, a freely given gift. The vocation is also a gift, it is not an enlistment of people who want to take that path. No, it is a gift to the heart of a person; a gift to a congregation; and that congregation is also a gift. Not always, however, is this gift appreciated and valued in its identity and in its specificity. This is true. There is a temptation to standardize consecrated people, as if they were all the same thing. In Vatican II, there was a proposal of this kind, to standardize consecrated people. No, it is a gift with a special identity, which comes through the charismatic gift that God gives to a man or a woman to form a religious family.

And then a problem: the problem of how to accompany men and women religious. The communities, especially women's, in our local Church often have difficulty finding serious men and women to accompany them, formators, spiritual fathers and confessors. Either because they do not understand what consecrated life is, or because they want to place themselves in the charisma and give interpretations that harm the heart of the nun... We are speaking of nuns who have difficulties, but men have them too. It is not easy to accompany. It isn't easy to find a confessor, a spiritual father. It's not easy to find a man with rectitude of intentions; in order that this spiritual direction, this confession not be a nice chat among friends but without depth. Or, finding those rigid men, who do not really understand where the problem

may be, because they do not understand religious life. In the other diocese that I had, I always advised the nuns who came to ask advice: "Tell me, in your community or in your congregation, isn't there a wise nun, a nun who lives the charism well, a good nun with experience? Do spiritual direction with her! – "But she's a woman!" – "But it is a charism of lay people!". Spiritual direction is not an exclusive charism of the presbytery: it's a charism of the laity! In early monasticism lay people were the great directors. Now I am reading the doctrine, actually on obedience, of St Silouan, that monk of Mt Athos. He was a carpenter, he worked as a carpenter, then a bursar, but he was not even a deacon; he was a great spiritual director! It is a charism of the laity. When the superiors see that a man or woman in that congregation or that province has that charism of a spiritual father, they must try to help them to be formed, to perform this service. It is not easy. A spiritual director is one thing and a confessor is another thing. I go to the confessor, I tell my sins, I feel the flogging; then he forgives me of everything and I go ahead. But I must tell the spiritual director what is happening in my heart. The examination of conscience is not the same for confession and for spiritual direction. For confession, you must search where you have fallen short, whether you have lost patience; if you have been greedy: these things, concrete things, which are sinful. But for spiritual direction, you must examine what has happened in the heart; such as the movement of the spirit, whether I have been desolate, if I have been consoled, if I am tired, why I am sad: these are the things to speak about with a spiritual director. These are the things. The superiors have the responsibility of looking, in the community, in the congregation, in the province, for those who have this charism, to give this mission and form them, help them with this. To accompany on the path is to go step by step with the consecrated brother or sister. I believe that we are still immature in this respect. We are not mature in this, because spiritual direction comes from discernment. But when you find yourself in front of consecrated men and women who do not know how to discern what is happening in their own heart, who do not know how to discern a decision, it is a lack of spiritual direction. And this can be done only by a wise man, a wise woman. But also formed! Today you cannot go only with good will: today the

world is very complex and human science also helps us, without falling into psychologism, but it helps us to see the path. Form them with readings of the greats, of the great men and women spiritual directors, especially of monasticism. I don't know if you have had contact with the works of early monasticism: how much wisdom and spiritual direction there was there! It is important to form them with this. How can we rediscover this wealth? The face of consecrated life is 80 percent female: it's true, there are more consecrated women than men. How is it possible to value the presence of women and particularly of consecrated women, in the Church? I am repeating a little in what I am about to say: give consecrated women this function that many believe is only for priests; and also give concreteness to the fact that a consecrated woman is both the face of Mother Church and of Mother Mary, and that is going forth in maternity, and maternity is not only having children! Maternity is accompanying growth; maternity is spending hours next to a sick person, a sick child, a sick brother; it is spending one's life in love, with that love of tenderness and maternity. On this path we will find even more the woman's role in the Church.

Fr Gaetano touched on various themes, that is why it's difficult for me to answer... But when they tell me "No! In the Church women must be dicastery heads, for example!". Yes, they can, in certain dicasteries they can; but what you are asking is simple functionalism. That is not rediscovering woman's role in the Church. It is more profound and goes on this path. Yes, may she do these things, that are being promoted – now in Rome we have one who is the rector of a university, and that is a good thing! – but this is not a triumph. No, no. This is a great thing, it is a functional thing; but what is essential to the woman's role is – speaking in theological terms – to acting in a manner which expresses the feminine genius. When we face a problem among men we come to a conclusion, but when we face that same problem with women the outcome will be different. It will follow the same path, but it will be richer, stronger, more intuitive. For this reason women in the Church should have this role, they must clarify, help to clarify the feminine genius in so many ways.

I think that with this I have answered the questions as best I could, including yours. In regard to the feminine genius, I spoke about the smile, I spoke about patience in community life, and I would like to say a word to this 97-year-old nun whom I greeted: she is 97... There she is, I see her. Raise your hand, so everyone can see you... I exchanged a few words with her, she looked at me with clear eyes, she looked at me with that smile of a sister, mother, and grandma. In her I would like to pay homage to perseverance in consecrated life. Some believe that consecrated life is heaven on earth. No! Maybe Purgatory... But not Heaven. It isn't easy to go forward. When I see a person who has spent her life, I give thanks to the Lord. Through you, sister, I thank all men and women religious, thank you very much!

