

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH

Unicuique suum Non praevalerunt

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Friday, 10 January 2014

Pope Francis announces a pilgrimage to Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem from 24 to 26 May

To the Holy Land following Paul VI

And on the Epiphany he calls the faithful to pray for 'holy cunning' like the Magi

On Sunday, 5 January, after the Angelus, Pope Francis announced that he will be travelling to the Holy Land from 24-26 May, stopping in Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It will be a "pilgrimage of prayer" in celebration of the anniversary of the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras which took place 50 years ago on 5 January. The Pontiff explained various details of the schedule, underlining the ecumenical meeting with representatives of all the Christian churches in Jerusalem, together with Patriarch Bartolomaios of Constantinople.

The following day the Holy Father celebrated Mass for the Epiphany in St Peter's Basilica and spoke about the experience of the Magi, who overcame that "dangerous moment of darkness" because "they believed the Scriptures" and thus escaped the "dreariness of the night of the world" in order to follow the light to Bethlehem. We must learn from the example of the Magi and follow that light which goes before us and which – as the Bishop of Rome explained before reciting the Angelus that day – is a sign of God's love. That same afternoon the Pope visited the live nativity scene of the Church of Sant'Alfonso Maria de' Liguori in Rome.

The Angelus on 5 January

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The Holy Father begins a new cycle of General Audiences on the Sacraments

A date to remember

Having concluded last year's series of reflections on the Creed, the Holy Father began the new secular year on another topic: the Sacraments. At the General Audience on Wednesday, 8 January, Pope Francis once again asked the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square to go home that day, learn the date of their Baptism and cherish it like a feast day. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today we begin a series of Catecheses on the Sacraments, starting with Baptism. By happy coincidence this coming Sunday is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

1. Baptism is the Sacrament on which our very faith is founded and which grafts us as a living member onto Christ and his Church. Together with the Eucharist and Con-



firmation it forms what is known as "Christian initiation", like one great sacramental event that configures us to the Lord and turns us into a living sign of his presence and of his love.

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VATICAN BULLETIN

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Ernesto A. Salgado of Nueva Segovia, the Philippines. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (30 Dec. 2013).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Marlo Mendoza Peralta as Archbishop of Nueva Segovia, the Philippines. Until now he has been Bishop of Alaminos (30 Dec. 2013).

Archbishop Peralta, 63, was born in San Carlos, Pangasinan, the Philippines. He was ordained a priest on 31 March 1975. He was ordained a bishop on 31 March 2006, subsequent to his appointment as Coadjutor of the Diocese of Alaminos; he succeeded as Bishop in 2007.

The Holy Father appointed two Auxiliaries for the Archdiocese of Seoul, Korea: Fr Timothy Yu Gyoung-chon, Director of the Archdiocesan Research Center for Integral Pastoral Ministry and Fr Peter Chung Soon-taek, OCD, Definitor General of the Discalced Carmelites in Rome. He assigned Fr Yu Gyoung-chon the titular episcopal see of Puppi and Fr Chung Soon-

taek the titular episcopal see of Tamazuca (30 Dec. 2013).

Bishop-elect Yu Gyoung-Chon, 51, was born in Jung-gu, Junggrim-dong, Korea. He holds a BA and a licence in theology. He was ordained a priest on 30 January 1992. After his ordination he returned to go to pursue doctoral studies in moral theology in Germany and then returned to Korea where he served briefly in parish ministry before working as a professor at the Catholic University of Seoul (the Major Seminary).

Bishop-elect Chung Soo-Taek, 52, was born in Daegu, Korea. He made his perpetual profession to the Order of Discalced Carmelites on 25 January 1992 and was ordained a priest on 16 July of the same year. He holds a licence in Sacred Scripture. He has served as novice master, master of students, first definitor of his congregation in Korea. Since 2009 he has been definitor general for the Far East and Oceania, based in Rome.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Denis Kiwanuka Lote of Tororo, Uganda. It was presented in accord with can.

401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (2 Jan. 2014).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Emmanuel Obbo of the Congregation of the Apostles of Jesus as Archbishop of Tororo. Until now he has been Bishop of Soroti. He also appointed the prelate Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of the Diocese of Soroti (2 Jan. 2014).

Archbishop Obbo, 61, was born in Nagoke, Uganda. He was ordained a priest on 13 December 1986. He was ordained a bishop on 6 October 2007, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Soroti.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Léonard Kasanda Lumembu, CICM, of Luiza, Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (3 Jan. 2014).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Félicien Mwanama Galumbulula as Bishop of Luiza, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Until now he has been a university professor and second deputy secretary of the National Bishops' Conference of the Congo (CENCO) (3 Jan. 2014).

