

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Friday, 26 September 2014

Pope Francis visits the Republic of Albania on Sunday, 21 September

Today we have touched martyrs

A new appeal against all forms of violence and intolerance in the name of God

Let no one use God as “armour” or religion as a “pretext” for “acts of violence and oppression”. The Pope made this firm warning during his visit on Sunday, 21 September, to Albania, a land that – he recalled on his arrival – “re-embarked upon the arduous but rewarding path of freedom” after a long “winter of isolation and persecution” against believers of every religion. It was the country’s experience in the last quarter century which has instead demonstrated that “peaceful and fruitful coexistence between persons and communities of believers of different religions is not only desirable, but possible and realistic”. The Holy Father also appealed against all intolerance at his afternoon meeting with leaders of other religions and other Christian denominations. To them the Bishop of Rome recalled that to kill in the name of God is “a grave sacrilege” and to discriminate is “inhuman”. The Pope then celebrated Vespers and listened to the moving testimony of those who were imprisoned and persecuted by the atheist regime. Deeply moved, he called Albania a “people of martyrs”, and said today “I touched two of them”.

After returning to Rome, the Holy Father went on Monday morning to thank and pray to *Salus Populi Romani* for the success of his visit at the Basilica of St Mary Major.



Witness and fraternity

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

Witness and fraternity are the two key words to understanding the meaning of Francis’ journey to Albania, as brief – less than 12 hours – as it was important and exemplary. Important for the country, which has received strong support from the Pontiff, and exemplary because of the sign that the Pope has wished to launch to Europe and to the whole international community.

In the warm welcome address, President Bujar Nishani, in his affectionate and composed welcome to the Pontiff, introduced his people as the People of Mother Teresa and drew on the last words exclaimed by the Catholic martyrs, victims of Communism – ‘Long live Albania! Long live the Pope!’.

He recalled with gratitude that in the “great season of loneliness” the Holy See’s support for the country was important. Today, in the footsteps of John Paul II, on his visit after the end of the atheist regime, the Bishop of Rome’s support for Albania is once again manifest. With a world-wide scope and with obvious affection for the Albanian people, with “respect and admiration for their witness and their fraternity in carrying the country forward”, Francis had written in his own hand at the outset of the visit.

The Pope spent two months preparing for this, his first visit in Europe. He was dismayed at the “level of cruelty” unleashed, which he defined as terrible, not only on Catholics but also on Orthodox

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To those newly ordained to the episcopate

Bishops without borders

The relationship between a shepherd and his flock is based on faithfulness to the Lord, which is expressed by “the ring on your right hand”. The Pontiff reflected on this Thursday morning, 18 September, to newly-ordained bishops. “Every authentic reform of the Church,” he reminded them, “begins with presence, that never-failing presence of Christ, but also that of the Pastor who governs in the name of Christ.”



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At the General Audience

The courage of a people



On Wednesday, 24 September, the Holy Father reflected on his visit to Albania.

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Pope Francis to the Bishops of Propaganda Fide

Missionary conversion

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In the hands of the Virgin

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To participants in the conference on ‘Evangelii Gaudium’

A sign of closeness

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Lord Christopher Patten on Vatican media

The duty to communicate effectively

MARY NOLAN

The commission responsible for revising Vatican media structures means to ensure that "the wonderful message that the Church has to offer gets through to the young, to the poor and to other groups in the most effective way". This was affirmed by Lord Christopher Patten, President of the eleven-member consultant team, which met from 22 to 24 September, to Vatican Radio and *L'Osservatore Romano* at the close of its first session.

"What is striking to us all", Lord Patten began, is the fact that the Pope is "such an extraordinary communicator himself. This makes us realize how much the rest of us have to do to 'up our game'". In addition to that, "there is the issue relevant to every media organization: constantly having to run to keep up with changing technology".

"This, however," he stressed, "doesn't mean that old technologies are somehow irrelevant." For example, short-wave radio is still very important "in communicating to some of the poorest groups around the world, particularly in Africa and Asia." No one in the commission, he said, thinks "you should forget what you've been doing in the past but you have to make sure that different institutions work together and that they take account, in order to be more effective, of newer technologies."

Regarding cost reduction, Lord Patten clarified that what the commission is concentrating on is making things more effective, not just cutting costs. It is of course, right that churches "ensure that they use the money raised by the faithful in as practical a way as possible," he said. "We are driven by a moral

concern to communicate much better. If in communicating better, you use your resources better, then that is terrific".

At the end of this the first meeting, Lord Patten underlined the commission's determination to conclude revision as soon as reasonably possible. The present objective is to report by Easter. "At our next meeting," he continued, "we plan to talk to Vatican Radio, to *L'Osservatore Romano*, to Vatican Television Center and to others who are part of the media operation."

This part of the process will continue through November and December. The President added that the commission would also "like to hear from those outside". Bishops' conferences, journalists covering the Vatican and others will, thus, be consulted.

VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Wednesday, 17 September

Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Thursday, 18 September

Members of the Episcopal Conference of the Ivory Coast on a visit *ad limina Apostolorum*:

– Cardinal Jean-Pierre Kutwa, Archbishop of Abidjan

– Archbishop Paul-Siméon Abouanan Djro, OFM, of Bouaké

– Archbishop Joseph Aké Yapo of Gagnoa

– Archbishop Marie-Daniel Dadiet of Korhogo

– Bishop Alexis Touabli Youlo of Agboville

– Bishop Raymond Ahoua, FDP, of Grand-Bassam

– Bishop Ziri Boniface Gbaya of Abengourou

– Bishop Marcellin Yao Kouadio of Yamoussoukro

– Bishop Maurice Konan Kouassi of Daloa

– Bishop Gaspard Béby Gnèba of Man

– Bishop Jean-Jacques Koffi Oi Koffi of San Pedro-en-Côte d'Ivoire

– Bishop Ignace Bessi Dogbo of Katiola

– Bishop Antoine Koné of Odienné

– Bishop Jean Salomon Lezoutié, Coadjutor Bishop of Yopougon

– Msgr Benoît Kouassi, Administrator of Bondoukou

Archbishop Guido Pozzo, titular Archbishop of Bagnoregio, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*

Bishop Óscar Vicente Ojea of San Isidro, Argentina

A group of cyclists from the association *Cruce por la educación argentina*

Friday, 19 September

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

Archbishop James Patrick Green, titular Archbishop of Altino, Apostolic Nuncio in Peru

H.E. Mr Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, with his entourage

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

Hon. Dr Ignazio Marino, Mayor of Rome, with several surgeons attending a congress on trafficking in transplant organs

Saturday, 20 September

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

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference

Cardinal Lluís Martínez Sistach, Archbishop of Barcelona, Spain

Bishop Alcides Jorge Pedro Casaretto, Bishop emeritus of San Isidro, Argentina

H.E. Mr Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, with his entourage

Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, with his entourage

H.E. Ms Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, President of the Republic of Argentina

Monday, 22 September

Cardinal George Pell, Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy

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Pope establishes a special study commission

To reform the matrimonial processes in canon law

On 27 August, Pope Francis decided to establish a Special Commission for the study of the reform of the matrimonial processes in canon law. The Holy See Press Office announced this on 20 September in a statement which explained that the Commission will be chaired by Msgr Pio Vito Pinto, Dean of the Roman Rota. The other members will include: Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, President of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts; Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, Secretary of the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Bishop Dimitrios Salachas, Apostolic Exarch of the Greek Byzantine Catholic Church; Msgr Maurice Monier, Msgr Leo Xavier Michael Arokiaraj and Msgr Alejandro W. Bunge, Prelate Auditors of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota; Fr Nikolaus Schöch, OFM, Substitute Promoter of Justice of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura; Fr Konstantin Miroslav Adam, OP, Rector of the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum); Fr Jorge

Horta Espinoza, OFM, Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law at the Pontifical University Antonianum; and Prof. Paolo Moneta, former professor of Canon Law at the University of Pisa. The work of the Commission will start as soon as possible and will have as its goal to prepare a proposal of reform of the matrimonial process, with the objective of simplifying its procedure, making it more streamlined, and safeguarding the principle of the indissolubility of matrimony.

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Francis reminded newly-ordained prelates that any authentic reform in the Church begins with their presence

Bishops without borders

No need for pastors who prefer being flattered to caring for their flock

"The Church's identity is defined by the love of Christ who knows no borders". Pope Francis highlighted this message in his address to the bishops appointed over the past year, who participated in a training course sponsored by the Congregation for Bishops and that for the Eastern Churches. The Pontiff received them on Thursday morning, 18 September, when he wished them fruitfulness, patience, humility and much prayer".

Dear Brothers,

I am happy to meet with you personally now, because in fact I must say that in some way I already know you. Not long ago you were introduced to me by the Congregation for Bishops or that for the Eastern Churches. You are the fruit of the diligent work and the tireless prayer of the Church who, when she comes to choose her Pastors, seeks to actualize that whole night that the Lord spent on the mountain, in the presence of his Father, before calling those whom he wanted to be with Him and to be sent into the world.

Thus, I thank, in the persons of Their Eminences, Cardinal Ouellet and Cardinal Sandri, all those who contributed to your being selected as Bishops and who undertook to organize these days of meetings, assuredly fruitful, in which one can savour the joy of being Bishops not in isolation but in communion, of experiencing the co-responsibility of the episcopal ministry and solicitude for the whole of the Church of God.

I know your *curriculum* and I place great hope in your potential. Now I can finally match the first meeting on paper with your faces, and after having heard you spoken of, I can personally listen to the heart of each one of you and fix my gaze on each one of you in order to discern the many pastoral hopes that Christ and his Church place in you. It is beautiful to see the mystery of each of you reflected in your face and to be able to read what Christ has written there. It is consoling to know that God does not leave his Bride without Pastors according to His heart.

Dear Brothers, our meeting is taking place at the beginning of your episcopal journey. The astonishment at your being chosen has already passed; those initial fears – when your name was pronounced by the Lord – have been overcome; and also the emotion experienced during your consecration is now being gradually stored in your memory and the weight of the responsibility has been adjusted in some way to your actually fragile shoulders. The oil of the Spirit, poured on your head, is still fragrant and at the same time it seeps down upon the body of the Churches entrusted to you by the Lord. You have already felt that the Gospel, open upon your head, has become a home where one can live with the Word of God; and the ring



on your right hand, which at times is too tight or at times risks slipping off, bears the power, however, to fuse your life to Christ and to his Bride.

In meeting you for the first time, I ask you mainly never to take for granted the mystery invested in you, not to lose wonder in the face of God's plan, nor the awe of walking

with awareness in his presence and in the presence of the Church which is first of all his. In some part of you it is necessary to safeguard this gift received, ensure it never weakens, prevent it from becoming barren.

Now allow me to speak to you openly on several themes that are close to my heart. I feel the need to

The ring and the people

The Pope's meeting with the new bishops was truly important and programmatic, as the words that Francis addressed to them were certainly uncommonly incisive. At the centre is in fact that dynamic which Bergoglio recalled in the very first moments of his pontificate when, immediately after his election, he wished to emphasize the relationship between a bishop and the people.

The relationship between every shepherd and his flock is fundamental and essential. It is based on faithfulness to the One Lord, and is expressed – the Pontiff stated to the bishops, evoking a suggestive and familiar image – by "the ring on your right hand, which at times is too tight or at times risks slipping off", but which, nevertheless, has the power "to fuse your life to Christ and to his Bride", that is, to the Church.

This twofold faithfulness is rooted in the wisdom of the Council of Trent which, in the mid-1500s, imposed residence on the bishops, that is to say, it required a stable presence in their dioceses, which they had frequently neglected. "Rightly said", Francis remarked, explaining that "every authentic reform of the Church of Christ begins with presence, that never-failing presence of Christ, but also from that of the Pastor".

The same twofold faithfulness guards against the existential confusion that leads one to "come

and go with no destination". You are not, in fact, "guardians of a failed mass", the Pope said emphatically to his brothers in the episcopate, but rather custodians of a precious gift to be shared, the joy of Christ. "I am thinking of so many people to lead to Him", above all priests – the first for whom the bishop must exercise his fatherhood – and then, naturally, the people. "Allow the Successor of Peter to scrutinize you from the height of the Mystery which irrevocably binds us", the Pontiff added, alluding to the Catholic communion. And again, "on returning to your homes, wherever they may be, please express the greeting and affection of the Pope and assure the people that they are always in his heart", said the Bishop of Rome, using a turn of phrase which recalled the touching words of John XXIII in his well-known "Moonlight Address" on the evening of the opening day of the Second Vatican Council.

And as the start of the itinerary of the biennial Synod (in Greek, "to journey together") on the Family is approaching, Francis counseled the pastors to walk with the people, "before, among and behind the flock", as well as to jealously safeguard "the passion for truth", and not to expend energy on "opposing and confronting, but on building and loving".

remind the Pastors of the Church of the inalienable bond between the steadfast presence of the Bishop and the growth of the flock. Every authentic reform of the Church of Christ begins with presence, that never-failing presence of Christ, but also from that of the Pastor who governs in the name of Christ. And this is not a pious recommendation. When the Pastor is remiss or unavailable, pastoral care and the salvation of souls are at stake (*De reformatione* Decree of the Council of Trent, IX). This was rightly said by the Council of Trent.

Indeed, through the Pastors whom Christ gives to the Church, He himself is loving his Bride and giving his life for her (cf. Eph 5:25-27). Love renders likeness in those who share it, thus all beauty in the Church comes from Christ, but it is also true that the glorified humanity of the Bridegroom did not disdain to take on our features. They say that after years of intense union of life and fidelity, in human couples too, the physical features of spouses gradually change and the two end up resembling one another.

You have been bound by a ring of fidelity to the Church which has been entrusted to you or which you have been called to serve. Love for the Bride of Christ gradually allows you to imprint your features onto her face and at the same time to carry within you her features. For this, intimacy, assiduity, steadfastness and patience are necessary.

There is no need for Bishops who are happy on the surface; one must dig deep in order to find what the Spirit continues to inspire in your Bride. Please, do not be Bishops with a set expiry date, who always want to change direction, like medicine that loses the capacity to cure, or as flavourless food that has to be thrown away because the food is no longer good for anything (cf. Mt 5:13). It is important not to block the healing power that flows from the soul of the gift you have received, and this defends you against the temptation to come and go with no destination, because "there is no favourable wind for those who do not know where to go". And we have learned where we are going: we are always going to Jesus. We are in search of "where he is staying", because the response he gave at the beginning "Come and see" (Jn 1:39) is inexhaustible.