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Friday, 15 May

No fear

Fear and sadness cause illness in people and in the Church too; they cause paralysis and selfishness, and in the end spoil the air of a community, which hangs a "forbidden" sign on its door, fearful of everything. However, a Christian sustained by the fear of God and by the Holy Spirit has the courageous attitude of joy, which in pain becomes peace. This was the Pope's message on Friday during Mass at Santa Marta.

In the Liturgy of the Word, Francis began, "there are two powerful words that the Church has us meditate on: fear and joy". This is seen in the Acts of the Apostles (18:9-18), when the Lord says to Paul: "Do not be afraid. Go on speaking".

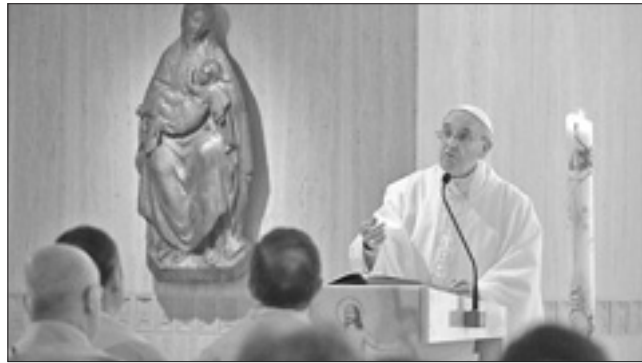
"Fear", the Pope explained, "is an attitude that harms us, weakens us, diminishes us, even paralyzes us". It is such that "a person in fear does nothing, doesn't know what to do: is fearful, frightened, focused on herself so that something harmful or bad won't happen to her". Thus, "fear leads to selfish egocentrism and it paralyzes us". For this very reason, "Jesus says to Paul: 'Do not be afraid. Go on speaking'".

Indeed, fear "is not a Christian attitude". But "it is an attitude, we can say, of an imprisoned soul, without freedom, which doesn't have the freedom to look ahead, to create something, to do good". Thus one who has fear keeps repeating: "No, there is this danger, there is that other one", and so on. "It's too bad, fear causes harm!", Francis again noted.

Fear must, however, be "distinguished from the fear of God, which has nothing to do with it". The fear of God, the Pontiff stated, "is holy, it is the fear of adoration before the Lord", and therefore "fear of God is a virtue". Indeed, "it does not diminish, it does not weaken, it does not paralyze"; but on the contrary, "it carries forth the mission that the Lord gives". In this regard, the Pontiff added: "The Lord, in Chapter 18 of the Gospel according to Luke, speaks of a judge who neither feared God nor had regard for anyone, and did whatever he wanted". This "is a sin: a lack of fear of God and also self-sufficiency". For "it detracts from the relationship with God as well as from adoration".

However, Francis said, "the fear of God, which is good, is one thing; but fear is another thing". Moreover, "a fearful Christian is insignificant: he is a person who doesn't understand what Jesus' message is".

The "other word" proposed by the liturgy, "after the Ascension of the Lord", is "joy". In the passage from the Gospel of John (16:20-23), "the Lord speaks of the passage from sadness to joy", preparing the disciples "for the moment of the Passion: 'you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy'". Jesus offers "the example of a woman in her hour of labour, who has great pain but afterwards, when the child is born, forgets the pain"



to make room for joy. And "no one will take your joy away from you", the Lord thus assures them.

However, the Pope advised, "Christian joy is not simply enjoyment, it isn't fleeting lightheartedness". Instead, "Christian joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit: it is having one's heart ever joyful because the Lord has triumphed, the Lord reigns, the Lord is at the right hand of the Father, the Lord has looked at me and sent me and has given me his grace and has made me a child of the Father". This is what "Christian joy" really is.

A Christian, therefore, "lives in joy". But, Francis asked, "where is this joy in the saddest moments, in times of anguish? Let's think about Jesus on the Cross: did He have joy? Eh, no! But yes, He had peace!". Indeed, the Pope explained, "Joy, in the moment of anguish, of trial, becomes peace". On the other hand, "lightheartedness in a moment of anguish becomes darkness, becomes troublesome".

This is why "a Christian without joy isn't Christian; a Christian who lives continuously in sadness is not a Christian". A "Christian who loses peace in trying times, in times of illness, of so many difficulties, is missing something".

Francis urged: "do not have fear" but instead "have joy". He explained that "not having fear is asking for the grace of courage, the courage of the Holy Spirit; and having joy is asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit, even in the most difficult times, through that peace that the Lord gives us".

This is what "happens in Christians, happens in communities, in the entire Church, in parishes, in so many Christian communities". Indeed "there are fearful communities that always stay on the safe side: 'No, no, let's not do this.... No, no, this can't be done, we can't do this'. At that point "it seems they have written 'forbidden' on the door: everything is forbidden out of fear". Thus, "when one enters that community the air is spoiled, because the community is ill: fear makes a community ill; a lack of courage makes a community ill".

Yet "even a community without joy is a community fallen ill, for when there is no joy there is emptiness. No, actually there is lightheartedness". Thus, in the final analysis, "it will be a fine, lighthearted community, but worldly, ill with worldliness because it doesn't have the joy of Jesus Christ". And one of

the effects of worldliness, the Pontiff warned, "is that of speaking ill of others". Thus, "when the Church is fearful and when the Church doesn't receive the joy of the Holy Spirit, the Church falls ill, the communities fall ill, the faithful fall ill".

In the prayer at the opening of Mass, the Pope recalled, "we asked the Lord for the grace to lift us up toward Christ seated at the right hand of the Father". This "contemplation of Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father", Francis stated, "will give us courage, give us joy, take away our fear and help us to avoid falling into a superficial and lighthearted life".