Bishop-elect Mwanama Galumbulula, 53, was born in Tshibala, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was ordained a priest on 9 August 1987. He holds a doctorate in missiology and in canon law. He has

served in parish ministry in Italy and as spiritual director and professor at the propaedeutic seminary St Léon, Luiza, and at the Major Seminary Jean Paul II, Tschilomba; as visiting professor at the Catholic University of the Congo, at the Major Seminary of Malole-Kananga; as rector *ad interim* of the Major Seminary of Malole-Kananga; as professor at the African Institute of Missionary Science, Kinshasa; as secretary of the Episcopal Commission for juridical affairs of CENCO.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Christian Riesbeck, CC, as Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, Canada, assigning him the titular episcopal see of Tipasa in Numidia. Until now he has been Chancellor of the said archdiocese (7 Jan. 2014).

Bishop-elect Riesbeck, 43, was born in Montreal, Canada. He holds a BA in political science and a licence in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 12 October 1996 and in 2003 he became a priest of the Companions of the Cross. He served for three years as parish vicar and then became parish priest of the Queen of Peace, Houston, Texas, USA. He has also served as judge of the regional tribunal.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Irineu Roman, CSI, as Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Belém do Pará,

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The Ambassador of Cuba presents his Credentials to the Holy Father

H.E. Mr Rodney Alejandro López Clemente, 67, is married with two children. He holds a degree in psychology. He has served as: director of the magazine *Juventud Técnica* and vice-president of the national council of *Brigadas Técnicas Juveniles* (1966-68); deputy secretary of the National Committee of *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* and deputy director of the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* (1968-73); director of the Centre for Youth Studies (1973-75); official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1975); first secretary and, subsequently, counsellor in India (1975-78); minister counsellor in Afghanistan (1978-79); head of department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1980-82); ambassador to Romania (1983-88); director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1988-92); ambassador to Germany (1992-95); ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern



On Monday morning, 23 December 2013, the Holy Father received H.E. Mr Rodney Alejandro López Clemente, Ambassador of Cuba, for the presentation of the Letters accrediting him to the Holy See

Ireland (1995-2000); director of the section for European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000-03 and 2010-12); permanent representative of Cuba to the United Nations (2003-05); ambassador to Italy (2005-09); serving with ambassadorial rank at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012-13).

Bishop Paul Liu Jinghe dies


On Wednesday, 11 December, Bishop Paul Liu Jinghe died in Tangshan, Diocese of Yongping, in the Province of Hebei, the People's Republic of China, only a few days before his 93rd birthday. The elderly prelate, who had been ill for more than a year, died of a heart attack. His funeral was celebrated on 17 December in the Cathedral of Yongping (Tangshan), at which the present Bishop Peter Fang Jianping presided.

Bishop Liu was born on 26 December 1920 in Huanghuagang in the Diocese of Yongping to a very devout Catholic family. He entered the Minor Seminary of Yongping in 1931 and in 1939 he begun studying philosophy and theology at the Wensheng Major Seminary in the Archdiocese of Beijing [then Peking]. He was ordained a priest on 4 May 1945 by Archbishop Paul Leon Cornelius Montaigne, CM, of Beijing. He then returned to his diocese in order to serve in pastoral ministry in Lulong and Tangshan, as well as other places.

From 1940-60 he was imprisoned three times. In 1970 he was sent to a re-education camp, where he was forced to work first in a textile factory, then in a chemical plant, and a stone quarry. He remained there until 1979. After he was released he immediately began to do pastoral work. He was ordained a bishop on 21 December 1981 without pontifical mandate. He sent several requests for forgiveness to the Holy Father requesting the legitimization of his episcopate, which was subsequently granted by Benedict XVI on 8 May 2008, re-establishing his full communion with the Successor of Peter. He retired from pastoral ministry in 2010 due to poor health. In the last years of his life he categorically refused to take part in illegitimate episcopal ordinations, a sign of communion and obedience to the Apostolic See.

The diocesan community prays that the Lord may welcome the Prelate's soul into his Kingdom, granting the gift of consolation to the Diocese of Yongping and the faithful.

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A date to remember

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Yet a question may stir within us: is Baptism really necessary to live as Christians and follow Jesus? After all, isn't it merely a ritual, a formal act of the Church in order to give a name to the little boy or girl? This is a question can arise. And on this point what the Apostle Paul writes is illuminating: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3-4). Therefore, it is not a formality! It is an act that touches the depths of our existence. A baptized child and an unbaptized child are not the same. A person who is baptized and a person who is not baptized are not the same. We, by Baptism, are immersed in that inexhaustible source of life which is the death of Jesus, the greatest act of love in all of history; and thanks to this love we can live a new life, no longer at the mercy of evil, of sin and of death, but in communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.

