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Friday, 17 October 2014

At the General Audience the Church awaits her Spouse

In God's tent



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Sunday Mass in thanksgiving for two new saints

Their memory sustains us

"The Church's mission of evangelization is essentially a proclamation of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, revealed to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ." These were the Pope's words during a homily at a Mass in thanksgiving on Sunday, 12 October, in St Peter's Basilica, for the equivalent canonizations of two Canadian Saints, François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation. "The memory of the missionaries sustains us at a time when we are experiencing a scarcity of labourers in the service of the Gospel".



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The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family

The discussion in its final stages

The Synod Fathers have explicitly called for the publication of the reports of the ten Circuli Minori, presented on Thursday morning, 16 October, during the 12th general Congregation. The decision was taken during a lively discussion, in the presence of the Pope and under the presidency of Cardinal Vingt-Trois, Cardinal Baldisseri, Secretary

General of the Synod of Bishops, specified that these texts are work materials which, like the *Relatio Post Disceptationem* before them, are part of the path of the Synod. He then announced that the Pope had added Cardinal Napier of South Africa and Archbishop Hart of Australia among the fathers called to collaborate in the drafting of the *Relatio Synodi*, whose work was to begin on Thursday afternoon. "Thus the five continents will be represented", the Secretary General explained. These two fathers will collaborate with the Relator General, the Special Secretary, the Secretary General, and with Cardinal Ravasi and Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop Fernández and Archbishop Aguiar Retes, Bishop Kang U-il and Fr Nicolás Pachón.

The work of the 12th Congregation, in which 178 fathers participated, opened at 10:30 with the intervention of the Orthodox Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, President of the Department of External Church Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, who brought the greeting of Patriarch Kirill. The issue of the family, the Orthodox Metropolitan pointed out, is particularly acute today and can be seen as the thermometer of the moral state of



observations and suggestions indicated, there emerged a common need for the launch of a sign of encouragement to Christian families who every day, despite the difficulties, live their vocation and their mission with fidelity, assuring trust and support to those who choose the path of Christian marriage.

During the open discussion that followed on whether to publish all the texts, the floor was taken by Cardinal Pell, Cardinal Erdő, Cardinal Vingt-Trois, Cardinal Martínez Sistach, Cardinal Napier, Cardinal Burke, Cardinal Nichols and Cardinal Parolin, Patriarch Laham, Patriarch Tawal, Archbishop Léonard and Archbishop Fisichella, and Bishop Muandula.

For all the reports of the Circuli Minori, see the link on the Holy See Press Office's website: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/16/0763.html>

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Saturday, 11 October

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

Cardinal Gerardo Majella Agnello, Archbishop emeritus of São Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

Archbishop Francesco Moraglia, Patriarch of Venice, Italy

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Fr José João dos Santos Marcos from the clergy of Lisbon, Portugal, as Coadjutor Bishop of Beja, Portugal. Until now he has been spiritual director of the *Cristo Rei* and of the *Redemptoris Mater* Major Seminaries (10 Oct.).

Bishop-elect Marcos, 65, was born in Monte Peroboloso. He was ordained a priest on 23 June 1974. He

holds a degree in theology. He has served in parish ministry; as: member of the priestly formation group in Merccana; spiritual director of the *Cristo Re* Major Seminary and of the *Redemptoris Mater* Seminary; member of the Pastoral Council of the Patriarchate of Lisbon. In 2003 he was appointed Canon of the Chapter of Lisbon Cathedral.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Michel Christian Cartatéguy, SMA, of Niamey, Niger. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (11 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Djalwana Laurent Lompo, titular Bishop of Buffada, as Archbishop of Niamey, Niger. Until now he has been Auxiliary Bishop of the said archdiocese (11 Oct.).

Archbishop Lompo, 47, was born in Koulbou. He was ordained a

priest on 21 September 1997. He was ordained a bishop on 9 June 2013, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of Niamey.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Francesco Pio Tamburrino, OSB, of Foggia-Bovino, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (11 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Vincenzo Pelvi, Military Ordinary emeritus for Italy, as Archbishop of Foggia-Bovino, Italy (11 Oct.).

Archbishop Pelvi, 66, was born in Naples, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 18 April 1973. He was ordained a bishop on 5 February 2000, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of Naples. On 14 October 2013 he was appointed Military Ordinary for Italy and raised to the dignity of Archbishop. On 10

August 2013, he resigned from his position as Military Ordinary for Italy.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Kazimierz Ryczan of Kielce, Poland. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (11 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jan Piotrowski as Bishop of Kielce, Poland, transferring him from the titular episcopal see of Sinitis. Until now he has been Auxiliary of the Diocese of Tarnów (11 Oct.).

Bishop Piotrowski, 61, was born in Szczurowa, Poland. He was ordained a priest on 25 May 1980. He was ordained a Bishop on 25 January 2014, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of Tarnów.

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The Holy Father receives the President of Sri Lanka



On 3 October, the Holy Father received in audience the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr Mahinda Rajapaksa, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State.

During the cordial discussions, the Parties focused on the country's current situation, with particular reference to signs of social and economic improvement, and conveyed their hope that solutions corresponding to the legitimate expectations of all citizens may be found.

In this context, the Parties expressed their hope that the Holy Father's upcoming visit to Sri Lanka may be welcomed as a sign of closeness to the Sri Lankan population and may encourage those who work for the common good, reconciliation, justice and peace.

Fifth Meeting of the Vietnam-Holy See Joint Working Group

To implement the agreements reached during the fourth meeting of the Vietnam - Holy See Joint Working Group in the Vatican in June 2013, the fifth meeting of the Joint Working Group took place in Hanoi on 10-11 September 2014. The Meeting was co-chaired by Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Sơn, head of the Vietnamese delegation and Undersecretary for the Holy See's Relations with States, Msgr Antoine Camilleri, head of the Holy See delegation.

The Holy See delegation appreciated the support given by the competent authorities at all levels to the Catholic Church in Vietnam for her accomplishment of mission. It also took note of the development in the religious policies of Vietnam, reflected in the 2013 Amended Constitution. The Vietnamese State has facilitated working visits to Vietnam by the Non-resident Special Envoy of the Holy See to Vietnam Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli. The Holy See delegation reaffirmed that it attached great importance to the development of relations with Vietnam in particular and Asia in general, as evidenced by the recent and coming papal trips to the continent. The Holy See reaffirmed its commitment towards the goal of establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam, and, together with the Catholic Church in the country, wishes to make more active contributions to the country's development where the Catholic Church has strengths, for example health care, education, charity and humanitarian works. The Vietnamese side reiterated the consistent policy of the State and Party in respecting freedom of religion and belief of all people and supporting the Catholic Church in Vietnam to actively participate in the national social-economic development.

The two sides emphasized again the underlying principles of "living the Gospel within the Nation" and "good Catholic being good citizens". The Holy See delegation stressed that Pope Francis had followed with interest recent developments in Vietnam - Holy See relations and encouraged the Catholic Community in Vietnam to continue contributing forwards the country's major goals.

The two sides noted with satisfaction the positive developments in Vietnam - Holy See relations, which is shown by increased exchanges and contacts at all levels, meetings of the Joint Working Group and working visits of the Non-Resident Special Envoy in Vietnam. They agreed on maintaining dialogue and contacts while creating favourable conditions for his mission, as he helps the Catholic Church in Vietnam to implement papal teaching.

The meeting took place in a sincere, candid and mutually respectful atmosphere.

The two sides agreed to convene the sixth meeting of the Vietnam - Holy See Joint Working Group in Vatican. The time of the meeting will be arranged through diplomatic channels.

On this occasion, the Holy See delegation paid courtesy call to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh and met with the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Chairman of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs Pham Dung. It also took the opportunity to visit some Catholic institutions in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

Pope Francis to meet Vietnamese Prime Minister

On Saturday, 18 October, the Holy Father will receive Mr Nguyễn Tấn Dũng, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The Director of the Holy See Press Office Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ, announced this on 11 October. The meeting, which will be held at 12:30 pm, will allow a deepening of the bilateral relations between Vietnam and the Holy See.

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At the General Audience Pope Francis speaks of the Church awaiting her Spouse

In the tent of God

Where there will be no prevarication or social, ethnic and religious distinctions

The Church is "called to become a city, the symbol par excellence of human coexistence and relationality" where "there will no longer be isolation, prevarication or distinctions of a social, ethnic or religious nature". These concepts were highlighted by Pope Francis at the General Audience on Wednesday, 15 October, in St Peter's Square. After his reflection dedicated to the Church, the Pontiff spoke of the expectation of a bride meeting her Spouse. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

During this period we have spoken of the Church, of our Holy Mother hierarchical Church, the People of God on the journey. Today we would like to ask ourselves: at the end, what will happen to the People of God? What will happen to each of us? What should we expect? The Apostle Paul encouraged the Christians of the Thessalonian community, who were asking themselves these questions, and after his explanation they said these words, which are among the most beautiful of the New Testament: "And so we shall always be with the Lord!" (1 Thes 4:17). They are simple words, but



laden with such great hope! "And so we shall always be with the Lord". Do you believe this? ... It seems not. Do you believe? Shall we repeat it together? Three times?: "And so we shall always be with the Lord". "And so we shall always be with the Lord". "And so we shall always be with the Lord". It is emblematic that John, taking up the intuition of the prophets in the Book of Revelation, describes the final, definitive dimension in terms of the "new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rv 21:2). That is what awaits us! This, then, is who the Church is: she is the People of God who follows the Lord Jesus and who prepares herself day by day for the meeting with Him, as a bride with her bridegroom. And this is not just an expression: there will be actual nuptials! Yes, because Christ, by becoming a man like us and making us all one with him, with his death



and his Resurrection, truly wedded us and constituted us, as a people, his bride. This is none other than the fulfilment of the plan of communion and of love woven by God throughout history, the history of the People of God and also the very history of each one of us. It is the Lord who is in the lead.

There is another aspect, however, which further comforts us and which opens the heart: John tells us that in the Church, the Bride of Christ, the "new Jerusalem" is made visible. This means that the Church, in addition to bride, is called to become a city, the symbol par excellence of human coexistence and relationality. How beautiful, then, already being able to contemplate, according to another very suggestive image in Revelation, all people and all peoples gathered together in this city, as in a tent, "the tent of God" (cf. Rv 21:3)! And in this glorious framework there will no longer be isolation, prevarication or distinctions of any kind – of a social, ethnic or religious nature – but we will all be one in Christ.

In sight of this wonderful and unprecedented scene, our heart cannot help feeling strongly confirmed in hope. You see, Christian hope is not simply a desire, a wish, it is not optimism: for a Christian, hope is expectation, fervent expectation, impassioned by the ultimate and definitive fulfilment of a mystery, the mystery of God's love, in which we are born again and which are already experiencing. And it is the expectation of someone who is coming: it is Christ the Lord approaching ever closer to us, day by day, and who comes to bring us at last into the fullness of his communion and of his peace. The Church then, has the task of keeping the lamp of hope burning and clearly visible, so that it may continue to shine as a sure sign of salvation and illuminate for all humanity the path which leads to the encounter with the merciful face of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, here then is what we are awaiting: Jesus' return! The Church as bride awaits her Spouse! We must ask ourselves, however, with total sincerity: are we truly luminous and credible wit-

nesses to this expectation, to this hope? Do our communities still live in the sign of the presence of the Lord Jesus and in the warm expectation of his coming, or do they appear tired, sluggish, weighed down by fatigue and resignation? Do we too run the risk of exhausting the oil of faith, and the oil of joy? Let us be careful!

Let us invoke the Virgin Mary, Mother of Hope and Queen of Heaven, that she may always keep us alert, listening and expectant, so that we may, already now, be permeated by Christ's love and take part one day in the unending joy, in the full communion of God. Always remember, never forget: "And so we

India, Japan, Thailand, Australia and the United States of America. In a particular way, my greeting goes to the Irish National Pilgrimage commemorating the fourteenth centenary of the death of St Columban. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke joy and peace in the Lord Jesus. God bless you all!

I address a warm welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims. In particular, I greet participants in the 4th Conference of the Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Foundation which will take place in Medellín, urging them to seek paths that can build peace and promote the dignity of the human person.



shall always be with the Lord!" (1 Thes 4:17). Shall we repeat it? Three more times? "And so we shall always be with the Lord!". "And so we shall always be with the Lord!". "And so we shall always be with the Lord!".

Lastly, I address a special thought to *young people*, the *sick*, and *newlyweds*. Let us continue to invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary upon the Synod for the Family. Dear *young people*, especially those from the Istituto Cicerone, San Nilo and San Giuseppe al Trionfale, always thank the Lord for the gift of the family; dear *sick people*, join the offer of your suffering with prayerful intentions for peace within families; and you, dear *newlyweds*, found your marital home on the rock of the Word of God.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including the various groups from England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Ghana,

The logo for the Year of Consecrated Life

Renewing the action of the Spirit

The logo for the Year of Consecrated Life – designed by the painter Carmela Boccasile, who works with her husband, Lillo Dellino, and son, Dario – expresses through symbols the fundamental values of religious consecration. Religious consecration recognizes the “unceasing work of the Holy Spirit, who in every age shows forth the richness of the practice of the evangelical counsels through a multiplicity of charisms. In this way too he makes ever present in the Church and in the world, in time and space, the mystery of Christ” (Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, n. 5).

The graphic depicts a dove, which has an outline similar to the Arabic word for “peace”, recalling that the vocation to consecrated life is to be an example of universal reconciliation in Christ. The dove is a traditional symbol portraying the action of the Holy Spirit as the source of life and inspiration of creativity. It recalls the beginning of history: when “the Spirit of God was moving

over the water” (Gen 1:2). The dove, gliding over a sea swelling with unexpressed life, recalls patient and trusting fruitfulness, while the signs which surround it reveal the creative and renewing action of the Spirit. The dove further evokes the consecration of the humanity of Christ in baptism.

Made up of mosaic tiles, the waters represent the complexity and harmony of the human and cosmic elements that the Spirit makes “sigh” according to God’s mysterious plan (cf. Rom 8:26-27) as they meet in the hospitable and fruitful encounter which brings about new creation. Among the waves of history, the dove flies over the waters (cf. Gen 8:8-14). Consecrated men and women in the sign of the Gospel, ever pilgrims among the peoples that live their charismatic and diaconal diversity as “good stewards of God’s



Christ, the model and patron of every consecrated life.

The small multifaceted polyhedron signifies the world with all its peoples and cultures, as Pope Francis affirms in *Evangelii gaudium* (n. 236). The breath of the Spirit sustains and leads it towards the future: an invitation to consecrated men and women “to become bearers of the Spirit (*pneumatophori*), authentically spiritual men and women, capable of endowing history with hidden fruitfulness” (*Vita consecrata*, n. 6).

The phrase *Vita consecrata in Ecclesia hodie. Evangelium, prophetia spes* places further emphasis on identity and horizons, experience and ideals, grace and the path that consecrated life has lived and continues to live in the Church as the People of God, in the pilgrimage of the nations and cultures, toward the future.

Two Chinese bishops die

On 21 September, Bishop John Chrysostom Lan Shi, Coadjutor Bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Sanyuan, Shaanxi Province (Mainland China) died at the age of 89.

He was born in 1925 in Tongyuan, Gaoling County (Shaanxi) to a Christian family. At age 14, he entered the diocesan seminary; at 29 he was ordained a priest and assigned as parish priest at Jingyang, a village in Xiushidu.

With the approach of the Cultural Revolution in 1965, he was arrested, detained and forced into hard labour until 1979. In 1980, following the liberalization of religious activities, he once again became the parish priest in the same village in Xiushidu.

In 2000, Msgr Lan Shi was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Sanyuan, the diocese in which Bishop Joseph Zong Huaide was serving at the time. On 28 November of the same year, he was ordained a bishop by Bishop Lawrence Zhang Wenbin, the then Bishop of the Apostolic Prefecture of Tongzhou / Weinan.

During his episcopal ministry, Bishop Lan Shi was particularly dedicated to the young, training several for the priesthood and consecrated life. As a music lover, he composed several songs to be played during the liturgy.

His funeral Mass was celebrated on 24 September in the parish of Xiushidu. Several local bishops and approximately 40 priests, 100 nuns and 2,000 faithful attended. The diocesan community prayed that the Lord receive the soul of the prelate into his Kingdom.

On 23 September, after a long illness Bishop John Baptist Wang Jin of Yuci (Yütze) in Shanxi Province

of the People’s Republic of China, died at the age of 90 years.

He was born on 22 April 1924 in Taiyuan, Shanxi, to a family with a long Catholic tradition. From an early age he felt the vocation to the priesthood and in 1935 he entered the minor seminary in Taiyuan. Forced to return to his family as the result of the Japanese invasion in 1937, the following year he was able to resume his studies at the seminary. In 1943 he went on to the Major Seminary of Taiyuan and in 1949 he completed his theological studies at the seminary in Macao. After a year of pastoral training in the Archdiocese of Taiyuan, he was ordained a priest on 9 June 1951.

He served in various parishes and as seminary rector. He was arrested in 1965 and imprisoned for 20 years.

Released from prison on 8 April 1985, he resumed his priestly ministry in the Diocese of Yuci. On 14 September 1999, after obtaining the approval of the Holy See, he received episcopal ordination from Archbishop Sylvester Li Jiantang of Taiyuan. During his episcopal ministry he always remained faithful to the principles of the Church of Christ, whom he deeply loved throughout his long life. During his time at the Diocese of Yuci he paid particular attention to priestly vocations. In 2000, 30 priests were ordained, the last on 9 July by the Prelate himself, despite his long illness and frequent hospitalizations.

The funeral of Bishop Wang Jin was celebrated on 7 October in the Cathedral of Yuci. He was buried in the cemetery for priests in Dongergou (Taiyuan). The diocesan community prayed the Lord to receive the soul of the Prelate into his Kingdom.

varied grace” (1 Pet 4:10); marked by the Cross of Christ even until martyrdom, they live history with the wisdom of the Gospel, the Church that embraces and heals all that is human in Christ.

The three stars recall the identity of consecrated life in the world as *confessio Trinitatis, signum fraternitatis et servitium caritatis*. These phrases express the circularity and the relationality of the Trinitarian love which consecrated life seeks to live every day in the world. The stars are also a symbol of the golden Triune seal with which Byzantine iconography honours Mary, the all holy mother of God, the first disciple of

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Antônio Fernando Brochini, CSS, as Bishop of Itumbiara, Brazil. Until now he has been Bishop of Jaboticabal, Brazil. (15 Oct.).

Bishop Brochini, 67, was born in Rio Claro, Brazil. He made his religious vows for the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata on 3 February 1973 and was ordained a priest on 8 December 1973. He was ordained a bishop on 3 March 2002, subsequent to his appointment as Coadjutor of Jaboticabal and on 25 June 2003 he succeeded as Bishop of the said diocese.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Martino Canessa of Tortona, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (15 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Vittorio Francesco Viola, OFM, as Bishop of Tortona, Italy. Until now he has been professor of liturgy and Custodian of the Protoconvent and Shrine of the Portiuncula (15 Oct.).