To live fully in your Churches it is necessary to always abide in Him and never to run from Him: to abide in his Word, in his Eucharist, doing "his Father's house" (cf. Lk 2:49), and above all in his Cross. Do not pause briefly, but stay for a long time! As the light in the Tabernacle is inextinguishable in your majestic Cathedrals or humble Chapels, so may the Flock never fail to en-

Bishops without borders

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

counter the flame of the Risen One in your gaze. Thus, not extinguished or pessimistic Bishops, who, relying solely on themselves, therefore surrender to the darkness of the world or resign themselves to the apparent defeat of the good, now crying in vain that the fort is under attack. Your vocation is not to be guardians of a failed mass, but custodians of the *Evangelii Gaudium*, and therefore you cannot lack the one treasure which we truly have to give and which the world cannot give to itself: the joy of God's love.

I ask you moreover not to be deluded by the temptation to exchange one flock for another. Love the people that God has given you, even when they have "committed great sins". Do not tire of "going up to the Lord" to obtain forgiveness and a new beginning, even at the cost of seeing many of your unreal images of the divine face cancelled, or the dreams you have nurtured about the way to foster its communion with God (cf. Ex 32:30-31). May you learn the humble but compelling power of vicarious substitution, which is the sole root of redemption.

Even the mission, which has become so urgent, is born from that "see where the Lord is staying and stay with him" (cf. Jn 1:39). Only one who encounters, stays and abides acquires the allure and the authority to lead the world to Christ (cf. Jn 1:40-42). I am thinking of so many people to lead to Him, your priests, *in primis*. There are so many of them who no longer search for where He lives, or who live in other existential latitudes, some in slums. Others, forgotten by the episcopal fatherhood or perhaps tired of searching



in vain, now live as if there were no longer fathers or they delude themselves that they need no fathers. I exhort you to cultivate within you, Fathers and Pastors, a quiet time in which to allow space for your priests: receive them, welcome them, listen to them, guide them. I would like you Bishops to be accessible not because of the media facilities you have, but because of the interior space that you offer to receive people and consider their actual needs, giving them the entirety and the breadth of the Church's teaching, and not a catalogue of regrets. And let the welcome be for everyone without distinction, by offering the firmness of authority which helps to mature and the gentleness of fatherhood which generates. And, please, do not fall into temptation of squandering your freedom, by surrounding yourselves with a court, party or sycophants, because the Church and the world have the right to always

find on the Bishop's lips the Gospel which sets one free.

There is then the People of God entrusted to you. When, at the moment of your consecration, the name of your Church was pronounced, the faces of those God was giving you reverberated. These People need your patience to care for them, to make them grow. I know well the extent to which our time has been rendered barren. It is necessary, then, to imitate Moses' patience in order to guide your people, without fear of dying in exile, but expending all your energy to the very end, not for you but to let those you are leading enter into God. Nothing is more important than introducing people to God! I especially entrust to you the young people and the elderly. The former because they are our wings, and the latter because they are our roots. Wings and roots without which we would not know

what we are nor where we need to go.

As our meeting concludes, allow the Successor of Peter to scrutinize you from the height of the Mystery which irrevocably binds us. Today, seeing you in your different features, which reflect the limitless richness of the Church scattered throughout the earth, the Bishop of Rome embraces the Catholicity of the Church. It is not necessary to recall the singular and tragic situations of our day. Thus, I would like so much that a message of encouragement resound through you, in every one of your Churches. On returning to your homes, wherever they may be, please express the greeting and affection of the Pope and assure the people that they are always in his heart.

I see in you sentinels, capable of awakening your Churches, rising before dawn or in the middle of the night in order to rekindle faith, hope, charity, without allowing yourselves to be lulled or to conform to the nostalgic lament of a fruitful but now superseded past. Continue to dig into your sources, with the courage to remove the scales that have covered the beauty and the vigour of your pilgrim and missionary ancestors who planted the Church and created civilization.

I see in you men capable of cultivating and developing God's field, in which the young sowers await hands willing to water it daily in the expectation of an abundant harvest.

Lastly I see in you Pastors capable of reconstructing unity, of weaving networks, of mending, of overcoming fragmentation. May you dialogue respectfully with the great traditions in which you are immersed, without fear of becoming lost and without the need to defend your borders, because the Church's identity is defined by the love of Christ who knows no borders. While jealously safeguarding the passion for truth, do not expend energy on opposing and confronting, but on building and loving.

Thus, sentinels, men capable of tending God's field, shepherds who walk before, among and behind the flock, I bid you farewell, I embrace you, wishing you fruitfulness, patience, humility and much prayer. Thank you.

The Pope's best wishes for Rosh Ha-Shanah

"May God help us work together to promote justice and peace in a world which is in so much need". Pope Francis expressed this wish in a message sent on 22 September to the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Di Segni, on the occasion of Rosh Ha-Shanah 5775, Yom Kippur and Sukkot, which was celebrated on Wednesday, 24 September. Extending his best wishes to the Jewish community of Rome, the Pontiff invoked the "blessing of the Most High so that this holiday may be

a font of happiness and a reason for strengthening bonds in families and communities".

A week before, the Holy Father had met with a delegation from the World Jewish Congress (WJC) at the Domus Sanctae Marthae received on Wednesday morning, 17 September.

At the audience, which was held for the Jewish new year, the Pope conveyed his best wishes to those present. The situation in the Middle East and religious fundamentalism were discussed at the meeting. Francis asked his guests to pray for peace and reconciliation, especially in those countries where Christians are persecuted and discriminated against.

The delegation was led by Ronald Lauder, President of the WJC, accompanied by Claudio Epelman, head of the Congreso judío latinoamericano and in charge of WJC's dialogue with the Holy See, and by Renzo Gattegna, President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

According to Jewish tradition, in order to have a "sweet" year it is necessary to begin it by eating sweets. Thus the group brought the Pope a traditional honey cake; and in return the Holy Father gave each one of them a Vatican medal commemorating his visit to the Holy Land.



New five-year term of the International Theological Commission

The following is a press release concerning the conclusion of the eighth five-year term of the International Theological Commission and the appointment of new members for the ninth five-year term.

Conclusion of the eighth five-year term

This year the eighth five-year term of the International Theological Commission, which began with the pontifical appointment of its Members in June 2009, will conclude.

As is known, the International Theological Commission, instituted by the Servant of God Paul VI on 11 April 1969, has the task of assisting the Holy See, and in particular the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in examining the most important and current doctrinal questions. The Commission is composed of theologians from various schools and nations, eminent in their scientific excellence and fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church. The Members – no more than 30 in number – are appointed by the Holy Father *ad quinquennium* upon proposal by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and following consultation with the Episcopal Conferences. During the course of its history the Commission has published 27 documents, with the approval of its President.

The Holy See wishes to express special gratitude for the competent and conscientious theological service provided by the Members of the Commission during the term that is about to draw to an end. Three documents have been published during



this term: *Theology today. Perspectives, Principles and Criteria* (approved in 2011 and published in 2012); *God the Trinity and the Unity of Humanity: Christian Monotheism and its Opposition to Violence* (approved in 2013 and published in 2014) and the more recent *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (approved and published in the current year 2014). In reality, the work of the Commission has been more extensive, as it has also offered valuable contributions on other issues on behalf of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is the primary task of the Commission.

Appointment of Members for the ninth five-year term (2014-2019)

On 26 July 2014, with the appointment by the Holy Father Francis of 30 new Members, the Commission began its ninth term. This will continue until 2019, which will also be a jubilee period for the Commission, which celebrates the

50th anniversary of its institution on 11 April 1969.

As usual, in view of the aforementioned appointments, during this last year extensive consultations have been carried out with Episcopal Conferences throughout the world, as well as the Synods of the Oriental Eparchies. On the basis of the responses received, Cardinal Gerhard L. Müller, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, presented to the Holy Father a preferential list of candidates. Taking these proposals into consideration, the Pope appointed the theologians who are to form the Commission, at the same time renewing the appointment of Fr Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, of France as Secretary General.

With regard to the provenance of the Members, there is an increased number of extra-European appointees in the new composition of the Commission. As well as the 14 representatives of Europe (compared to 14 in the previous term) there are 5 from South America (previously 3), 4 from Asia (previously 4), 3 from

Africa (previously 2), 3 from North America (previously 2) and 1 from Australia (previously 1).

Furthermore, there is a notable increase in the contribution of female theologians. In the two previous terms, the Commission benefited from the presence of two renowned theologians, Sr Sara Butler, MSBT, from the United States of America, and Prof. Barbara Hallensleben from Switzerland, of German origin. Five other female theologians have been appointed for the new term: Sr Prudence Allen, RSM, from the United States of America, Sr Alenka Arko, Com. Loyola of Slovenia-Russia, Moira Mary McQueen from Canada-Great Britain, Tracey Rowland from Australia, Marianne Schlosser from Germany, of Austrian origin. Women now constitute 16% of the Commission's members, a sign of growing female involvement in theological research.

In 2014 it was also decided to further diversify the ecclesial provenance of the members, in relation to their religious status and the particular charisms they represent.

At the first meeting, which will take place from 1 to 5 December in plenary session, the three themes to be considered over the coming years will be selected.

The first meeting of the new members, which will take place in plenary session at the premises of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is traditionally held in the first week of Advent – from 1 to 5 December. The three themes to be considered by the Commission over the coming years will be selected.

New access to the Commission's web page (www.cti.va) on the Vatican website

The International Theological Commission has renovated and enriched its page on the Vatican website (www.vatican.va), which offers all its documents in various languages, among the section of Commissions linked to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. All the documents published by the Commission are available for consultation, usually in ten or more languages. The Commission has now taken a further step to facilitate consultation while conserving all its documentation on the official site of the Holy See (www.vatican.va), by establishing a new link (www.cti.va).

Referring to the initials of its Latin name, *Commissio Theologica Internationalis*, the new link has the advantage of being identical for various languages, such as Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese. Aside from offering a page dedicated to the Commission, the new link also offers the reader the possibility of selecting the language without returning to the Vatican homepage. It is hoped that this new and more user-friendly page will be a useful tool for stimulating dialogue by enabling an increasingly effective communication of the Commission's theological patrimony both within and beyond the Church.

The five women appointed to the International Theological Commission

So as not to deny Creation

GIULIA GALEOTTI

During an interview by Lucetta Scaraffia that appeared in the September edition of "Women Church World", Cardinal Gerhard Müller, President of the International Theological Commission, anticipated that five women would be appointed to the Commission. This understandably piqued the interest of the press. Cardinal Müller is also the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose task is, after consulting the Bishops' Conferences, to offer recommendations to the Pope on the appointments of theologians. His earlier indication has been confirmed for the five-year term (2014-2019) that recently opened, for which there are indeed five women theologians, more than twice the number of the two terms in the previous decade. Thus, women constitute 16% of the Commission's total membership today. Two reli-



"The risen Jesus appears to Mary" by Salvatore Fiume (1985)

gious and three lay women are among these five appointees, almost all of whom teach in seminaries.

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To participants in the meeting on 'Evangelii Gaudium' sponsored by the dicastery for the new evangelization

A sign of closeness

"So many people live in great suffering and ask the Church to be a sign of the closeness, of the goodness, of the solidarity and of the mercy of the Lord". Pope Francis made these remarks while addressing the participants in the international meeting for the "Pastoral Project of Evangelii Gaudium", whom he received in audience on Friday afternoon, 19 September. The meeting, which was organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization took place in the Vatican from Thursday to Saturday, 18-20 September. The following is a translation of the address Pope Francis delivered in Italian after a greeting by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Council.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good afternoon,

I am pleased to take part in your work and I thank Archbishop Rino Fisichella for his introduction. I am also grateful for this setting of "life": this is life! Thank you.

You work in the pastoral care of diverse Churches in the world, and you are meeting to reflect together on the pastoral project of the *Evangelii Gaudium*. In fact, I myself wrote that this document has a "programmatic significance and important consequences" (n. 25). And it cannot be otherwise when dealing with the principal mission of the Church, that is, evangelization! There are times, however, in which this mission becomes more urgent and our sense of responsibility needs to be rekindled.

What comes to mind, first of all, are the words of the Gospel according to Matthew, where it is said that when Jesus "saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36). How many people, in the existential peripheries of our time, are "tired and exhausted" and await the Church, they are waiting for us! How can they be reached? How can the experience of faith, the love of God, the encounter with Jesus be shared with them? This is the responsibility of our communities and of our pastoral care.

The Pope does not have the task of offering "a detailed and complete analysis of contemporary reality" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 51), but to invite all the Church to scrutinize the signs of the times that the Lord offers us unceasingly. So many signs are present in our communities, and the Lord places so many opportunities before us in order to recognize his presence in the world today! Amid negative situations, which as always, make more noise, we also see many signs which instill hope and give courage. These signs, as *Gaudium et Spes* states, must be scrutinized in the light of the Gospel (cf. nn. 4, 44): this is the "acceptable time" (cf. 2 Cor 6:2), it is the moment of firm commitment, it is the context in which we are called to labour in order to cultivate the Kingdom of God (cf. Jn 4:35-36). Unfortunately, we see so much poverty and loneliness in today's world! So many people live in great suffering and ask the Church to be a sign of the closeness, of the goodness, of the solidarity and of the mercy of the Lord. This is a task which pertains in a special way to all those who have the responsibility of pas-

toral care: from the bishop in his diocese to the priest in his parish, from the deacons in service to charity to the men and women catechists in their ministry of spreading the faith.... Clearly, all those occupied in the various spheres of pastoral care are called to recognize and interpret these signs of the times in order to



provide a wise and generous response. In the face of so many pastoral exigencies, before the people's many requests, we run the risk of becoming frightened and withdrawing into ourselves in a fearful and defensive attitude. And this gives rise to the temptation of self-sufficiency and of clericalism, that codi-

fication of the faith in rules and regulations, as the scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law did in the time of Jesus. To us, everything will be clear and set in order, but the faithful and those in search will still hunger and thirst for God. I have also said several times that the Church seems to me to be a field hospital: so many wounded people who ask us for closeness, who ask us for what they asked of Jesus: closeness, warmth. And with this attitude of the scribes, of the doctors of the law and of the Pharisees, we will never give a witness of closeness.

There is a second word which causes me to reflect. When Jesus tells the episode of the vineyard

There was much work to do in the vineyard and this landlord spent almost all his time going down the streets and to the town squares to seek workers. Think of those of the last hour: no one had called them; who knows how they must have felt, because at the end of the day they would have brought nothing home to feed their children. Thus, all those in charge of pastoral care can take this parable as a good example. To go out at various times of day to go and meet the many who are in search of the Lord. To reach the weakest and the poorest in order to give them the support of feeling useful in the Lord's vineyard, were it even for only an hour.