2. Many of us have no memory of the celebration of this Sacrament, and it is obvious why, if we were baptized soon after birth. I have asked this question two or three times already, here, in this square: who among you knows the date of your Baptism, raise your hands. It is important to know the day on which I was immersed in that current of Jesus' salvation. And I will allow myself to give you some advice... but, more than advice, a task for today. Today, at home, go look, ask about the date of your Baptism and that way you will keep in mind that most beautiful day of Baptism. To know the date of our Baptism is to know a blessed day. The danger of not knowing is that we can lose awareness of what the Lord has done in us, the memory of the gift we have received. Thus, we end up considering it only as an event that took place in the past - and not by our own will but by that of our parents - and that it has no impact on the present. We must reawaken the



memory of our Baptism. We are called to live out our Baptism every day as the present reality of our lives. If we manage to follow Jesus and to remain in the Church, despite our limitations and with our weaknesses and our sins, it is precisely in the Sacrament whereby we have become new creatures and have been clothed in Christ. It is by the power of Baptism, in fact, that, freed of original sin, we are inserted into Jesus' relation to God the Father; that we are bearers of a new hope, for Baptism gives us this new hope: the hope of going on the path of salvation our whole life long. And this hope nothing and no one can extinguish, for it is a hope that does not disappoint. Remember, hope in the Lord never disappoints. Thanks to Baptism, we are capable of forgiving and of loving even those who offend us and do evil to us. By our Baptism, we recognize in the least and in the poor the face of the Lord who visits us and makes himself close. Baptism helps us to recognize in the face of the needy, the suffering, and also of our neighbour, the face of Jesus. All this is possible thanks to the power of Baptism!

3. A last point, which is important. I ask you a question: can a person baptize him or herself? No one can be self-baptized! No one. We can ask for it, desire it, but we always need someone else to confer this Sacrament in the name of the Lord. For Baptism is a gift which is bestowed in a context of care and fraternal sharing. Throughout his-

tory, one baptizes another, another and another... it is a chain. A chain of Grace. I cannot baptize myself: I must ask another for Baptism. It is an act of brotherhood, an act of filiation to the Church. In the celebration of Baptism we can see the most genuine features of the Church, who

at Baptism. That in encountering us, our brothers and sisters may encounter true children of God, true brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, true members of the Church. And do not forget your homework today: find out, ask for the date of your Baptism. As I know my birthday, I should know my Baptism day, because it is a feast day.

SPECIAL GROUPS:

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's Audience, including those from Australia, Haiti and the United States of America. Upon you and your families I invoke God's blessings of joy and peace!

Lastly, my thoughts turn to *young people*, the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Dear friends, in these days following the Feast of the Epiphany let us continue to meditate on the manifestation of Jesus to all the nations. The Church invites you, dear *young people*, especially students at the Isti-



like a mother continues to give birth to new children in Christ, in the fecundity of the Holy Spirit.

Let us, then, ask the Lord from our hearts that we may be able to experience ever more, in everyday life, this grace that we have received

tuto Vescovile di Nola, to be enthusiastic witnesses to Christ among your peers; she exhorts you, dear *sick people*, to spread her light every day with serene patience; and she encourages you, dear *newlyweds*, to be a sign of her renewing presence by your faithful love.

Report from Fides

Twenty two pastoral care workers were killed in 2013

In the year 2013 a total of 22 pastoral care workers were killed, the majority of whom were priests. These are the latest statistics provided by Fides News Agency. This number is almost double the count for the 2012, when 13 were reported killed.

The most recent victim was Fr Eric Freed, a parish priest in Eureka, California, who was brutally beaten to death during the night between 31 December and 1 January. The police cur-

rently have a suspect in custody.

For the fifth year in a row the number of pastoral care workers murdered has increased in Latin America, with Colombia in first place. In 2013, 19 priests, a woman religious and two lay people were violently killed. In the Americas 15 priests were killed (seven in Colombia, four in Mexico, one in Brazil, one in Venezuela, one in Panama and one in Haiti). In Africa one priest was killed in Tanzania, a woman religious

in Madagascar and a laywoman in Nigeria. In Asia one priest was killed violently in India, one in Syria and a layman in the Philippines. In Europe one priest was killed in Italy. This list, provided by Fides, regards all pastoral care workers who have suffered a violent death, not only missionaries *ad gentes* in the strict sense.

There is still concern for all the other pastoral care workers who were kidnapped or who disappeared this past year.



Praying at the coffin of Fr Freed, 6 January (AP)

Pope Francis' visit announced

The joy of Catholic Ordinaries in the Holy Land

The announcement made during Sunday's Angelus that Pope Francis will visit Jordan, Palestine and Israel from 24 to 26 May was welcomed with joy by the Holy Land's Catholic Ordinaries. In a statement the Ordinaries expressed "confidence that this visit will not only be an international event, but it will mainly be a message of love and brotherhood to all the inhabitants of the countries he will visit". The Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land, in expressing "their immense joy" at the Pope's decision, pointed out that "this visit aims mainly at spreading and promoting love, cooperation and peace among all inhabitants of the region, as to promote better relations among followers of various religions and advance ecumenical work among Christians of the different churches".

VATICAN BULLETIN

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Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal see of Sertei. Until now he has been Episcopal Vicar of the São João Batista Region and Parish Priest of Santa Edwiges, Belém do Pará (8 Jan. 2014).

Bishop-elect Roman, 55, was born in Vista Alegre do Prata, Brazil. He made his perpetual profession to the Congregation of St Joseph on 2 January 1988 and was ordained a priest on 1 January 1990. He has served in parish ministry and as director of the Giuseppino di Fazenda Souza Seminary, Caxias do Sul; director of Giuseppino di Ana Rech Seminary, Caxias do Sul; Director of the Seminary of Adult Vocations; director and treasurer of the religious community of Planaltina.

ITALIAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Nunzio Galantino of Cassano all'Jonio as General Secretary *ad interim* of the Italian Episcopal Conference (28 Dec. 2013).

START OF MISSION

On 4 December 2013 Archbishop Aldo Cavalli, titular Archbishop of Vibo Valentia, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio to Libya with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Nuri Ali Abu Sahmain, President of the National General Congress of Libya.

NECROLOGY

Bishop emeritus Joaquim Gonçalves of Vila Real, Portugal, at age 77 (31 Dec. 2013).

The Prince of Wales defends religious pluralism

Christian Churches are part of the Middle East

NIGEL MARCUS BAKER*

"It seems to me that we cannot ignore the fact that Christians in the Middle East are, increasingly, being deliberately targeted by fundamentalist Islamist militants. Christianity was, literally, born in the Middle East and we must not forget our Middle Eastern brothers and sisters in Christ."

These words, spoken by The Prince of Wales, were delivered in a speech given by His Royal Highness at a reception he hosted on 17 December in London for representatives of the Christian churches in the Middle East. The Prince had spent the day with the Coptic and Syrian Orthodox communities in the United Kingdom, sharing their prayers, and listening to their concerns for the future of Christianity in the region. Alongside Prince Charles, throughout the day, was Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, Chief Adviser to King Abdullah II for Religious and Cultural Affairs, who has consistently over the years stood up for the rights of Christians.

The Prince of Wales reminded his audience from the Antiochian, Greek, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian Orthodox, Melkite, Maronite, Syrian Catholic, Chaldean, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, that he had for 20 years "tried to build bridges between Islam and Christianity and to dispel ignorance



and misunderstanding. The point though, surely, is that we have now reached a crisis where the bridges are rapidly being deliberately destroyed by those with a vested interest in doing so – and this is achieved through intimidation, false accusation and organized persecution – including against Christian communities in the Middle East at the present time." Like Pope Francis, he insisted that while building bridges was important, it was also vital to be prepared to cross them, holding out the hand of welcome: "Now, of course, is the time to redouble our combined efforts", he emphasised, "to stress what binds the three Abrahamic faiths together and, as Christians, Jews and Muslims, to express outrage at

what tears us asunder. And surely there is no better time to do so than at Christmas – to remind all of us that an emphasis on love of neighbour and doing to others as we would have them do to us are the ultimate foundations of truth, justice, compassion and human rights. Such profound wisdom is at the very heart of all three religions, however obscured the message may have become."

The Prince of Wales also spoke of Syria, recognising that people of all faiths were suffering there, not just Christians. But he went on to say that "the decline of Christians in the region represents a major blow to peace as Christians are part of the fabric of society, often acting as bridge-builders between other communities. This crucial role throughout Middle Eastern society is one recognized by many Muslims (who are not extremists), both Shia or Sunni, who attest to the fact that Christians are their friends and that their communities are needed". Christians, he argued, belong in the Middle East, and have an important role to play there.

It is easy to become despondent about the loss of religious plurality in the Middle East. At the same time, there are many good people throughout the region and outside it, of all faiths, who are determined to ensure that the physical presence of Christianity alongside Islam – so fundamental for the identity of the region and the future prosperity and well-being of the different communities that make up the rich Middle Eastern mosaic – is preserved. The symbolism of the two Princes, one Christian and the other Muslim, expressing their support for the Middle Eastern Christian churches on a cold winter's day in London was very clear. It was an expression of hope, not despair. As Prince Charles noted, they were meeting on the day in the Eastern Christian calendar of the celebration of the festival of Daniel and the three boys in the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "They symbolize all those who are persecuted for their faith", said the Prince. "But the important point is: they survived!"

*UK Ambassador to the Holy See

Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ

Suffering purifies



A careful examination of the past; a verification of the path chosen, which is not without a penitential dimension; the appointment of new superiors; revision of the constitution which will be presented to Pope Francis for final approval. These are the three crucial moments in the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Legionaries of Christ, which began on 8 January with a Mass celebrated by the papal delegate Cardinal Velasio De Paolis.

The papal delegate repeated the words 'confidence' and 'faithful' in his homily, to highlight the important progress that has been made so far and to offer encouragement for the steps that must be made. "You have suffered a great deal", the Cardinal said to the priests "both internally and externally. You have suffered the shame of being accused, eyed with suspicion... You were able to accept this suffering out of love for your vocation, and out of love for the Church and for the Legion".