Bishop-elect Viola, 49, was born in Biella, Italy. He holds a doctorate in Sacred Liturgy. He made his solemn vows as a Friar Minor on 14 September 1991. He was ordained a deacon on 4 July 1992 and a priest on 3 July 1993. He has served as defender of the Seraphic Province of the Friars Minor of Umbria; as Custodian of the Convent of the Papal Basilica of St Mary of the Angels

and of the Portiuncula; as Custodian of the convent annexed to the Basilica of St Clare in Assisi; head of the liturgical office for the Umbria Region; head of education, schools and university for the diocese of Assisi; head of the diocesan *Caritas*; professor of liturgy at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St Anselm in Rome; member of the Conference of the National Liturgical Office; teacher at the Theological Institute in Assisi and professor at the Institute for religious studies in Assisi.

CARDINAL TAKES POSSESSION

On 11 October, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, took possession of the Presbyteral Title of Santi Simone e Giuda Taddeo a Torre Angela, Via di Torrenova.

On 11 October, Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati Andreollo, SDB, Archbishop of Santiago de Chile, took possession of the Presbyteral Title of Santissimo Redentore a Valmelaina, Via Monte Ruggero.

NECROLOGY

Bishop John Patrick Boles, titular Bishop of Nova Sparsa, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Boston, USA, at age 84 (9 Oct.).

Bishop José Hernán Sánchez Porras, Military Ordinary for Venezuela, at age 70 (13 Oct.).

Mass in thanksgiving for the canonizations of St François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation

Their memory sustains us

On Sunday 12 October, in the Vatican Basilica, the Holy Father celebrated a Mass in thanksgiving for the equivalent canonizations of Sts François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation. These saints of French origin could be considered founders of the Church in Canada. Concelebrating with the Holy Father were Cardinal Lacroix, Archbishop of Québec, Cardinal Collins, Archbishop of Toronto, and Cardinal Quillet, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily, which was delivered in Italian.

We have heard Isaiah's prophecy: "The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..." (Is 25:8). These words, full of hope in God, point us to the goal, they show the future towards which we are journeying. Along this path the Saints go before us and guide us. These words also describe the vocation of men and women missionaries.

Missionaries are those who, in docility to the Holy Spirit, have the courage to live the Gospel. Even this Gospel which we have just heard: "Go, therefore, into the byways...", the king tells his servants (Mt 22:9). The servants then go out and assemble all those they find, "both good and bad", and bring them to the King's wedding feast (cf. v. 10).

Missionaries have received this call: they have gone out to call everyone, in the highways and byways of the world. In this way they have done immense good for the Church, for once the Church stops moving, once she becomes closed in on herself, she falls ill, she can be corrupted, whether by sins or by that false knowledge cut off from God which is worldly secularism.

Missionaries have turned their gaze to Christ crucified; they have received his grace and they have not kept it for themselves. Like St Paul, they have become all things to all people; they have been able to live in poverty and abundance, in plenty and hunger; they have been able to do all things in him who strengthens them (cf. Phil 4:12-13). With this God-given strength, they have the courage to "go forth" into the highways of the world with confidence in the Lord who has called them. Such is the life of every missionary man and woman... ending up far from home, far from their homeland; very often, they are killed, assassinated! This is what has happened even now to many of our brothers and sisters.

The Church's mission of evangelization is essentially a proclamation of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, revealed to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Missionaries have served the Church's mission by breaking the bread of God's word for the poor and those far off, and by bringing to all the gift of the unfathomable love welling up from the heart of the Saviour.

Such was the case with St François de Laval and St Marie de l'Incarnation. Dear pilgrims from



Canada, today I would like to leave you with two words of advice drawn from the Letter to the Hebrews. Keeping missionaries in mind, they will be of great benefit for your communities.

The first is this: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (13:7). The memory of the missionaries sustains us at a time when we are experiencing a scarcity of labourers in the service of the Gospel. Their example attracts us, they inspire us to imitate their

faith. They are fruitful witnesses who bring forth life!

The second is this: "Recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings... Do not therefore abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance... (10:32,35-36). Honouring those who endured suffering to bring us the Gospel means being ready ourselves to fight the good fight of faith with humility, meekness, and mercy, in our daily lives. And this bears fruit.

We must always remember those who have gone before us, those who

founded the fruitful Church in Québec! The missionaries from Québec who went everywhere were fruitful. The world was full of Canadian missionaries like François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation. So a word of advice: remembering them prevents us from renouncing candour and courage. Perhaps – indeed, even without perhaps – the devil is jealous and will not tolerate that a land could be such fertile ground for missionaries. Let us pray to the Lord, that Québec may once again bear much fruit, that it may give the world many missionaries. May the two missionaries, who we celebrate today, and who – in a manner of speaking – founded the Church in Québec, help us by their intercession. May the seed that they sowed grow and bear fruit in new courageous men and women, who are far-sighted, with hearts open to the Lord's call. Today, each one must ask this for your homeland. The saints will intercede for us from heaven. May Québec once again be a source of brave and holy missionaries.

This, then, is the joy and the challenge of this pilgrimage of yours: to commemorate the witnesses, the missionaries of the faith in your country. Their memory sustains us always in our journey towards the future, towards the goal, when "the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..."

"Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Is 25:9).

The Pope's prayer at the Angelus

No one is excluded

At the Angelus on Sunday, 12 October, Pope Francis spoke of God's freely given, broad and universal invitation. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection given in St Peter's Square.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning,

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus speaks to us about the response given to the invitation from God – who is represented by a king – to participate in a wedding banquet (cf. Mt 22:1-14). The invitation has three characteristics: *freely offered, breadth and universality*. Many people were invited, but something surprising happened: none of the intended guests came to take part in the feast, saying they had other things to do; indeed, some were even indifferent, impertinent, even annoyed. God is good to us, he freely offers us his friendship, he freely offers us his joy, his salvation; but so often we do not accept his gifts, we place our practical concerns, our interests first. And when the Lord is calling to us, it so often seems to annoy us.

Some of the intended guests went so far as to abuse and kill the

servants who delivered the invitation. But despite the lack of response from those called, God's plan is never interrupted. In facing the rejection of the first invitees, He is not discouraged, He does not cancel the feast, but makes another invitation, expanding it beyond all reasonable limits, and sends his servants into the town squares and the byways to gather anyone they find. These, however, are ordinary, poor, neglected and marginalized people, good and bad alike – even bad people are invited – without distinction. And the hall is filled with "the excluded". The Gospel, rejected by some, is unexpectedly welcomed in many other hearts.

The goodness of God has no bounds and does not discriminate against anyone. For this reason the banquet of the Lord's gifts is universal, for everyone. Everyone is given the opportunity to respond to the invitation, to his call; no one



Jan Luyken, "The Man Without a Wedding Garment" (18th cent.)

has the right to feel privileged or to claim an exclusive right. All of this induces us to break the habit of conveniently placing ourselves at the centre, as did the High Priests and the Pharisees. One must not do this; we must open ourselves to the peripheries, also acknowledging that, at the margins too, even one who is cast aside and scorned by society is the object of God's generosity. We are all called not to reduce the Kingdom of God to the confines of the "little church" – our "tiny little church" – but to enlarge the Church to the dimensions of the Kingdom of

Holy See statement in Geneva

We need a globalization of charity

The following is the Statement by Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations at the 2014 International Dialogue on Migration held in Geneva on 8 October by the International Organization for Migration "Migration and Families".

Mr Chairman,

The migrant family is a critical component of the growing phenomenon of migration in our globalized world. Thus the Delegation of the Holy See finds it most opportune to have chosen this topic for reflection at the 2014 International Dialogue on Migration (IDM).

1. Migrants very often move out of concern for the needs of their families; at times, they even risk their lives on flimsy boats or in dan-

gerous deserts in the hope of ensuring their families a decent life, as the IOM Report documents. Through their work, the taxes they pay, the new businesses they start and the variety of services they provide, most migrants offer a positive economic and social contribution to the receiving societies. Women domestic workers, for example, leave their children behind in the home country in order to become caregivers for children, disabled and elderly persons abroad. While migrants are a positive presence in their host societies, they face the risk that their own children and relatives remain in the shadow and deprived of their affection at home. The remittances sent home focus the debate on the financial benefits generated by migrants. While this money is important to improve health and education for

the family members left behind, it does not quite compensate for other needs: human affection, a necessary presence to educate in values and integrity, a reference model for responsible behaviour, especially for young people. The human emptiness felt when a father or mother emigrates becomes a reminder of the ambivalence of emigration and of the fundamental right to be able to stay at home in dignity. Especially when mothers emigrate, other negative consequences emerge: children's school attendance declines, early marriages of adolescent girls increase, and there is a heightened risk of drug abuse. As Pope Francis recently stated, "it is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries" (Pope Francis, *Message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*).

2. Children, therefore, as well as elderly persons and spouses left behind, must become a high priority in any migration policy and debate: they are particularly vulnerable, and hence should receive special protection. Policy and program development should aim at maximizing the benefits of remittances, limiting the negative effects of migration and emphasizing family ties as a primary concern in the management of immigration by States. Policy formulation often treats family and labour migration as two distinct realms, "social" and "economic." In reality, the two concepts are closely intertwined (Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Cheng Yi En, *Family Migration*, p. 2). In the planning by the international community and in discussions focused on the post-2015 Development Agenda, migration must have a proper place, not only as functional to development and demography, but as a major human rights commitment aimed at safeguarding the dignity of every human person and the centrality of the family.

3. Indeed an urgently needed immigration reform involves the formulation of a legal framework that helps keep families together. The life and dignity of every human person is lived within the family. All children need their parents. Parents have the responsibility to protect and nurture their children, and yet deported parents are prevented from living out this fundamental vocation. Too many families are now torn apart. By allowing children to emigrate unaccompanied further problems arise as they are exposed to lawlessness and despair. The family structure, however, should be the place where hope, compassion, justice and mercy are taught most effectively. Family is the basic unit of coexistence, its foundation, and the ultimate remedy against social fragmentation (cf. Pope Francis, *Ad-*

dress to the community of Varginha, 25 July 2013).

4. Finally, achievable measures could be implemented in a realistic and sensitive manner. Migrants, who are restricted or prevented from traveling home in order to provide personal care for elderly parents or affection to their kin, should be entitled to occasional leaves and should benefit from special prices for their trip home. Interest fees for the transfer of remittances must be lowered. The process to obtain a visa for a spouse or close family members (which in certain countries takes several years) needs to be speeded up. Ad hoc "family counselors" to serve in regions with a very high rate of migrants should be engaged in order to provide assistance and advice to members of the family "left behind" and to facilitate timely reunification of the family. In fact, when returning migrants revert to day-to-day interaction with their societies of origin, they experience a "reverse culture shock" (http://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?pid=S1665-89062013000100001&script=sci_art-text). The changes in family dynamics that result from migration do not end when the migrant returns to the society of origin; in fact, migrants generally return to a family situation that is very different from that before departure. Family members can become "strangers" since they have been absent from each others' lives and since relations between them are largely based on the sending of money and goods or sporadically maintained by new forms of Internet communications.

5. In conclusion, it is mandatory to avoid treating the "left behind" population merely as passive recipients of the effects of migration. In this context, family migration needs to be reconceived using frameworks of trans-nationalism that grant more flexibility to the movement of people, especially in countries where the presence of migrant workers' families is legally impeded. Healthy interaction and personal relations among family members are obstructed by borders. States and civil society are prompted by their own future to give priority to the family and thus make migration a more positive experience for all.

Pope Francis to visit France in 2015

Pope Francis is going to France in 2015. Fr Federico Lombardi announced this in the Holy See Press Office on Tuesday, 7 October, during a presentation of the Holy Father's schedule at the European Parliament on 25 November. Around 10 am the Bishop of Rome will arrive in Strasbourg where he will give two addresses and then depart at 2 pm.



At the Angelus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

God. However, there is one condition: wedding attire must be worn, that is, charity toward God and neighbour must be shown.

Let us entrust the tragedies and the hopes of so many of our excluded, weak, outcast, scorned brothers and sisters, as well as of those who are persecuted for reasons of faith, to the intercession of Most Holy Mary, and let us also invoke her protection upon the work of the Synod of Bishops, meeting in the Vatican during these days.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

Dear brothers and sisters, this morning in Sassari, Fr Francesco Ziarno of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, was declared Blessed: he preferred to be killed rather than deny the faith. Let us give thanks to God for this priest and martyr, a heroic witness to the Gospel. His courageous faithfulness to Christ is an act of great

eloquence, especially in the current context of the ruthless persecution of Christians.

At this time, our thoughts turn to the city of Genoa hard hit, once again, by flooding. I assure my prayers for the victims and for those who have suffered serious damage. May Our Lady of the Guard sustain the dear people of Genoa in a concerted effort to overcome this difficult trial. Let us all pray together to Our Lady of the Guard: *Hail Mary*... May Our Lady of the Guard protect Genoa!

I greet all the pilgrims, especially the families and parish groups. In particular I would like to cordially greet the group of Canadian pilgrims who have come to Rome for the Holy Mass of Thanksgiving for the Canonization of François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation: may the two Saints arouse apostolic fervour in the heart of young Canadians.

I wish a happy Sunday to you all. I ask you to please pray for me. Have a good lunch! *Arrivederci!*

Secretary of State to the Nuncios in countries of the Middle East

No one can stay neutral or inert

On Saturday, 4 October, the Feast of St Francis, the Secretary of State presided at Mass in the Pauline Chapel in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncios in several countries of the Middle East. The following is a translation of his homily, which was given in Italian.

PIETRO PAROLIN

Our meeting is the fruit of the peace brought to the world by Christ, who gave himself for all of us, as the Eucharist which comes to nourish us every day with the newness of his divine life, and is illuminated by the noble and holy figure of St Francis, a witness to the way of charity, of humility and of poverty as the privileged paths to take to truly become new beings, capable of comprehending and fulfilling the will of the Father and attaining salvation.

The Saint from Assisi teaches us the rationale, the courage and the patience of dialogue, even with those furthest away, in order that, touched by the purity of our intentions, they may amend and desist from their violent and subversive tactics.

Today we are celebrating this Holy Eucharist with anxiety for what is occurring in several countries in the Middle East.

We are seriously alarmed at seeing the growing threats to peace, and

dismayed at the situation of the Christian communities living in the territories between Syria and Iraq, controlled by an entity which tramples on rights and adopts terrorist methods as it seeks to extend its power.

These communities, who have lived in those lands since apostolic times, are thus facing situations of grave danger and of open persecution. They are often forced to abandon everything and flee from their homes and their country.

It is depressing to observe how persistent and active the forces of evil are; what great strides the conviction has made in a few corrupt minds that violence and terror are the methods to employ in order to impose dominion over others, even masked by the pretense of expressing a particular religious viewpoint!

This is an obvious perversion of genuine religious consciousness with tragic consequences, which calls for a response. The Church cannot remain silent in the face of the persecution suffered by her children, and the international community cannot remain neutral between the assailant and the assailed.

"Preserve me, O God, for in thee I take refuge" (Ps 16[15]:1). Thus prays the Psalmist. He, who has no shortage of difficulties and violent adversaries, turns confidently to the Lord. He is not dismayed by the wicked and their machinations, be-



cause he knows that his life is in God's hands. He knows that his true strength and security is the Lord, who gives him peace and gladness, and who is preparing for him a definitive future of joy. It is a gladness which does not fail even in tribulation and danger, because it is grounded in God. It is a joy like that felt by St Francis, who identified with the Crucified Christ to the point of receiving the stigmata within his own flesh. It is the gladness of every faithful Christian who knows that History is guided by Providence, and that the forces of evil will not prevail.

This certainty which makes us rejoice, far from letting us be idle or inactive spectators, spurs us as individuals and as a Christian com-

munity, as a Church, to constant and trusting prayer and to implement every practical initiative to raise the awareness of Governments and to inform public opinion. Everything possible should be done to alleviate the situation of our sorely tried brothers and to stop the aggressors. Providence also needs our support and that of our freedom and of our diligence and creativity, of our initiative and our daily effort.

Persecuted Christians and all those who are suffering unjustly must be able to recognize the Church as the institution that defends them, that prays and acts for them, that is not afraid to assert the truth, that makes itself the voice of the voiceless, defender and support for the abandoned, displaced and discriminated against.

Indeed, everything depends on God and on his Grace, but it is also necessary to act as if everything depended on us, on our prayer and on our solidarity.

I thank you, dear Apostolic Nuncios who work in the Middle East, for having accepted this invitation to come to the Vatican during these days in order to study in depth *cum et sub Petro* the situation in the countries where you are posted to represent the Holy See. I thank you for your work and your presence, by which you contribute to the peace and understanding among the peoples. The voice of the Holy Father speaks through you. Through you are made clear the actions of the Apostolic See to uphold the right to life and to religious freedom, the cornerstones of human rights. Through your prudent work, awareness is raised among Governments and international organizations with regard to their duty to guarantee peace and security in the manner established by international law, in order to render the aggressors harmless.

We are all called to commit ourselves to this task for world peace, for the continuity and development of the presence of the Christian communities of the Middle East, for the common good of humanity.

In the rejoicing hymn that we proclaimed, taken from the passage in Matthew, Jesus thanks and praises the Heavenly Father for having revealed the divine mysteries to babes, to those who have a pure and simple heart (cf. Mt 11:25), and not to those who are closed to the love of God, thinking they do not need it and can do without it. And this revealed mystery is Jesus Christ, in whom the true face of the Father is unveiled and whose yoke is truly easy and whose burden is light, while other yokes are so heavy and inhuman as to crush and disfigure the face of the human being.

May St Francis, profoundly identified with Christ Our Peace, and for this reason the prophet of peace and dialogue, intercede for us, help us to be credible witnesses of the Risen Christ. Let us pray to the Lord to convert the hearts of aggressors and bend them to his easy yoke.

Interview with Cardinal Parolin on the dire situation in the Middle East

We must not give up

Religious leaders play a fundamental role in fostering dialogue

"We must not forget, we must not give up". This was the appeal launched by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, with regard to the tragic news that continues to emanate from the areas under conflict in the Middle East, and in particular from those areas hit by the onslaught of offenses by the so-called Islamic State, where hundreds of thousands are being persecuted on account of their faith. In an interview by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Cardinal Parolin emphasized the Holy See's commitment to the populations of the region and recalled that Pope Francis announced a Consistory on 20 October to discuss the delicate situation. The assembly will take place slightly more than two weeks after the meeting of the Apostolic Nuncios in the Middle East, which took place in the Vatican.

Your Eminence, what was the reason for the meeting in the Vatican of the Pontifical representatives in the Middle East?