"With this intention to lift up our spirit toward Christ seated at the right hand of the Father", Francis concluded, "let us continue our celebration, by asking the Lord: lift up our spirit, take away all of our fears and give us joy and peace".

Tuesday, 19 May

The importance of saying goodbye

Pope Francis recalled the suffering of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, rejected and abandoned in the middle of the sea, and also of the Christian and Yazidi refugees "cast out of their homes" in Iraq. These tragedies are taking place today right before our very eyes. Celebrating Mass on Tuesday morning in the chapel at Casa Santa Marta, the Pontiff proposed a reflection on the ultimate meaning of every farewell, great or small, with the word "goodbye" (a contraction of "God be with ye"), which expresses an act of entrustment to the Father. He also took the opportunity to speak of the sorrow and apprehension of all mothers who watch their sons depart for war.

After all, the Pope began, "the atmosphere in these final days of the Easter season is an atmosphere of farewell". And "in the liturgy the Church takes up Jesus' discourse at the Last Supper, where he bids farewell before his Passion, and makes us read it again: Jesus bids farewell in order to go to the Father and send us the Holy Spirit" (Jn 17:1-11).

Today, Francis repeated, "this atmosphere of farewell is also the focus of the First Reading, one of those beautiful pages of the Acts of the Apostles: Paul's farewell" (20:17-27). He "was in Miletus" and "he

sent the elders of the Church to call Ephesus" for "a gathering of the small churches, as big as parishes". And thus "begins that discourse which will finish in tomorrow's liturgy, where Paul recalls his work, what he has done: 'I did not shrink declaring to you anything that was profitable, and from preaching to you and teaching you'. Therefore, 'he reminds them that he has toiled, but he does not boast'. It is a reminder: 'This has been my life among you'. He then adds: 'And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit'".

Paul's farewell, the Pope explained, was "even somewhat dramatic". In fact, Paul leaves "not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord". And that is, namely, "to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God".

Paul then "makes a rather long, brotherly speech, and when it's over he begins to weep". And he says: "now, behold, I know that you will see my face no more, but I know also that neither will I see yours". Then, "everyone weeping, they go to the beach, kneel down and pray, as they weep and bid farewell to Paul", accompanying him "to the ship".

Thus, the Pope summarized, referring to the two Readings, "Jesus bids farewell, Paul bids farewell and this helps us to reflect on our own farewells". Indeed "in our life there are many farewells: there are small farewells - you know I'm returning, today or tomorrow - and there are grand farewells and you don't know how this journey will end".

Francis recognized that it is "good to think about this", because "life is filled with farewells" and "there is also so much sorrow, so many tears" in some situations. And he called for reflection on the "poor Rohingya people in Myanmar. At the time they left their land to flee from persecution they didn't know what would happen to them. For months they have been on a boat, there... They arrive in one city where, after being given food and water, they are told: 'Go away': it is a farewell".

The Pope then recalled "the farewell of the Christian and Yazidi who expect never to return again to their land because they are cast from their homes. Today!"

The Pontiff then pointed out that "there are even small, but great farewells in life: I think about the farewell of a mother who says goodbye, gives a final embrace to a son who goes off to war, and every day she awakes with the fear that an official will come and announce to her: 'We thank you very much for the generosity of your son who gave his life for the homeland'. Because "one never knows how these grand farewells will turn out". And then "there is also the final farewell, that we all must do, when the Lord calls us to the other side: I think about this".

"These great farewells of life, even

The Pope asks the Bishops of the Republic of Congo to be models of reconciliation

For a new brotherhood

And reminds them that the Church must be free to proclaim the Gospel

“Ensure that the economic aid granted to your particular Churches to sustain them in their specific mission neither limits your freedom as pastors, nor blocks the freedom of the Church, which must have carte blanche to proclaim the Gospel in a credible manner”. This was Pope Francis’ call to the Bishops of the Republic of Congo, whom he received in audience on Monday morning, 4 May, on the occasion of their ‘ad limina’ visit. In the address – which was consigned in French, a translation of which is provided hereunder – the Pontiff also recalled that “the wounds caused by the serious crisis” that the country suffered in the 1990s left deep scars.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

It is a great joy for me to welcome you on the occasion of your visit *ad limina Apostolorum*, which allows you to reinforce your bonds with the Apostolic See and with the Bishops of the entire world, thereby reinforcing collegiality. My joy is even greater because, through you, I see young and dynamic Christian communities, who seek to root themselves in the love of the Lord. In receiving you, I have a special thought for them, as well as for the priests, men and women religious, catechists and all other pastoral agents who work for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in Congo. It is also to strengthen you in your commitment to their service, by returning to the sources, that you make the pilgrimage to the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, who bore witness to faith in Christ to the supreme sacrifice of martyrdom. I am touched by the testimony of the bond to the Successor of Peter, expressed on your behalf, by Bishop Daniel Mizonzo, President of your Conference. In warmly thanking him, as well as each one of you, I would like to express my encouragement to you in your apostolic work.

The recent creation of three new dioceses is testimony of the vitality of the Catholic Church in your country, as well as the zeal with which her pastors demonstrate in the work of evangelization. It is a source of great satisfaction, which at the same time spurs greater efforts to respond more expediently to the needs of the People of God and to the expectations of the many people to whom the Gospel of Jesus has not yet been proclaimed.