Another aspect: please, let us not pursue the voice of the sirens who call us to perform pastoral care in a disjointed series of initiatives, without managing to grasp the essential commitment of evangelization. At times it seems that we are more concerned with redoubling activities than with being attentive to the people and their encounter with God. Pastoral care which does not pay attention to this becomes, little by little, sterile. Let us not forget to do as Jesus did with his disciples: after they had gone into the villages to spread the message of the Gospel, they returned happy about their success; but Jesus took them aside, to a lonely place to stay with them for a while (cf. Mk 6:31). Pastoral care without prayer and contemplation can never reach the heart of the people. It will stop at the surface without allowing the Word of God to take root, to sprout, to grow and bear fruit (cf. Mt 13:1-23).

I know that all of you work hard, and for this I want to leave you with a last important word: patience. Patience and perseverance. The Word of God entered with "patience" at the moment of the Incarnation, and was constant until death on the Cross. Patience and perseverance. We do not have a "magic wand" for everything, but we trust in the Lord who accompanies us and who never abandons us. In the difficulties as in disappointments which are present, not infrequently, in our pastoral work, we must never fail to have faith in the Lord and in prayer which sustains us. In any case, let us not forget that help is given to us, in the first place, precisely by the many whom we have drawn close to and supported. Let us do good, but without expecting a reward. Let us sow and bear witness. Testimony is the beginning of an evangelization which touches the heart and transforms it. Words without testimony do not work, they are useless! Testimony is what brings and validates the word.

Thank you for your commitment! I bless you and, please, do not forget to pray for me, because I must speak often and bear a bit of the Christian witness! Thank you.

Let us pray to Our Lady, the Mother of Evangelization: *Hail Mary*...

Audience with the President of the Republic of Armenia

On Friday, 19 September, the Holy Father received in audience the President of the Republic of Armenia, H.E. Mr Serzh Sargsyan, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussions, satisfaction was expressed for the development and strengthening of bilateral relations, highlighting the special role of Christianity in the history and life of Armenian society. With regard to the regional political situation, it is hoped that complex and hitherto unresolved issues may be overcome through dialogue between all the interested parties. Furthermore, mention was made of the theme of conflict in the Middle



East, and trust was expressed in the common efforts of interested nations and religious communities to achieve a peaceful co-existence of peoples throughout the entire region. Special attention was paid to the situation faced by Christian communities and other religious minorities in the area, and to the humanitarian crisis regarding refugees from the affected zones.

The Pope meets with political and civil authorities of Albania at the Presidential Palace of Tirana

There can be peace among different religions

On Sunday, 21 September, after a 1.5-hour flight the Holy Father arrived at the airport of Tirana, the capital of Albania. Shortly after his arrival the Pope was driven to the Presidential Palace where he delivered his first address. In the residence of the head of state the welcome ceremony took place. There the Pope met with the President of the Republic, Government, Civil Authorities, and the Diplomatic Corps. After President Bujar Nishani's greeting the Bishop of Rome addressed those present. The following is the English text of the Pope's address, which was given in Italian.

Mr President,
Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Members of the
Diplomatic Corps,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here with you, in this noble land of Albania, a land of heroes who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the nation, and a land of martyrs, who witnessed to their faith in difficult times of persecution. I am grateful for the invitation to visit your country, called "the Land of the Eagles", and for your warm welcome.

Almost a quarter of a century has passed since Albania re-embarked upon the arduous but rewarding path of freedom. This experience has allowed Albanian society to take up the process of material and spiritual reconstruction, to foster an increase of enthusiasm and initiatives, and to create a spirit of cooperation and exchange with countries of the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Europe and indeed with the rest of the world. This rediscovered freedom has helped you look to the future with trust and hope, establishing new projects and renewing friendly relations with countries both near and far.

Respect for human rights – for you, "respect" is an essential word –, among which religious freedom and freedom of expression stand out, is the preliminary condition for a country's social and economic development. When the dignity of the human person is respected and his

or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the potential of the human personality is unleashed through actions that further the common good.

There is a rather beautiful characteristic of Albania, one which is given great care and attention, and which gives me great joy: I am referring to the *peaceful coexistence and collaboration that exists among followers of different religions*. The climate of respect and mutual trust between Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims is a precious gift to the country. This is especially the case in these times where an authentic religious spirit is being perverted and where religious differences are being distorted and instrumentalized by extremist groups. This creates dangerous circumstances which lead to conflict and violence, rather than being an occasion for open and respectful dialogue, and for a collective reflection on what it means to believe in God and to follow his laws.

Let no one consider themselves to be the "armour" of God while planning and carrying out acts of violence and oppression! May no one use religion as a pretext for actions against human dignity and against the fundamental rights of every man and woman, above all, the right to life and the right of everyone to religious freedom!

What the experience in Albania shows, rather, is that a peaceful and fruitful coexistence between persons and communities of believers of dif-



ferent religions is not only desirable, but possible and realistic. The peaceful coexistence of different religious communities is, in fact, an inestimable benefit to peace and to harmonious human advancement. This is something of value which needs to be protected and nourished each day, by providing an education which respects differences and particular identities, so that dialogue and cooperation for the good of all may be promoted and strengthened by mutual understanding and esteem. It is a gift which we need to implore from God in prayer. May Albania always continue to walk this path, offering to other countries an inspiring example.

Mr President, after a winter of isolation and persecution, the springtime of freedom has finally come. By means of free elections and new institutional structures, a democratic pluralism has been consolidated which is now favouring economic activity. Many people, especially at the beginning, chose to emigrate in search of work and a better standard of living, and in their own way contributed to the advancement of Albanian society. Many others rediscovered reasons for staying in their homeland, wanting to build it up from within. The efforts and sacrifices of all have im-

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Greeting of the President of the Republic Mother Teresa's people

"We are the people of Mother Teresa!" With these words the President of the Republic, Bujar Nishani, welcomed the Pope to Albania – the destination of his first visit in Europe – at the ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Tirana. Recalling the history of Albania, the President noted, in particular, the role of the Catholic Church and of other religious communities during Communism. Referring to the many martyrs, Nishani also spoke about the salient moments of Christian history. The Holy See had a special role, explained the President, recalling John Paul II's statements on persecution and then his visit in 1993.

Nishani told the Pope that he follows his preachings and teachings. Thus, he added, I can affirm with conviction that the Pope's words "are an illuminating lecture of faith and humanism, courage and culture, a genuine doctrine for peace, prosperity and stability in the world". Pope Francis' testimony, the Albanian President continued, represents "a great spiritual and ethical reflection" on the fate of mankind and "on the true respect that every human being deserves".

There are certain themes which are part of all religions, Nishani affirmed, including: the individual and society, wealth and poverty, society and institutions, faith and the right to safeguard it, corruption and egocentrism, religion and the state, the state and democracy. "All these great themes," the President said to the Pope, that you deal "with are very inspiring, very useful for the 24-years-old Albanian democracy and for the whole world". He continued by stating that Albania sees the Bishop of Rome as "a precious friend" who opened the door and the hearts of the people. According to the popular saying in Albania: "The Albanian's home belongs to God and to the friend".

At the end the President commented on the country's progress since the fall of the regime, including its economic development, and he spoke about how they had overcome their isolation to have greater involvement in Europe. The once atheist state has become a place where religious freedoms are consolidated and religious communities live together in harmony.

The Holy Father gives missal

The only known missal in Albanian, written by Johannes Buzukus, was printed in the mid-16th century. The Holy Father gave both a facsimile and a digital copy of this missal to the President of Albania, during their private visit. The facsimile was produced by the Vatican Printing Press and the original was digitized by the Library. Buzukus was a Dominican who most likely lived in or around Venice, where the volume is thought to have been printed. From 1554-55 Buzukus worked on translating the text. Then in the 1640s it was found in the College of Propaganda Fide by the Archbishop of Skopje, Giovanni Battista Nikolović Casasi. Centuries later, in 1902, it was moved to the Vatican Library, along with other manuscripts for Propaganda Fide. Not only is it the only missal written in Albanian, it is the oldest book of any written in the language. It is a document of truly singular importance for the country's linguistic history, culture and liturgy.





Homily during Holy Mass in Mother Teresa Square, Tirana

On eagle's wings

Do not forget the nest, your long history or your trials

Pope Francis celebrated Holy Mass on Sunday morning, 21 September in the Tirana square dedicated to Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Approximately 250,000 faithful were present including many young people. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily, which was given in Italian.

The Gospel we have just heard tells us that, along with the Twelve Apostles, Jesus calls another 72 disciples and that he sends them to the villages and cities to announce the Kingdom of God (cf. Lk 10:1-9, 17-20). He comes to bring the love of God to the world and he wishes to share it by means of communion and fraternity. To this end he immediately forms a community of disciples, a missionary community, and he trains them how to "go out" on mission. The method is both clear and simple: the disciples visit homes and their preaching begins with a greeting which is charged with meaning: "Peace be to this house!". It is not only a greeting, but also a gift: the gift of peace. Being here with you today, dear brothers and sisters of Albania, in this Square dedicated to a humble and great daughter of this land, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, I wish to repeat to you this greeting: May peace be in your homes! May peace reign in your hearts! Peace in your country! Peace!

In the mission of the 72 disciples we see a reflection of the Christian community's missionary experience in every age: the risen and living Lord sends not only the Twelve, but the entire Church; he sends each of the baptized to announce the Gospel to all peoples. Through the ages, the message of peace brought by Jesus' messengers has not always been accepted; at times, the doors have been closed to them. In the recent past, the doors of your country were also closed, locked by the chains of prohibitions and prescriptions of a system which denied God and impeded religious freedom. Those who were afraid of the truth did everything they could to banish God from the hearts of men and women and to exclude Christ and the Church from the history of your country, even though it was one of the first to receive the light of the

Gospel. In the second reading, in fact, we heard a reference being made to Illyria, which in Paul's time included the territory of modern-day Albania.

Recalling the decades of atrocious suffering and harsh persecutions against Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims, we can say that Albania was a land of martyrs: many bishops, priests, men and women religious, laity, and clerics and ministers of other religions paid for their fidelity with their lives. Demonstrations of great courage and constancy in the profession of the faith are not lacking. How many Christians did not succumb when threatened, but persevered without wavering on the path they had undertaken! I stand spiritually at that wall of the cemetery of Shkodër, a symbolic place of the martyrdom of Catholics before the firing squads, and with profound emotion I place the flower of my prayer and of my grateful and undying remembrance. The Lord was close to you, dear brothers and sisters, to sustain you; he led you and consoled you and in the end he has raised you up on eagle's wings as he did for the ancient people of

Israel, as we heard in the First Reading. The eagle, depicted on your nation's flag, calls to mind hope, and the need to always place your trust in God, who does not lead us astray and who is ever at our side, especially in moments of difficulty.



At the Angelus the Pope's appeal to the youth of the country

'No' to the idolatry of money

At the end of Holy Mass, the Pope led the recitation of the Angelus. The following is the English text of the Pope's words before the Marian prayer.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Before concluding this celebration, I wish to greet each of you who have come from all over Albania and from nearby countries. I thank you for your presence and for the witness of your faith.

In a particular way, I wish to greet the young! They say that Albania is the youngest country in Europe and I wish to greet you. I invite you to build your lives on Jesus Christ, on God: the one who builds on God builds on rock, because he is always faithful, even if we sometimes lack faith (cf. 2 Tim. 2:13). Jesus knows us better than anyone else; when we sin, he does not condemn us but rather says to us, "Go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). Dear young people, you are the new generation, the new generation of Albania, the future of the country. With the power of the Gospel and the ex-

ample of your ancestors and the martyrs, you know how to say "No" to the idolatry of money – "No" to the idolatry of money! –, "No" to the false freedom of individualism, "No" to addiction and to violence; you also know how to say "Yes" to a culture of encounter and of solidarity, "Yes" to the beauty that is inseparable from the good and the true; "Yes" to a life lived with great enthusiasm and at the same time faithful in little things. In this way, you will build a better Albania and a better world, in the footsteps of your ancestors.

Today, the doors of Albania have been reopened and a season of new missionary vitality is growing for all of the members of the people of God: each baptized person has his or her role to fulfil in the Church and in society. Each one must experience the call to dedicate themselves generously to announcing the Gospel and to the witness of charity; called to strengthen the bonds of solidarity so as to create more just and fraternal living conditions for all. Today, I have come to thank you for your witness and also to encourage you to cultivate hope among yourselves and within your hearts. Never forget the eagle! The eagle does not forget its nest, but flies into the heights. All of you, fly into the heights! Go high! I have also come to involve the young generations; to nourish you assiduously on the Word of God, opening your hearts to Christ, to the Gospel, to an encounter with God, to an encounter with one another, as you are already doing and by which you witness to the whole of Europe.

In the spirit of communion among bishops, priests, consecrated persons and laity, I encourage you to bring vitality to your pastoral activities, which are activities of service, and to continuously seek new ways of making the Church present in society. In particular, I extend an invitation to the young, of whom there were so many along the way from the airport to here. This is a young people, very young! And where there is youth, there is hope. Listen to God, worship him and love one another as a people, as brothers and sisters.

To the Church which is alive in this land of Albania, I say "thank you" for the example of fidelity to the Gospel. Do not forget the nest, your long history, or your trials. Do not forget the wounds, but also do not be vengeful. Go forward to work with hope for a great future. So many of the sons and daughters of Albania have suffered, even to the point of sacrificing their lives. May their witness sustain your steps today and tomorrow as you journey along the way of love, of freedom, of justice and, above all, of peace. So may it be.

Let us turn to the Virgin Mary, whom you venerate above all under her title of "Our Lady of Good Counsel". I stand before her, spiritually, at her Shrine in Shkodër, so dear to you, and to her I entrust the entire Church in Albania and all the people of this country, especially families, children and the elderly, who are the living memory of the people. May Our Lady guide you to walk "together with God towards the hope that does not disappoint".

Meeting with leaders of other religions and other Christian denominations

Let no one kill in the name of God

After having lunch with the Bishops of Albania at the Apostolic Nunciature in Tirana on Sunday afternoon Pope Francis went to the Catholic University of Our Lady of Good Counsel, where he met with leaders of other religions and other Christian denominations present in the country. The following is the English text of the Pope's address, which was given in Italian after the introduction by Archbishop Angelo Massafra, President of the Episcopal Conference, who also presented the participants.

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to be here at this meeting which brings together leaders of the main religious confessions present in Albania. With deep respect I greet each one of you and the communities that you represent; and I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Archbishop Massafra for his words of introduction. It is important that you are here together: it is a sign of the dialogue which you experience daily, seeking to build among yourselves bonds of fraternity and cooperation for the good of the whole of society. Thank you for all that you are doing.