The Holy Father decided to convene the Apostolic Nuncios in the Middle East in order to dedicate a reflection on the tragic situation that has been experienced for some

time in the region, and to manifest his closeness and solidarity, and that of the entire Church, toward the people who are suffering the consequences of the ongoing wars. Particular attention was dedicated to Christians and to the other



groups being persecuted on account of their religious faith, especially in certain areas of Iraq and Syria, by the so-called Islamic State. The heads of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia who have direct responsibility for the Catholic Church in the Middle East also participated in the meeting. Through their presence, the Permanent Observers of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York

and Geneva and of the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union was intended to highlight the international consequences and dimensions of this dramatic situation. These representatives of the Pope give voice in a multilateral range to

the Holy See's position on various issues and maintain continuous contact with the diplomatic representatives of numerous countries. Thus, from direct experience in that land, a rich exchange of information and an evaluation of the situation have been possible, in order to determine what the Church can do, what can be requested from the international community, and to meet today's somber situation head-on. A further confirmation of how much the Holy Father takes all this to heart is seen in his will to dedicate the 20 October Consistory to the Middle East.

On the basis of the information of the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Interview with the Secretary of State

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Nuncios, what can be said of the Christian communities and of the other groups who are suffering from the violence in the region?

We have heard, with great feeling and deep concern, the testimony of the unspeakable atrocities being perpetrated from different sides, but mostly by the fundamentalist group of the so-called Islamic State: decapitations, the sale of women, the enlistment of children in deadly battles, the destruction of places of worship. This has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee from their homes and seek refuge elsewhere, in volatile conditions. People are being humiliated in their dignity and subjected to physical and moral suffering. In this regard, the Pontifical representatives and the superiors of the dicasteries who attended the meeting reaffirmed the refugees' right to return and to live in dignity and security in their own country and in their own environment. It is a right that must be supported and guaranteed as much by the international community as by the nations in which they are citizens.

What can the international community do?

The situation is truly complex. At the root of the forced displacement of millions of people in the Middle East are violent and inhuman conflicts which see involvement, either openly or in the shadows, of mercenary groups, non-state groups, regional and global powers. The choice of armed conflict, rather than dialogue and negotiation, increases the suffering of all the peoples in-

involved. The way of violence leads only to destruction; the way of peace leads to hope and to progress. On several occasions and with the initiatives assumed in the first place by the Holy Father, such as his pilgrimage to the Holy Land – the prayer gathering in the Vatican with the Israeli and Palestinian Presidents, and his messages to the whole world – the Holy See has reiterated its conviction, proven by experience, that all is lost with war, and all is won with peace. The first urgent step for the good of the people of Syria, Iraq and of the entire Middle East is to lay down weapons and to dialogue. The destruction of cities and villages, the killing of innocent civilians, of women and children, of young people recruited or forced to fight, the separation of families, tell us that there is a moral obligation for all, for everyone to say 'stop' to so much suffering and injustice, and to begin a new journey in which everyone participates with equal rights and duties as citizens in building the common good, in respecting the differences and talents of each one.

Pope Francis has, many times, denounced arms trafficking as being at the base of all wars.

Sadly, this is true. To speculate on and profit from the lives of others raises serious ethical questions. In an especially grave moment, given the rising number of victims produced by the wars exploding in the Middle East, the international community must confront the issue. The more available weapons become, the easier it becomes to use them. The issue with regard to the so-called Islamic State is even more serious and it

would also be necessary to pay attention to the sources that support its terrorist activities through a more or less clear political endorsement, as well as through illegally trading oil and supplying weapons and technology.

Is the use of force legitimate in order to stop the so-called Islamic State?

As was also stated in the final communiqué, the meeting participants emphasized that it is legitimate to stop the unjust aggressor, always, however, in accordance with international law. When the Holy Father, responding to one of the journalists' questions, affirmed that it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor, he specified: "I emphasize the word: 'stop'. I'm not saying to drop bombs, to make war, but to stop the aggressor. The means used to stop him would have to be evaluated". On my part I wished to develop some ideas with regard to my recent address to the General Assembly of the United Nations. In any case, as was emphasized in the meeting, one cannot entrust the resolution of the problem only to a military response. It must be confronted more deeply, starting from the root causes which are exploited by the fundamentalist ideology. The international community, through the United Nations and the structures which it is given for similar emergencies, must act in order to prevent potential genocide and to aid the countless refugees who are at risk for a life of hardship and slow but certain death. In the specific case of the violations and abuses committed by the so-called Islamic State, it appears appropriate that the nations of the region be directly involved, together with the rest of the international community, in the actions to be undertaken, with the knowledge that it is not a matter of protecting one religious community or another, or one ethnic group or another, but people who are part of the one human family and whose fundamental rights are being systematically violated.

And the religious leaders?

Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders can and must play a fundamental role in fostering dialogue between religions and cultures, and in teaching mutual understanding. In addition, they must clearly denounce the instrumentalization of religion in order to justify violence. In the concrete case of the so-called Islamic State, particular responsibility falls on the Muslim leaders not only to disavow the pretense of forming a caliphate and of denominating itself the "Islamic State", but also to more generally condemn the practices, unworthy of man, committed by the extremists, such as killing people for the sole motive of their religious affiliation. As the Holy Father said in Albania, "To kill in the name of God is a grave sacrilege. To discriminate in the name of God is inhuman". In this regard, there must be recognition and appreciation for the expressions of solidarity with Christians and the other groups suffering in Iraq, on the part of several Muslim leaders



and Islamic political leaders who have condemned the conduct of the Islamic State. They deserve to be encouraged. As affirmed in a recent and important declaration by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: "The plight of Christians, Yazidis and many other religious and ethnic minority communities in Iraq demands a clear and courageous stance on the part of religious leaders, especially Muslims, those engaged in interfaith dialogue and everyone of good will. All must be unanimous in condemning unequivocally these crimes and denouncing the invocation of religion to justify them. Otherwise what credibility will religions, their followers and their leaders have? Even after patiently pursuing interreligious dialogue in recent years, what credibility will there be?"

What should the response be to the grave humanitarian emergency in the region?

On the part of the international community and its humanitarian structures, a renewed will of solidarity is necessary in order to supply food, water, housing, education for the young, and medical assistance, for the displaced people and refugees throughout the Middle East. The figures with regard to the humanitarian plight are shocking. In Syria, for example, half of the population is in need of humanitarian aid, not to mention the hardships of the refugees, who number in the millions. And behind each number is an actual person suffering, one of our brothers who needs help. The Church for her part is trying to make her contribution, in particular through the local *Caritas* associations assisted by various Catholic charitable organizations, who assist not only Christians but all those who are suffering, without distinction. In this respect I wish to point out that humanitarian aid to the needy can also provide a context for cooperation between Christians and Muslims.

The Holy Father to Catholic Charities

No one is a leftover

No one is to be a leftover. No one is to be excluded from God's love and from our care. This was the Pope's message to the participants in the annual meeting of Catholic Charities in the United States, which was held on 5-7 October in Charlotte, North Carolina. The theme of the meeting was "Setting the Pace: Changing the Course".

Speaking in Spanish in a video-message, the Pontiff said that, like the Good Samaritan and the innkeeper in the well-known Bible passage (Lk 10:35), "we are called to be in the 'streets' inviting and serving those who have been left out". We must, he added, "see the 'image of God' in each person's eyes".

Then using a phrase from *Evangelii gaudium*, he returned to "the throw away culture", which "is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are

not the 'exploited' but the outcast, the 'leftovers'."

Describing the charity work of the U.S. *Caritas* as "the engine of the Church that organizes love", the Bishop of Rome praised the service to the poor, to the lonely, to the elderly confined to institutions, to young families, to homeless men, to hungry children, to young refugees, to migrant fathers and many other needy people. In this regard, he said, the work of charitable organizations allows these people "to know and experience the tremendous and abundant love of God through Jesus Christ".

In this regard Pope Francis compared the professionals and volunteers to "the very hands of Jesus in the world", to which their testimony "helps to change the course of the lives of many persons, families and communities".

Finally the Pontiff encouraged Catholic Charities to continue their work, concluding that "we are called to be a Church, a people of and for the poor".

General Congregations of the Synod on the Family

Wednesday afternoon, 8 October

Sixth Congregation

In the presence of the Holy Father and 180 Synod Fathers, the general debate continued throughout the sixth general Congregation on the theme set forth in the *Instrumentum laboris*: "Difficult Pastoral Situations (Part II, Chapter 3). Situations in Families / Concerning Unions of Persons of the Same Sex".

Firstly, it was underlined that the Church is not a customs house, but rather the house of the Father, and must therefore offer patient accompaniment to all people, including those who find themselves in difficult pastoral situations. The true Catholic Church encompasses healthy families and families in crisis, and therefore in her daily effort of sanctification must not show indifference in relation to weakness, as patience implies actively helping the weakest.

With regard to processes for the declaration of nullity of marriage, in general, the need to streamline the procedures was observed by many (along with the need to integrate more competent laypersons in the ecclesiastical Tribunals), but the Assembly also noted the danger of superficiality and the need always to safeguard respect for the truth and the rights of the parties. It was also remarked that the process is not contrary to pastoral charity, and judicial pastoral care must avoid attempts to apportion blame, instead encouraging a calm discussion of cases. Again with regard to marriage nullity, the hypothesis of recourse to administrative channels, not in lieu of the judicial process but rather as a complement to it, was considered. It was suggested that it would be the responsibility of the bishop to decide which requests for nullity could be dealt with through administrative channels.

It was strongly emphasised that an attitude of respect must be adopted in relation to divorced and remarried persons, as they often live in situations of unease or social injustice, suffer in silence and in many cases seek a gradual path to fuller participation in ecclesial life. Pastoral care must not therefore be repressive, but full of mercy.

With regard to polygamy, on the one hand it was underlined that this is a diminishing tendency as it is favoured mostly within rural contexts and therefore undermined by advancing urbanisation; on the other, it was recalled that there are polygamists who have converted to Catholicism and who wish to receive the sacraments of Christian initiation, and it was asked if there are specific pastoral measures to engage in these situations with the appropriate discernment.

Attention returned to the need for greater preparation for marriage, especially among the young, to whom the beauty of sacramental union must be presented, along with an adequate emotional education that is not merely a moralistic exhortation that risks generating a sort of reli-



Angu Walters, "Happy Family"
(Cameroonian art)

gious and human illiteracy. The path to marriage must involve a true growth of the person.

During the hour of free and open discussion - between 6 and 7 p.m. - the interventions presented experiences and practical models for the pastoral care of divorced and remarried persons, making extensive use of listening groups. It was remarked that it is important to carefully avoid moral judgement or speaking of a "permanent state of sin", seeking in-

The testimonies of Retrouvaille and Equipe Notre Dame

Two movements for the family

Financial difficulties, infidelity and family of origin problems are among the most frequent causes for marriage troubles. Stephen and Sandra Conway, a couple from South Africa, said this on Wednesday, 8 October, at the sixth General Congregation. After saving their own marriage in 2008 thanks to Retrouvaille courses, they began volunteering at the organization helping other broken couples who are close to separation or divorce. Searching to value the positive aspects of their relationship, paying special attention to the children and the life of faith, the programme sees the participation of 10,000 couples each year, who try to "find each other again". The couple spoke about remarried people who are "constantly reminded and guilty of these past relationships or mistakes". They continued: "We have also had requests from same sex unions or couples to attend Retrouvaille. We do chat to these couples and try to show understanding and compassion to them".

On Thursday morning, 9 October, the seventh General Congregation was held on the theme: "Openness to Life". A married couple and heads of Equipe Notre Dame (END) in Brazil, Arturo and Hermelinda As Zamberline introduced the discussion.

stead to enable understanding that not being admitted to the sacrament of the Eucharist does not entirely eliminate the possibility of grace in Christ and is due rather to the objective situation of remaining bound by a previous and indissoluble sacramental bond. In this respect, the importance of spiritual communion was emphasised repeatedly. It was also commented that there are evident limits to these proposals and that certainly there are no "easy" solutions to the problem.

Thursday morning, 9 October

Seventh Congregation

In the presence of the Holy Father and 184 Synod Fathers the seventh general Congregation was divided into two phases: the first consisting of further general debate on the theme of the previous afternoon, "Difficult Pastoral Situations" (Part II, Chapter 3). Situations in Families / Concerning Unions of Persons of the Same Sex", and the second regarding the subsequent issue, "The Pastoral Challenges concerning an Openness to Life".

In the first part, therefore, the Assembly continued its reflection on the matter of access to the sacrament of the Eucharist for divorced and remarried persons. Firstly, it re-em-

phasised the indissoluble nature of marriage, without compromise, based on the fact that the sacramental bond is an objective reality, the work of Christ in the Church. Such a value must be defended and cared for through adequate pre-marital catechesis, so that engaged couples are fully aware of the sacramental character of the bond and its vocational nature. Pastoral accompaniment for couples following marriage would also be useful.

At the same time, it was said that it is necessary to look at individual cases and real-life situations, especially those involving great suffering, distinguishing for example between those who abandon their spouse and those who are abandoned. The problem exists - this was repeated several times in the Assembly - and the Church does not neglect it. Pastoral care must not be exclusive, of an "all or nothing" type but must instead be merciful, as the mystery of the Church is a mystery of consolation.

It was in any case recalled that for divorced and remarried persons, the fact of not having access to the Eucharist does not mean that they are not members of the ecclesial community; on the contrary, it is to be taken into consideration that there exist various responsibilities that may be exercised. Furthermore, the need to simplify and speed up the procedures for the declaration of marriage nullity was underlined.

With regard to cohabitation in certain regions, it was shown that this is often due to economic and social factors and not a form of refusal of the teachings of the Church.

Often, moreover, these and other types of *de facto* unions are lived while conserving the wish for a Christian life, and therefore require suitable pastoral care. Similarly, while emphasising the impossibility of recognising same sex marriage, the need for a respectful and non-discriminatory approach with regard to homosexuals was in any case underlined.

Further attention was paid to the matter of mixed marriages, demonstrating that in spite of the difficulties that may be en-

countered, it is useful to look also at the possibilities they offer as a witness to harmony and interreligious dialogue. The Assembly then returned to theme of language, so that the Church may involve believers, non-believers and all persons of good will to identify models of family life that promote the full development of the human person and societal wellbeing. It was suggested that the family should be spoken of using a "grammar of simplicity" that reaches the heart of the faithful.

In the second part of the Congregation, the theme of responsible parenthood was considered, emphasising that the gift of life (and the virtue of chastity) are basic values in Christian marriage, and underlining



The South African couple Stephen and Sandra Conway

The movement of spirituality for couples is present in 70 countries with 137,000 members, including 45,500 Brazilians. Married for 41 years, nearly half of those years in end, they have three children, a daughter-in-law and one granddaughter.

Speaking about sexuality and birth control, the couple underlined how in their experience "many Catholic couples, who take seriously their marriage, do not feel obliged to use only natural methods", nor consider contraception a moral problem or a sin to confess. They have for that reason developed a study called: "Evangelizing sexuality", which reveals this discrepancy between doctrine and practice, especially among young people.

General Congregations of the Synod on the Family

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the seriousness of the crime of abortion. At the same time, mention was made of the numerous crises experienced by many families, for instance in certain Asian contexts, such as infanticide, violence towards women and human trafficking. The need to highlight the concept of justice among the fundamental virtues of the family was underlined.

The debate turned to the issue of the responsibility of parents in educating their children in faith and in the teachings it offers: such responsibility is primordial, it was said, and it is important to pay it suitable attention. It was also noted that the pastoral care of children can create a point of contact with families who find themselves in difficult situations.

With regard to children, the negative impact of contraception on society and the resulting decline in the birth rate was underlined. It was remarked that Catholics should not remain silent in relation to this issue, but should instead bring a message of hope: children are important, they bring life and joy to their parents, and they reinforce faith and religious practices.

Finally, attention turned to the essential role of the laity in the apostolate of the family and in its evangelisation, as well as lay movements able to accompany families in difficulty.

Thursday afternoon, 9 October

Eighth Congregation

During the eighth general Congregation, following the agenda of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, in the presence of the Holy Father and 181 Synod Fathers, the general debate focused on the theme "The Church and the Family in the Challenge of Upbringing (Part III, Chapter 2). The Challenge of Upbringing in General / Christian Education in Difficult Family Situations".

Firstly, the vocation of life as a basic element of the family was emphasised; this led to an invitation to the faithful to deepen their knowledge of Paul VI's Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, thus better understanding the meaning of the use of natural methods of fertility control and the non-acceptance of contraception. Union and procreation, it was said, are not separate from the conjugal act. The condemnation of genetic manipulation and cryopreservation of embryos was therefore reiterated forcefully.

From various quarters there emerged the tendency of several states and organisations based in the Western world to present, especially in the context of Africa, various concepts (including abortion and homosexual unions) as "human rights", linked to economic aid and strong pressure campaigns for the promotion of such concepts. In this respect, it was highlighted that the expression "rights to sexual and reproductive health" does not have a pre-

cise definition in international law and ends up encompassing mutually contradictory principles such as the condemnation of forced abortion and the promotion of safe abortion, or the protection of maternity and the promotion of contraception. Also without any binding value, the promotion of such "rights" represents a risk, as it may influence the interpretation of other norms, especially in combating discrimination against women.

The Assembly reiterated the importance of adequate preparation for marriage, as its celebration seems to be increasingly reduced to the social and legal status, rather than a religious and spiritual bond. The preparatory course, it was noted, is often perceived by couples as an imposition, a task to complete without conviction, and as a result it is too brief. Since marriage is a vocation for life, preparation for it should be long and detailed, as in the case of preparation for religious life. It was also shown that, among couples, there is a frequent lack of awareness of the sacramental value of the marriage bond, so much so that the celebration of the marriage rite, it was said, is not automatically the celebration of the marriage sacrament.

With regard to the streamlining of procedures for the process of verifying matrimonial nullity, it was recalled that a special study Commission for the reform of the canonical

marriage nullification process was instituted by the Holy Father Francis on 20 September 2014, and the hope was expressed that it will enable a single simpler procedure to be put into effect, which must however be uniform for all the Church. Furthermore, regarding the current procedural requirements, the possibility was raised of placing more discretion in the hands of the bishop.

At the same time, the hope was expressed that there would be a greater presence of suitably prepared lay judges, women in particular.

The Assembly went on to insist on the importance of good preparation for priests in relation to the pastoral care of marriage and the family, and remarked that homilies can be used as a special and effective moment for proclaiming the Gospel of the family to the faithful. It was commented that there is a need for formation and information, as the spiritual holiness of the priest, his creativity and his direct relationship with families are particularly appreciated by the faithful.

There were further reflections on the relationship between migration and family, in which it was reiterated that the family is a fundamental right to be accorded to every migrant, and the importance of protection for the right to family unity through international migratory policies was emphasised. It was said

that the family is an essential element for the integration of migrants in host countries.

During the hour dedicated to free discussion – between 6 and 7 pm – three themes emerged in particular: with regard to divorced and remarried persons, the need for a penitential path was highlighted, to be accompanied by reflection on the case of divorced persons who remain alone and suffer in silence, at the margins of social life. Secondly, mention was made of the need to protect the children of divorced couples from suffering the psychological effects of their parents' divorce. In this respect, it was recalled that adequate pastoral care of children often causes their parents to draw closer to the Church.