At the Angelus the Pope announces a journey abroad

To the Holy Land in the footsteps of Paul VI

On Sunday, 5 January, at the Angelus with the faithful in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis announced that he will make a "pilgrimage of prayer" the Holy Land from 24-26 May. Before

reciting the Marian prayer, the Pope reflected on the mystery of the Incarnation. The following is an English translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Once again, the Liturgy this Sunday sets before us, in the Prologue of the Gospel of St John, the most profound significance of the Birth of Jesus. He is the Word of God who became man and pitched his "tent", his dwelling, among men. The Evangelist writes: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). These words, that never cease to amaze us, contain the whole of Christianity! God became mortal, fragile like us, he shared in our human condition, except for sin, but he took ours upon himself, as though they were his own. He entered into our history, he became fully God-with-us! The birth of Jesus, then, shows us that God wanted to unite himself to every man and every woman, to every one of us, to communicate to us his life and his joy.

Thus, God is God-with-us, God who loves us, God who walks with us. This is the message of Christmas: the Word became flesh. Thus, Christmas reveals to us the immense love that God has for humanity. From this too derives our enthusiasm, our hope as Christians, that in our poverty we may know that we are loved, that we are have been visited, that we are accompanied by God; and we look upon the world and on history as a place in which we walk together with Him and among us toward a new heaven and a new earth. With the Birth of Jesus, a new promise is born, a new world comes into being, but also a world that can be ever renewed. God is always present to stir up new men, to purify the world of the sin that makes it grow old, from the sin that corrupts it. However much human history and the personal story of each of us may be marked by difficulty and weakness, faith in the Incarnation tells us that God is in solidarity with mankind and with human history. This closeness of God to man, to every man and woman, to each one of us, is a gift that never fades! He is with us! He is God-with-us! Behold the glad tidings of Christmas: the divine light that filled the hearts of the Virgin Mary and St Joseph, and guided the footsteps of the shepherds and the Magi, shines today too for us.

In the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God there is also an aspect that is connected to human freedom, to the freedom of each one of us. Indeed, the Word of God pitched his tent among us, sinners who are in need of mercy. And we all must hasten to receive the grace that he offers us. Instead, the Gospel of St John continues, "his own people received him not" (v. 11). We reject him too many times, we prefer

to remain closed in our errors and the anxiety of our sins. But Jesus does not desist and never ceases to offer himself and his grace which saves us! Jesus is patient, Jesus knows how to wait, he waits for us always. This is a message of hope, a message of salvation, ancient and ever new. And we are called to witness with joy to this message of the Gospel of life, to the Gospel of light, of hope and of love. For Jesus' message is this: life, light, hope and love.

May Mary, the Mother of God and our tender Mother, support us always, that we may remain faithful to our Christian vocation and be able to realize the aspiration for justice and peace that we carry within us at the start of this new year.

After the Angelus, the Pope said:

Brothers and sisters, in this atmosphere of joy which characterizes the Christmas Season, I would like to announce that, God willing, I will make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land from 24 to 26 May. The main purpose is to commemorate the historic meeting between Pope Paul VI and

Patriarch Athenagoras, which took place on 5 January, like today, 50 years ago. I will stop in three places: Amman, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Three days. At the Holy Sepulchre we will celebrate an Ecumenical Meeting with all the representatives of the Christian Churches of Jerusalem, together with Patriarch Bartholomaios of Constantinople. From this moment on I ask you to pray for this pilgrimage, that it may be a pilgrimage of prayer.

In recent weeks I have been receiving messages from every part of the world, with best wishes for a holy Christmas and for the New Year. I would like, but unfortunately it is impossible, to respond to everyone! But from my heart I do want to thank the children for their beautiful drawings. They are really beau-

tiful! Children make beautiful drawings! Very, very, beautiful! I thank the children, first. I thank the young people, the elderly, families and the parish and religious communities, the associations, the movements and the different groups who have shown me their affection and closeness. I ask all of you to continue to pray for me, I need it, and to pray for my service to the Church.

And now I greet with affection you, dear pilgrims present today... to all of you I wish a good Sunday and a good lunch. Goodbye!



Like the slice of a plough

Fifty years ago, on 4 January 1964, Paul VI's visit to the Holy Land began. It concluded on the evening of the Epiphany with the embrace and lights of one million enthusiastic Romans welcoming home their bishop. The visit lasted only a few short hours but it changed the face of the papacy. In fact, since then, the Successors of the Apostle Peter have resumed, in a new way and all over the world, the path that the fisherman from Galilee and the first followers of the Teacher of Nazareth had unobtrusively taken, trusting only in his Word.

The idea goes back to the very beginning of his pontificate, during the quiet work of the first summer he spent at Castel Gandolfo, and which can be found in a note dated 21 September outlining the itinerary as "very quick" and with a "simple, pious, penitent and loving attitude". To prepare for the visit, two of the Pope's close colleagues went privately to the Near East. They also travelled to Damascus but found it would be impossible for Paul VI – who wanted to honour the memory of the Apostle whose



Angelo Biancini "Paul VI and Athenagoras" (1970)

name he had chosen – to stop there.

It was the Pontiff himself who made the surprising and truly sensational announcement to the bishops gathered at the conclusion of the work of the second session of the Council on 4 December. "We will see that blessed land which Peter left and where none of his successors have returned", Montini said. And one month later the unthinkable happened. In 57 hours Paul VI went from Amman to the River Jordan, Jerusalem, then Nazareth and the Lake of Tiberias. He returned to the Holy City, visited Bethlehem and then left from Amman.