It is beneficial that in these recent years the reflections of your Conference have been centred on the mission of the laity in the Church and in society. Here I would like to commend their relevant contribution to the work of evangelization. It is important that your pastoral care help their movements of spirituality and apostolate to rediscover and affirm the actual vocation in view of the “credible lay witnesses to the saving truth of the Gospel, its power to purify and transform human hearts, and its fruitfulness for building up the human family in unity, justice and peace” (*Address to the Leaders of the Apostolate of the Laity*, Korea, 16 August 2014). The laity in fact need to be accompanied and to be formed in witnessing the Gospel in socio-political spheres, which consti-

tute their specific fields of the apostolate (cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, nn. 4, 7). The pastoral care of the family is an integral part of this accompaniment. The reservations of the faithful to Christian marriage reveal the necessity for a deep evangelization, which entails not only the inculturation of the faith, but also the evangelization of traditions and of the local culture (cf. *Africae Munus*, nn. 36-38). In this regard, I would like to thank you for the contribution of your Dioceses to the Synod of Bishops on the Family. You will not fail to benefit from it so as to better adapt your pastoral care to local realities.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, in these areas and in many others, the priests are your first collaborators. As a result, their living conditions and their spiritual wellbeing must never cease to be at the centre of your concerns and of your solicitudes (cf. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 7). In particular, continuing formation is indispensable for them, to enable them to serve the People of God ever better and to accompany them spiritually in a proper way,

The Church “has received the mission of reconciling hearts, of drawing divided communities back toward each other and of building a new fraternity rooted in forgiveness and solidarity”

particularly through dignified liturgical celebrations and homilies which nourish the faith of the faithful. In this respect, I invite you to continue monitoring the conditions of the priests of your diocese studying elsewhere, and to support them during their sojourn abroad, so as to favour their return in good time, ensuring that the good of the Church is always safeguarded.

I give thanks to God for the numerous priestly and religious vocations that are flourishing in your dioceses. Moreover, they testify to your apostolic zeal, blessed by the Lord, because it is ultimately He the Master of the harvest who calls and sends out labourers to his harvest (cf. Mt 9:38). This creates even more obligations for you pastors to whom these vocations are entrusted, in order that, through personalized listening, you accompany those who feel they are called to serve the Lord in his vineyard, according to different charisms. The immense pastoral needs of the local Church requires in her turn rigorous discernment, so



that the People of God can depend on dedicated pastors, who edify with their life’s witness, above all concerning celibacy and the spirit of evangelical poverty. Moreover, we must not fail to ensure that everyone, priests, catechists, young families, prayer groups and still others, may be ever more aware of the importance of their contribution in the accompaniment and the formation of candidates to the priesthood and that each one play their proper role in it.

In this *Year of Consecrated Life*, I would like to personally give praise to the commitment of men and women religious to the service of the peoples of Congo, to those who offer, with generosity and dedication, both spiritual and material assistance, witnessing to the chaste, poor and obedient Christ.

If harmonious collaboration among Bishops and consecrated men and women, necessary at all levels, supports the proclamation of the Gospel, your affectionate closeness cannot but reassure and allow them to contribute ever more to the growth of the local Church, in the diversity of their charisms.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, some dioceses are experiencing serious difficulties, due to the lack of available local material and financial resources. I understand the extent of the thoughts and concerns linked to such a situation in the heart of a pastor. This is why I encourage you to resolutely set your dioceses on the right path of autonomy, of gradually taking charge and of solidarity among the particular Churches of your country, according to the beautiful tradition that dates back to the first Christian communities (cf. Rom 15:25-28). In this respect, continue to ensure that the economic aid granted to your particular Churches to sustain them in their specific mission neither limits your freedom as pastors, nor blocks the freedom of the

Church, which must have *carte blanche* to proclaim the Gospel in a credible manner.

With regard to mutual aid and solidarity among the particular Churches, they must also communicate themselves in promoting the missionary spirit first and foremost within Africa. I gladly address to you the solemn appeal of my Predecessor Blessed Paul VI to Kampala: “By now, you Africans are missionaries to yourselves” (*Homily during the Eucharistic Celebration at the Conclusion of the Symposium of the Bishops of Africa*, 31 July 1969).

Ecclesial communion must also be concretely manifest in the exercise of the prophetic dimension of your pastoral task. It is indeed important that you be able, with a single voice, to speak powerful words inspired by the Gospel to direct and illuminate your countrymen on every aspect of community life, when times are difficult for the Nation or when circumstances so require. In this way, your efforts for an ever greater plan should always be followed, because unity in diversity is one of the notable features and also one of the requirements of the Church, as the Body of Christ. This coherence will not only allow you to always defend the common good and also the good of the Church before any request, but will also support your efforts in facing together the numerous pastoral challenges, not the least of which is the proliferation of sects.

Profound evangelization constitutes another challenge. Well, it necessarily presupposes particular attention to the actual living conditions of the peoples, or ultimately to the promotion of the human person. On this level too, the commitment of the Catholic Church in Congo is important: in every sphere, be it education, health care, aid to the various categories of people in need, among which are the refugees from neighbouring countries, your diocesan communities generate a considerable contribution. With the generosity and the dedication of the Good Samaritan, they place themselves without reservation at the service of their brothers and sisters. As pastors, continue to ensure that social pastoral care be increasingly carried out in the spirit of the Gospel and be ever better perceived as the work of evangelization, and not as the action of a non-governmental organization.