Thirdly, the importance of the relationship between the family and the education of children was affirmed, with particular reference to parents' right to choose the most suitable educational plan for their children, so that they may receive a quality education.

Finally, the Secretary General of the Synod, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, announced that during the eight general Congregations, there had been a total of 180 interventions from the Synod Fathers, with the addition of 80 more during the hours of open debate.

Friday morning, 10 October

Ninth Congregation

During the ninth general Congregation, in the presence of the Holy Father and 185 Synod Fathers, 15 interventions were heard (6 from couples and 9 from single Auditors), almost all laypersons engaged in the field of family pastoral care, bioethics and human ecology. From various countries throughout the world and representing almost all the continents, the Auditors brought to the Assembly their living testimony of family apostolate lived in everyday life.



Message from the Synod Fathers for peace in Iraq, Syria and the entire Middle East

Be close to the families victimized by war

We are close to the families who are suffering due to conflicts and war, especially in Syria, Iraq and the entire Middle East. The Synod Fathers expressed this in the following message published on Friday, 10 October. Gathered around the Successor of the Apostle Peter, we the Synod Fathers of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, along with all participants, share the paternal concern of the Holy Father, expressing our profound closeness to all the families who suffer as a consequence of the many conflicts in progress.

In particular, we raise to the Lord our prayers for Iraqi and Syrian families, forced on account of their profession of the Christian faith or their belonging to other ethnic or religious communities, to abandon everything and flee towards a future without any form of certainty. We join with the Holy Father Francis in emphasising that "no one use the name of God to commit violence", and that "To kill in the name of God is a grave sacrilege!" (*Address to leaders of other re-*

ligions and other Christian denominations, Tirana, 21 September 2014).

Offering thanks to International Organisations and Countries for their solidarity, we invite persons of good will to offer the necessary assistance and aid to the innocent victims of the current barbarism, and at the same time we implore the international community to act to re-establish peaceful coexistence in Iraq, in Syria, and in all the Middle East.

Equally, our thoughts go to those families that are torn apart and suffering in other parts of the world, and who suffer persistent violence. We wish to assure them of our constant prayer that the Lord may convert hearts and bring peace and stability to those who are now in need.

May the Holy Family of Nazareth, which suffered on "the sorrowful road of exile" (*Angelus*, 29 December 2013), make every family a "community of love and reconciliation" (*ibid.*), a source of hope for the whole world.



"Family", anonymous

Firstly, mention was made of the difficulties experienced by families living in the Middle East, especially in Iraq: these numerous conflicts have serious repercussions on families, divided by the deaths of their members, forced to migrate in search of a safe place to live, deprived of a future for the young who are removed from schools, or for the elderly who are abandoned to their own devices. The unity of the Christian family in the Middle East is profoundly disrupted, with consequences also for the social and national unity of the countries in the region. Faced with such dramatic situations, the Church truly represents a safe haven, a "family of families" that offers comfort and hope. It is also necessary to prepare married couples to be "mediators" of peace and reconciliation.

Another point highlighted by the Auditors was the need for the Church to listen more to laypeople in the search for solutions to the problems of families, especially in relation to the sphere of intimacy in the life of couples. For this reason it is important that there be synergy between the academic world and the pastoral world, so as to form not "technicians" but rather pastoral workers who know and understand how to promote the themes of family and life through a solid Catholic overall anthropological vision.

Furthermore, the Auditors remarked on the need for greater dialogue between Church and State, also through the efforts of lay faithful who, without motivations of personal ambition, know how to promote the protection of the rights of the family and the defence of life, working for a State with a human face. The laity, it was remarked, must be active and competent in the public defence of the values of life and the family.

The interventions focused on the need to adequately and permanently prepare priests in relation to themes regarding the family, especially in relation to openness to life, so that they are able to explain and speak naturally and clearly about conjugal love. It was also noted that if natural family planning is explained in depth, highlighting its positive worth, it can strengthen the life of the couple. In this respect, it was reiterated that homilies, if well pre-

pared, may ensure that the faithful participate more fully in the celebration of Mass.

A further starting point for reflection shed light on the importance of testimony: the young do not need theory, it was said, but they clearly understand the centrality of the family if it is demonstrated by families themselves, credible witnesses and subjects of evangelisation. For this, the Assembly reflected on the need for couples to be accompanied by adequate pastoral care after marriage as well as before.

The Auditors then gave voice to the suffering of those who lose a family member: widows and widowers, orphans, or parents who lose a child. For these people, the accompaniment of the Church is fundamental, through support groups and sharing, so that they do not become lost in the profound anguish of loss, and the fear of a "desert" of emotions, but remain firm in their faith.

The Synod Fathers went on to speak about the importance of "human ecology", which helps to combat the negative effects of economic globalisation, which often proposes models contrary to Catholic doctrine. They expressed their firm condemnation of all forms of domestic violence, especially in relation to women, showing that this is often perpetrated by young people.

Finally, the need for communication within families was emphasised,

as sharing between couples, participation of both parents in the education of children, and above all prayer within domestic walls, all contribute to strengthening the family unit.

Friday afternoon, 10 October

Tenth Congregation

The tenth general Congregation in the presence of the Holy Father and 168 Synod Fathers, involved hearing seven fraternal Delegates of various Christian confessions. The intervention of the eighth Delegate, Metropolitan Hilarion, president of the Department for External Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, will be given in the coming days.

In their interventions, the fraternal Delegates expressed to the Holy Father and the Synod Fathers their gratitude for the invitation to participate in the Assembly. Each one then went on to present the question of the family in the context of his own Christian confession.

Overall, it was underlined that the challenges and hopes attached to the family unit are common to all Christians: the family, it was said, is fundamental for society, it is the foundation of communion in justice. Certainly, the difficulties are plenty: the economic crisis is pressing, the mass media reduce moments of dialogue between domestic walls, at times

even proposing models that lead to adultery, and factors such as wars, migrations, globalisation, the drama of diseases such as Aids and Ebola, and the Islamic fundamentalism present in some countries continually place the good of the family at risk in every context.

Common to all Christians is the need for adequate preparation for marriage and appropriate reflection on marriage between believers and non-believers. With regard to divorced and remarried persons, it was said that their acceptance in the Church may give new hope, promoting a more serene family life and thus creating a richer society. Therefore, on the part of all Christian confessions, it is essential to listen to those who find themselves in difficult family situations, who are in need of mercy and compassion every day, as the Church always wishes to help those who suffer, looking both at the Sacred Scriptures and at the problems of contemporary life.

The wish was expressed for listening and comprehension, far from any form of condemnation, in relation to homosexual persons, while emphasising that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Particular attention was shown towards children born in difficult contexts and for all victims of violence, especially women and minors, as the defence of the most vulnerable, of

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Interview of the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops

A brisk journey

After the first week of work and, thus the halfway point of the Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod on the Family, the Secretary General, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, was interviewed by *L'Osservatore Romano*. Taking advantage of a quiet moment early Saturday morning, 11 October, the Cardinal spoke informally about the preparation for the Assembly, the fruitful work of these first, truly intense days, the calm atmosphere, and also of the next landmarks on the journey which was moving along briskly.

Your Eminence, this has been your first Synod, after a life lived mostly as a Pontifical representative around the world: how did it go?

I was a bit apprehensive because, although having participated in many episcopal assemblies, I have never been to a Synod and I was really unable to imagine how this new experience would be. I expected it to be more complex and rigid. Instead, the Synod is an assembly like any other; and the structure and the many people who were very prepared, have helped a great deal.



How long has the work been going on and what are the innovations in this Assembly?

We have been working for more than a year and, although there have been no formal changes, we experimented with the dynamic between the rules and their application – which can obviously be rigid or flexible – and we have taken advantage of this space.

Among the innovations, the main and most significant one during these months was the personal participation of the Pope in all of the meetings of the Ordinary Council of the Secretariat.

During the debates in the hall, we then simplified many formalities and introduced Italian, which even among the Synod Fathers is better known than Latin. In a more informal atmosphere, this allowed the work to be more effective and open.

There has, however, been criticism concerning information: could it be described as a closed Synod?

Just the opposite. We have simplified things, focusing on interviews with journalists – with the in-

dividual Fathers as well, who are obviously free to grant interviews – and abandoning the system of synopses because, in reality, they do not reflect the interventions: the initial written text was summarized and disseminated, but the one proclaimed during the Assembly was then modified. I think that in this way the discussion is better reflected. A discussion, I repeat, which really is free.

How have these days been going?

We have had a calm atmosphere, even in the fair comparison of different points of view, because I have seen in everyone a great love for the Church as the People of God, in everyone unquestionable loyalty to the teaching of the Tradition, and a gaze of mercy for the people. We listened to all those who asked to speak: at least 180 scheduled interventions and 85 within the time reserved for open interventions. In total, the 265 interventions scrupulously respected the time schedule and left us with an extra hour-and-a-half, which we naturally used immediately. "You have a Swiss watch", the Pope told me with a wink. But the discussion was also facilitated by the fact that 60% of the interventions came before and it was possible to take into account the *Relatio ante Disceptationem*, on the basis of the discussion. This was not dramatic at all, but serious and constructive.

(G.M.V.)

With the tenderness of a mother and the clarity of a teacher

The following is the 'Relatio post disceptationem' delivered by the Relator General of the Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Péter Erdő, Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Hungary, on Monday, 13 October, which draws on different themes that emerged during the general congregations (6-10 October) of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops held at the Vatican. The following is the English translation of the report courtesy of the Holy See Press Office.

Introduction

1. During the prayer vigil held in St Peter's Square on 4 October 2014 in preparation for the Synod on the family, Pope Francis, in a simple and straightforward manner, evoked the centrality of the experience of family in all lives: "Evening falls on our assembly. It is the hour at which one willingly returns home to meet at the same table, in the depth of affection, of the good that has been done and received, of the encounters which warm the heart and make it grow, good wine which hastens the unending feast in the days of man. It is also the weightiest hour for one who finds himself face to face with his own loneliness, in the bitter twilight of shattered dreams and broken plans; how many people trudge through the day in the blind alley of resignation, of abandonment, even resentment: in how many homes the wine of joy has been less plentiful, and therefore, also the zest – the very wisdom – for life. Let us make our prayer heard for one another this evening, a prayer for all!"

2. The font of joys and trials, of deep affections and relations – at times

wounded – the family is truly a "school of humanity" (*Familia schola quaesdam uberioris humanitatis est*). Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 52), of which we are in great need. Despite the many signs of crisis in the institution of the family in various contexts of the "global village", the desire for family remains alive, especially among the young, and is at the root of the Church's need to proclaim tirelessly and with profound conviction the "Gospel of the family" entrusted to her with the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ.



Kaie M. Bergeson, "Bright as a Sun" (2012)

At the 11th general Congregation

In the presence of the Holy Father and 184 Synod Fathers, the eleventh general Congregation began with the presentation, in the Assembly Hall, of the *Relatio post disceptationem*, read by the General Rapporteur, Cardinal Péter Erdő.

Immediately after, there followed a period of free discussion among the Synod Fathers. In general, the *Relatio post disceptationem* was meant to pull together the interventions that were offered during the last week, to capture the spirit of the Assembly. The document, it was said, reveals the Church's love for the family faithful to Christ, but also her capacity to be close to humanity in every moment of life, to understand that, behind the pastoral challenges, there are many people who suffer. The Synod, it was emphasized, should have the watchful gaze of the shepherd who devotes his life to his sheep, without a *provisi* judgement.

Furthermore, to allow this Report to bring together various points of view to provide a basis for the work of the Small Groups, certain additional reflections were suggested: for example, while the Church must welcome those in difficulty, it would be useful to speak more widely about those families who remain faithful to the teachings of the Gospel, thanking them and encouraging them for the witness they offer. From the Synod it emerged more clearly that indissoluble, happy marriage, faithful for ever, is beautiful, possible and present in society, therefore avoiding a near-exclusive focus on imperfect family situations.

Other reflections involved giving more emphasis to the theme of women, their protection and their importance for the transmission of life and faith; to include consideration of the figure of grandparents within the family unit; more specific reference to the family as a "domestic Church" and the parish as a "family of families", and to the Holy Family, an essential model for reference. In this respect, it was

depth in the Ordinary General Assembly scheduled to take place in October 2015, as well as during the full intervening year between the two synodal events. The *convener* in *unum* around the Bishop of Rome is indeed an event of grace, in which episcopal collegiality is made manifest in a path of spiritual and pastoral discernment": thus Pope Francis described the synodal experience, indicating its tasks in the dual process of listening to the signs of God and the history of mankind and in the resulting two-fold and unique fidelity.

4. In the light of the same discourse we have gathered together the results of our reflections and our dialogues in the following three parts: *listening*, in order to examine the state of the family today, in the complexity of its light and shadows; *looking*, our gaze fixed on Christ, to re-evaluate with renewed freshness and enthusiasm what revelation, transmitted in the faith of the Church, tells us about the beauty and dignity of the family; and *discussion* in the light of the Lord Jesus to discern the ways in which the Church and society can renew their commitment to the family.

PART I

Listening: the context and challenges to the family

The socio-cultural context

5. Anthropological and cultural change today influences all aspects of life and requires an analytic and diversified approach, capable of discerning the positive forms of individual freedom. It is necessary to be aware of the growing danger represented by an exas-

perated individualism that distorts family bonds and ends up considering each component of the family as an isolated unit, leading in some cases to the prevalence of an idea of the subject formed according to his or her own wishes, which are assumed as absolute.

6. The most difficult trial for families in our time is often solitude, which destroys and gives rise to a general sense of impotence in the socio-economic situation that often ends up crushing them. This is due to growing precariousness in the workplace that is often experienced as a nightmare, or due to heavy taxation that certainly does not encourage young people to marry.

7. Some cultural and religious contexts pose particular challenges. In African societies the practice of polygamy remains, along with, in some traditional contexts, the custom of "marriage in stages". In other contexts the practice of "arranged marriages" persists. In countries in which Catholicism is a minority religion, there are many mixed marriages with all the difficulties that these may lead to in terms of legal form, the education of children and mutual respect from the point of view of religious freedom, but also with the great potential that derives from the encounter between the differences in faith that these stories of family life present. In many contexts, and not only in the West, the practice of cohabitation before marriage, or indeed cohabitation not oriented towards assuming the form of an institutional bond, is becoming increasingly widespread.

8. Many children are born outside marriage, especially in certain countries, and there are many who subsequently grow up with just one of their parents or in an enlarged or reconstituted family context. The number of divorces is growing and it is not uncommon to encounter cases in which decisions are taken solely on the basis of economic factors. The condition of women still needs to be defended and promoted, as situations of violence within the family are not rare. Children



are frequently the object of contention between parents, and are the true victims of family breakdown. Societies riven by violence due to war, terrorism or the presence of organized crime experience deteriorating family situations. Furthermore, migration is another sign of the times, to be faced and understood in terms of the burden of consequences for family life.

The relevance of emotional life

9. Faced with the social framework outlined above, a greater need is encountered among individuals to take care of themselves, to know their inner being, and to live in greater harmony with their emotions and sentiments, seeking a relational quality in emotional life. In the same way, it is possible to encounter a widespread desire for family accompanied by the search for love for oneself as well as the desire for a family to be cultivated and supported? This is a great challenge for the Church too. The danger of individualism and the risk of living selfishly are significant.

10. Today's world appears to promote limitless affectivity, seeking to explore all its aspects, including the most complex. Indeed, the question of emotional fragility is very current: a narcissistic, unstable or changeable affectivity do not always help greater maturity to be reached. In this context, couples are often uncertain and hesitant, struggling to find ways to grow. Many tend to remain in the early stages of emotional and sexual life. The crisis in the couple destabilizes the family and may lead, through separation and divorce, to serious consequences for adults, children and society as a whole, weakening individual and social bonds. The decline in population not only creates a situation in which the alternation of generations is no longer assured, but over time also risks leading to economic impoverishment and a loss of hope in the future.

Pastoral challenges

11. In this context the Church is aware of the need to offer a meaningful

word of hope. It is necessary to set out from the conviction that man comes from God and that, therefore, a reflection able to reframe the great questions on the meaning of human existence, may find fertile ground in humanity's most profound expectations. The great values of marriage and the Christian family correspond to the search that distinguishes human existence even in a time marked by individualism and hedonism. It is necessary to accept people in their concrete being, to know how to support their search, to encourage the wish for God and the will to feel fully part of the Church, also on the part of those who have experienced failure or find themselves in the most conflicted situations. This requires that the doctrine of the faith, the basic content of which should be made increasingly better known, be proposed along with mercy.

PART II

Gazing upon Christ: the Gospel of the Family

The gaze upon Jesus and gradualness in the history of salvation

12. In order to "walk among contemporary challenges, the decisive condition is to maintain a fixed gaze on Jesus Christ, to pause in contemplation and in adoration of His Face... Indeed, every time we return to the source of the Christian experience, new paths and undreamed of possibilities open up" (Pope Francis, Address of 4 October 2014). Jesus looked upon the women and the men he met with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps with patience and mercy, in proclaiming the demands of the Kingdom of God.

13. From the moment that the order of creation is determined by orientation towards Christ, it becomes necessary to distinguish without separating the various levels through which God communicates the grace of the covenant to humanity. Through the law of gradualness (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 34), typical of divine pedagogy, this means interpreting the nuptial covenant in terms of continuity and novelty, in the order of creation and in that of redemption.

14. Jesus Himself, referring to the primordial plan for the human couple, reaffirms the indissoluble union between man and woman, while understanding that "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning" (Mt 19:8). In this way, He shows how divine condescension always accompanies the path of humanity, directing it towards its principle, not without passing through the cross.

The family in God's salvific plan

15. Since, by their commitment to mutual acceptance and with the grace of Christ, couples promise fidelity to one another and openness to life, they acknowledge as constitutive elements of marriage the gifts God offers them, taking their mutual responsibility seriously, in His name and before the Church. Now, in faith it is possible to assume the goods of marriage as commitments best maintained with the help

of the grace of the sacrament. God consecrates love between spouses and confirms its indissolubility, offering them help in living in fidelity and openness to life. Therefore, the gaze of the Church turns not only to the couple, but to the family.

16. We are able to distinguish three fundamental phases in the divine plan for the family: the family in its origin, when God the creator instituted the primordial marriage between Adam and Eve, as a solid foundation for the family; he created them male and female (cf. Gn 1:24-31; 2:24b); the historic family, wounded by sin (cf. Gn 3) and the family redeemed by Christ (cf. Eph 1:22-32), in the image of the Holy Trinity, the mystery from which every true love springs. The sponsal covenant, inaugurated in creation and revealed in the history of God and Israel, finds its fullest expression in Christ with the Church.

The discernment of values present in wounded families and in irregular situations

17. In considering the principle of gradualness in the divine salvific plan, one asks what possibilities are given to married couples who experience the failure of their marriage, or rather how it is possible to offer them Christ's help through the ministry of the Church. In this respect, a significant hermeneutic key comes from the teaching of Vatican Council II, which, while it affirms that, "the one Church of Christ... subsists in the Catholic Church", it acknowledges that, "many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure... these elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward Catholic unity" (*Ad Gentes*, 8).