Half a century late, in reading

the texts, news and comments one perceives the originality of a journey that only a few months before would have seemed impossible. Even interpretations by historians – which focus primarily on the political context or on the dynamics of the Council – do not yet seem to grasp the most authentic and revealing implications of the papal visits. Contrary, however, to the accounts of the eye witnesses of the time, journalists and writers, but above all of the two protagonists.

It is in fact in spontaneous words such as "in God's presence" and in the actions of Paul VI and of Athenagoras, the Patriarch of Constantinople, whom he met in Jerusalem after centuries of division, that one can perceive the meaning of this real "return to the beginnings of the Gospel" that open to a future yet to be fulfilled. It was a journey that the Pope of Rome compared to "a furrow-slice by a ploughshare that has turned over dry, hardened soil".

G.M.V.

Pope Francis to the Superiors General of institutes of religious life as recounted in 'Civiltà Cattolica'



ANTONIO SPADARO

When Pope Francis speaks “off the cuff” and dialogues, his speech has a certain rhythm that “undulates” progressively; one would do well to follow it with care because it is fed by the living relations he experiences with his interlocutors. Those observing should pay careful attention not only to the contents of what he says but also to the dynamic of the relationship that is created. This is what happened during the conversation that the Holy Father held with the Union of Superiors General of religious institutes for men at the end of their 82nd General Assembly, which took place from November 27 to 29 at the *Salesianum* in Rome. Seated among them I took down notes of the discussion. I will here try to express as far as possible the wealth of content, preserving the lively and spontaneous tone of the three hour meeting. Halfway through the meeting, for a half hour, the Pope circulated among the participants to greet the Superiors General personally, sipping *mate* in the relaxed and informal setting.

The Superiors had, in fact, requested only a brief meeting to greet the Pope, but the Pontiff wished to spend the whole morning with them. He chose, however, not to give an address nor to sit through prepared remarks: he wanted only a frank and free discussion consisting of questions and answers.

It was 9:25 and the presence of photographers means that the Pope's arrival at the New Synod Hall was imminent; approximately 120 Superiors await him. Greeted by applause the Holy Father took a seat at exactly 9:30, looks at the clock and congratulated himself on

his “Swiss” punctuality. All laughed: this was the Pope's way of greeting Fr Mauro Jöhre: a Swiss, the Minister General of the Capuchin Friars Minor and recently elected vice-president of the Union of Superiors General.

After a few brief words of welcome from the president, Fr Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Jesuits, and from the general secretary, Fr David Glenday, a Columban, Pope Francis cordially thanked the Assembly in a very simple way for their invitation and immediately took up the first group of questions. The religious asked the Pope specifically about the identity and mission of religious: “What is expected of consecrated life? What is asked of us? If you were in our place how would you respond to your own call to go to the peripheries, to live the Gospel *sine glossa*, evangelical prophecy? What should we feel called to do?” And further: “What should be emphasized today? What are the priorities?”

Pope Francis began by saying that he, too, is a religious – let us recall that Jorge Mario Bergoglio as provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina had published *Meditaciones para religiosos* (San Miguel: Ediciones Diego de Torres, 1982), a book consisting of a series of reflections written for his confreres, which shed light on several key themes that Bergoglio will develop later – and he therefore knows from experience what they were talking about. The last Pope to belong to a religious order was the Camaldolese Gregory XVI, elected in 1831. Francis then made explicit reference to Benedict XVI: “He said that the Church grows by witness, not by proselytism. The witness that can really attract is that associated with attitudes which are uncommon: generosity, detachment, sacrifice, self-forgetfulness in order to care for others. This is the witness, the ‘martyrdom’, of religious life. It ‘sounds an alarm’ for people. Religious speak to people by their life: ‘What’s happening? These people are telling me something! These people go beyond a mundane horizon’”. Thus, the Pope continued citing Benedict XVI, “religious life ought to promote growth in the Church by way of attraction” (Benedict XVI, Homily at the inaugural

Be true prophets, not just pretenders

Mass of the General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean at the Shrine of Aparecida, 13 May 2007).

Pope Francis has taken up this theme of his predecessor a number of times. He did so in his homily at the Santa Marta on 1 October, adding: “When people see this witness of humility, of meekness, of gentleness, they hear the need of which the prophet Zachariah speaks: ‘I wish to come with you!’ People sense this need when faced with the witness of charity, that humble charity without pretense, not self-important, humble, which adores and serves”. Pope Francis again referred to Benedict XVI's insight on 4 October at the Cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi as well as in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (n. 14).

“The Church,” therefore, “must be attractive. Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world. We are speaking of an eschatological outlook, of the values of the Kingdom incarnated here, on this earth. It is a question of leaving everything to follow the Lord. No, I do not want to say ‘radical’. Evangelical radicalness is not only for religious: it is demanded of all. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way. It is this witness that I expect of you. Religious should be men and women who are able to wake the world up”.