Albania sadly witnessed the violence and tragedy that can be caused by a forced exclusion of God from personal and communal life. When, in the name of an ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from society, it ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way, their dignity is trampled and their rights violated. You know well how much pain comes from the denial of freedom of conscience and of religious freedom, and how from such a wound comes a humanity that is impoverished because it lacks hope and ideals to guide it.

The changes that have come since the 1990's have had the positive effect, among other things, of creating the conditions for the exercise of authentic religious freedom. This has made it possible for each community to renew traditions which were never really extinguished, despite ferocious persecution. With this religious freedom has also come the possibility for every person to offer, according to their own religious convictions, a positive contribution; firstly, to the moral reconstruction of the country and then, subsequently, to the economic reconstruction.

In reality, as John Paul II stated during his historic visit to Albania in 1993, "Religious freedom [...] is not only a precious gift from the Lord for those who have faith: it is a gift for each person, because it is the basic guarantee of every other expression of freedom [...]. Only faith reminds us that, if we have one Creator, we are therefore all brothers and sisters. Religious freedom is a safeguard against all forms of totalitarianism and contributes decisively to human fraternity" (*Message to the Albanian People*, 25 April 1993).

He immediately then added, "True religious freedom shuns the temptation to intolerance and sectarianism, and promotes attitudes of respect and constructive dialogue" (*ibid.*). We cannot deny that intolerance towards those with different religious convictions is a particularly

insidious enemy, one which today is being witnessed in various areas around the world. All believers must be particularly vigilant so that, in living out with conviction our religious and ethical code, we may always express the mystery we intend to honour. This means that all those forms which present a distorted use of religion must be firmly refuted as false since they are unworthy of God or humanity. Authentic religion is a source of peace and not of violence! No one must use the name of God to commit violence! To kill in the name of God is a grave sacrilege. To discriminate in the name of God is inhuman.

Seen in this light, religious freedom is not a right which can be guaranteed solely by existing legislation, although laws are necessary. Rather religious freedom is a shared space – like this one – an atmosphere of respect and cooperation that must be built with everyone's participation, even those who have no religious convictions. Allow me to outline two attitudes which can be especially helpful in the advancement of this fundamental freedom.

Peace among different religions

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proved the life of the nation in general.

The Catholic Church, for its part, has resumed a normal existence, re-establishing its hierarchy and taking up once more the line of a long tradition. Places of worship have been built or rebuilt. Among these, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Counsel at Shkodër holds a special place. Similarly, schools and centres of education and healthcare have been established for the use of all citizens. The presence of the Church and its activities are therefore rightly seen as a service, not only to the Catholic community, but rather to the whole nation.

Blessed Mother Teresa, together with the martyrs who witnessed to their faith – to whom we pray and offer our appreciation – most certainly are rejoicing in heaven because of the work of men and women of good will who contribute to the flourishing of civil society and the Church in Albania.

Today, however, new challenges arise which must be faced. In a world that tends to economic and cultural globalization, every effort must be made to ensure that



The first attitude is that of regarding every man and woman, even those of different religious traditions, not as rivals, less still enemies, but rather as brothers and sisters. When a person is secure of his or her own beliefs, there is no need to impose or put pressure on others: there is a conviction that truth has its own power of attraction. Deep down, we are all pilgrims on this earth, and on this pilgrim journey, as we yearn for truth and eternity, we do not live individual autonomous and self-sufficient lives; the same applies to religious, cultural and national communities. We need each other, and are entrusted to each other's care. Each religious tradition, from within, must be able to take account of others.

The second attitude which fosters the promotion of religious freedom is the work done in service of the common good. Whenever adherence to a specific religious tradition gives birth to service that shows conviction, generosity and concern for the whole of society without making distinctions, then there too exists an authentic and mature living out of religious freedom. This presents it-

self not only as a space in which to legitimately defend one's autonomy, but also as a potential that enriches the human family as it advances. The more men and women are at the service of others, the greater their freedom!

Let us look around us: there are so many poor and needy people, so many societies that try to find a more inclusive way of social justice and path of economic development! How great is the need for the human heart to be firmly fixed on the deepest meaning of experiences in life and rooted in a rediscovery of hope! Men and women, inspired in these areas by the values of their respective religious traditions, can offer an important, and even unique, contribution. This is truly a fertile land offering much fruit, also in the field of interreligious dialogue.

I also wish to mention something which is always an illusion: relativism, "everything is relative". In this regard, we must keep in mind a clear principle: we cannot enter into dialogue if we do not approach it from the perspective of our own identity. Without identity, there can be no dialogue. It would be an illusory dialogue, a dialogue without substance: it would serve no purpose. All of us have our own religious identity to which we are faithful. But the Lord knows how to guide history. May each one of us begin with our own identity, not pretending to have another, because it serves no end and does not help; it is relativism. What unites us is the path of life, is starting from our own identity for the good of our brothers and sisters. To do good! And so, we walk together as brothers and sisters. Every one of us offers the witness of our identity to others and engages in dialogue with others. Then dialogue can move on to theological questions. But even more important and beautiful is to walk together without betraying our own identity, without disguising it, without hypocrisy. This is what I like to think.

Dear friends, I encourage you to maintain and develop the tradition of good relations among the various religious communities in Albania, and to be united in serving your beloved homeland. With a sense of humour, one could say that this seems like a football match: Catholics against everyone else. But it is everyone together, for the good of the country and of humanity. Continue to be a sign for your country, and beyond, that good relations and fruitful cooperation are truly possible among men and women of different religions. And I ask a favour: pray for me. I have great need of your prayers. Thank you.

Vespers in the Cathedral of Tirana with priests, religious men and women, seminarians and representatives of Albania's lay movements

Today we have touched martyrs



In the late afternoon of Sunday, 21 September, in the Cathedral of Tirana, Pope Francis celebrated Vespers with priests, religious men and women, seminarians and representatives of lay movements present in Albania. After the greeting of Archbishop Mirdita and the testimonies a priest and a nun, both of whom suffered persecution under the Communist regime (see page 12), the Pope improvised a short speech. The following is the English text.

I had prepared a few words to say to you, and I will give them to the Archbishop, who will make them available for you later. The translation is already done. He will see that you get them.

But right now I would like to tell you something else.... In the reading we heard these words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God" (2 Cor 1:3-4).

This is the text which the Church invites us to reflect upon at this evening's Vespers. Over the past two months I have been preparing for this Visit by reading the history of the persecution in Albania. For me it was surprising: I did not know that your people had suffered so greatly! Then today, on the road from the airport to the square, there were all those pictures of the martyrs. It is clear that this people today continues to remember their martyrs, those who suffered so dearly! A people of martyrs.... And today at the beginning of the celebration, I touched two of them.

Let us go home reflecting on this: today we have touched martyrs.

The following is the homily that the Pope had prepared for the event and which was assigned to those present.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, It is a great joy for me to meet with you in your beloved homeland; I thank God for the opportunity and I thank you for your hospitality! Here in your midst, I can better express my closeness to your task of evangelization.

Since the moment your country has been free from dictatorship, the ecclesial communities in Albania have begun again to journey onward and to organize themselves for pastoral work, looking to the future with hope. I am particularly grateful to those Pastors who paid a great price for their fidelity to Christ and for their decision to remain

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"It is clear that this people today continues to remember their martyrs, those who suffered so dearly! A people of martyrs... And today at the beginning of the celebration, I touched two of them"

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in our lives and in our mission. That which the Lord promises for the prayer made with trust and perseverance goes beyond what we can imagine (cf. Lk 11:11-12); beyond that which we ask for, God sends us also the Holy Spirit. The contemplative dimension of our lives becomes indispensable even in the midst of the most urgent and difficult tasks we encounter. The more our mission calls us to go out into the peripheries of life, the more our hearts feel the intimate need to be united to the heart of Christ, which is full of mercy and love.

Considering the fact that the number of priests and religious is not yet sufficient, the Lord Jesus repeats to you today "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest", (Mt 9:37-38). We must not forget that this prayer begins with a gaze: the gaze of Jesus, who sees the great harvest. Do we also have this gaze? Do we know how to recognize the abundant fruits that the grace of God has caused to grow and the work that there is to be done in the field of the Lord? It is by gazing with faith on the field of God that prayer spring forth, namely, the daily and pressing invocation to the Lord for priestly and religious vocations. Dear seminarians, postulants and novices, you are the fruit of this prayer of the people of God, which always precedes and accompanies your personal response. The Church in Albania needs your enthusiasm and your generosity. The time that you dedicate today to a solid spiritual, theological, communitarian and pastoral formation, is directed to serving adequately the people of God tomorrow. The people, more than seeking experts, are looking for witnesses: humble witnesses of the mercy and tenderness of God; priests and religious conformed to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who are capable of communicating the love of Christ to all people.

Together with you and the entire Albanian people, I want to give thanks to God for the many missionaries whose activity was decisive for the renewal of the Church in Albania and which continues to be of great importance to this day. These missionaries have offered significant contribution to the consolidation of the spiritual patrimony that the Albanian bishops, priests, consecrated religious and lay persons have preserved in the midst of difficult trials and tribulations. Let us acknowledge the great work done by the religious institutes for the revival of Catholic education: these efforts are worth recognizing and sustaining.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not be discouraged in the face of difficulties. Following the footsteps of your fathers, be tenacious in giving testimony to Christ, walking "together with God, toward the hope that never disappoints". In your journey, rest assured that you are accompanied and supported by the love of the whole Church. I thank you from the heart for this meeting, and I entrust each one of you and your communities - your plans and your hopes - to the holy Mother of God. I bless you from my heart and I ask you please to pray for me.



With tears in his eyes

The Church which - 20 years ago, emerged from the winter bloodstained by persecution, and from the catacombs from which a dictatorial communist and ostensibly atheist regime compelled her - is marked by suffering, including that of two octogenarians. At the meeting with priests, religious and representatives of the lay world held on Sunday afternoon, 21 September in Tirana's new Cathedral dedicated to St Paul, the testimony of Fr Ernest Simoni, 84, and Sr Marije Kaleta, 85, was the most touching moment of Pope Francis' visit. The Pontiff was moved to tears at the end of the priest's account. Tortured and condemned to death as an enemy of the people, Fr Ernest's sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment. Of the very few survivors of the persecution, Fr Ernest, who spent 27 years in various concentration camps and in forced labour, is one of only two priests still living. "While imprisoned, I celebrated Mass in Latin by heart and I secretly confessed and distributed communion", he recalled.

With tears in his eyes, amid the unending applause of those present, everyone visibly moved, Francis helped the priest, who had knelt to kiss the Pontiff's ring, back to his feet, engaged him in a lengthy embrace and kissed the priest's hand in turn. These moments of great intensity were then followed by Sr Marije's account. After living for seven years in the convent of the Stigmatine Sisters, she was forced to profess her faith in hiding. "The Lord gave me so much faith", she recounted, "that I was also able to give it to others, baptizing not only the children of the villages, but also those who came to my door". Not only that, but thanks to several priests, she managed to keep in her house, in a dresser, the Most Blessed Sacrament, which she took to the sick.

his homily, a meditation during the recitation of Vespers, he put aside his prepared text - the only time that day - to speak extemporaneously, as he was still so touched by their testimony. A reflection spoken from the heart, concluding with a validation: "Let us go home thinking: today we have touched martyrs".

On his return from Korea, Francis explained that one of the reasons for the second visit of a Pontiff to Albania - the first having been that of John Paul II on 23 April 1993 in order to rebuild a Church destroyed by persecution - would be based on martyrdom. He reiterated this shortly after the flight bound for Tirana left Rome, in a brief greeting to journalists, emphasizing that Albania "is a country which has suffered very much". He repeated it several times throughout the day, recalling the terrible cruelty inflicted on not only Catholics, but also Orthodox and Muslims.

In the Cathedral, the Pope confided to having been provided, for two months, with the documentary history of Albania and the suffering of the Church. Along the Martyrs of the Nation Blvd, this suffering can be seen in the faces and names of many Catholics - two bishops, 39 priests and eight lay people, including one woman - killed out of hatred for the faith during the dark years of the brutal communist dictatorship. The canonization process is currently underway for those very Catholics. The Papal procession followed this boulevard several times throughout the day's various transfers, and the Bishop of Rome was struck: "One can see that these people remember these martyrs". Martyrs whose witness, just as that of the whole Church of Albania, was also underlined by Archbishop Mirdita in his greeting to the Pontiff. Martyrs who, as one priest recalled, "died shouting: 'Long live the Pope'". Today we too want to shout "Long live the Pope". (Gaetano Vallini)

Testimony of Albanian priest and nun who survived persecution

With only a shoe for the baptism

Pope Francis was introduced to the suffering experienced by the Church in Albania, whose "frontier identity" has not been expressed through the "production of theological thought but through sacrifice and martyrdom, a constant in our life from the first century until today". Expressing this to the Pontiff was Archbishop Rrok Mirdita of Tirana, as he introduced Fr Ernest Simoni and Sr Marije Kaleta, who spoke about their experiences. Fr Simoni had been condemned to death by the communist regime and, after commutation of his sentence, spent 27 years in various concentration and forced labour camps. Sr Marije had been evicted from her convent by the atheist government. The following are translations of their testimony, beginning with that of Fr Simoni.

Haec dies quam fecit Dominus exultemus et laetemur in ea. Long live Christ, long live the Church. I am Fr Ernest Simoni (Troshani). I am an 84-year-old priest. In December of 1944 in Albania, the atheist communist party came to power, which had the elimination of faith and the clergy as its principle objective. In bringing about this plan they immediately began to arrest, torture and execute by firing squad hundreds of priests and lay people. For the seven years that followed, they shed the blood of innocent faithful, some of whom, before being shot, shouted: "Long live Christ the King".

In 1952 the communist government, through a political movement, willed by Moscow (Stalin), sought to reunite the priests who were still alive, to allow them to exercise their faith freely, on condition that the Church would renounce the Pope and the Vatican. The clergy never accepted this governmental intention. I continued my studies at the Franciscan college for 10 years, from 1938 to 1948. Our superiors were shot and killed by the communists, and because of this I was forced to complete my study of theology secretly. After four years I was taken by the army, with the intent to make me disappear. I spent two years in that suspense, years which were more terrible than prison. But the Lord saved me and on 7 April 1956 I was ordained a priest. The day after, *Domenica in Albis* and the Feast of the Divine Mercy, I celebrated my

first Mass. For eight-and-a-half years I exercised my priestly ministry. But the communists decided to do away with me.