18. In this light, the value and consistency of natural marriage must first be emphasized. Some ask whether the sacramental fullness of marriage does not exclude the possibility of recognizing positive elements even in the imperfect forms that may be found outside this nuptial situation, which are in any case ordered in relation to it. The doctrine of levels of communion, formulated by Vatican Council II, confirms the vision of a structured way of participating in the *Mysterium Ecclesiae* by baptized persons.

19. In the same perspective, which we may consider inclusive, the Council opens up the horizon for appreciating the positive elements present in other religions (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 2) and cultures, despite their limits and their insufficiencies (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 55). Indeed, looking at the human wisdom present in these, the Church learns how the family is universally considered as the necessary and fruitful form of human cohabitation. In this sense, the order of creation, in which the Christian vision of the family is rooted, unfolds



Arturo Martini, "The Mother" (1929-1930)

historically, in different cultural and geographical expressions.

20. Realizing the need, therefore, for spiritual discernment with regard to cohabitation, civil marriages and divorced and remarried persons, it is the task of the Church to recognize those seeds of the Word that have spread beyond its visible and sacramental boundaries. Following the expansive gaze of Christ, whose light illuminates every man (cf. Jn 1:9; cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22), the Church turns respectfully to those who participate in her life in an incomplete and imperfect way, appreciating the positive values they contain rather than their limitations and shortcomings.

Truth and beauty of the family and mercy

21. The Gospel of the family, while it shines in the witness of many families who coherently live out their fidelity to the sacrament, with their mature fruits of authentic daily sanctity must also nurture those seeds that are yet to mature, and must care for those trees that have dried up and wish not to be neglected.

22. In this respect, a new dimension of today's family pastoral care consists of accepting the reality of civil marriages and also cohabitation, taking into account the due differences. Indeed, when a union reaches a notable level of stability through a public bond, it is characterized by deep affection, responsibility with regard to offspring, and capacity to withstand trials, it may be seen as a seed to be accompanied in development towards the sacrament of marriage. Very often, however, cohabitation is established not with a view to a possible future marriage, but rather without any intention of establishing an institutionally-recognized relationship.

23. Imitating Jesus' merciful gaze, the Church must accompany her most

The 'Relatio post disceptationem'

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fragile sons and daughters, marked by wounded and lost love, with attention and care, restoring trust and hope to them like the light of a beacon in a port, or a torch carried among the people to light the way for those who are lost or find themselves in the midst of the storm.

PART III

The discussion: pastoral perspectives

Proclaiming the Gospel of the family today, in various contexts

24. The Synod dialog has allowed an agreement on some of the more urgent pastoral needs to be entrusted to being made concrete in the individual local Churches, in communion *cum Petro* et *sub Petro*.

25. The announcement of the Gospel of the family is an urgent issue for the new evangelization. The Church has to carry this out with the tenderness of a mother and the clarity of a teacher (cf. Eph 4: 15), in fidelity to the merciful *kénosis* of Christ. The truth is incarnated in human fragility not to condemn it, but to cure it.

26. Evangelizing is the shared responsibility of all God's people, each according to his or her own ministry and charism. Without the joyous testimony of spouses and families, the announcement, even if correct, risks being misunderstood or submerged by the ocean of words that is a characteristic of our society (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 50). On various occasions the Synodal Fathers underlined that Catholic families are called upon themselves to be the *active subjects* of all the pastoral of the family.

27. It will be decisive to highlight the primacy of grace, and therefore the possibilities that the Spirit gives in the sacrament. This is about letting it be known that the Gospel of the family is a joy that "fills the hearts and lives", because in Christ we are "set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1). In the light of the parable of the sower (cf. Mt 13:3), our task is to cooperate in the sowing: the rest is God's work. We must not forget that the Church that preaches about the family is a sign of contradiction.

28. For this reason, what is required is a *missionary conversion*: it is necessary not to stop at an announcement that is merely theoretical and has nothing to do with people's real problems. It must never be forgotten that the crisis of faith has led to a crisis in matrimony and the family and, as a result, the transmission of faith from parents to children has often been interrupted. Confronted by a strong faith, the imposition of certain cultural perspectives that weaken the family and marriage is of no importance.

29. Conversion, above all, has to be that of language so that this might prove to be effectively meaningful. The announcement must let it be experienced that the Gospel of the family is the response to the

deepest expectations of a person: to his or her dignity and its full realization in reciprocity and communion. This is not merely about presenting a set of regulations but about putting forth values, responding to the need of those who are found today even in the most secularized countries.

30. The indispensable in-depth biblical-theological study is to be accompanied by dialogue, at all levels. Many insisted on a more positive approach to the riches contained in diverse religious experiences, while not being blind to the difficulties. In the diverse cultural realities the possibilities should first be grasped and in the light of them the limits and radicalizations should be rejected.

31. Christian marriage cannot only be considered as a cultural tradition or social obligation, but has to be a vocational decision taken with the proper preparation in an itinerary of faith, with mature discernment. This is not about creating difficulties and complicating the cycles of formation, but of going deeply into the issue and not being content with theoretical meetings or general orientations.

32. The need was jointly referred to for a conversion of all pastoral practices from the perspective of the family, overcoming the individualistic points of view that still characterize it. This is why there was a repeated insistence on renewing in this light the training of presbyters and other pastoral operators, through a greater involvement of the families themselves.

33. In the same way, the necessity was underlined for an evangelization that clearly denounces the cultural, social and economic factors, for example, the excessive room given to market logic, that prevents an authentic family life, leading to discrimination, poverty, exclusion, and violence. For this reason a dialog and cooperation has to be developed with the social structures, and lay people who are involved in cultural and socio-political fields should be encouraged.

Guiding couples on the path in preparation for marriage

34. The complex social reality and the changes that the family is called on today to deal with require a greater commitment from the whole Christian community for the preparation of those who are about to be married. As regards this, the Synod Fathers agreed to underline the need for a greater involvement of the entire community privileging the testimony of the families themselves, as well as a rooting of the preparation for marriage in the path of Christian initiation, underlining the connection between marriage and the other sacraments. In the same way, the necessity was highlighted for specific programs for preparation for marriage that are a true experience of participation in the ecclesial life and that study closely the diverse aspects of family life.

Accompanying the early years of married life

35. The early years of marriage are a vital and delicate period during which couples grow in the awareness of the challenges and meaning of matrimony. Thus the need for a pastoral accompaniment that goes beyond the celebration of the sacrament. Of great importance in this pastoral care is the presence of experienced couples. The parish is considered the ideal place for expert couples to place themselves at the disposal of younger ones. Couples need to be encouraged towards a fundamental attitude of acceptance of the great gift of children. The importance of family spirituality and prayer needs to be underlined, encouraging couples to meet regularly to promote the growth of the spiritual life and solidarity in the concrete demands of life. Meaningful liturgies, devotional practices and the Eucharist celebrated for families, were considered as vital in favoring evangelization through the family.

Positive aspects of civil unions and cohabitation

36. A new sensitivity in today's pastoral life consists in grasping the positive aspect of civil unions and, having duly pointed out the differences, of cohabitation. It is necessary that in the ecclesial proposal, while clearly presenting the ideal, we also indicate the constructive elements in those situations that do not yet or no longer correspond to that ideal.

37. It was also noted that in many countries "an increasing number live together *ad experimentum*, in unions which have not been religiously or civilly recognized" (*Instrumentum Laboris*, 81). In Africa this occurs especially in traditional marriages, agreed between families and often celebrated in different stages. Faced by these situations, the Church is called on to be "the house of the Father, with doors always wide open [...] where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 47) and to move towards those who feel the need to again take up their path of faith, even if it is not possible to celebrate a religious marriage.

38. In the West as well there is an increasingly large number of those who, having lived together for a long period of time, ask to be married in the Church. Simple cohabitation is often a choice inspired by a general attitude, which is opposed to institutions and definitive commitments, but also while waiting for a secure existence (a steady job and income). In other countries common-law marriages are very numerous, not because of a rejection of Christian values as regards the family and matrimony, but, above all, because getting married is a luxury, so that material poverty encourages people to live in common-law marriages. Furthermore in such unions it is possible to grasp authentic family values or at least the wish for them. Pastoral accompaniment should always start from these positive aspects.

39. All these situations have to be dealt with in a constructive manner, seeking to transform them into opportunities to walk towards the fullness of marriage and the family in the light of the Gospel. They need to be welcomed and accompanied with patience and delicacy. With a view to this, the attractive testimony of authentic Christian families as subjects is important for the evangelization of the family.

Caring for wounded families (the separated, the divorced who have not remarried and the divorced who have)

40. What rang out clearly in the Synod was the necessity for courageous pastoral choices. Reconfirming forcefully the fidelity to the Gospel of the family, the Synodal Fathers felt the urgent need for new pastoral paths, that begin with the effective reality of familial frailties, recognizing that they, more often than not, are "endured" more than freely chosen. These are situations are diverse because of personal as well as cultural and socio-economic factors. It is not wise to think of unique solutions or those inspired by a logic of "all or nothing". The dialogue and meeting that took place in the Synod will have to continue in the local Churches, involving their various components, in such a way that the perspectives that have been drawn up might find their full maturation in the work of the next Ordinary General Assembly. The guidance of the Spirit, constantly invoked, will allow all God's people to live the fidelity to the Gospel of the family as a merciful caring for all situations of fragility.

41. Each wounded family first of all should be listened to with respect and love, becoming companions on the journey as Christ did with the disciples of the road to Emmaus. The words of Pope Francis are of particular value in these situations: "The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this 'art of accompaniment', which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169).

42. Such discernment is indispensable for the separated and divorced. What needs to be respected above all is the suffering of those who have unjustly endured separation and divorce. Forgiveness for the injustice endured is not easy, but it is a journey that grace makes possible. In the same way it always needs to be underlined that it is indispensable to take charge in a faithful and constructive way of the consequences of separation or divorce on the children: they must not become an "object" to be fought over and the most suitable means need to be sought so that they can get over the trauma of the family break-up and grow up in the most serene way possible.

43. Various Fathers underlined the necessity to make the recognition of cases of nullity more accessible and flexible. Among the proposals were



Marc Chagall, "Song of Songs"

the abandonment of the need for the double conforming sentence; the possibility of establishing an administrative means under the responsibility of the diocesan bishop; a summary process to be used in cases of clear nullity. According to authoritative proposals, the possibility should then be considered of giving weight to the faith of those about to be married in terms of the validity of the sacrament of marriage. It needs to be emphasized that in all these cases it is about the ascertaining of the truth over the validity of the obstacle.

44. As regards matrimonial suits, the streamlining of the procedure, requested by many, as well as the preparation of a sufficient number of workers, clerics and lay people, dedicating themselves to this, requires an increase in the responsibilities of the diocesan bishop, who in his diocese might charge a specially trained priest who would be able to offer the parties advice on the validity of their marriage.

45. Divorced people who have not remarried should be invited to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their state. The local community and pastors have to accompany these people with solicitude, particularly when there are children involved or they find themselves in a serious situation of poverty.

46. In the same way the situation of the divorced who have remarried demands a careful discernment and an accompaniment full of respect, avoiding any language or behavior that might make them feel discriminated against. For the Christian community caring for them is not a weakening of its faith and its testimony to the indissolubility of marriage, but rather it expresses precisely its charity in its caring.

47. As regards the possibility of partaking in the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, some argued in favor of the present regulations because of their theological foundation, others were in favor of a greater opening on very precise conditions when dealing with situations that cannot be resolved without creating new injustices and suffering. For some, partaking in the sacraments might occur were it preceded by a penitential path – under the responsibility of the diocesan bishop and with a clear commitment in favor of the children. This would not be a general possibility, but the fruit of a discernment applied on a case-

by-case basis, according to a law of gradualness, that takes into consideration the distinction between state of sin, state of grace and the attenuating circumstances.

48. Suggesting limiting themselves to only "spiritual communion" was questioned by more than a few Synodal Fathers: if spiritual communion is possible, why not allow them to partake in sacramental communion? As a result a greater theological study was requested starting with the links between the sacrament of marriage and the Eucharist in relation to the Church-sacrament. In the same way, the moral dimension of the problem requires further consideration, listening to and illuminating the consciences of spouses.

49. The problems relative to mixed marriages were frequently raised in the interventions of the Synodal Fathers. The differences in the matrimonial regulations of the Orthodox Churches creates serious problems in certain contexts to which have to be found suitable responses in communion with the Pope. The same applies to inter-religious marriages.

Welcoming homosexual persons

50. Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community: are we capable of welcoming these people, guaranteeing them a fraternal space in our communities? Often they wish to encounter a Church that offers them a welcoming home. Are our communities capable of providing that, accepting and evaluating their sexual orientation, without compromising Catholic doctrine on the family and matrimony?

51. The question of homosexuality leads to a serious reflection on how to elaborate realistic paths of affective growth and human and evangelical maturity integrating the sexual dimension: it appears therefore as an important educative challenge. The Church furthermore affirms that unions between people of the same sex cannot be considered on the same footing as matrimony between man and woman. Nor is it acceptable that pressure be brought to bear on pastors or that international bodies make financial aid dependent on the introduction of regulations inspired by gender ideology.

52. Without denying the moral problems connected to homosexual unions it has to be noted that there are cases in which mutual aid to the point of sacrifice constitutes a pre-

vious support in the life of the partners. Furthermore, the Church pays special attention to the children who live with couples of the same sex, emphasizing that the needs and rights of the little ones must always be given priority.

The transmission of life and the challenge of the declining birthrate

53. It is not difficult to notice the spread of a mentality that reduces the generation of life to a variable of an individual's or a couple's plans. Economic factors sometimes have enough weight to contribute to the sharp drop in the birthrate which weakens the social fabric, compromising the relationship between generations and rendering the view of the future less certain. Being open to life is an intrinsic requirement of married love.

54. Probably here as well what is required is a realistic language that is able to start from listening to people and acknowledging the beauty and truth of an unconditional opening to life as that which human life requires to be lived to its fullest. It is on this base that we can rest an appropriate teaching regarding natural methods, which allow the living in a harmonious and aware way of the communication between spouses, in all its dimensions, along with generative responsibility. In this light, we should go back to the message of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* of Paul VI, which underlines the need to respect the dignity of the person in the moral evaluation of the methods of birth control.

55. So help is required to live affectively, in marriage as well, as a path of maturation, in the evermore profound welcoming of the other and in an ever fuller giving. It has to be emphasized in this sense the need to offer formative paths that nourish married life and the importance of a laity that provides an accompaniment consisting of living testimony. It is undoubtedly of great help the example of a faithful and profound love made up of tenderness, of respect, capable of growing in time and which in its concrete

opening to the generation of life allows us to experience a mystery that transcends us.

The challenge of education and the role of the family in evangelization

56. The fundamental challenge facing families today is undoubtedly that of education, rendered more difficult and complex by today's cultural reality. What has to be considered are the needs and expectations of families capable of testifying in daily life, places of growth, of concrete and essential transmission of the virtues that provide form for existence.

57. In this the Church can carry out a precious role in supporting families, starting from Christian initiation, through welcoming communities. What is asked of these, today even more than yesterday, in complex as well as mundane situations, is to support parents in their educative undertaking, accompanying children and young people in their growth through personalized paths capable of introducing them to the full meaning of life and encouraging choices and responsibilities, lived in the light of the Gospel.

Conclusion

58. The reflections put forward, the fruit of the Synodal dialog that took place in great freedom and a spirit of reciprocal listening, are intended to raise questions and indicate perspectives that will have to be matured and made clearer by the reflection of the local Churches in the year that separates us from the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops planned for October 2015. These are not decisions that have been made nor simply points of view. All the same the collegial path of the bishops and the involvement of all God's people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will lead us to find roads of truth and mercy for all. This is the wish that from the beginning of our work Pope Francis has extended to us, inviting us to the courage of the faith and the humble and honest welcome of the truth in charity.

General Congregations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

those who have no voice of their own – believers or otherwise – is common to all Christians.

Another central theme in the interventions by the fraternal Delegates was that of the proclamation of the Gospel. The family, it was said, is the first school of faith: it is the place where knowledge of the Good News is transmitted and disseminated, and it is therefore essential that Christians share the "joy of the Gospel", that "*evangelii gaudium*" frequently mentioned by Pope Francis.

Some differences in approach were encountered, for example on the theme of birth control, underlining the freedom of conscience of believers, while always respecting the meaning of love and marriage. Furthermore, in relation to second marriages, it was said by the Or-

thodox delegates that these in any case constitute a deviation and while they are celebrated, it is after a period of accompaniment on the part of the Church in an attempt to bring married couples towards reconciliation.

In particular, the fraternal Delegates of the Churches present in the Middle East thanked Pope Francis for the prayer vigil for peace in Syria and throughout the world, held on 7 September 2013; in this context, the responsibility of evangelisation by Middle Eastern Christian families within a largely Islamic context was emphasised.

Finally, the delegates concluded their interventions by expressing the hope that the extraordinary Synod on the family will prove successful, especially in view of the ordinary Assembly scheduled for 2015.

Karol Wojtyła's thought and recovering the forgotten truth about what it means to be human

Calming the perfect storm

J. BRIAN BRANSFIELD*

Karol Wojtyła, the man who became St John Paul II, regularly escaped from two of the worst totalitarian regimes in history: German Nazism, and later, Soviet Communism. By "escaped," I do not mean that he ran away. Rather, as a priest and bishop, he escaped only by *going deeper*.

As the secret police patrolled the streets of Kraków, Fr Wojtyła escaped into the mountains of Poland with young married couples. He enlisted not a militia but young men and women united by the permanent, faithful, fruitful bond of marriage – because he knew *they* were the target. The goal of totalitarian regimes is not simply to conquer lands, but to control a people's entire culture, to change the unchangeable meaning of things.

So, there in the freedom of the mountains, Wojtyła went deeper still: He spoke about the unchangeable nature of the human person. He taught about the enduring meaning of marriage and the nature of the family. Years later as pope, John Paul II underscored these truths in his landmark document on the Christian family, *Familiaris Consortio*: "The future of humanity passes by way of the family" (n. 86).

And with his proclamation of St John Paul II as "the pope of the family," Pope Francis has signaled that the Church needs to meditate on the late pope's insights in response to the confusion and violence of our modern era.

Three Revolutions

In the year 2000, Josef Seifert, rector of the International Academy of Philosophy in Lichtenstein, noted that more people were murdered in the 20th century than at any period in history. The primary reason for this, Seifert explained, was "a mere

logical application to politics and private life of ideas about man which highly respected scientists and philosophers have taught for decades at the most prestigious universities around the globe." More people are killed as a result of political ideologies, Seifert said, than by a "relapse to animal passions" or by "dark feelings of national pride or vengeance."