Pope Francis returned in a circular fashion to concepts he has already expressed in the past, exploring them more deeply. In fact he continued: “You should be real witnesses of a different way of doing and behaving. But in life it is difficult for everything to be clear, precise, outlined neatly. Life is complicated; it consists of grace and sin. He who does not sin is not human. We all make mistakes and we need to recognize our weakness. A religious who recognizes himself as weak and a sinner is not negating the witness that he is called to give, rather he is reinforcing it, and this is good for everyone. What I expect of you therefore is to give witness. I want this special witness from religious”.

As he continued to respond to the first questions, Pope Francis touched

on one of the key points of his thought: “I am convinced of one thing: the great changes in history came about when reality was considered not from the centre but from the outskirts. It is a question of hermeneutics: we are able to understand only when we look at it from the periphery, and not when our viewpoint is equidistant from everything. In order truly to understand reality we need to move away from the central position of calmness and peacefulness and direct ourselves to the peripheral areas (cf. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, *Nel cuore dell'uomo. Utopia e impegno*, Milan: Bompiani, 2013, p. 23; Pope Francis, *La mia porta è sempre aperta. Una conversazione con Antonio Spadaro*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2013, p. 86ff). Standing at the periphery helps us to see and understand better, it helps us to provide a more accurate analysis of reality by shunning centralism and ideological approaches”. Therefore: “It is useless to be at the centre of a sphere. To understand we ought to ‘move around’ in order to see reality from various viewpoints”.

Pope Francis expressed his conviction in *Evangelii Gaudium* when he wrote: “Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness” (n. 236).

The Pope continued: “We need to accustom ourselves to thinking. I often refer to a letter penned by Fr Pedro Arrupe, who had been General of the Society of Jesus. It was a letter sent to the *Centros de Investigación y Acción Social* (CIAS). In this letter,” – Pope Francis is well acquainted with Fr Pedro Arrupe's letter and also quoted it in his interview with *Civiltà Cattolica*, describing it as “inspired” (cf. Pope Francis, *La mia porta è sempre aperta*, p. 117) – “Fr Arrupe spoke about poverty and said that authentic contact with the poor is necessary. This for me is truly important: we need to become acquainted with reality through experience, to spend time going to the outskirts in order to become truly acquainted with reality and people's life experiences. If this does not happen we then run the risk of being abstract ideologists or fundamentalists, and this is not healthy”.

The Pope then reflected on a concrete issue, the apostolate to youth. “Those working with youth cannot stop at saying things which are too ordered and structured, like a treatise; these things go in one ear and out the other of young people. We need a new language, a new way of saying things. Today God asks this of us: to leave the nest which encloses us in order to be sent. He who lives his consecration in a cloister lives this inner tension in



Holy Mass in thanksgiving for the canonization of Peter Faber in the Church of the Gesù

The company of the restless

To preserve the "holy and beautiful restlessness" of those who are seeking God. This is what Pope Francis asked of the Jesuits and faithful who were gathered in the Church of the Gesù in Rome, on Friday morning, 3 January, for the Mass offered in thanksgiving for the canonization of Peter Faber. The following is an English translation of the Pope's homily which he gave in Italian.

St Paul tells us, as we heard: "Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil

to find him, and find him in order to seek him again and always. Only this restlessness gives peace to the heart of a Jesuit, a restlessness that is also apostolic, but which must not let us grow tired of proclaiming the *kerygma*, of evangelizing with courage. It is the restlessness that prepares us to receive the gift of apostolic fruitfulness. Without restlessness we are sterile.

It was this restlessness that Peter Faber had, a man of great aspirations, another Daniel, Faber was a "modest, sensitive man with a profound inner life. He was endowed with the gift of making friends with people from every walk of life" (Benedict XVI, *Address to the Jesuits*, 22 April 2006). Yet his was also a restless, unsettled, spirit that was never satisfied. Under the guidance of St Ignatius he learned to unite his restless but also sweet – I would say exquisite – sensibility, with the ability to make decisions. He was a man with great aspirations; he was aware of his desires, he acknowledged them. Indeed for Faber, it is precisely when difficult things are proposed that the true spirit is revealed which moves one to action (cf. *Memoriale*, 301). An authentic faith

always involves a profound desire to change the world. Here is the question we must ask ourselves: do we also have great vision and impetus? Are we also daring? Do our dreams fly high? Does zeal consume us (cf. Ps 68:10)? Or are we mediocre and satisfied with our "made in the lab" apostolic programmes? Let us always remember: the Church's strength does not reside in herself and in her organizational abilities,

but it rests hidden in the deep waters of God. And these waters stir up our aspirations and desires expanding the heart. It is as St Augustine says: pray to desire and aspire to expand the heart. Faber could discern God's voice in his desires. One goes nowhere without desire and that is why we need to offer our own desires

to the Lord. The *Constitutions* say that: "we help our neighbour by the desires we present to the Lord our God" (*Constitutions*, 638).