In this regard, in certain sectors of society, the wounds caused by the serious crisis that affected Congo at the end of the 1990s left deep scars, which at times have not yet completely closed. In this field in particular, the Church, empowered by the Gospel of Jesus, has received the mission of reconciling hearts, of drawing divided communities back toward each other and of building a new fraternity rooted in forgiveness

The Pope counsels the Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement to never tire of going out to meet those who are distant

Keep pressing forward

Pope Francis received thousands of members of the Cursillos de Cristiandad Movement in audience on Thursday afternoon, 30 April, in the Paul VI Hall. The Pontiff spoke with its members on the charism of Cursillos and answered their questions, on how to stay true to the original charism while adapting to meet the changing needs of the modern world. Another question addressed how to cultivate friendship with Christ and with others in the world. Yet another was dedicated to the outward bound mission which is characteristic of Cursillos, and how to achieve it despite the internal and external obstacles they face. The Pope set aside his prepared speech and answered the questions extemporaneously in Italian. The following is a translation of the Pope's discourse.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good afternoon!

First of all I must apologize, because this meeting was scheduled for tomorrow, and I believe that you had to make many changes and also with difficulties, in transportation, in means of transport.... I sincerely apologize!

There was some confusion. You know that the Pope is infallible when he makes dogmatic definitions, something which he does, but rarely.... But the Pope also has his

flaws and infallibility has nothing to do with his flaws! This Pope is not very orderly and is even undisciplined. And this confusion was the result of this. I beg your pardon for this. Thank you!

I was aware of the questions, I wrote a speech to respond, but at times I will come back to a few questions, because there are things I would like to highlight.

As the President said, you have come to Rome for your *Ultreya*, a name that recalls the age-old greet-

ing of the pilgrims from Santiago de Compostela, who encouraged each other to go "further away", "always a step further". For you this is a true reunion among friends, a fraternal meeting of prayer, of celebration, of sharing your experience of Christian life. I thank your representatives who presented your Movement's proposals, problems and perspectives to me. For my part, I would like to offer you some helpful suggestions for your spiritual growth and your mission in the Church and in the world.

You are called – you did not choose first, no, you were chosen – to make the most of the charism that the Lord entrusted to you and which is at the origin of Cursillos de Cristiandad, from whose group of founders Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló and then Bishop of Mallorca, Juan Hervas y Benet – he was brave! – stand out. They knew how to accompany the growth of the Movement with paternal solicitude. In the 1940s, together with other young lay

people, they realized the need to reach their peers, seeing the desire for truth and love present in their hearts. These pioneers of your Movement were authentic missionaries: they did not hesitate to take the initiative and courageously approach people, engaging them in the journey of faith with respect and love. This is important: geniality, fellowship.... One thing I would like to say to your Movement: you have not proselytized! This is a virtue. "The Church does not grow through proselytism, but through witness" – Pope Benedict said this to us. And it is so! You have not done proselytism. It is a grace of God. By following their example, today you too want to proclaim the Good News of God's love, by being close to friends, acquaintances, classmates and coworkers so that they too can live a personal experience of the infinite love of Christ who liberates and transforms life. How it is necessary to go out, to go ever further, never tiring, to meet those who are said to be distant!

In order to help others to grow in faith, following a path toward the Lord, it is important to experience in the first person the goodness and tenderness of God. This experience is the beginning of the journey that you are taking. When you see and comprehend that in your life God has been so good, so tender, so merciful, He wants to go out, wants to reach others. The Lord wants to meet us, the Lord wants to dwell with us, be a friend and brother, our teacher who reveals to us the path to take in order to achieve happiness. He asks nothing of us in return, only that He be welcomed, because God's love is freely given, a pure gift. This is important! To bear witness it is necessary to recognize that all that we have is purely given, is a gift, is free, is grace. And this is not bought, it is not sold! It is a journey freely undertaken, it is a journey that cannot be explained: "Why me, Lord? What must I do?"; "Tell it to others!". Communicate what the Lord has done for me, with so much tenderness, with so much goodness, with so much mercy. This is the testimony. This amicable testimony of dialogue among friends. The encounter with Christ, and with the mercy of the Father who gives Him to us, is possible first in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist and in Reconciliation. In the Holy Mass we celebrate the memory of his sacrifice: still today He truly gives his Body for us and sheds his Blood to redeem mankind. In Penance Jesus accepts us with all our limitations and sins, to give us a new heart capable of loving like He does, who loved his own to the end (cf. Jn 13:1). Each time we return to ask forgiveness, He forgives, for He knows that we are weak, that we are sinners. We have a degree in sinning! Everyone. And He knows this. And He always receives us, with love. Another way is meditating on the Word of God, especially the *lectio divina*, reading the Word of God, reading the Bible. Many times I have counseled, and I also do so

For a new brotherhood

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and solidarity. You pastors, continue to be models and prophets in this sense!

Recently, in the Diocese of Dolisie, in Louvakou, the Shrine dedicated to Divine Mercy was inaugurated, becoming a place of pilgrimage, of retreats and of spiritual meetings. I am delighted by this, and I hope that this Shrine truly becomes a place in which the People of God come to strengthen their faith, especially on the occasion of the upcoming Extraordin-

ary Jubilee of Mercy and of the other pastoral initiatives that you shall take.

In conclusion, renewing my fraternal and prayerful affection for you, I again emphasize my encouragement to the priests, men and women religious, consecrated lay people, catechists, and to all the faithful of the Church who roam this beautiful and beloved land of Congo. Invoking Divine Mercy upon you and on your country, I wholeheartedly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and to each of your diocesan communities.



Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

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the last one, are not farewells" that conclude with "see you soon, see you later, until we meet again". They are not farewells "in which one knows he is returning either right away or in a week". Instead, with grand farewells, "one neither knows when nor how" the return may be. And "that last farewell is even portrayed in art, in songs, for example". In this regard, Francis spoke of the traditional song of the Alpine troops, recalling *Il Testamento del Capitano* [the Captain's Testament], "when that captain bids farewell to his soldiers". He then posed the question: "Do I think about that great farewell, my grand farewell", meaning: "not when I have to say 'see you soon', 'see you later', 'until we meet again', but 'goodbye'?"

The two texts in the day's liturgy "say the word 'goodbye': Paul entrusts his own to God, and Jesus entrusts to the Father his disciples, who remain in the world. It is "en-

trusting to the Father, entrusting to God" which is the "origin of the word "goodbye". In fact, "we say 'goodbye' only in the great farewells, whether those of life, or the final one".

Before the icon "of Paul who weeps, kneeling on the beach" and the icon of "Jesus, somber for he is going to his Passion, with his disciples, weeping in his heart", the Pontiff recommended that we "reflect on it: it will do us good". And that we ask ourselves: "Who will be the person to close my eyes? What will I leave?". The Pope noted, in fact, that "Paul and Jesus, in these passages, both do an examination of conscience: 'I have done this, this and this'. And thus it is good to ask oneself, in a sort of examination of conscience: 'What have I done?'. And to do so with the awareness that "it is good for me to imagine myself at that moment, one never knows when, in which 'see you later', 'see you soon', 'see you tomorrow', 'until we meet again' will become 'goodbye'. He then

invited further reflection: "Am I prepared to entrust to God all of my loved ones? To entrust myself to God? To say that word which is the Son's word of entrustment to the Father?"

Pope Francis also counseled: "if you have a little time today and, if you don't, find it!": read Chapter 16 of the Gospel according to John or Chapter 19 of the Acts of the Apostles. These are "the farewell of Jesus and the farewell of Paul". In the light of these very texts, it is important "to consider that one day I too will have to say that word: 'goodbye'. Yes, he added, "to God I entrust my soul; to God I entrust my history; to God I entrust my loved ones; to God I entrust all".

"Now", the Pope concluded, "let us remember Jesus' goodbye, Jesus' death". And he prayed "that Jesus, died and risen, will send us the Holy Spirit so that we learn this word, learn to say it existentially, with all our strength: the last word: 'goodbye'".



now: always carry a small Gospel in a pocket or in a purse. On journeys, while waiting at the dentist's or to do something, read a passage of the Gospel and calmly think about it. This familiarity with the Word of God brings us close to the Lord. And in this way we are able to hear the Lord who points out the path to take and encourages us in the face of the uncertainties and difficulties that life presents. Eventually, we encounter the love of Christ in the Church which, through various activities, testifies to the charity of God. The love of Jesus in works of mercy. I will ask you a question: are all of you able to recite the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy? Let's be brave.... Those who cannot, raise your hand! [many hands are raised] But look.... I work for you, bishops! I work for you! It is important to read what the corporal works of mercy are. Some of you – surely – remember them, but there are seven.... And there are seven spiritual. An assignment to do at home: find and study the works of mercy. Why? To put them into practice. Everything in the ecclesial community has the objective of enabling people to touch by hand the infinite divine mercy. Some think: "No, God is far way. I will go to hell.... I have done so much". But if you have done many things, many bad things, He will be very glad and will celebrate that you have drawn near to ask forgiveness. And this is the work of persuasion that you must do with friends and in Cursillos. Because it's true, God celebrates! God celebrates. And someone may also feel somewhat jealous about this: think about the elder son of that merciful father (cf. Lk 15:11-32) who gave a feast because the other one, who had taken all his money, who had spent it on the "good life", returned with nothing.... And he celebrates. It is a peculiarity of our God! To give a feast when a serious sinner comes. This is good!

The Cursillos' mode of evangelization was born precisely from this burning desire for *friendship with God*, from which *friendship with brothers* springs. It has been understood from the very start that only from relationships of authentic friendships is it possible to prepare and accompany people on their journey, a journey which begins with conversion, passes through the discovery of the beauty of a life lived in the grace of God, until it reaches the joy of becoming apostles in everyday life. And thus, since then,

thousands of people in all the world have been helped to grow in the life of faith. In the present context of anonymity and isolation typical of our cities, the welcoming, familiar people-oriented dimension, which you offer in group encounters is so important. Friendships are made. There will be problems, here or there.... There will be, there are always problems. But friendship must be fostered. "But Father, when we foster friendship, certain arguments, jealousy, envy also grow...". What did the Lord say? When the devil sows weeds, let them grow. You grow good grain, friendship. And at harvest time the weeds will be burned and the good grain will bear its fruit. I ask you to always maintain a climate of friendship and fraternity in which to pray and to share on a weekly basis experiences, apostolic successes and failures.