Thus on 24 December 1963, just as I finished the celebration of Holy Mass for the Christmas Vigil in the village of Barbullush, near Shkodër, four security officers arrived and presented me with a decree for arrest and execution by firing squad. They handcuffed my arms behind my back, kicking me as they forced me into their car. From the Church they put me in solitary confinement, where they left me for three months in inhuman conditions. Bound, they took me to interrogation. The head told me: "You will be hung as an enemy because you told the people that we will all die for Christ if it is necessary". They tightened the handcuffs so much that my heart stopped beating and I nearly died. They wanted me to speak against the Church and the Church hierarchy. I did not accept. I almost died from the torture. Seeing me that way, they let me go. The Lord wanted me to continue to live.

Among the accusations there were also three Masses celebrated for the soul of the American President, John Kennedy, killed one month before my arrest. I celebrated these Masses according to the instructions of Paul VI, given to all the priests in the world. I had had a subscription to the main Russian magazine, "The Soviet Union", in French. In the meantime, Albania had broken off

relations with the Soviet Union. The magazine, which showed a photo of the American President was presented to the judge as material evidence of the charge. Divine Providence willed that my death sentence not be carried out. They brought another prisoner, a dear friend of mine, to the isolation room to spy on me. He began to speak against the party, but I responded that Christ taught us to love our enemies and to forgive them, and that we must commit ourselves for the good of the people. My words reached the ears of the dictator, who, five days later, lifted the death sentence.

But, this sentence was replaced by 18 years in prison at the Spaç mine. After being released from prison, I was again condemned to forced labour: for 10 years – until the fall of the regime – I worked in the sewers.

During the period of imprisonment, I celebrated Mass in Latin from memory and I secretly confessed and distributed communion.

With the arrival of religious freedom the Lord helped me to serve many villages and to reconcile many people who begrudged the Cross of Christ, by moving hatred and the devil away from the hearts of men.

Your Holiness, certain of being able to express the wish of all those present, I pray that, through the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of Christ, the Lord give you life, health and strength in guiding the great flock that is the Church of Christ. Amen.

The following is the testimony of Sr Maria.

Praised be Jesus Christ.

I am Sr Marije Kaleta and I am 85 years old. At the age of 10, I heard the Lord's call, without yet knowing what it meant to be religious. I was an only child. The prayers and advice of my uncle, a priest, helped me to take this path. My uncle's name was Fr Ndoc Suma, a priest who suffered many years in prison and in various labour camps. Today I am happy to see his name on the list of martyrs whose canonization process is underway, along with that of the only woman, Maria Tuci, my friend and also a Stigmatine Sister.

For seven years I lived in the convent of the Stigmatine sisters, and then the atheist government evicted us and thus I returned to my parents and to the service of my uncle, who was in prison. After the death of my parents I lived alone, with the desire to keep the faith alive in the heart of the faithful, even if in a hidden way.

The Lord gave me so much faith that I was also able to give it to others, baptizing not only the children of the villages, but also all those who came to my door, but only after being certain that they would not report me. Many events happened to



me during these years when I publicly bore witness to the faith. With simplicity of heart I would like to recount one of them. I was going home from work in the cooperative. Along the way I heard a voice calling me. A woman with a child in her arms ran up to me. She asked me to baptize the child she was carrying. Out of fear, because I knew she was the wife of a communist, I told her that I had nothing to baptize with, because we were on the road. But from the great desire she had, she told me there was water in the roadside ditch. I told her, though, that I had nothing to use to draw the water. But she insisted that I baptize her child. Then, seeing her faith, I took off my shoe, as it was plastic, and I used it to ladle water from the ditch and baptize the little girl.

In addition, thanks to knowing a few priests, I was fortunate to keep, in a dresser in the house, the Most Blessed Sacrament, which I took to the sick and dying.

I performed a religious service, but not even I know how I did it. Still today, when I think back on it, it seems incredible to me that we were able to stand so much terrible suffering, but I know that the Lord gave us strength, patience and hope.

As in the parable of the weeds, the Lord waits. "Wait" for the grain to ripen fully before separating them from the wheat. Even though the period was long and the work in the cooperative was very difficult, the Lord gave strength to those who he had called. Indeed he rewarded me for all the suffering, even here on earth. After the years of the regime, the churches reopened and I was fortunate to become a religious, a common desire for so many other priests and nuns.

On this special day I would not know how to thank the Lord enough. I had the privilege of meeting Your Holiness and asking your blessing for me, my uncle priest and the Stigmatine Sisters, for the parish where I was born and where I have performed my service until today, for the bishops, the priests and the men and women religious, for the whole of the Church and the entire population of Albania. Amen.

Witness and fraternity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

and Muslims. "All three religious components have borne witness to God and now bear witness to fraternity", Francis summarized to journalists during the return flight to Rome.

From this land of martyrs, the Bishop of Rome once again gave voice to these powerful words: "Let no one consider themselves to be the 'armour' of God while planning and carrying out acts of violence and oppression!", he urged in his discourse to the Albanian authorities and the Diplomatic Corps. "Authentic religion is a source of peace and not of violence!", he said at the meeting with representatives of other religious communities in the country and repeated: "To kill in the name of God is a grave sacrilege!".

The witness of fraternity borne by the people of Albania and from its heroic history of resistance to

evil is precious "in these times where an authentic religious spirit is being perverted and where religious differences are being distorted and instrumentalized by extremist groups. This creates dangerous circumstances which lead to conflict and violence", the Pope stated clearly.

And beside the unequivocal words expressed during the journey in Albania will remain the strong emotion and the tears of the Pontiff on hearing the simple and touching story of two survivors of the atrocious Communist persecution: an 84-year-old priest, Fr Ernest Simoni, and an 85-year-old Stigmatine nun, Sr Marije Kaleta, who escaped death, decades of imprisonment and forced labour. Today "we have touched martyrs", the Pope said, deeply moved, adding that, consoled by God during the persecution, they were the ones to console us.

G.M.V.

At the Bethany Centre

Never ashamed of showing goodness

For the last meeting on Albanian soil, Pope Francis went approximately 20 kilometres from Tirana to meet with children of the Bethany Centre and representatives of other charitable centres in Albania. After listening to the director and to the testimony of a young man raised at the Centre, the Holy Father delivered his address. The following is the English text of the Pope's address, which was given in Italian.

Dear Friends,

I thank you from my heart for your joyful welcome! Above all, I wish to thank those of you who, each day, offer to so many children and youngsters in need of care, tenderness, a serene environment and friendliness. May you be also true educators, giving good example in the way you live and the way you offer support.

In places such as this we are all confirmed in the faith; each one is helped in his or her belief, because we see the faith visibly expressed in practical acts of charity. We see how faith brings light and hope in situations of grave hardship; we observe how faith is rekindled in hearts touched by the Spirit of Jesus who said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Mt 9:37). This faith, working through charity, dislodges the mountains of indifference, of disbelief and of apathy, and opens hands and hearts to work for what is good and share this experience. Through humble gestures and simple acts of service to the least among us, the Good News that Jesus is risen and lives among us is proclaimed.

This Centre, furthermore, shows that it is possible to live together peacefully and fraternally as people of different ethnicities and followers of various religious confessions. Here differences do not prevent harmony, joy and peace, but rather become occasions for a greater mutual awareness and understanding. The variety of religious experiences reveals a true and reverential love of neighbour; each religious community expresses itself through love and not violence, and is never ashamed of showing goodness! The persons who nourish goodness in their heart, find that such goodness leads to a peaceful conscience and to profound joy even in the midst of difficulties and misunderstandings. Even when affronted, goodness is never weak but rather, shows its strength by refusing to take revenge.

Goodness is its own reward and draws us closer to God, who is the Supreme Good. It helps us to think like him, to see our lives in the light of his plan of love for each one of us, and enables us to delight in life's daily joys, helping us in difficulties and in trials. Goodness offers infinitely more than money, which only deludes, because we have been created to receive the love of God and to offer it, not measuring everything in terms of money or power, which is the danger that kills us all.

Dear friends, in her greeting, your Director recalled the steps taken by your Association and the works that

were inspired by the founder, Mrs Antonietta Vitale, whom I cordially greet and thank for her welcome. Your Director also spoke of help given by benefactors and described the progress of various projects. She noted too, how many children have been lovingly welcomed and cared for. Mirjan spoke, on the other hand, of a personal experience, of wonder and gratitude for an encounter which was life-changing for him, and which opened new horizons, offering opportunities to make new friends, and particularly one



Friend who is greater than all the others, namely, Jesus. Mirjan said something very poignant in regard to those volunteers who offer their help; he said, "For fifteen years now they have sacrificed themselves joyfully out of love for Jesus and for us". This phrase reveals how making a gift of oneself for the love of Jesus gives birth to joy and hope, and it also shows how serving one's brothers and sisters is transformed into an experience of sharing God's kingdom. The words of Mirjan-Paolo might seem paradoxical to many in our world who are slow to grasp their meaning and who frantically seek the key to existence in earthly riches, possessions and amusements. What these people discover, instead, is estrangement and bewilderment.

The secret to a good life is found in loving and giving oneself for love's sake. From here comes the strength to "sacrifice oneself joyfully", and thus the most demanding

work is transformed into a source of a greater joy. In this way, there is no longer any fear of making important choices in life, but they are seen for what they are, namely, as the way to personal fulfilment in freedom.

May the Lord Jesus and his Mother, the Virgin Mary, bless your Association, this *Bethany Centre* and the other centres which love has initiated and providence has built. May God bless all the volunteers, benefactors and the children and adolescents who have been welcomed here. May your patron, Saint Anthony, accompany you along the way. I encourage you to continue faithfully serving the Lord Jesus in the poor and abandoned, and to pray to him so that the hearts and minds of all may be opened to goodness, to charity shown in works, which is the source of real and authentic joy. I ask you also kindly to pray for me, and from my heart, I bless each one of you.

Inflight interview on return from Tirana

The ability to be brothers and sisters

During the flight from Rome to Tirana, the Pope wanted to greet the 50 journalists – from 10 different countries – wishing them "a good day's work and not one of rest. It will be a job that is a little strong, a beautiful hardworking day", he added, asking as usual to pray for him. At his side, was the director of the Vatican Press Office,

Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ, who welcomed him and presented the different media: press, news agencies, television, radio, photographers. In addition to them, he added, in Albania, "we naturally expect many more that have gone directly and then all the people of Albania celebrating". Addressing the journalist, Pope Francis thanked them for

their "help that does so much good, so that the people, the world knows, the things that the Pope does, what the Churches does, in this case Albania". It is, he continued, about "a country that has suffered so much, so much. So much suffering", but at the same time has been "able to find peace with different religions, and this is a good sign for the world: dialogue, peace, that balance that is in favour of governance". More detailed was the press conference on the return flight that evening. Fr Lombardi introduced three journalists from three Albanian television stations who asked a few questions about the trip. The following is the English text of the interview.

Your Holiness set out with a certain idea of Albanians, of Albania. How Albanians have suffered but are also tolerant. Did you find any other qualities in the Albanians which you met? Are these qualities the right ones to make the eagle return to the nest?

I would say that I came to a better understanding of those things you mentioned, but I was also able



VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, Archbishop of Valencia, Spain

Tuesday, 23 September

Members of the Episcopal Conference of Ghana on a visit *ad limina Apostolorum*:

– Archbishop Gabriel Charles Palmer-Buckle of Accra
– Archbishop Matthias Kobena Nketsiah of Cape Coast

– Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye of Kumasi, Apostolic Administrator of Obuasi, with Archbishop emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong and Archbishop emeritus Thomas Kwaku Mensah

– Archbishop Philip Naameh of Tamale

– Bishop Francis Anani Kofi Lodonu of Ho

– Bishop Gabriel Akwasi Ababio Mante of Jasikan

– Bishop Anthony Kwami Adanuty of Keta-Akatsi

– Bishop Joseph Kwaku Afrifah-Agyekum of Koforidua

– Bishop John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSp, of Sekondi-Takoradi

– Bishop Joseph Francis Kweku Essien of Wiawso

– Bishop Peter Kwaku Atuahene of Goaso

– Bishop Joseph Osei-Bonsu of Konongo-Mampong

– Bishop Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi of Sunyani

Former Nuncio Wesołowski under house arrest

On 24 September the Promoter of Justice of the Court of First Instance of the Vatican City State summoned the former Nuncio Józef Wesołowski, on whom he had conducted a criminal investigation. Wesołowski – already judged in the first instance by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and dismissed from the clerical state at the end of canonical administrative penal process – was notified of the indictment of the criminal proceedings against him for serious acts of child abuse in the Dominican Republic.

The seriousness of the allegations has prompted the official investigation to impose a restrictive measure that, in light of the accused's health condition, as evidenced by medical documentation, consists of house arrest, with its related limitations, in a location within the Vatican City State.

The initiative taken by the judicial departments of Vatican City State is a result of the express desire of the Pope, so that a case so serious and delicate would be addressed without delay, with just and necessary rigor, and with full assumption of responsibility on the part of the institutions that are governed by the Holy See.

– Bishop Dominic Yeboah Nyarko of Techiman

– Bishop Peter Paul Angkyier of Damongo

– Bishop Alfred Agyenta of Navrongo-Bolgatanga

– Bishop Paul Bemile of Wa

– Bishop Vincent Sowah Boi-Nai, SVD, of Yendi

– Bishop Gabriel Edoe Kumordji, SVD, titular Bishop of Ita, Vicar Apostolic of Donkorkrom

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Anthony Colin Fisher, OP, as Archbishop of Sydney, Australia. Until now he has been Bishop of Parramatta (18 Sept.).

Archbishop Fisher, 54, was born in Sydney, Australia. He was ordained a priest on 14 September 1991. He was ordained a bishop on 3 September 2003, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Buruni and Auxiliary of Sydney. In 2010 he was appointed Bishop of Parramatta.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Ulrich Neymeyr as Bishop of Erfurt, Federal Republic of Germany. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Maragua and Auxiliary of Mainz (19 Sept.).

Bishop Neymeyr, 57, was born in Worms-Herrnsheim, Federal Republic of Germany. He was ordained a priest on 12 June 1982. He was ordained a bishop on 21 April 2003, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Maragua and Auxiliary of Mainz.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Cardinal Francis Eugene George, OMI, from his office as Archbishop of Chicago, USA. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (20 Sept.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Blase J. Cupich as Archbishop of Chicago, USA. Until now he has been Bishop of Spokane (20 Sept.).

Archbishop Cupich, 65, was born in Omaha, Nebraska, USA. He was ordained a priest on 16 August 1975. He was ordained a bishop on 21 September 1998, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Spokane.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Riccardo Luca Guariglia, OSB, as Abbot Ordinary of the Territorial Abbey of Montevergine, Italy. Until now he has been the Cloistered Prior and Novitiate Master in the said abbey (20 Sept.).