If these words seem to refer to the bygone era of Nazi death camps and

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Msgr Bransfield's article was published by the Knights of Columbus in the August 2014 issue of the magazine *Columbia*. Bransfield is currently the Associate General Secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the author of *The Human Person: According to John Paul II and Meeting Jesus Christ: Meditations on the Word*.

Soviet gulags, consider the following facts: One of the most renowned professors of ethics in the United States maintains that a healthy chimpanzee has more of a right to life than a sick child. According to a 1997 study in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, nearly one-third of pediatricians in the Netherlands had euthanized malformed infants, sometimes even without the permission of the parent. In February 2007, the Supreme Court of Switzerland declared that the mentally ill have a constitutional right to be eliminated. The World Health Organization estimates there are as many as 50 million surgical abortions worldwide *every year*. Consider further the innumerable evils of war, abuse, terrorism, poverty and hunger.

Many, with unsettling accuracy, point out that our age is marked by the rejection of God. Still, the daily headlines indict us; we have not

only rejected God, but we have forgotten what it means to be human.

What lies at the heart of this cultural amnesia? Over the last 150 years, a perfect storm of sinister proportions has been gathering force. It has all but swept from our contemporary consciousness any sense of what it means to be human.

The first wave of the storm began with the Industrial Revolution. In the latter half of the 1800s, American society went from being based on the local community, with the family at its center, to being centered on the factory and the assembly line. Of course, industrial society ushered in some undeniably positive things, but as the nature of manufacturing and production changed, something else changed as well. Fathers, mothers and even children had to go to the factories for long hours. Hours meant output, and output meant profits. Human work became less about the human being, about making a living for one's family, and more about the bottom line and an individual keeping score with others. Gradually, the sense of being a person became, "I am successful if I *acquire* ... profits, position, status."

The second wave of the perfect storm, the sexual revolution, came with gale force in the second half of the 20th century. Human sexuality was no longer about a permanent, faithful and fruitful gift of self in marriage and family, but simply about satisfying an individual's personal erotic need. And so, adultery and cohabitation spread rampantly. No-fault divorce was presented as a panacea, yet it produced an epidemic of fatherlessness. Pornography went from being a dirty little secret in the 1920s to a cottage industry in the 1950s to a lifestyle and career option in the year 2000. Now, to be human, the goal was not simply to acquire things, but to acquire pleasure, which had lost its reference to genuine beauty.

The third wave of the perfect storm began to rage in the late 1970s

with the advent of the technological revolution. Technology has advanced so rapidly that the computer or mobile device is now the unquestioned third party in every relationship. The digital screen has replaced the face.

Something else crept in along with the advances of the technological revolution. The goal became *speed*: quicker access to the Internet, to information, to communication. In fact, high-speed access is often too slow. Even instant gratification does not seem fast enough. And now, when we are not on a digital device, we anxiously want everyday people to get out of our way – in traffic, on the elevator or at the checkout counter.

Today, as a result of the perfect storm, what it means to be human is not simply to acquire pleasure, but to *acquire pleasure quickly*.

By pleasure I mean something more understated than indulging in hedonism. It is the subtly insistent background music pressuring us to approach our entertainment, education, finance, home life, job and even our religion according to rules of consumerism, power and individualism. Failing to acquire pleasure quickly is tantamount to failing as a human being.

Recall Prof. Seifert's key insight: Transposed into political ideologies, these ideas about man have killed and continue to kill millions. The headlines are clear: Modern man straddles the extremes of unrestrained pleasure and untold violence. The irony is that the more society attempts to "acquire pleasure quickly," the more everyone suffers.

The Recovery

When Karol Wojtyła was elected Pope in 1978, in the middle of the perfect storm, he knew what to do. He had faced totalitarian regimes before. He went deeper, always deeper. This time, he did not lead young people into the mountains of Poland. He led the world into the center of the Church by proclaiming what it means to be a human being.

Throughout his pontificate, St John Paul II fearlessly taught the great truth that countless generations had long known, a truth confirmed by both sacred Scripture and the living tradition of the Church: Human life and the beauty of man and woman are not toys or tools; they are gifts, and as such, are meant to show us something not only about ourselves, but about God.

The human being is created in the image of God, who is love (cf. Gn 1:26-27, 1 Jn 4:8). In the "quick fix" mentality of our age, we can think that love is about *me* and getting my way. But genuine love is not about me; it is about a gift of self to the other who is different from me.

The sexual difference that exists between man and woman is not simply a biological fact. It is essential, irreplaceable and naturally



Fr Karol Wojtyła, later John Paul II, pictured in the early 1950s surrounded by young people

Pope Francis to athletes of the Italian Paralympic Committee

Let us overcome barriers

"Each athlete is a witness of how important it is to live such joy and toil in sport in the encounter with others". In his speech to the disabled athletes of the Italian Paralympic Committee – received in the Paul VI Hall on Saturday morning, 4 October – the Pope recalled how sport helps "us to live and welcome differences, to turn them into a precious opportunity of mutual enrichment and discovery". Francis then thanked the disabled athletes so that their healthy competition may be "transformed into a message of encouragement to all those who are in similar situations" and becomes an invitation to overcome "the barriers that we may meet, and above all those" that are within us. The following is a translation of the Pope's address, which was given in Italian.

Dear Athletes,
Dear Friends,
Good morning,

I thank you for your presence – so many and so festive! – and I thank the President of the Italian Paralympic Committee for his courteous words.

You have come from many parts of the world, and each one of you brings his or her own experience of sports and above all your experience as men and women: you bring achievements, goals reached through so much hard work, despite the many difficulties that had to be faced. Each one of you is a witness of how important it is to live such joy and toil in the encounter with others, to be able to share in their "race", to find a group of friends who will lend you a hand and where

you extend a hand to others. And like this each of you manages to give your best!

Sport fosters contact and relationships with people who come from diverse cultures and walks of life. It accustoms us to live and welcome differences, to turn them into a precious opportunity for mutual enrichment and discovery. Above all, sport is a precious opportunity to recognize one another as brothers and sisters on the journey, to foster the culture of inclusion and reject the culture of waste.

All this is felt even more in your experience, because the disability that you experience in some aspect of your physical make up, through the practice of sports and healthy competition, is transformed into a message of encouragement for all



those who are in situations similar to yours. It becomes an invitation to commit all our energy to do beautiful things together, overcoming the barriers that we may meet, and above all those that are within us.

Your testimony, dear athletes, is a great sign of hope. It is proof of the fact that there is unimaginable potential in every person, which can be developed through trust and solidarity. God the Father is the first to know this! God knows your hearts perfectly: he knows everything. He

is the first to know it! He knows us better than anyone, and looks at us with confidence. He loves us as we are, and makes us grow according to what we can become. Thus, in your effort for sports without barriers, for a world without exclusion, you are not alone! God our Father is with you!

May sport be for you all a gym in which to train daily, to measure up to yourself and to others, a gym that

gives you the opportunity to know new people and places and to help you feel an active part of society. May you be able to experience, also through sports, the closeness of God and the friendship of brothers and sisters.

I thank you for this meeting. I bless all of you and your loved ones. And, please, remember to pray for me! Thank you.

Now I ask the Lord to bless all of you, bless your whole life, bless your journey and bless your hearts.

Calming the perfect storm

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

foundational to human existence itself. Sexual difference expresses a deeper meaning, an unparalleled and immeasurable *openness* at every level of a man and woman's being. This openness is directed to the reciprocal gift of self in the two-in-one-flesh communion of persons proper to the union of man and woman in marriage. In other words, the human body, in its male and female particularity, is not something *added* to the person. Rather, it is inseparable from one's very identity. All of our being, especially the blessing of our human sexuality, is called to express total, self-giving love, which is integral to the meaning of the human person.

Some people mistakenly think that in order to be holy, one has to be a priest or a religious. Some may even think that priests and religious set the rules for married couples or that marriage is some kind of consolation prize for those who could not be priests or nuns. On the contrary, the genuine love of husband and wife sets a pattern for what it is to be a priest or a religious. The life-giving gift of self in married love is the very form of the life-giving gift of self that is at the heart of being a priest or religious.

In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II wrote, "Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy" (n. 11).

God has chosen, from the beginning of time, to mediate something

of his ineffable love into the universe through human love. In fact, on the cross, Christ the Bridegroom offers himself completely in the sacrifice of love to his bride the Church.

Married love is thus meant to convey something of divine love in the world, and God has a plan by which this happens. In the very same moment that he creates human life, God also creates the sexual difference between man and woman: "God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). Jesus confirms this great truth of Genesis and proclaims it anew when he teaches about marriage in reference to "the beginning" (cf. Mt 19:4ff).

We find the first and primary form of the gift of self in marriage. The Second Vatican Council puts it this way: "God did not create man as a solitary, for from the beginning 'male and female he created them' (Gn 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 12).

The council further teaches that man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself" (*GS*, n. 24). To *find* myself I have to *give* myself. Think about this paradox. It is not the mantra of the so-called reality shows. To be filled up *inside*, I have to go *outside* in the authentic gift of self.

Man's first recorded words in Scripture confirm the council's teaching. Man and woman first come to recognize one another on

the basis of their bodies: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," says Adam in joy and wonder. "This one shall be called 'woman,' for out of man this one has been taken" (Gn 2:23).

It is only in the sight of woman, recognizing the meaning of their personhood through their respective bodies, that Adam can name Eve. In naming her, he also names himself and knows *who he is*. His identity becomes clear, as does hers on seeing him.

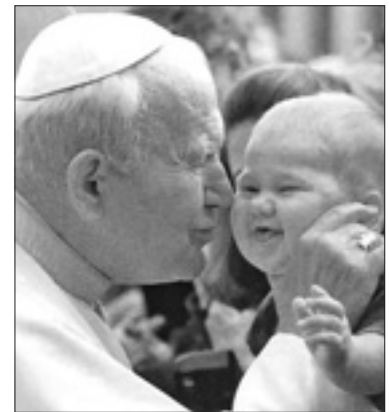
The Beauty of Love

For husbands and wives, the conjugal act is a crowning moment of the lifelong, daily gift of self. This total gift of conjugal union, by which all their other daily gifts are summed up in their very flesh, is so significant that God has made it the source of the greatest of gifts: new human life.

Even though the conjugal act does not always result in a new life, it is always meant to reflect and manifest the total, complete and fruitful self-giving of marriage.

New life, like human sexuality, is a gift. Sadly, many people misuse the gift of sexuality by living through the dark prism of *acquiring pleasure quickly*. As a result, they likewise fail to recognize the gift of new life and treat it instead as a prize, a trophy or a curse.

The pleasure-seeking pressures of our culture are never far away, but



neither are the mountains. The wisdom of the Church helps us to see that we are not meant to *acquire pleasure quickly*; we are meant, always and everywhere, to *give beauty slowly*.

Karol Wojtyła regularly escaped. He escaped deeper and proclaimed the central *idea about man*, the mountainous meaning of genuine love inscribed in the flesh of man and woman. He also knew, as human reason testifies and as Jesus taught, that if genuine love doesn't begin with man and woman in marriage, it doesn't begin at all.

The nature of the family – the bond of father, mother and child – reveals something about the inner structure of love that exists in its fullness only in God himself. To say that married love possesses this transcendent meaning is not to seek a naive return to some idyllic past. It is to return to Christ, to return to who we are really called to be.

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 9 October

He always give more

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Lk 11:9-10). At the morning Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis returned to meditate on the theme of prayer. He paused on the day's Reading from the Gospel of Luke, which speaks of the man who asks, and on the love of God who answers and gives in overabundance.

After recalling the text of the collect prayer recited before the Liturgy of the Word – "O God, source of all good, hear the prayers of your people beyond every wish and all merit, pour out your mercy upon us: forgive our conscious fears and bestow that which prayer does not dare to hope" – the Pontiff began his reflection pointing out that "God's mercy is not only forgiving – we all know this – but being generous and giving more and more...". Pausing on the invocation "and bestow that which prayer does not dare to hope", Francis highlighted: "Perhaps in prayer we ask for this and that, and He always gives us more! Always, always more".

The Pope then resumed the thread of the Gospel narrative, recalling that, a few verses before the passage offered in the day's liturgy, the Apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray as John had done with his disciples. "And the Lord taught them the Our Father". Afterwards the Gospel goes on to speak of the "generosity of God", of that "mercy of which he always gives more, more than what we believe can be given".

Pope Francis went to the heart of the text: "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight...". There are three words, three key words in this passage: friend, Father, and gift". This is the idea linked to the everyday experience of each person: in our life, the Pontiff said, there are golden friends, "who would give their life for a friend", and there are other more or less good ones, but a few are friends in a more profound way. There are not very many of these: "The Bible tells us 'one, two or three... no more'. Then the others are friends, but not like these".

Along the lines of the passage from Luke, the Pope continued: "I go to his house and ask, I ask, and in the end he feels bothered by the intrusion; he gets up and gives what the friend asks". The very "bond of friendship" sees that "we are given what we ask". But, he explained, "Jesus takes a step forward and speaks of the Father", posing these questions to his listeners: "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?". From here the following reassurance: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give...!". This means "not only the friend who accompanies us

on the journey of life helps us and gives us what we ask; but also the heavenly Father, this Father who loves us so much", to the point that He concerns himself – Jesus says – with feeding the birds of the field".

In this way, Pope Francis indicated, the Lord "wants to reawaken trust in prayer". Then, turning again to the Gospel of Luke, he quoted: "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (11:9-10). The Pontiff explained: "This is the prayer: ask, seek the way, and knock at the heart of God, the friend who accompanies us, the Father" who loves all of his creatures.

At the end of the passage, the Pope pointed out a phrase which "seems a little cryptic: 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children', will your heavenly Father give much more than you ask? Yes! He 'will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'. This is precisely 'the gift, this is the 'more' of God'. Because the Father, the Pontiff underlined, "never gives you a gift, something you ask him for, like this, without wrapping it well, without something more that makes it more beautiful". And "what the Lord, the Father gives us that is 'more', is the Spirit: the true gift of the Father is what prayer does not dare to hope". Man knocks at God's door with prayer to ask for grace. And "He, the Father, gives me that and more: the gift, the Holy Spirit".

It is this, the Pope emphasized, the dynamic of prayer, which "one does with a friend, who is the companion on the journey of life, one does with the Father and one does in the Holy Spirit". The true friend is Jesus: it is he, in fact, "who accompanies us and teaches us to pray. And our prayer must thus be Trinitarian". It is a very important point of emphasis for Pope Francis who, approaching his conclusion, recalled a classic dialogue he has had many times with the faithful: "Do you believe? Yes, yes! What do you believe in? In God! But what is God for you? God, God!". A rather generic, abstract concept, which, for the Bishop of Rome, does not fit reality. Because, he stated, "the Father, the Son and the Spirit exist: they are persons, not an idea in the air". In other words, he specified, "this 'mist God' does not exist: people exist!".

The Pontiff's final message in brief: "Jesus is the companion on the journey who gives us what we ask; the Father who cares for us and loves us; and the Holy Spirit who is the gift, is that 'more' that the Father gives, for which our conscience does not dare to hope".

Friday, 10 October

The heart on guard

Do we guard our heart well? Do we protect it from the demon's constant attempts to enter it and dwell there? These were among the questions asked by Pope Francis during Mass

at Santa Marta, reflecting on the day's reading from the Gospel of Luke (11:15-26). It presents "a sad story", he said, which begins with Jesus, who casts out a demon, "and ends with the moment when the demons return to the heart of the person from whom they had been cast out".

It is a recurring situation in the life of every man because, the Pontiff recalled, quoting the passage from Luke: "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'. Here then, is where the demon, finding the heart at peace, "goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there". And thus, "the latter state of that man becomes worse than the former".

The demon in fact, the Bishop of Rome explained, never gets discouraged, "he has patience", and he repeatedly returns, even "at the end of life", because he "doesn't give up what he wants for himself".

Jesus, too, felt this reality: in the Gospel of Luke we read that "after



William Blake, "Jesus Tempted by Satan to Turn the Stones to Bread" (1815-1819)

the temptation in the wilderness" the demon left him alone for a while, but then "kept coming back". And the demons "set traps for him" up until the end, until his passion, "up to the Cross", telling him, "If you are the Son of God... come, come to us, this way we can believe". And, Francis explained, what also happens to us when someone tempts us, asking us: "Are you capable?". And they challenge us maliciously, saying: "No, you aren't capable". This is why "Jesus speaks of a strong man, fully armed, the guard of his own palace, who guards his own house", because the heart of each one of us is like a house. And so, the Pontiff asked himself, "am I the guard of my heart?".

It is indeed necessary "to protect that treasure where the Holy Spirit dwells, so that the other spirits do not enter". And it needs to be done "like one protects a house, with lock and key". After all, the Pope said, we use "many types of security" in

our houses to defend against thieves. Do we do the same with our heart? Or do we leave "the door open?". One must "be vigilant", Francis advised, because the demon, even though "he has been cast out by baptism, he goes, he finds seven others more evil than himself, and he returns".

Such constant attention is necessary. One must always ask oneself: "What is happening there", inside us? "Am I the sentry of my heart?". We learn, the Pontiff suggested, from our everyday life: "Who among us, when we are at home, whether in the kitchen, or at our desk, wherever we may be, and seeing a person pass through that we don't know, who among us remains calm? No one!". We immediately turn to the stranger: "Who are you? Who let you in? Where did you come in?". The same thing can also happen inside us. "How many times", the Bishop of Rome underlined, "do wicked thoughts enter, wicked intentions, jealousy, envy. So many things that enter. But who opened that door? Where did they come in?". And if we are not aware of whom we let into our heart, it "becomes a town square, where everyone comes and goes". You begin to lack intimacy. And there, "the Lord cannot speak or even be heard".

So it happens that, even if our heart "is truly the place to receive the Holy Spirit", without the proper vigilance "the Spirit ends up in a corner", as if we have locked him in "a closet". And there, the Spirit is "sad".

What do we do then, to prevent this occurrence? To answer, the Pope took another cue from the Gospel. He quoted an expression that Jesus used, "which seems a bit curious: 'he who does not gather with me scatters'". Starting from the word "gather", Francis explained that one needs "to have a gathered heart", a heart in which we manage to be aware of "what's happening". In this sense, what may be recommended is the age old "but good" practice of examining the conscience. "Who among us", asked the Pontiff, "in the evening, before the day is over, is alone" and in the silence "asks himself" what has happened in my heart today? What has occurred? What things have passed through my heart?".

It is an important exercise, a complete "grace" that can help us to be good guardians. Because, the Pope recalled, "the devils come back, always, even at the end of life". And to keep watch so the demons do not enter our heart, it is essential to know how to "be in silence before one's self and before God", in order to check whether someone we don't know has entered our house, and whether the key is in place". This, the Pontiff concluded, "helps us to defend ourselves against so much malevolence, also against what we might do ourselves". Because "these demons are so clever" and are capable of misleading everyone.



Monday, 13 October

The God of surprises

"A heart that loves the law, for the law is God's", but "which also loves God's surprises", for his "holy law is not an end in itself": it is a journey, "a teaching which leads us to Jesus Christ". Pope Francis called us to ask the Lord for this in prayer, during Mass at the Chapel of Santa Marta.