A memory comes to mind of a woman, born in a family of atheists, and she too was an atheist; not agnostic, but atheist. But she was a good woman, a professional, a woman who did her job, was married, with children, but without religion. One of her daughters encountered Jesus Christ, better yet, was found by Jesus Christ. She converted and lived a Christian life. And the mother respected this: "It's your choice, daughter. Go ahead! I don't believe, but you go on". Years passed, the daughter was a committed Catholic, we could also say a militant Catholic – I don't like the word but let's say it to make it clearly understood. Then the elderly mother, at over 80 years old, fell ill. She was nearing death, but was lucid. The day before she died, while the daughter was near her, taking care of her, she asked: "Tell me", – she had never asked this question, because she had respect –, "what do you feel when you pray?". And the daughter, respecting her mother, said that she spoke to God, to the Lord.... This is how a conversation on this subject began, lightly, peacefully. Then another subject came up, and this one returned.... At the end the mother said: "Are you happy with what you've found in religion?"; "Yes, Mom, because I believe in Jesus, I believe that Jesus loves us!"; "How I wish I could feel the same!". And the daughter encouraged her and said: "Tell me, Mom, do you want this?"; "Yes! But it's too late..."; "Never, Mom. Do you want me to baptize you?"; and the mother said: "Yes!". The daughter couldn't call a priest, because the mother would have been frightened. The daughter

baptized the mother and two hours later the mother fell into a coma and died, at midnight. These are the miracles of God through closeness, through service. Not proselytism! That daughter never proselytized. I knew her pretty well, to the point that she came to me to tell me what she had done and was afraid to have done wrong. "No, you did well! You enabled you mother to enter Heaven!". But it takes patience. It takes patience. Proselytism is not patient! "Read this, do this, come here, go there"; they knock at your door.... No, no. Friendship. And there, sowing, in friendship. And this sowing in friendship is true penance.

In these small group meetings it is important to place alongside them moments that promote a *greater social and ecclesial dimension*, also involving those who come in contact with your charism but do not regularly participate in the group. A greater social and ecclesial dimension, which also involves those who do not have contact with your charism, who do not regularly participate in the group. The Church, indeed, is a "mother with an open heart" who invites us at times to "slow down", to "stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 46). It is beautiful to help everyone, even those who struggle to live their own faith; to help and to always stay in contact with this Mother Church, always close to the great welcoming family which is the Mother Church, our Holy Mother Church. In recent years, in Argentina, there have been some problems with Cursillos: external problems. Because once, they worked until a certain point, then there was Saturday, Sunday, perhaps Monday, maybe.... They could do it. Today they work on Saturday, even Sunday. And they weren't finding the time for those long, three-day prayer meetings. They were losing their pay, losing their bonuses, and even risked losing their jobs. And they were trying to bring their charism up to date with this situation. What must be done in this situation? Consider what Christians did at the time of Nazism, communism: they tried to do catechesis in another way, at other times, the Mass somewhat in hiding.... I do not know. Look for ways that allow you to carry on with your charism. This is very important! Do not let external conditions block it!

I encourage you to "keep pressing forward", faithful to your charism! To keep alive the zeal, the flame of the Spirit who always urges the disciples of Christ to *reach those who are distant*, without proselytizing, to "go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel" (*ibid.*, 20). You have heard this, I have said it to you several times: in large cities, Christian cities, even in Christian families, there are children who do not know how to make the sign of the cross. And this paganization of society challenges us: do something to evangelize. The Spirit urges us to go forth from our own comfort zone. How beautiful it is to proclaim to all the love of God who saves and gives meaning to our life! Helping today's men and women to discover the beauty of the faith and

the life of grace that is possible to live in the Church, our mother! There are Christian and Catholic communities – there are! – where they do not speak of the life of grace, they do not speak of the beauty of having the Trinity within us, the presence of the Living God within us. Your task is to go and bear this Good News: God abides in us, God is in us. This is grace! Help today's men and women discover the beauty of faith and of a life of grace. And you will do so if you are docile, in an attitude of humility and trust, under the guidance of this holy mother, the Church, which always seeks the good of all her children; if you are in harmony with your Pastors and united with them in the mission of bringing the joy of the Gospel to all.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Divine Grace, assist in your apostolic journey.

Before giving the blessing, I want to look at the questions, whether there is something I have not said....

"How do we trust in the Holy Spirit, to the point of daring to proclaim the Mercy of God, where He is not sought?". If you do not trust in the Holy Spirit, go home! Go and look for another more agnostic, more ideological religion. Jesus said to us: "I will not leave you alone. I will send you the Spirit". And what does the Spirit do? Two things. He reminds us what Jesus taught us and He teaches us what we have to do. And then this trusting in the Spirit is surprising! To know when it is the Spirit who is pushing you. I like thinking of Philip, when the Spirit says to him: "Go on that road", the road to Gaza (cf. Acts 8:26-40). And he goes. At a certain point he sees a chariot, a travelling carriage, and seated in it is a minister of the treasury of Ethiopia, of Candace the queen, reading Isaiah.... A dialogue commences: "Explain this to me...". And then when they find water, this minister of the treasury asks for Baptism.... The Spirit guides you. It is actually the Spirit! Trust in the Spirit. Think about Philip, think of the many, so many who trust in the Spirit. It is beautiful to read the Book of the Acts of the Apostles: after Pentecost, the things that the Spirit has done!... Great things! And have trust.

"In every movement one strongly feels a twofold need: faithfulness to the original charism and the need for change and novelty in order to respond to and transform situations". The question was: "How to maintain harmony between these two tensions? How to discern the novelty that the Holy Spirit suggests from the novelty that instead moves away from the charism? How to understand whether a certain faithfulness to the original charism is more rigidity than true loyalty to the Holy Spirit?". This is important. To understand and know souls: "Do not trust, beloved ones, in every Spirit", the Apostle says to us. Know when an inspiration is in harmony with the original charism and when it is not. This going forth leads you to find different situations, different cultures, and the original charism must be interpreted for that culture. Not betrayed! Interpreted. It must be the charism, but interpreted! "I

Cardinal Parolin celebrates Mass during the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis

People before all else

People before all else. Never lose sight of the world's emergencies and of the truth that "Jesus is the Christ". This was the message of Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, during Mass on Saturday morning, 16 May, celebrated during the General Assembly of *Caritas Internationalis*, which was held in Rome from 12-17 May. In his homily, the Cardinal underlined that *Caritas Internationalis* must be "more ecclesial" and make "the face of the Church more charitable".