Abbot Guariglia, 47, was born in Santa Maria di Castellabate, Italy. He entered the monastery on 26 February 1992 and that same year on 14 August he began his novitiate. He made his first profession on 18 October 1993 and he made his solemn vows in 1997. He was ordained a priest on 29 April 2000. He holds a licence in Sacred Liturgy. He has served as treasurer of the monastic community, as lecturer of fundamental liturgy at the Theologate

“Madonna delle Grazie”, Benevento, and as counsellor of the Visitor of the Italian Province of Subiaco of the Cassinese Congregation of the Benedictines.

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The Holy Father appointed the following as members of the International Theological Commission and has reconfirmed the mandate of former members for a five-year (2014-2019) term. The said Commission is now composed of:

– Fr Serge Thomas Bonino, OP, Secretary General, France

– Fr Terwase Henry Akaabiam, Nigeria

– Sr Prudence Allen, RSM, United States of America

– Sr Alenka Arko, Loyola Community, Russian Federation - Slovenia

– Msgr Antonio Luiz Catelan Ferreira, Brazil

– Msgr Piero Coda, Italy

– Fr Lajos Dolhai, Hungary

– Fr Peter Dubovský, SJ, Slovakia

– Fr Mario Angel Flores Ramos, Mexico

– Fr Carlos María Galli, Argentina

– Fr Krzysztof Gózdź, Poland

– Fr Gaby Alfred Hachem, Lebanon

– Fr Thomas Kollampampil, CMI, India

– Fr Koffi Messan Laurent Kpogo, Togo

– Fr Oswaldo Martínez Mendoza, Colombia

– Prof. Moira Mary McQueen, Canada - Great Britain

– Fr Karl Heinz Menke, Germany
– Fr John Junyang Park, Korea
– Fr Bernard Pottier, SJ, Belgium
– Fr Javier Maria Prades López, Spain

– Prof. Tracey Rowland, Australia

– Prof. Héctor Gustavo Sánchez Rojas, SCV, Peru

– Prof. Marianne Schlosser, Austria - Germany

– Fr Nicholas Segeja M'hela, Tanzania

– Fr Pierangelo Sequeri, Italy

– Fr Željko Tanjić, Croatia

– Fr Gerard Francisco P. Timoner III, OP, the Philippines

– Fr Gabino Uribarri Bilbao, SJ, Spain

– Fr Philippe Vallin, France

– Fr Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM Cap., United States of America

SPECIAL ENVOY

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, as his Special Envoy to the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of Myanmar, to be held in Yangon from 21-23 November 2014 (20 Sept.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr. Paolo Rudelli, Nunciature Counsellor, as Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe (20 Sept.).

CARDINAL TAKES POSSESSION

On 21 September, Cardinal Fernando Sebastián Aguilar, CME, Archbishop emeritus of Pamplona y Tudela, took possession of the Title of Sant'Angela Merici.

Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Promulgation of decrees

On 17 September, Pope Francis received Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in a private audience and authorized the Congregation to promulgate the following decrees:

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Bl. Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception (in the world: Adelaide Brando), Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters Expiatory Victims of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; born in Naples, Italy, on 1 May 1856 and died in Casoria on 20 January 1906;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Pio Alberto del Corona of the Order of Friars Preachers, titular Archbishop of Sardinia, Bishop emeritus of San Miniato, Founder of the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Spirit; born in Livorno, Italy, on 5 July 1837 and died in Florence on 15 August 1912;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Mary Elizabeth Turgeon, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sister of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary; born in Beaumont, Canada, on 7 February 1840 and died in Rimouski on 17 August 1881.

The Supreme Pontiff also approved the votes of the Cardinal Fathers and Bishops at the Ordinary Session in favour of the canonization of Bl. Joseph Vaz, priest of the Oratory of St Philip Neri, Founder of the Oratory of the Holy Cross of Miracles in Goa; born in Benaulin, India, on 21 April 1651 and died in Kandy, Sri Lanka, on 16 January 1711.

His Holiness has decided to call an upcoming Consistory for the Canonization of Bl. Joseph Vaz and Bl. Maria Cristina of the Immaculate Conception (in the world: Adelaide Brando).

Inflight interview

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

to see at close hand the suffering which you Albanians endured. The matter of tolerance... I would put it differently. Albanians are not so much "tolerant" – they are brothers and sisters. They have the ability to be brothers and sisters: and that is something more important. And this is evident in the way they live with one another, in the cooperation between Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics. They cooperate, but as brothers and sisters, no? Another thing which struck me from the beginning is how young the country is. After I noted this, I was told that it is the youngest country of Europe. But Albania has, it is clear, a superior development in culture and also in governance, thanks to this brotherhood.

Your Holiness, what were your emotions as you drove down the central boulevard of Tirana, under the pictures of the clergy who were martyred during the communist regime, in a country in which until 25 years ago atheism had been officially imposed?

For two months I have been working to understand that difficult period in Albania; I tried to under-



stand how it began. But from the beginning you [also] have beautiful, strong cultural roots, a great culture. I tried to understand this and it was a cruel period; the level of cruelty was horrible. When I saw those photographs (and there were not only Catholics, but Orthodox also Muslims as well...) and I thought of how they were told that they could not believe in God – [and when they said:] "I do believe in God", they were immediately executed. So I would say that all three religious groups bore witness to God and

now they are bearing witness to brotherhood.

Your Holiness, you visited Albania, which is a country with a Muslim majority. But your visit took place at a very uncertain time in our world. You yourself have said that the third world war has already begun. Is the message of your visit for Albanians alone, or for others too?

No, it is for others too. It is broader. Albania has taken the route of peace, coexistence and coopera-

tion, which extends to other countries which also have various ethnic roots. You said that it is a country with a Muslim majority. True, but it is not a Muslim country; it is a European country. This was a surprise to me. Albania is a European country precisely because of its culture – the culture of coexistence, also its past culture.

Now that you have made this visit to Albania, which is in Europe, what will be your next ones?

I can't alter the geography. The next visits will be on 25 November to Strasbourg, for both the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. And then 28 November, perhaps, to Turkey, to be present on the 30th for the Feast of St Andrew with Patriarch Bartholomaios.

Your Holiness, we have come to see that you have a vision of Albania somewhat different than that of Europeans. In other words, we see Europe pretty much as the European Union. You chose as the first European country which you visited a country on the periphery, one which is not a member of the European Union. What might this say to those who only see the Europe of the "powerful"?

That this trip of mine is a message, it is a sign: it is a sign which I wish to give.

I think that all of us saw you weep for the first time; you were greatly moved by that encounter [with the living martyrs]. It was, I believe, the most moving moment of the visit.

To listen to a martyr speak about his own martyrdom is powerful! I believe that all of us present were moved: all of us. Those witnesses spoke as if they were talking about someone else, so naturally and so humbly. It did me very good!

Thank you very much, and enjoy your dinner.

So as not to deny Creation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Program at the University of St Thomas in Houston, Texas, and not to be forgotten among her numerous publications is her forthcoming *The Concept of Woman: Search for Communion of Persons, Volume III: 1500-2010* (Eerdmans Publishing).

Sr Alenka Arko of the Loyola Community was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 26 October 1996 and is currently residing in Russia. She has studied at the University of Ljubljana, the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome (diploma in Oriental Theology), and at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where she pursued her doctorate in theology with a thesis on the *Inner Man according to St Gregory of Nyssa*. A Vatican Radio editor from 1992 to 1995, over the years Sr Ardo has taught at the inter-diocesan seminary of Mary Queen of the Apostles in St Petersburg, at the St John Chrysostom Institute of the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome and at the inter-diocesan seminary for Central Asia in Karaganda, Kazakhstan.

As a layperson, Moira Mary McQueen (a British and Canadian citizen born in Scotland) has been President of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute since 2004. A professor of moral theology in the Faculty of Theology at St Michael's College, University of Toronto, her publications include *Bioethics Matters: A Guide for Concerned Catholics* (Novalis 2008, 2011). Ms McQueen is an expert in sexual ethics, a radio commentator, member of committees dealing with cases of sexual abuse in the Diocese of Hamilton and the Archdiocese of Toronto, a pro-

fessor in various seminaries. She has written on end-of-life, reproductive technologies, regenerative medicine, genetics and mental health.

Tracey Rowland (7 July 1964) is a married Australian who studied at the Universities of Queensland, Melbourne, London and Cambridge (earning a degree in philosophical theology) and at the Pontifical Lateran University (earning a degree in sacred theology). She is a professor in Melbourne, the President of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne, and has been a permanent member of the Centre of Philosophy and Theology at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom since 2001. Her publications include *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford University Press, 2008, translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese).

Marianne Schlosser, born on 3 December 1959 in Donauwörth, Bavaria, was educated at the University of Munich. She is a professor of theology of spirituality at the University of Vienna, and her main research interests include theology and spirituality in the patristic and middle age, specifically in reference to the mendicant orders. A Catherine of Siena Scholar, she is a co-editor of Franciscan sources in German. Among her many publications, *Erhebung des Herzens. Theologie des Gebetes*, is to be released in the spring of 2015.

There have been women in the International Theological Commission – established by Paul VI on 11 April 1969 in order to assist the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the examination of the most important and current doc-

trinal questions – since 2004. In fact, on 9 February of that year, in nominating the new members of the Commission, John Paul II welcomed the guidance of Cardinal Ratzinger who, convinced that "omitting women from the whole of theology would mean denying creation and choice (salvation history) and therefore, suppressing revelation", recommended two women. They were Sr Sara Butler from the United States, and Barbara Hallesleben, a German lay woman.

The Pope receives the President of the Republic of Latvia

On Saturday morning, 20 September, the Holy Father received in audience H.E. Mr Andris Bērziņš, President of the Republic of Latvia, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State accompanied by Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States. During the discussions, which took place in a cordial atmosphere, the existing good relations between Latvia and the Holy See were evoked, as well as the positive contribution made by the Catholic Church to society, especially in the fields of education and social welfare.



Mention was then made of various aspects of life in the country, as well as international matters of common interest, particularly in view of Latvia's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which Latvia will assume from 1 January 2015. Special attention was paid to the situation in Ukraine, in the hope that a political solution, based on rights, may be sought through dialogue.

Message for the Feast of the Our Lady of Charity of Cobre

In the maternal hands of the Virgin

"Joy to live, courage to serve and to persevere in good works". In this way, the Pope entrusted Cuba's faithful to the Virgin in a message sent to the President of the Bishops' Conference of Cuba, Archbishop García Ibáñez, on the occasion of the Feast of the Virgin of Charity of Cobre, celebrated on 8 September. The following is a translation of the message, which was written in Spanish.

To His Excellency Archbishop
Dionisio Guillermo García Ibáñez
of Santiago de Cuba
President of the Catholic Bishops'
Conference of Cuba

Vatican, 8 September 2014

Dear Brother,

A few days ago a venerated statue of Our Lady of Charity of Cobre was placed in the Vatican Gardens. Her presence is an evocative reminder of the affection and vitality of the Church that journeys in the bright land of the Caribbean which, for more than four centuries, has turned to the Mother of God with this beautiful name. From the mountains of El Cobre, and now from the See of Peter, this small and blessed figure of Mary expands the soul of those who invoke her with devotion, as she leads us to Jesus, her divine Son.

Today the Feast of Mary, Most Holy, the *Virgin Mambisa*, is celebrated with devotion, I join all Cubans who desire to direct their gaze to her Immaculate Heart in order to ask her for support, to entrust their loved ones to her and to imitate her humility and dedication to

Christ, of whose disciples she was the first and foremost.

Each time I read about Our Lady in the passages of Sacred Scripture my attention is drawn to three verbs. I would like to pause on these so as to invite the pastors and faithful of Cuba to practice them.

The first is to hail. This was the first word the Archangel Gabriel addressed to the Virgin: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1:28). The life of one who has discovered Jesus is filled with an inner joy so great that nothing and no one can take it away. Christ gives to his own the strength necessary to be neither sad nor disheartened, when problems seem unsolvable. Sustained by this truth, the Christian does not doubt that what one does lovingly generates serene joy, the sister of hope which breaks the barrier of fear and opens the door to a promising future. "I am the Virgin of Charity", the three brothers read on the tablet that was floating in Nipe Bay. How beautiful it would be if every Cuban, especially the youth, could say the same: "I am a person of Charity": I live to love truly and not to be thus trapped in the vindictive cycle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Such joy is shown by one who shows true love through daily actions, and is not one of those whose empty eloquence the wind blows away.

The second verb is to arise. St Luke says that Mary, with Jesus in her womb, arose and went in haste to serve her cousin Elizabeth who, in her old age, was about to become a mother (cf. Lk 1:39-45). She did God's will by making herself avail-

able to those who needed her. She did not think of herself, she overcame adversity and gave herself to others. Victory is for those who continually arise without being discouraged. If we imitate Mary, we cannot keep our arms folded, only complaining, or perhaps dodging the hard work that others do and which is our responsibility. This is not about doing everything with tenderness and mercy. Mary was always with her people supporting the least. She knew loneliness, poverty and exile, and she learned to share fraternity and to make her home in any place where goodness took root. Let us beseech her to give us a poor spirit which is not proud, a pure heart that sees God in the face of the neediest, great patience that we may not shrink when confronted with life's difficulties.

The third verb is to persevere. Mary, who felt God's goodness, proclaimed that He worked great things in her (cf. Lk 1:46-55). She did not rely on her own strength but on God's, whose love is endless. She thus remained at the side of the Son, who had been abandoned by all others; she prayed without leaving the apostles and other disciples' side, so that they would not lose heart (cf. Acts 1:14). We too are called to abide in God's love and to continue loving others. In this world, where lasting values are discarded and everything changes, where the throw-away culture triumphs, where it seems people are afraid of life-long commitments, the Virgin encourages us to be men and women steadfast in doing good works, who keep their word, who are ever faithful. This is because we trust in God and we place him at the centre of our life and that of the people we love.

To experience joy and share it with those who surround you, lift your heart and not to succumb to adversity, stay on the path of goodness, tirelessly helping those who are afflicted and distressed: these are the important lessons which the Virgin of Charity of Cobre teaches us, useful today and tomorrow. I place in her maternal hands the pastors, the religious communities and the faithful of Cuba, so that she may encourage their evangelizing commitment and their will to make joy of life, love the cornerstone of society. In this way the joy to live, the courage to serve and to persevere in good works will never be lacking.

I ask the children of the Church in Cuba to please pray for me, because I need it.

May Jesus bless them and may the Holy Virgin always protect them!

Fraternally,

FRANCIS



Chinese Archbishop dies

On 25 August Archbishop emeritus Joseph Wu Shizhen of Nanchang, located in the Province of Jiangxi, People's Republic of China, died after suffering from a long illness. He was 93 years old.