The Pontiff rested mainly on the passage of the Gospel according to Luke (11:29-32), in which Jesus harshly criticizes the crowd gathered to hear him, as "an evil generation" because "it seeks a sign". According to the Bishop of Rome "it is evident that Jesus is speaking to the doctors of the law", who, "many times in the Gospel", ask him for "a sign". Indeed, they "do not see many of Jesus' signs". But this is precisely why "Jesus scolds them" on various occasions: "You are incapable of seeing the signs of the times", he tells them in the Gospel of Matthew, drawing upon the image of the fig tree: "as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; and you do not understand the signs of the times".

Pope Francis thus exhorted that we ask ourselves the reason that the doctors of the law did not understand the signs of the times and invoked an extraordinary sign. And he proposed several answers: the first was "because they were closed. They were closed within their system, they had organized the law very well". It was "a masterpiece. All of the Jews knew what one could and could not do, where one could go. It was all organized". But Jesus caught them unprepared, by doing "curious things", such as "going with the sinners", and "eating with the publicans". And the doctors of the law did not like this, they found it "dangerous", putting at risk "the doctrine which they, the theologians, had been making for centuries".

In this regard the Bishop of Rome acknowledged that it was a law "made for love, in order to be faithful to God", but it had become a closed regulatory system. They "had simply forgotten history. They had forgotten that God is the God of the law", but He is also "the God of surprises. And God, many times, also had surprises in store for his people": suffice it to think of the Red Sea and of "how he saved them" from slavery in Egypt, the Pope recalled.

Despite that, however, they "did not understand that God is always new; He never denies himself, He never says that something He had said was a mistake, never; but He al-

ways surprises. And they did not understand and they closed themselves within that system created with much good will; and they asked" that Jesus give them "a sign", failing to understand, however, "the many signs that Jesus made" and maintaining a completely "closed" attitude.

The second response to his initial question, the Pontiff pointed out, is attributable to the fact that they "had forgotten that they were a people on a journey. And when one is on a journey one always finds new things, things one does not know. And in the law, they had to accept these things in a heart faithful to the Lord". But, also in this case, "a journey is not absolute in itself, it is a journey toward an end point: toward the definitive manifestation of the Lord". After all, all of "life is a journey toward the fullness of Jesus Christ, when the second coming occurs". It is a journey toward Jesus, who will come again in glory, as the angels said to the Apostles on the day of the Ascension".

In other words, Pope Francis emphasized, repeating the words from the Gospel passage, this generation "seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah": that is to say, the Pope clarified, "the sign of the Resurrection, of glory, of that eschatology we are journeying toward". However, many of his contemporaries "were closed within themselves, not open to the God of surprises"; they were men and women who "did not know the path or even this eschatology, to the point that when, in the Sanhedrin, the priest asks Jesus: 'Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God', and Jesus says, yes, and 'you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'. Then the high priest tore his robes and made a scandal. 'He has uttered blasphemy! Blasphemy!', he yelled". For them, the sign that Jesus gave was blasphemy.

For this reason, the Pope explained, Jesus defined them as an "evil generation", inasmuch as "they did not understand that the law they protected and loved was a pedagogy toward Jesus Christ". Indeed, "if the law does not lead to Jesus Christ, does not bring us close to Jesus Christ, it is dead". And this is why Jesus scolds the members of that generation "for being closed, for being incapable of recognizing the signs of the times, for not being open to the God of surprises, for not being on a journey toward the Lord's triumphant finale", to the point "that when he explains it, they think it is blasphemy".

The Pope then moved on to his final instruction, to reflect on this theme, to ask oneself about these as-

pects: "Am I attached to my things, to my ideas, closed? Or am I open to the God of surprises?". And also: "Am I a stationary person or a person on a journey?". And finally, he concluded, "do I believe in Jesus Christ and in what he has done?", that is, "he died, rose again... do I believe that the journey goes forth toward maturity, toward the manifestation of the glory of the Lord? Am I capable of understanding the signs of the times and of being faithful to the voice of the Lord that is manifest in them?".

Tuesday, 14 October

Appearance and truth

"Jesus condemns people with good manners but bad habits", because it is one thing to "appear good and beautiful", but inner truth is something else. In the same way, it isn't good to be bound exclusively to the letter of the law, because "law alone doesn't save. Law saves when it leads you to the source of salvation". During morning Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis called for an examination of conscience regarding the state of each Christian's faith.

The day's liturgy offered a Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (11:37-41), from which the Pontiff began his homily. He explained Jesus' attitude with respect to the Pharisee who was scandalized because the Lord did not perform the ritual cleansing before his meal. Christ's response was grim: "You are so concerned with the outside, with appearance, but inside you are filled with plunder and evil". The words go along with those from a parallel passage from Matthew, where he speaks of greed and uncleanness and where the Pharisees are compared to "whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness". In this regard, the Pope underscored that Jesus firmly condemned the Pharisees' self-confidence in "having fulfilled the law". He condemned "this cosmetic spirituality".

This refers to the people "who liked to take walks in the town square", and to be seen while they prayed, and to wear a dismal face while they fasted. "Why is the Lord like this?", Francis asked himself, pointing out that, to describe the actions of the Pharisees, the Gospel uses two different but related adjectives: "plunder and evil". He also explained that this evil is "strongly associated with money".

The Pontiff then recounted a brief anecdote: "I once heard an elderly preacher of spiritual exercises, who said: 'How is sin able to enter the soul? Oh, it's simple! Through your pockets...'. Money itself is basically 'the door' through which corruption enters the heart. This explains why Jesus stated: 'Give for alms those things which are within'".

Pope Francis explained that "alms have always been, in the tradition of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, the touchstone of justice. A just man, a just woman is always linked to alms": because with alms we share our own with others, we give what each one "has within".

And thus the Holy Father returned to the theme of appearance and inner truth. The Pharisees whom Jesus speaks of "believed they were good because they did all that the law commanded should be done". But law "alone doesn't save". Law saves "when it leads you to the source of salvation, when it prepares your heart to receive the true salvation that comes from faith".

The same concept, the Pope specified, emerges from the day's First Reading, taken from the Letter of Paul in which he disagrees with the Galatians (5:1-6) because they had been "very attached to the law" and "frightened of the faith" and had "returned to the prescriptions of the law" regarding circumcision. The Apostle's words are also well suited to our own daily life, because the faith, the Bishop of Rome highlighted, "is not only reciting the Creed: we all believe in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, in life everlasting...". But if our faith is "immobile" and "inactive", then "it's of no use".

Thus, what's important in Jesus Christ is "the faith which becomes active in charity". And this brings us back to the theme of alms, intended "in the broadest sense of the word", in other words, "detached from the dictatorship of cash, from the idolatry of money" because "all greed distances us from Jesus Christ".

This is why, the Pope explained, throughout the Bible there is "a lot of talk about alms", whether the "small, everyday" alms or the more important ones. It is necessary, though, to pay attention to two things: we mustn't "sound the trumpet when giving alms" and we mustn't limit ourselves to donating only what's extra. It's necessary to "strip oneself" and not give "only the leftovers". It's important to do as that elderly woman did, "who gave all she had to live".

One who gives alms and "sounds the trumpet" so that everyone knows "is not a Christian". This, Francis indicated, is to act as a Pharisee, "it's hypocritical". To better illustrate the concept, the Pope told about what happened once to Fr Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1965 to 1983. In the period that "he was a missionary in Japan", while seeking offerings for his mission, he received an invitation from an important woman who wanted to make a donation. The woman didn't receive him in private, but wanted to consign her envelope in front of "journalists who took photographs". In other words, she "sounded the trumpet".

Fr Arrupe, recalled the Pontiff, said that he had "suffered great humiliation" and had put up with her only for the good of "the poor of Japan, for the mission". Once he returned home, he opened the envelope and discovered that there "were ten dollars" inside. If the heart doesn't change, Pope Francis commented, appearance counts for nothing. And thus concluded his homily. "Today it will do us good to think about how my faith is, how my Christian life is: is it a Christian life of cosmetics, of appearance, or is it a Christian life with a faith which is active in charity?". Everyone can examine his conscience "before God". And "it is good for us to do so".

Moral formation as a foundation of the civic in Catholic education

Not only to look but to see

BARBARA CHYROWICZ*

Catholic universities exist in the world which today is extremely secularized. This does not mean that their mission is finished. On the contrary, it is even more relevant than before. We, however, have to look for a new paradigm for our mission. Firstly, we cannot close Catholic universities to those young people who are non-believers, but they must accept our specific character; whether or not they can see it depends on us. Secondly, it is the moral formation of the young people which should be the task of Catholic universities. And this aspect has a missionary character in the sense that its mission is addressed to both believers (independently of their religion) and non-believers. There is no doubt that people's moral maturity is a foundation of the civic. What is the specific character of Catholic university?

While I was a grant holder at the Catholic University of Leuven, I would spend relatively lots of time conversing with a young man who kept trying to convince me that calling a university Catholic today has no sense. Why? The reason is that there is no Catholic physics, mathematics or biology. Therefore, calling a university Catholic indicates nothing essential, unless it points at the owner of the university. The owner can be the Catholic Church just like any other Church. Why should we mark it in the name?

The young man's arguments were not very original. It is true that the time of the Catholic Church's mercenary over education is gone forever, and the pluralism of views makes not only the Catholic, but in general the Christian, world view one of many options. If, therefore, it is supposed to be sensible to stress

"It is the task of a Catholic university – aside from its job of researching and educating – to support young people in their 'becoming,' maturing, gaining wisdom, and responsibility for others"

the Catholic character of a university, there must be something that will be specific of it: specific, original and important for young people because it is for them that there are universities.

It will not be mathematics or physics, although it is not excluded that it is the high level of tuition in individual institutions that will make students choose just this Catholic university. I think that Catholic universities should in particular be concerned with a high level of research and treat it as their mission. The quality of education, however important, is not something specific of Catholic universities. Paraphrasing the words of Luke: "these should have done, without overlooking the others" (11:42).



The Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium

There is perhaps nothing more blunt than Christ's statement that His followers are "not of this world" (Jn 15:19). Taking Christ's farewell speech in its literal sense, one may, therefore, claim that Catholic universities have no sense, and that teaching should be reduced only to theology. "For the world in its present form is passing away." (1 Cor 7:31). The point is not, however, to emigrate from the only accessible reality into some vague spheres of the spirit. This is our world, and we have no another. If Christians "are not of this world," it is because they "think somewhat differently" and they "see differently". And this does not mean in the least the laws of physics or the calculus of probability. It deals with who they are, or, rather, "whom they become". Therefore it is the task of a Catholic university – aside from its job of researching and educating – to support young people in their

"becoming," maturing, gaining wisdom, and responsibility for others. It is just in this that "seeing and thinking differently" consists; it is to be more profound and should go beyond the details of the applied sciences towards a holistic vision of man in which what matters is not only who he knows, but who he is and where he goes. While in the applied sciences there appears to be a more intensified level of specialisation, and general questions are pushed into the background, i.e. the questions about the sense of life, struggle, sacrifice for others. At a Catholic university these questions should be always present. It is the trait of a mature man that he can find his place in the world and he does not live only for himself, and this is a profoundly Christian idea... Man cannot fulfil himself otherwise than, as we read in *Gaudium et Spes*, through a disinterested gift of himself (cf. n. 24) Only such people truly edify a community who can transcend the narrow circle of its own affairs and who can be committed on behalf of others regardless of profit. Maturity is always fertile....

The mature person can see more and further. Only then do we have mature graduates who will enter adult life with their minds open and responsibility for the society in which they live. Why is this maturity so fundamentally important? Let us illustrate it by comparing our biological and spiritual development.

Maturation always has the character of a process, longer or shorter with regard to its kind. We mature in two ways. First, like any other animal organisms, we gain biological maturity, which makes us candidates to pass life. The problem is that man, with respect to the fact that his life entails the dimension of "becoming," does not pass only the biological life. He passes also "what he has become": what he has recognised, approved, discovered, what is praiseworthy, desirable, and what is despicable and should be absolutely rejected; he passes what is sacred and what is not sacred, what is beautiful and repellent, what is priceless and banal. He passes on what he has chosen because, although we do not choose the fact of our existence, we choose what we become... I can be an utter scoundrel, I can become simply a good man, not necessarily a hero. What we become, therefore, remains extremely important for us and for others. If, to use the analogy of biological maturation, it is directed at passing biological life and this end confers sense on each biological existence, then, taking into consideration the double character of human maturity, then maturity understood as "becoming" is equally profoundly written into the sense of man's spiritual existence. Not only do we ourselves "become," but it is the purpose of our life to help others in their "becoming". We are "becoming" by creating an entirely new and unique quality in the world of persons. The activity of others is indispensable for us to become because, biologically and spiritually, we appear in this world "naked". We take (or not) what is passed on to us by

those who have preceded us, and after a while we turn to those who will come after us. A Catholic university is a place in which people are supposed to gain knowledge and wisdom, the latter being the condition of spiritual fertility. It is "spiritual fertility" that creates a specifically human world. Therefore the question of attaining maturity is neither free nor neutral; it is a *sine qua non* for the growth of successive generations. This may sound grandiloquent, but the point is very simple: the beauty of humanity. Is it not the duty of a Catholic university to be particularly concerned with this beauty?

Such a person stands a chance of moral maturation who is capable of seeing, who is not only looking, but who also can see: himself, others, and the surrounding reality. The "seeing" has a chance to make a right choice, which will not betray what he has recognized because this would mean to give up oneself, but he has chosen himself. Moreover, such a person will be able to guide others, to guide them to their own maturation. It is easy to plan out a goal for someone; the point is to guide him in such a way that he can discover it himself.

Sources of the civic in Europe

Sr Chyrowicz's paper was presented at conference in Rome on 26-27 September, entitled: "Sources of the Civic: Catholic Higher Education and Democracy in Europe". Held at the University of Notre Dame Global Gateway and sponsored by the Nanovic Institute for European Studies, the conference examined various concepts of civic education and the unique role that Catholic universities play in cultivating virtues, values and responsibilities central to the healthy exercise of civic life.

There can be no solution to the problem because as long as man lives, there is no end to "becoming". The more spiritually mature we become – and this process is still open – the more we can see... We are like artists in the process of painting, one painting throughout our life. When we are young our life is devoted to sketches, and we can only guess what the complete work will become. And then throughout our adult life we try to find colours and filling the rest with contents. A Catholic university is supposed not only to teach what the biological development consists in, but it is supposed to help the young people in their development, so that they could "sketch out their own lives"! If it abandons this task, it will undermine its sense.

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To the Congregation for the Clergy on the importance of vocational discernment

Diamonds in the rough

Vocations must be guarded and fostered so "that they may bear mature fruit". They are "diamonds in the rough" to be fashioned "with care, respect for a person's conscience and patience, so that they may shine in the midst of the People of God". On Friday morning, 3 October, in the Clementine Hall, the Holy Father met with the Congregation for the Clergy at the start of their Plenary Assembly. The following is a translation of the Pope's address, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Cardinals,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Brothers and Sisters,

I address to each of you a warm greeting and my sincere thanks for sharing the Holy See's concern for ordained ministers and their pastoral work. I thank Cardinal Beniamino Stella for the words with which he introduced this meeting. What I would like to tell you concerns three subjects, which correspond to the goals and activity of this Dicastery: vocation, formation, evangelization.

Returning to the image in the Gospel of Matthew, I like comparing the vocation to the ordained ministry to the "treasure hidden in a field" (13:44). It is truly a treasure that God places from the beginning in the hearts of some men; those whom He has chosen and called to follow him in this spe-

cial state of life. This treasure, which needs to be discovered and brought to light, is not meant to "enrich" just someone. The one called to the ministry is not the "master" of his vocation, but the administrator of a gift that God has entrusted to him for the good of all people, rather, of all men and women, including those who have distanced themselves from religious practice or do not profess faith in Christ. At the same time, the whole of the Christian community is the guardian of the treasure of these vocations, destined for his service, and it must be ever more conscious of the duty to promote them, welcome them and accompany them with affection.

God never ceases to call some to follow and serve Him in the ordained ministry. We too, however, must do our part, through forma-



tion, which is the response of man, of the Church to God's gift, that gift that God gives through vocations. It means guarding and fostering vocations, that they may bear ripe fruit. They are "diamonds in the rough" ready to be carefully polished with respect for the conscience of the candidates and with patience, so that they may shine among the People of God. Formation is therefore not a unilateral act by which someone transmits theological or spiritual notions. Jesus did not say to those he called: "come, let me explain", "follow me, I will teach you": no! The formation offered by Christ to his disciples came rather as a "come, and follow me", "do

as I do", and this is the method that today too, the Church wants to adopt for her ministers. The formation of which we speak is a discipular experience which draws one to Christ and conforms one ever more to Him.

Precisely for this reason, it cannot be a limited task, because priests never stop being disciples of Jesus, who follow Him. Sometimes we proceed with celerity, at other times our step is hesitant, we stop and we may even fall, but always staying on the path. Therefore, formation understood as discipleship accompanies the ordained minister his entire life and regards his person as a whole, intellectually, humanly and spiritually. Initial and on-going formation are distinct because each requires

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The Pope's video message for the 50th anniversary of the founding of Loppiano International Centre

A culture of relationships

The following is an English translation of the video message which Pope Francis transmitted on 4 October to the International Centre of the Focolare Movement in Loppiano. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of Loppiano, the first model-town of the Movement which is a place of dialogue and intercultural acceptance.

Dear Brothers and Sisters all residents of Loppiano,
Good evening.

With you, I also greet all the people who today populate the town wished for by Chiara Lubich, inspired by the Gospel of brotherhood – that universal brotherhood – and those who from every corner of the world are linked and participate in the celebration of the first 50 years of its foundation. Loppiano is a reality that lives in service to the Church and to the world, for which we can thank the Lord; a town which is a living and effective witness of communion among peoples of various nations, cultures and vocations, which above all takes care every day to maintain mutual and never-ending charity among you.

I am pleased that you have chosen for your anniversary the day in which the entire Church celebrates St Francis of Assisi, witness and creator of peace and fraternity. It is truly a happy coincidence for me too.

The people of Loppiano, those who live there permanently and those who are there for a period of experience and formation, want to become ex-

perts in mutual acceptance and dialogue, peacemakers, builders of brotherhood.

May you continue with renewed enthusiasm on this path, I hope that you are able to remain faithful and that you may increasingly embody the prophetic design of this town which blossomed from the charism of unity exactly 50 years ago. May you live this in profound harmony with the message of the Second Vatican Council which was being celebrated then, the design, that is, to testify in mutual love for all, the light and the wisdom of the Gospel. Therefore, Loppiano is a school of life, where there is only one teacher: Jesus.