Commenting on the day's readings, the Cardinal reintroduced the expression "Jesus is the Christ", stating: "I cannot but pause to contemplate this affirmation: Jesus is the Christ, the heart of the Church's preaching". A truth, he added, which "should become flesh of our flesh; and this, above all, in our personal life".

"Being Christian, professing that Jesus is the Christ", he said "is, in the first instance, a personal attitude, matured and pondered by those who have responsibility at different levels of *Caritas*. A personal attitude and not an external

label. It is from this intimate conviction that can flow a service that is worthy of the name we bear". This, he said, "cannot ever simply be taken for granted, as if it were an obvious premise, but is rather a personal adhesion which is renewed every day". Thus, he suggested that they consider the dimension of service "as the primary element which makes of *Caritas* a genuine *Caritas Christi*". Continuing, the Secretary of State said, "this is the wellspring that gives sense to our presence in the world". It "becomes the criterion for judging the reality that surrounds us". In fact, "for economic and social questions, for those of an ecological and anthropological nature, Christians have at their disposal a measure to read and interpret such reality with the eyes of Christ". As Christians "these realities pose us questions, requiring an answer. We cannot simply be indifferent faced with the great needs of humanity".

Regarding these realities, Cardinal Parolin, pointed to "major emergencies, such as that which has affected Nepal these last weeks, or of the major crises such as in Syria or in Iraq, for which the International Community has not been able to find a path to an equitable and shared solution".

But "the real challenge to our faith is in the style of our response". Therefore we must ask ourselves: "How does our faith bear upon the interpretation of human needs and the response that is given to them?". "This is the question that should precede, accompany and complete every strategic or political consideration".

According to Cardinal Parolin, "one of the principal characteristics of this style, which sets apart a Catholic charity organisation, and particularly *Caritas*, should be the personal encounter with the person who is suffering". Thus, "it is striking that Pope Francis speaks not of poverty, but of the poor" because "behind every social phenomenon, there are people". Thus, the Cardinal extended the invitation not to "lose sight of the personal dimension of misery in its different forms, as well as the personal dimension of our response". Also because this "does not prevent an intervention on structures, processes and the major decisions".

Another dimension on which to reflect, said Cardinal Parolin regarding the day's liturgy, is that "of the Church continuing the work of Christ". As the new statues demonstrate, "*Caritas* does not exist without a vital relationship with the Church". This is an affirmation which, according to Cardinal Parolin, must make *Caritas* "grow and be welcomed within the Church, from the parish up to the international level". The members of *Caritas* thus have "a role of witness and prophecy, to make the face of the Church ever more maternal and welcoming, so that she might live ever more fully her charitable nature". Also, he said that belonging to the Church is important because "no *Caritas* organisation can exist alongside the Church, considering her to be a mere partner, rather than the very subject of its activity".

He concluded: "Communion with the local Church is an intrinsic characteristic of *Caritas*, and no strategy or agreement with national or international sponsors can make us deviate from this profound communion, as it is a question of our very identity".

In the Apostolic Palace

The Pope blesses an icon of Our Lady of Silence



"May the Virgin Mary intercede to the Lord that all who enter the Apostolic Palace may always use the right words".

This was the intention entrusted by Pope Francis to Our Lady of Silence. The icon, placed between two elevators at the main entrance to the Apostolic Palace in the San Damaso Courtyard, was blessed by the Pontiff on Monday morning, 18 May.

Pressing forward

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don't want problems, I follow the original charism...". This way you will become a beautiful display, a museum. You will make of your Movement a museum of things that are not useful today. Each charism is called to grow! Why? Because it carries the Holy Spirit inside, and the Holy Spirit makes it grow! Each charism must confront different cultures, with different ways of thinking, with different values. What does this do? It leaves the door open to the Holy Spirit. Here I have to do this, here I must do this... And how do I do this? Pray, ask! Prayer: without prayer no movement can go forward. No one!

I thank you once again for this meeting. I thank you for all that you do in the Church, which is so beautiful: helping people to encounter Jesus, helping them to understand that it is beautiful to live in God's grace. It is beautiful! I thank you so much and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Pray for me because even the Pope must be faithful to the Holy Spirit.

And now I shall give you the blessing, but let us pray together to Our Lady, our Mother. Hail Mary...

[Blessing]

Do not forget to learn the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy.



Cardinal Tagle named President

In the name of the world's poor

"Thank you for your trust. I'm limited in my capacities but with all of you, with the love that Jesus has poured into our hearts and in the name of all of the poor people in the world, I accept this election. Let us together strengthen the church of the poor so our witness can help guide us to a world of understanding justice, true freedom and peace". Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle thus accepted his election as the new President of *Caritas Internationalis* via telephone on Thursday, 14 May. The organization held its 20th General Assembly from 21-17 May. The Archbishop of Manila succeeds Cardinal Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, who is stepping down after serving two consecutive terms.

The life of the Church, Cardinal Tagle continued, stands on three pillars: the Word of God, the sacraments and the service of charity. The different branches of *Caritas* must work together in order to be more strategically effective and productive in disaster prevention and in preparing to respond to major disasters, he said. These are emergencies that the new President knows well since the Philippines and the entire continent of Asia have been affected in recent years by numerous and serious disasters. *Caritas*, as well as rescue operations, must contribute to the search for effective ways to mitigate climate change.