The Bishop was born on 19 January 1921 in the district of Linchuan, in the city of Fuzhou (Jiangxi), to a family with a long Catholic tradition. He entered the seminary in 1933 at the age of 12. He received his philosophical and theological formation from 1942 to 1949, and was ordained a priest by Bishop William Charles Quinn, CM, of Yujiang on 6 November 1949. After his ordination, Fr Wu had to return to his hometown to work in agriculture and then began working in traditional Chinese medicine, serving in various hospitals in the district of Linchuan until the 1980s. In 1982 he returned to the diocese and began serving in pastoral ministry in the Catholic communities of Linchuan, Jiujiang and Lushan.

Archbishop Wu exercised his ministry in difficult times. He strove to provide the seminarians and women religious in his archdiocese with a solid formation of the human and spirit. He restored and reopened several churches and guided the local communities with pastoral zeal.

His funeral was celebrated on 30 August at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in Songbaixiang (Nanchang). The diocesan community prays that the Lord welcome the Archbishop's soul into his Kingdom.

Cardinal Müller meets Bishop Fellay

On Tuesday morning, 23 September, from 11 am to 1 pm, a cordial meeting took place at the premises of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, between Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and Bishop Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the Society of St Pius X. The meeting was also attended by Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, Secretary of the same Congregation, Archbishop Joseph Augustine Di Noia, OP, Adjunct Secretary and Archbishop Guido Pozzo, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, along with two assistants from the Society of St Pius X, Fr Niklaus Pfluger and Fr Alain-Marc Nély.

During the meeting, various problems of a doctrinal and canonical nature were examined, and it was decided to proceed gradually and over a reasonable period of time in order to overcome difficulties and with a view to the full reconciliation envisioned.



To the Bishops of Propaganda Fide

Missionary conversion

Today there is an imperious need for missionary conversion: a conversion which concerns every baptized person and every parish. The Holy Father emphasized this need in the Church. The following is a translation of the address the Bishop of Rome consigned on Saturday morning, 20 September – after his brief extemporaneous remarks – to the bishops who work at Propaganda Fide.

Dear Brothers,

I give you my cordial welcome, together with the heads of the Missionary Dicastery, led by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, whom I thank for the words with which he introduced our meeting. I hope that this review seminar may be fruitful for each one of you, both spiritually and pastorally. You answered with faith and generosity the call of the Lord, who has chosen you to be Shepherds of his flock. You have not been frightened by the difficulties and challenges of today's world (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 52-75), which make the Bishops' mission today even more arduous; but you have placed your trust in the Lord, like the first disciples and St Peter, who exclaimed: "at your word I will let down the nets" (Lk 5:5). You too are called, along with all the Pastors of Church, to base your mission on the word of Jesus, to offer hope to the world.

During these two weeks, you have examined the various aspects of life and the episcopal ministry which respond to the fundamental mission of the Church: to proclaim the Gospel. As I underlined in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, today there is an imperious need for missionary conversion (cf. nn. 19-49); a conversion which concerns every



baptized person and every parish, but which the Pastors are naturally called to live and witness to first, as leaders of the particular Churches. I therefore encourage you to order your life and your episcopal ministry to this missionary transformation which challenges the People of God today.

At the centre of this missionary conversion of the Church is service to humanity, following the example of her Lord who washed the feet of his disciples. The Church, as an evangelizing community, is called to grow in proximity, to bridge distances, to abase herself to the point of humiliation, if necessary, and to embrace human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24). In this perspective, the Second Vatican Council, discussing the duty of the Bishop, as the guide of God's family, underlined that Bishops, in exercising their ministry as fathers and shepherds in the midst of their faithful, must act as "those who serve" always keeping before their eyes the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life for all (cf. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, 16 October 2003, n. 42). Shining examples of this pastoral service are the holy martyrs of Korea: Andrea Kim Taegön, a priest, and Paul Chông Hasang and Companions, whose liturgical memorial we are celebrating today. Anchored in Christ, the Good Shepherd, they did not hesitate to shed their own blood for the Gospel, of which they were faithful disseminators and to which they were heroic witnesses.

The Church needs Pastors, and therefore servants, Bishops who know how to kneel before others to wash their feet. Pastors close to their people, meek, patient and merciful fathers and brothers, who love poverty both as freedom for the Lord and as simplicity and austerity of life. You are called to keep constant watch over the flock entrusted

to you, to keep it united and faithful to the Gospel and to the Church. Strive to give an authentic missionary drive to your diocesan communities so that they may ever increase with new members, thanks to your testimony of life and your episcopal ministry exercised in service to the People of God. Be close to your priests, foster religious life and love the poor.

While I address you, I cannot but think of those Confereres who, for various reasons, are not here with us. To all of them I send a fraternal greeting and blessing. How I would like, for example, that the Chinese bishops ordained in recent years were present with us today! From the bottom of my heart, however, I hope that day is not far off! I wish to assure them not only of my and our solidarity but also that of the world's Episcopate so that, in common faith, even if at times they have

the impression of being alone, they may feel the increasing certainty that their suffering will bear fruit – a great harvest! – for the good of their faithful, of their fellow citizens and of all the whole Church.

Dear brothers, we are on the journey of the Synod on the family. While I also trust in your prayers for the next Synod Assembly, I would like to underline with you that families are the basis of evangelizing work, with their mission of education and with their active participation in the life of the parish communities. I encourage you to promote the pastoral care of the family, so that families, accompanied and formed, may make an ever better contribution to the life of the Church and of society. May the Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization, accompany you with her maternal tenderness. On all of you and on your dioceses, I invoke the blessing of the Lord.

Meeting with the President of Argentina



On Saturday, 20 September, Pope Francis received the President of the Argentine Republic, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, in the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Audience with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe



On Saturday morning, 20 September, the Pope received in audience the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and his entourage

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 18 September

The scent of a sinner

The Lord saves “only when we open the heart” in the “truth of our sins”. This was the lesson that Pope Francis drew from the day’s Reading from the Gospel according to Luke (7:36-50). The passage relates the story of the sinful woman who, at lunch in a Pharisee’s home, without being invited, approaches Christ with “a flask of ointment” and “standing behind him at his feet, weeping”, she begins to “wet his feet with her tears”, then wiping them “with the hair of her head”, kisses them and anoints them with ointment.

The Pontiff explained that the very “recognition of sins, our misery, the recognition of what we are and what we are capable of doing or have done is the door that opens to the caress of Jesus, to the forgiveness of Jesus, to the Word of Jesus: Go in peace, your faith has saved you, because you have been brave, you have been courageous in opening your heart to him who alone can save you”. In this regard the Pope repeated an expression especially dear to him: “the privileged place for the encounter with Christ is our sins”.

Pope Francis commented that to the untrained ear this “would almost seem heresy, but even St Paul said it” in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (12:9), when he affirmed boasting of “only two things: of his sins and of the Risen Christ who saved him”.

The Bishop of Rome introduced his reflection by reconstructing the scene described in the Gospel passage. He explained that the man “who invited Jesus to lunch was a person of a certain level, cultured, perhaps an academic. He wanted to hear Jesus’ teaching because, as a good and cultured person he was unsettled”, and sought to “know more”. And “it doesn’t seem that he was a bad person”, and nor were “the others who were at the table”. Until a female figure bursts into the banquet: deep down “an ill-mannered woman” who “actually enters where she was not invited”. One who was not cultured or, if she was, she did not show it here”. In fact “she enters and does what she wants to do: without apologizing, without asking permission”. The Pope observed, “Jesus lets her do” all this.

It is here that reality is revealed behind the facade of good manners, with the Pharisee who begins to think to himself: “If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner”. This was not a “bad” man, yet “he was unable to understand the woman’s gesture. He was unable to understand the basic gestures of the people”. Perhaps, Francis underlined, “this man had forgotten how to caress a child, how to console a grandmother. In his theories, in his thoughts, in his government life –

because perhaps he was a councilor to the Pharisees – he had forgotten the first gestures of life that we all, right at birth, began to receive from our parents”. In other words he “was far from reality”. Only in this way, the Pope continued, can his “accusation” toward Jesus be explained: “This is a holy man! He speaks to us of beautiful things, he performs some magic; he is a healer; but in the end he does not know the people, because if he knew what sort of woman this is he would have said something”.

Here then are two very different “approaches”: on one side is that of the “man who sees and qualifies”, he judges; and on the other, that of the “woman who cries and does seemingly mad things”, because she uses ointment which “is expensive, it’s costly”. The Pontiff paused on the particular fact that in the Gospel the word “anoint” is used to signify that the “woman’s ointment anoints: it has the capacity to become an unction”, to the contrary of the Pharisee’s words, which “do not touch the heart, do not touch the body, do not touch reality”.

Between these two very antithetical figures is Jesus, with “his pa-



Mary, give us the grace of being joyful as we walk in the freedom of the children of God.

(@Pontifex on 18 September)



tiency, his love”, his “will to save everyone”, which “lead him to explain to the Pharisee the meaning of what this woman is doing” and to reproach him, although “with humility and tenderness”, for having lacked “courtesy” toward him. “I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment”.

The Pope also highlighted that the Gospel does not say “how the story ends for this man”, but it clearly tells “how it ends for the woman: ‘your sins are forgiven!’”. This sentence scandalized “those who were at the table with him, who

began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’”. While Jesus continues straight on his path and “says that phrase so often repeated in the Gospel: ‘Go in peace, your faith has saved you!’”. In other words, “she is told that her sins are forgiven” while “Jesus only shows and explains gestures to the others, that is, what they haven’t done for him”. It is a difference which Francis wanted to stress: in the woman’s behaviour “there is so very much love”, while regarding that of the dinner companions, Jesus does not say that love is lacking, “but he makes it understood”. As a result, “the words of salvation – ‘Your faith has saved you!’ – he says only to the woman, who is a sinner. And he tells her because she has managed to weep for her sins, so to speak. ‘I am a sinner’”. On the contrary, “he doesn’t say it to those people” who, although they were not “bad”, these people actually “believed they weren’t sinners”. To them “the sinners were the others: the publicans, the prostitutes”.

Here then is the lesson of the Gospel: “Salvation enters the heart only when we open the heart in the truth of our sins”. Of course the Bishop of Rome reasoned, “none of us will go to make the gesture that this woman did”, because it is “a cultural gesture of that period; but we all have the opportunity to weep, we all have the opportunity to open ourselves and say: Lord save me! We all have the opportunity to encounter the Lord”. This is also because, the Pope indicated, “to the other people in this Gospel passage, Jesus says nothing. But in another passage he will say those terrible words: ‘Hypocrites, because you are detached from reality, from the truth!’”. And yet, in reference to the example of this sinful woman, he will caution: “Think hard, it will be the prostitutes and the publicans to go before you into the kingdom of heaven”. Because they, the Pontiff concluded, “feel they are sinners” and “they open their heart in the confession of sins, at the encounter with Jesus, who gave his blood for all of us”.

Friday, 19 September

Fear of resurrection

Christian identity is fulfilled for us only with the resurrection, which will be “like a reawakening”. This is why Pope Francis advised “being with the Lord”, walking with him as disciples, in order that the resurrection may begin here and now. But “without fear of the transformation that our body will undergo at the end of our Christian journey”.

The Pontiff focused precisely on the essence of the resurrection in his homily during Mass. Drawing from the day’s Reading from the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (15:12-20), the Pope first explained that the Apostle “has to make a correction which is difficult for that time: that of the Resurrection”. Indeed, “the Christians believed that yes, Christ is risen, he went away, he finished his mission, he helps us

from heaven, he accompanies us” but what was “not very clear” for them was “the following result that we too will be raised”.

In reality, Francis affirmed, “they thought in another way: yes, the dead are justified, they will not go to hell – very good! – but they will go a bit in the cosmos, in the air, there, the soul before God: only the soul”. But “they did not understand, the resurrection did not enter their mind”: that is, that “we too will be raised”.

“There was strong resistance”, the Pope pointed out, and it was so “from the first days”. Thus, Peter himself, who “had contemplated Jesus in his Glory on Mount Tabor, in the morning of the Resurrection, rushed to the grave”, believing that the Lord’s body had been stolen. He did this because “a true resurrection” never “not entered their mind”. Their “theological” vision, the Pontiff explained, ended with the triumph. Such that “the day of the Ascension they said: But tell me, Lord, now will you free the kingdom of Israel?”.

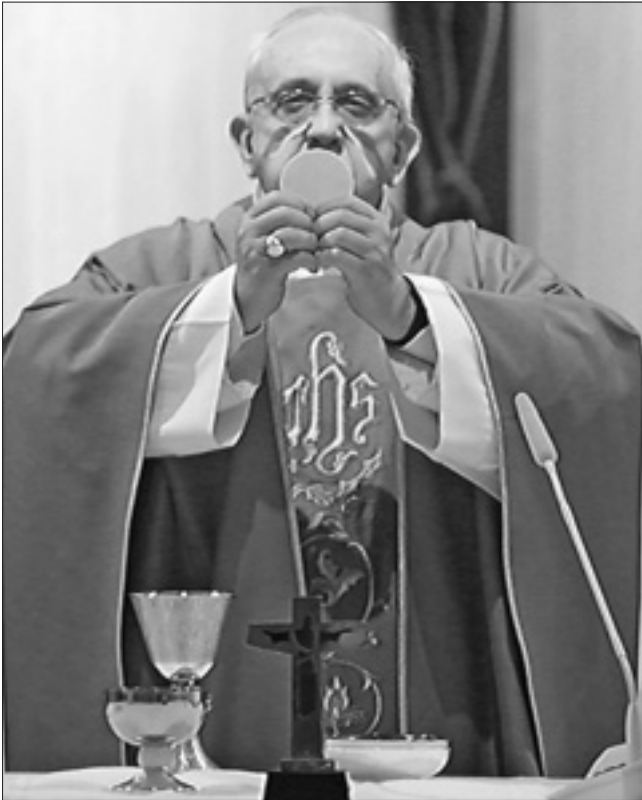
The did not understand “our passage from death to life through the Resurrection”, the Bishop of Rome explained. “Not even Mary Magdalene, who loved the Lord so much”, understood. And she too thought: “They stole the body!”.

The Disciples did not understand “the resurrection either of Jesus or of Christians”. In the end they only accepted “that of Jesus, because they saw it”; but the resurrection “of Christians was not understood in the same way”. They were convinced that “we will go to heaven, but nothing unusual” such as: “the dead will be raised”.