Yes, a city, a school of life in order to allow the world to hope again, to witness that the Gospel is truly a leaven and the salt of a new civilization of love. But for this, drawing on the spiritual sap of the Gospel, it is necessary to imagine and experience a new culture in all spheres of the life of a society: from the family to politics to the economy, also known as a culture of relationships. The origin of wisdom is the sincere desire for education, the concern of education is love. It is not a coincidence that you have a site in Loppiano, where the Sophia University Institute was established by the Holy

See several years ago. There is an urgent need, in fact, for young people, for men and women who, in addition to being properly prepared in the various disciplines, to be at the same time imbued with the wisdom that flows from the love of God.

Dear friends, my heartfelt wish for Loppiano and all of you is to look ahead, to always look ahead and to aim high with trust, courage and creativity. No mediocrity.

I entrust you to Mary Theotokos, Mother of God, who welcomes you all to the shrine in the heart of the town. And I ask you to pray for me.

I greet you and and bless you. *Arrivederci.*



Stain glass window from the church in Loppiano

The Pontiff encourages the Bishops of Chad on their 'ad limina' visit to ensure the Church is integrated in the social fabric

A quality catechesis

The Church must be fully integrated in the social fabric, but obligations of social work should not exhaust the work of evangelization: it is important that the faithful be firmly formed from the doctrinal and spiritual point of view. Pope Francis recalled this to the Bishops of Chad whom he received on Thursday, 2 October, on the occasion of their 'ad limina' visit. In his address, the Pontiff urged the prelates to aim to provide a "quality catechesis" and to develop a dialogue with other religions in order to discourage the development of the violence which victimizes Christians in several nearby countries. The following is a translation of the Pope's address, which he consigned in French.

Dear Brother Bishops,

It is a great joy to welcome you to the Vatican on the occasion of your *ad limina* visit. I cordially thank Bishop Jean-Claude Bouchard, President of your Bishops' Conference, for the words that he addressed to me. This regular pilgrimage of Bishops from the entire world to the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul is a particularly significant occasion in order to experience collegiality. Not only does it demonstrate and strengthen the bonds of communion with the Successor of Peter, but it also recalls the brotherly solicitude that each Bishop must have for the other Particular Churches, above all for those located in the same country. I express the hope that you will return to your dioceses strengthened in the conviction that you are not alone in your difficult and demanding mission, but that you have beside you brothers who share the same concern to proclaim the Gospel and to serve the Church in Chad, and also the certainty that the Pope, with the entire universal Church, remembers you in his prayers and encourages you in your ministry.

I would like first and foremost to thank you for the work of evangelization that you are doing. Your communities are growing, not only in terms of numbers but also with regard to the quality and the strength of their commitment. I truly rejoice at the work accomplished in the areas of education, health and development. Besides, the civil authorities are very grateful to the Catholic Church for her contribution to the entire society of Chad. I encourage you to persevere on this path for there is a profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, a link which must find expression and develop in every work of evangelization (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 178). Service to the poor and to the weakest is a true witness rendered to Christ who made himself poor to come close to us and save us. Religious congregations, as well as the laity who work with them, play an important role in this area, for which we sincerely thank them.

It is certain, however, that this commitment to social work cannot alone exhaust the entire work of evangelization; a deepening and rooting the faith in the heart of the faithful – which means a genuine spiritual and sacramental life – are essential if it is to withstand today's numerous trials and in order that the faithful's conduct conform more closely to the demands of the Gospel, enabling them to advance toward true holiness. This is particularly true in a country where the influence of some cultural traditions is very strong, where less morally challenging religious proposals appear everywhere, and where secularization is gaining ground.

It is therefore important that the faithful be firmly formed from the doctrinal and spiritual point of view: the first sphere of this formation is undoubtedly catechesis. I urge you, in a renewed missionary spirit, to update the catechetical methods used in your dioceses. On the one hand, what is good in your cultural traditions must be taken into consideration and enhanced – because Christ did not come to abolish cultures but to bring them to fulfillment (cf. *General Audience Catechesis*, 20 August 2014) – and on the other,



Emmanuel Nsama, "Jesus and the Samaritan"

what is not Christian must be openly denounced. At the same time, it is crucial to ensure the accuracy and thoroughness of the doctrinal content of these paths. Such content is expressed clearly in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, to which every formation syllabus should refer.

The concern to provide a quality catechesis necessarily raises the issue of the formation of catechists. They are quite numerous in your dioceses and their role in proclaiming the faith is irreplaceable. Please convey



to them my most profound encouragement. The catechist must be properly trained not only intellectually – which is absolutely crucial – but also humanly and spiritually, in order that, as Christ's true witness, his or her teaching may actually bear fruit. Maybe every diocese should have a training centre for catechists, which, in general, could serve in the long term for the on-going training of the laity? In fact, the work of evangelization among the faithful must be continually repeated and deepened.

This is also true with regard to families, who form the "vital cell of society and of the Church" (*Africae Munus*, n. 42) and which are so weakened today. I advise you – but I know you already do so – to pay special attention to them; they need your guidance, your teaching, your protection. And, in the bosom of the family, it is important that the role and the dignity of the woman be valued, in a way that bears an eloquent witness to the Gospel. It is thus fitting that, in this area, "the conduct of the members of the

of people – this is for a diocese. But I highly recommend that you make a concerted effort to choose and train stable and competent professors. Do not hesitate to commit yourselves personally, visiting the seminaries yourselves, showing you are close to the professors and to the seminarians, the better to appreciate the wealth and understand the short-comings of the syllabus in order to confirm the former and remedy the latter.

Regarding the permanent formation of the clergy, at the diocesan level, in order that everyone may participate, it is certainly necessary to review and remember the needs of the priestly life in all of its aspects – spiritual, intellectual, moral, pastoral, liturgical... – as well as to engender a sincere and enthusiastic fraternal priesthood.

Dear Brother Bishops, the Church in Chad, notwithstanding her growth and vitality, is clearly in the minority amid a population with a Muslim majority and which is still partly attached to its traditional forms of worship. I encourage you to see that the Church, which is respected and listened to, totally retain her rightful place in the society of Chad in which she has become a structural component even where she is a minority. In such a context, I cannot but encourage you to further interreligious dialogue, so happily begun by the late Archbishop Mathias N'Gartéri Mayadi of N'Djamena, who strove so hard to promote the coexistence of the different religious communities. I think that similar initiatives should be continued in order to discourage the development of the violence which victimizes Christians in some of your neighbouring countries. Furthermore it is very important to maintain the good relations you have established with the civil authorities, which facilitated the recent signing of a *Framework Agreement* between the Holy See and the Republic of Chad, which, once ratified, will greatly help the Church's mission. May you be able to implement this *Agreement* fully, for a greater spread of the Gospel!

With this hope, entrusting all of you, besides the priests, consecrated people, catechists and all the faithful lay people of your dioceses, to the protection of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, and to the intercession of St John Paul II, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing.

The Holy Father received participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in audience on Thursday morning, 2 October, in the Clementine Hall. His address to them emphasized the necessity to defend the right to employment and to promote reforms directed toward the redistribution of wealth and sovereignty. The following is a translation of Pope Francis' address, which he delivered in Italian.



To the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Safeguard the right to work

Dear Cardinals,
Dear Brother Bishops and Priests,
Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you all affectionately and I thank Cardinal Peter Turkson for the words with which he introduced this meeting. Your Plenary Assembly coincides with the fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, a fundamental document for the evangelization of society, which offers valuable guidelines for the presence of Catholics in society, in institutions, in the economy, in finance and in politics. *Caritas in Veritate* called attention to the benefits but also the dangers of globalization, when it is not oriented to the good of peoples. If globalization has notably increased the aggregate wealth of the whole and of numerous individual States, it has also exacerbated the gap among the various social groups, creating inequality and new poverty in the very countries considered the wealthiest.

One of the aspects of today's economic system is the exploitation

of the international disparity in labour costs, which weighs on thousands of people who live on less than two dollars a day. This imbalance not only fails to respect the dignity of those who provide low-cost labour, but it destroys the

"A love full of truth is in fact the foundation on which to build the peace that is particularly desired and necessary today for the good of all"

sources of employment in those regions in which it is the most protected. This raises the issue of creating mechanisms for the protection of the right to employment, as well as of the environment, in the presence of a growing consumerist ideology, which does not show responsibility in conflicts with cities and with Creation.

The growth of inequality and poverty undermines inclusive and participatory democracy at risk which always presupposes an economy and an equitable and non-exclusive market. It is a question, therefore, of overcoming the structural causes of inequality and poverty. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, I wished to point out three fundamental instruments for the social inclusion of the most needy: education, access to health care and employment for all (cf. n. 192).

In other words, the social state of right and, in particular, the fundamental right to employment should not be dismantled. This cannot be considered a variable dependent on financial and monetary markets. It is a fundamental good in regard to dignity (cf. *ibid.*), to the formation of a family, to the realization of the common good and of peace. Education, work and access to health care

for all (cf. *ibid.*, 205) are key elements for development and the just distribution of goods, for the attainment of social justice, for membership in society (cf. *ibid.*, 53), and for free and responsible participation in political life, meaning the administration of the *res publica*. Views that claim to increase profitability, at the cost of restricting the labour market, thereby creating new exclusions, are not in conformity with an economy at the service of man and of the common good, with an inclusive and participatory democracy.

Another problem arises from the persistent inequalities in economic sectors, in wages, in commercial and speculative banks, including institutions and global problems: it is necessary to maintain deep concern for the poor and for social justice (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 201). It requires, on one hand, significant reforms that provide for the redistribution of the wealth produced and universalization of free markets at the service of families, and, on the other, the redistribution of sovereignty, on both the national and supranational planes.

Caritas in Veritate also called us to regard the present social issue as an environmental question. In particular, it remarked on the link between environmental ecology and human ecology, between the former and life's ethics.

The principle of *Caritas in Veritate* is extremely relevant today. A love full of truth is in fact the foundation on which to build the peace that is particularly desired and necessary today for the good of all. With this principle, dangerous fanaticisms, conflicts over the possession of resources, migrations of biblical dimensions, unrelenting epidemics of hunger and poverty, human trafficking, social and economic injustices and disparities, and unequal access to collective goods can be overcome.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Church is always moving, seeking new ways to proclaim the Gospel also in the social sphere. I thank you for your commitment in this area and, on entrusting you to the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, I ask you to pray for me and I bless you from my heart. Thank you.

Diamonds in the rough

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

different methods and timing, but they are two halves of one reality, the life of a disciple cleric, in love with his Lord and steadfastly following him.

Such path of discovery and evaluation of a vocation has a precise purpose: evangelization. Every vocation is missionary and the mission of ordained ministers is evangelization, in all its forms. It starts in the first place with "being", in order to then be translated into "doing". Priests are united in a sacramental brotherhood, therefore, the first form of evangelization is the witness of brotherhood and of communion among themselves and with their bishop. From such a communion can arise a powerful missionary zeal – which frees ordained ministers from the comfortable temptation of being over anxious about the opinion of others and of their own well being, than inspired by pastoral love – in order to proclaim the Gospel, to the remotest peripheries.

In this mission of evangelization, priests are called to grow in the awareness of being pastors, sent to stand in the midst of their flock, to render the Lord present through the Eucharist and to dispense his mercy. This is what it means to "be" priests, it is not just limited to what priests "do"; they are free from all spiritual worldliness, conscious that their life is first and foremost about evangelizing even before their work.

How beautiful it is to see priests joyful in their vocation, with a deep serenity, that sustains them even in moments of fatigue and pain! And this never comes about without prayer, prayer from the heart, from that dialogue with the Lord... who is the heart, so to speak, of priestly life. We need priests, there is a lack of vocations. The Lord calls, but it is not enough. And we bishops are tempted to take the young men who present themselves without discernment. This is bad for the Church!

Please, one must carefully study the evolution of a vocation! See

whether it comes from the Lord, whether the man is healthy, whether the man is well-balanced, whether the man is capable of giving life, of evangelizing, whether the man is capable of forming a family and renouncing this in order to follow Jesus. Today we have so many problems, and in many dioceses, because some bishops made the mistake of taking those who at times have been expelled from other seminaries or religious houses because they need priests. Please! We must consider the good of the People of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, the themes that you have been discussing in these days of Assembly are of great importance. A vocation cared for by means of on-going, in communion, will become a powerful instrument of evangelization, at the service of the People of God. May the Lord enlighten you in your reflections, may my blessing also go with you. And please, I ask you to pray for me and for my service to the Church. Thank you.

On intellectual signs

The Lord will give you a sign

SEBASTIAN WALSH, O.PRAEM.*

"The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." These words from the opening paragraphs of *Gaudium et Spes* find special meaning and application in the present as the Church reflects upon our times in the Synod on the Family. These signs of the times are to be judged in light of the Gospel, which offers to mankind a sign from beyond time, a revelation from eternity.

Human life is filled with signs: traffic signs, signs giving directions, signs advertising something. Our words are signs we use to communicate with one another. Even facial expressions and clothing are kinds of signs of our interior dispositions that are interwoven with our daily human experiences. So we find signs everywhere: man-made signs and even natural signs like smoke which is a sign of fire. Human life would be impossible and unbearable without these signs.

Today there are so many signs and so many kinds of signs that interpreting all of them can get so confusing so quickly. Nowhere is this more evident than in the modern family. New reproductive technologies are being developed; public opinion is shifting about the origin, nature and purpose of the family; new laws are everyday being passed. How should we interpret these signs? Does the Gospel have anything to say about them? These are the questions facing the Synod on the Family.

So what does the Gospel have to say about the signs of the times? First of all, the Gospel teaches us that God too institutes signs. The Lord Jesus teaches that the Incarnation is intended to be a sign when he says to Philip: "He who has seen me has seen the Father," (Jn 14:9). And so that He might always be with us, Jesus gave us the seven sacraments of the Church as signs of God's grace. These signs given by God point beyond ordinary human life to a higher, supernatural life. The Gospel also teaches us that the things in the natural world are also intended by God to be signs of the supernatural. Jesus says to Nicodemus: "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (Jn 3:12). In other words, unless we understand the meaning of the natural things around us, the "earthly things," we cannot understand the "heavenly things" of which they are signs. No one in this life has a direct experience of that supernatural life, so that means the heavenly life is given to us entirely through earthly signs. Entering into the supernatural life presupposes a knowledge and love of the natural order. We have no alternative.



Marc Chagall, "Life"

The Synod on the Family is now in the process of interpreting these signs anew, trying to help modern man understand them once again, to make them fresh for those who have lost a sense of the sacred in the natural world. In particular, the Synod is striving to interpret to the world the supernatural significance of the

"These signs given by God point beyond ordinary human life to a higher, supernatural life. The Gospel also teaches us that the things in the natural world are also intended by God to be signs of the supernatural"

natural family. The stakes are high. For unless modern man can recapture the meaning which God has written into the natural human family, the result will be ignorance and error, indifference and animosity, toward the entire supernatural order.

The natural human family itself is a privileged sign intended by God to lead us into supernatural realities. When we survey the principal mysteries of our faith, we find that they are expressed in terms of relationships within the human family: God is a Father, who has an eternally begotten Son. This is the foundational truth of our faith. The relationship of this Son to His Church is that of a bridegroom to his bride. The love of God for His people is like that of a mother for her infant child. Moreover, among the seven Sacraments of the Church, the best known is the Sacrament of Matrimony. It is best known because it is closest to nature, standing as it were on the boundary between the natural and supernatural order. And so it is the natural beginning point by which souls are lead into the life of grace. Hence, it was the first sacred sign instituted by God at the origin of our race in paradise, when He united Adam and Eve in marriage.

We read in the Gospel according to St John that it was at a wedding feast that Jesus first manifested His glory and His disciples first began to believe in Him. This is not by chance. The natural beginning of the Christian faith is in the Christian

family, and the first sacrament by which children come to believe is the marriage between their parents. For while habitual faith is infused first at baptism, that faith becomes actual through the witness of the Sacrament of Matrimony. The Sacrament of Matrimony is the first sign by which Christ is glorified; and children first learn to believe in Christ's love for them, they first become disciples, through the marriage of their parents.

In the beginning of creation, God blessed each day and called it good. But on one occasion, it was not good: it was not good for the man to be alone. Yet once woman was made from man, God said that it was very good. Every artist has his favorite work of art, and God's favorite is the human family. From all eternity, in fact, He understood himself as the Son of Mary, as a member of a human family. The reason for God's predilection is that more than the other parts of His creation, the family reflected His own goodness and beauty. Hence, we cannot know God, we cannot love Him, without knowing and loving the natural human family. To do so would be tantamount to considering someone beautiful whose accurate reflection in a mirror we consider ugly.

Consider how the modern distortions of the family can lead to distortions in faith. The indissolubility of marriage is intended to be a sign of God's eternal and unique love for His Church. Is it any surprise then that religious pluralism and the denial that there is one Church is widespread in a society in which divorce and remarriage are widespread? The natural begetting of a child through the loving union of husband and wife is intended to be a sign that God creates each human soul immediately and with love. This reality is obscured in a society which accepts *in vitro* fertilization or other artificial means of procreation. The eternal and natural procession of the Son from the Father is signified by the natural begetting of a child, yet this significance is lost to a society which accepts cloning or other non-natural modes of reproduction. In such a world, God, if one believes in Him at all, will simply be viewed as a technician, a maker who stands apart from and indifferent to His creation. And in

households where, by design, there is no father or there is no mother, how will the children come to understand God as Father or what it means for God to love us like a mother? Or how shall the spiritual motherhood of the Church or the Virgin Mary be valued in a society which teaches that mothers are expendable, a non-essential part of a family, which can be replaced by a man? And when the natural relationship between husband and wife is denied, the purpose of a male priesthood is misunderstood or rendered meaningless. Pope Francis underlines the significance of a male priesthood when he wrote that it is "a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives Himself in the Eucharist," (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 104). C.S. Lewis put it this way in *God in the Dock*: "One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolize to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. We have no authority to take the living and semitive figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures." Examples could be multiplied but, suffice it to say, a lack of love and esteem for the goodness of the natural family entails a lack of love and esteem for God and the things of heaven.

From this we can see that the natural relationships within a family are not simply a matter of necessity or competence to carry out a function. They are also indispensable signs of higher realities. The case of the Holy Family is a striking example of this. If ever a father and husband were unnecessary and expendable in a family from the perspective of functionality, it was in the Holy Family. St Joseph was not necessary to beget or even educate the child. God was the child's Father and the Holy Spirit was the Spouse of the Virgin Mary. St Joseph was not necessary as a moral or intellectual guide to his spouse who was conceived without original sin, and is acclaimed by the Church as Virgin most prudent, and Seat of Wisdom. The power of miracles or angelic protection could have sufficed to provide and protect the child and His mother. Yet in spite of all this, God willed the Holy Family to have a husband and father, and it was through St Joseph that He guided the Holy Family in the early years of the life of Jesus. In the one case where God could have done without a husband and father, He chose not to. Grace builds upon, preserves and perfects nature, even in its most extraordinary manifestations.

The Lord Himself has given us the sign of the human family: the *almah*, the maiden under a guardian, who shall bear a Son and call Him Emmanuel, "God is with us." Indeed, if we cherish and believe in this sign, God shall be with us, and we with Him.

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