The same thing happens “when Paul goes to Athens and begins to speak” about the Resurrection: “the wise men and philosophers from Greece, are frightened” the Pope recalled. The question is that if “the Resurrection of Christ is a miracle, perhaps a frightening thing, the resurrection of Christians is a scandal: they cannot understand it!”. And this is why “Paul reasons this very clearly: If Christ is raised, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If Christ is raised, the dead will also be raised”.

The Pontiff observed that there is “resistance to the transformation, resistance that the work of the Spirit, which we received in Baptism, transforms until the end, at the resurrection”. And “when we speak about this, our language says: but I want to go to heaven, I do not want to go to hell!”. However, “we stop there”. And “none of us says: I will be revived like Christ!”.

For us as well, Francis continued, “it is difficult to understand this”. Very difficult. It is easier to imagine a sort of “cosmic pantheism” and to think: “We will be in the contemplation, there, in the world, the world will be changed”. Thus, there is “resistance to being changed, which is the word which Paul uses: ‘We will be changed. Our body will be changed’”. This resistance is “human”, the Pope recognized. Such that “when a man or a woman must undergo surgery” they are very



frightened because either something will be removed or something else will be placed inside them: they "will be transformed, so to speak". And so there is fear. But, the Pope clarified, "with the Resurrection, we will all be transformed".

"This is the future that awaits us", the Pope emphasized, "and this leads us to put up great resistance to the transformation of our body", but "resistance also to the Christian identity". And, he added: "Perhaps we do not have much fear of the Apocalypse of the Evil One, of the Antichrist who must come first; perhaps we do not have much fear. Perhaps we do not have much fear of the call of the Archangel or of the sound of the trumpet: but, the victory will be the Lord's". Yet we have "fear of our resurrection: all of us will be transformed". And "that transformation will be the end of our Christian journey".

"This temptation to not believe in the resurrection of the dead", the Pope explained, "was born in the early Church, in the first days of the Church. Paul, in about the year 50, must clarify this very thing to the Thessalonians and speak about it once or twice". And "at the end, to console them, to encourage them, he says one of the most hope-filled phrases in the New Testament: 'At the end we will be with him'". And it will be "to stay with the Lord, this way, with our body and with our soul". This is our "Christian identity: to stay with the Lord". It is an affirmation which, the Pontiff remarked, is certainly not "news". Indeed, "it is the first thing said by the first disciples". In fact "when John the Baptist signals Jesus as the Lamb of God and the two disciples come with him, the Gospel reads: 'and they stayed with him that day'".

"We will be raised to stay with the Lord", the Pontiff affirmed, "and the resurrection begins here, as disciples, if we stay with the Lord, if we walk with the Lord. This is the path toward the resurrection. And if we are accustomed to staying with the Lord, this fear of the transformation of our body falls away".

In reality the resurrection "will be like a reawakening", Francis clarified, repeating the words of Psalm 17[16]: "when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form". And "Job also tells us: whom 'my eyes shall behold'. Not spiritually: with my body, with my eyes, transformed". This is why one must not "have fear of the Christian identity", which "does not end with a temporal triumph, it does not end with a good mission". Because "the Christian identity is fulfilled with the resurrection of our bodies, with our resurrection: the end is there, that we are sated with the image of the Lord".

For this reason, the Pope indicated, "the Christian identity is a journey, it is a path where one stays with the Lord, like those two disciples who stayed with the Lord all that evening". Thus "even our whole life is called to be with the Lord to remain, to stay with the Lord, after the call of the Archangel, after the sound of the trumpet". And the Pope recalled in conclusion that St Paul, in the Letter to the Thessalonians "ends with this line of reasoning with this phrase: 'Comfort one another with these words'".

Tuesday, 23 September
Two conditions

The Word of God is not "a comic strip" to be read, but a lesson to be listened to with the heart and to be

practised every day. A commitment accessible to all, because although "we have made it a bit difficult", Christian life is "simple, simple". In fact, "to listen to the Word of God and practise it" are the only two "conditions" established by Jesus for those who want to follow him.

For Pope Francis, this sums up the meaning of the Readings from Mass on Tuesday, 23 September. During the Mass at Santa Marta, the Pontiff paused on the passage from the Gospel according to Luke (8:19-21) which speaks of Jesus' mother and brethren who "could not reach him for the crowd". Beginning with the observation that Jesus spent most of his time "on the street, with the people", the Bishop of Rome pointed out that among the many who followed him there were people who heard "in him a new authority, a new way of speaking", they heard "the power of salvation" that he offered. In this regard, the Pope indicated that "it was the Holy Spirit who touched their heart".

However, the Pope noted that there were also people mixed among the crowd who followed Jesus with ulterior motives. Some "out of convenience", others perhaps out of a "desire to be better". A bit like us today, he said, in that "so often we go to Jesus because we need something and then we forget him there, alone". The story repeats itself, seeing that even then Jesus sometimes admonished those who followed him. That is what happens, for example, when Jesus says to the people: "You come to me not to hear the Word of God but because I fed you the other day"; or with the ten lepers, of whom only one came back to thank him, while "the other nine were happy with their health and forgot about Jesus".

Despite all this, the Pope affirmed, "Jesus continued to speak to the people" and to love them to the point of defining "that immense crowd as 'my mother and my brethren'". Thus, the family of Jesus are "those who listen to the Word of God" and "put it into practise". This, Pope Francis stated, "is the Christian life: nothing more. Simple, simple. Perhaps we have made it a bit difficult, with so many explanations that no one understands, but Christian life is like this: listening to the Word of God and practising it. This is what we prayed for in the Psalm: 'Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands', of your Word, of your Commandments, in order to practise" them.

He then invited that one should "truly listen to the word, in the Bible, in the Gospel", meditating on the Scriptures to put their content into practise every day. But, the Pontiff clarified, should we scan the Gospel superficially, "this is not listening to the Word of God: this is reading the Word of God, as if one would read a comic strip". While to listen to God's Word is "to read it" and ask oneself: "What does this say to my heart?". Only in this way, in fact, "does our life change". This happens "every time we open the Gospel and read a passage and ask ourselves: 'Is God speaking to me'?"

with this, is he saying something to me?"

This means "to listen to the Word of God, to listen with the ears and listen with the heart, to open the heart to God's Word". On the other hand, "Jesus' enemies listened to Jesus' words but they were close by in order to try and find a mistake, to make him slip up" and make him lose "authority. But they never asked themselves: 'What is God telling me with these words?'".

Moreover, the Pontiff added, "God does not speak only to all but he speaks to each one of us. The Gospel was written for each one of us. And when I pick up the Bible, when I pick up the Gospel and read it, I must ask myself what the Lord is saying to me". This, then, "is what Jesus says that true relatives do, his true brethren: they 'listen to the Word of God with the heart'. And then, he says 'they put it into practise'".

Of course, Francis recognized, "it is easier to live calmly without being concerned with the requirements of God's Word". However, "the Father also did this work for us". Indeed, the Commandments are really "a means of practising the Word of the Lord". And the same holds true for the Beatitudes. The Pope observed that there in that passage from the Gospel according to Matthew "is everything we must do in order to put the Word of God into practise".

Last "are the works of mercy", which also appear in the Gospel of Matthew, in Chapter 25. In short, these are examples "of what Jesus wants when he asks us to put the Word 'into practise'".

In conclusion, the Pontiff summarized his reflections, recalling that "so many people followed Jesus", some of them "for the novelty", others "in need of hearing a good message" but in reality there were not many who then effectively "practised the Word of God". Yet "the Lord did his work because he is merciful and he forgives everyone, he calls everyone back, he awaits everyone, because he is patient".

Even today, the Pope highlighted, "so many people go to Church to hear the Word of God, but perhaps they do not understand the preacher when he preaches something a bit



When a society lacks God, even prosperity is joined by a terrible spiritual poverty.

(@Pontifex on 23 September)

difficult; or they do not want to understand. Because this is also true: many times, our heart does not want to understand". But Jesus continues to welcome us, "even those who go and listen to the Word of God and then betray him", as did Judas who calls him "friend". The Lord, Francis reiterated, "always plants his Word", and in exchange "he asks only for an open heart to listen to it and good will to put it into practise. This is why today's prayer is that of the Psalm: 'Guide me, Lord, in the way of your commands', that is, on the path of your Word, so that, with your guidance, I may learn to practise it".

At the General Audience Pope Francis speaks about his journey to Albania

The courage of a people

Albanians are "a courageous, hard-working people who seek unity in peace". Recalling his recent visit to the Balkan country, Pope Francis made these remarks at the General Audience on Wednesday, 24 September, as he addressed the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square. The following is an English translation of the Holy Father's catechesis.

Dear Brothers and Sisters
Good morning,

Today I would like to speak about the Apostolic Journey I made to Albania last Sunday. I do so first as an act of thanksgiving to God, who allowed me to make this visit in order to demonstrate, also physically and in a tangible way, my closeness and that of the whole Church to this people. I would like to renew my fraternal recognition of the Episcopate of Albania, of the priests and of the men and women religious who work with so much dedication. My grateful thought goes also to the

tyrs of the faith. Thanks to the testimony of several elderly people, who had lived through the terrible times of persecution in person, the faith of so many heroic witnesses of the past resonates. They followed Christ to the extreme consequence. It is precisely from the intimate union with Jesus, from the loving relationship with Him that these martyrs – as every martyr – received the strength to confront the painful events that led them to martyrdom. Today too, as yesterday, the strength of the Church does not stem so much from the organizational capabilities or structures, which are also necessary: the strength of the Church does not lie there. Our strength is Christ's love! It is a strength that sustains us in moments of difficulty and which inspires the everyday apostolic action in order to offer goodness and forgiveness to everyone, thereby witnessing to the mercy of God.

Travelling along Tirana's principal boulevard which leads from the air-

port to the great central square, I was able to glimpse the portraits of 40 priests assassinated during the communist dictatorship, for whom the Cause of Beatification has been opened. These are joined by hundreds of Christian and Muslim religious men and women assassinated, tortured, imprisoned and deported simply because they believed in God. There were dark years during which religious freedom was razed to the ground and belief in God was prohibited. Thousands of churches and mosques were destroyed, transformed into warehouses and cinemas

which propagated the Marxist ideology. Religious books were burned and parents were prohibited from giving their children the religious names of their ancestors. The memory of these tragic events is essential for the future of a people. The memory of martyrs who resisted in faith is a guarantee for the future of Albania; because their blood was not shed in vain, but is a seed which will bear the fruit of peace and fraternal cooperation. Today, in fact, Albania is an example not only of the rebirth of the Church, but also of the peaceful coexistence of religions. Thus, the martyrs are not the defeated, but the victors: resplendent in their heroic witness is the omnipotence of God who always comforts his people, opening new paths and horizons of hope.

This message of hope, based on faith in Christ and on the memory of the past, I entrusted to the entire Albanian population, who I saw were enthusiastic and joyous in the places of meetings and celebrations, as well as on the streets of Tirana. I encouraged everyone to draw ever new energy from the Risen Lord, in order to be Gospel leaven in society and to commit themselves, as is already happening, to charitable and educational work.

I thank the Lord once again because, with this Journey, he enabled me to encounter a courageous and strong people, who did not bend down in pain. To the brothers and sisters of Albania, I renew the invitation to have the courage of the good, in order to build the present and the tomorrow of their country and of Europe. I entrust the fruits of my visit to Our Lady of Good Counsel, venerated in the Shrine dedicated to her in Scutari, that She continue to guide the journey of this martyr people. May the difficult experience of the past root them more deeply in openness toward brothers, especially the weakest, and make them protagonists of that dynamism of charity so necessary in the everyday socio-cultural context. I would like all of us today to greet this courageous, hard-working people who seek unity in peace.



Outside of the Cathedral after Vespers

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the new students at the Venerable English College in Rome and I assure them of my closeness in prayer as they begin their studies for the priesthood. Upon all the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, India, China, Japan, Kenya, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord Jesus. God bless you!

I address a welcome to the Arabic-speaking pilgrims, particularly those from Jordan and from the Middle East. Testimony to Christ appears, in some places, difficult and dangerous, and could cost, in some moments, even life; but if we live it with faithfulness, with perseverance and with faith in "the One who conquered death", it is transformed into an unlimited source of joy and beatitude. Indeed, Christ never forgets his faithful disciples: may you always be genuine witnesses to Christ and to the Truth; may you be a cause of reconciliation and of unity; may you be witnesses to justice, to peace and to charity. May the Lord bless you and protect you always!

My thoughts now turn to those countries in Africa which are suffering from the Ebola epidemic. I am close to the many people stricken with this terrible illness. I ask you to pray for them and for those who have so tragically lost their lives. I hope that the necessary aid will not be lacking from the International Community to alleviate the suffering of these, our brothers and sisters. Let us pray for these our brothers and sisters to Our Lady. [Hail Mary]

I address a thought to *young people*, the *sick*, and *newlyweds*. Yesterday we celebrated the memorial liturgy of St Lino Papa. May his love of the Church in an epoch of strong persecution against Christians, inspire the spiritual life of each one: let us learn to face moments of adversity with courage, certain that the Lord never fails to give his support and his grace to each of his children.



Authorities who welcomed me with great courtesy, as well as to those who cooperated to organize my visit.

This visit was born of my desire to go to a country which, after long being oppressed by an atheist and inhuman regime, is living the experience of peaceful coexistence among the country's different religious components. I felt it was important to encourage it on this path, that it may continue with tenacity to evaluate all the implications for the benefit of the common good. For this reason the Journey had at its centre an interreligious meeting where I was able to observe, with great satisfaction, that the peaceful and fruitful coexistence between persons and communities of believers of different religions is not only desirable, but possible and realistic. They are putting it into practice! This entails an authentic and fruitful dialogue which spurns relativism and takes the identity of each one into account. What the various religious expressions have in common is, indeed, life's journey, the good will to do good to one's neighbour, without denying or diminishing their respective identity.

The meeting with priests, consecrated people, seminarians and lay movements was an opportunity to gratefully remember, marked by particular emotion, the numerous mar-

tyrs of the faith. Thanks to the testimony of several elderly people, who had lived through the terrible times of persecution in person, the faith of so many heroic witnesses of the past resonates. They followed Christ to the extreme consequence. It is precisely from the intimate union with Jesus, from the loving relationship with Him that these martyrs – as every martyr – received the strength to confront the painful events that led them to martyrdom. Today too, as yesterday, the strength of the Church does not stem so much from the organizational capabilities or structures, which are also necessary: the strength of the Church does not lie there. Our strength is Christ's love! It is a strength that sustains us in moments of difficulty and which inspires the everyday apostolic action in order to offer goodness and forgiveness to everyone, thereby witnessing to the mercy of God.



Photos of the Albanian martyrs hanging on the main boulevard in Tirana (ANSA)