Faber had the true and deep desire "to be expanded in God": he was completely centred in God, and because of this he could go, in a spirit of obedience, often on foot, throughout Europe and with charm dialogue with everyone and proclaim the Gospel. The thought comes to mind of the temptation, which perhaps we might have and which so many have of condemnation, of connecting the proclamation of the Gospel with inquisitorial blows. No, the Gospel is proclaimed with gentleness, with fraternity, with love. His familiarity with God led him to understand that interior experience and apostolic life always go together. He writes in his *Memoriale* that the heart's first movement should be that of "desiring what is essential and primordial, i.e., that is, the first place be left to the perfect intention of finding our Lord God" (*Memoriale*, 63). Faber experiences the desire to "allow Christ to occupy the centre of his heart" (*Memoriale*, 68). It is only possible to go to the limits of the world if we are centred in God! And Faber travelled without pause to the geographic frontiers, so

much so that it was said of him: "it seems he was born not to stay put anywhere" (M1, *Epistolae* 1, 362). Faber was consumed by the intense desire to communicate the Lord. If we do not have his same desire, then we need to pause in prayer, and, with silent fervour, ask the Lord, through the intercession of our brother Peter, to return and attract us: that fascination with the Lord that led Peter to such apostolic "folly".

We are men in tension, we are also contradictory and inconsistent men, sinners, all of us. But we are men who want to journey under Jesus' gaze. We are small, we are sinners, but we want to fight under the banner of the Cross in the Society designated by the name of Jesus. We who are selfish want nonetheless to live life aspiring to great deeds. Let us renew then our oblation to the Eternal Lord of the universe so that by the help of his glorious Mother we may will, desire and live the mind of Christ who emptied himself. As St Peter Faber wrote, "let us never seek in this life to be tied to any name but that of Jesus" (*Memoriale*, 205). And let us pray to Our Lady that we may be emissaries with her Son.



Jesuit Fathers Anton Witvoer and Marc Lindeijer, General Postulator and Vice-Postulator, respectively, of Peter Faber's cause, give the Pope a reproduction of the formula of the final vows of the saint

2:5-9). We, Jesuits, want to be designated by the name of Jesus, to serve under the banner of the Cross, and this means: having the same mind as Christ. It means thinking like him, loving like him, seeing like him, walking like him. It means doing what he did and with his same sentiments, with the sentiments of his Heart.

The heart of Christ is the heart of a God who, out of love, "emptied" himself. Each one of us, as Jesuits, who follow Jesus should be ready to empty himself. We are called to this humility: to be "emptied" beings. To be men who are not centred on themselves because the centre of the Society is Christ and his Church. And God is the *Deus semper maior*, the God who always surprises us. And if the God of surprises is not at the centre, the Society becomes disorientated. Because of this, to be a Jesuit means to be a person of incomplete thought, of open thought: because he thinks always looking to the horizon which is the ever greater glory of God, who ceaselessly surprises us. And this is the restlessness of our inner abyss. This holy and beautiful restlessness!

However, because we are sinners, we can ask ourselves if our heart has preserved the restlessness of the search or if instead it has atrophied; if our heart is always in tension: a heart that does not rest, that does not close in on itself but beats to the rhythm of a journey undertaken together with all the people faithful to God. We need to seek God in order

The gentle and loving nature of Peter Faber

MARC LINDEIJER

When Peter Faber died in Rome on 10 August 1546, he was just 40 years old. His short life may be summed up in a few lines. He was born in the village of Le Villaret, Savoy, on 13 April 1506. In 1525 he went to Paris to study for the priesthood; there he met Ignatius of Loyola. He was ordained a priest on 22 July 1534, and shortly thereafter he celebrated the Mass at which the first seven Founders of the Society of Jesus made their vows. In 1538, these men presented themselves to Pope Paul III seeking approval for the Society and for the first missions. The following year, Faber began seven years of travel through Europe – Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Portugal – preaching tirelessly, hearing confessions and conducting the Spiritual

Exercises. He also taught theology and participated in discussions aimed at promoting unity and reform in the Church.



In April 1546, Faber left Madrid for the Council of Trent. He had been appointed a peritus by Paul III. During the journey to Rome he was struck by a fever and died shortly after his arrival.

Throughout his life, Faber had always sought to go unnoticed. It is not without significance, then, that his tomb was lost in 1568 as construction began on the new and splendid Church of the Gesù; nor that the process of canonization of the "third companion" fell behind compared with those of the great Founder Ignatius and the great missionary Francis Xavier.

It took a Pope, come from afar, to snatch Faber from the shadows of the modesty he so preferred and place him in full light, by raising him to the well deserved honours

Pope Francis celebrates Holy Mass in St Peter's Basilica on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

The star and the journey

"To lift our gaze towards the star" and to place ourselves on the journey following the Magi "as wise companions on the way". This was Pope Francis' call to the faithful at Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, which was celebrated on Monday, 6 January, in St Peter's Basilica. Concelebrating with the Pope were 29 cardinals, including Dean Angelo Sodano, Tarcisio Bertone, Francis Arinze and José Saraiva Martins and more than 200 bishops and prelates of the Roman Curia, including Archbishop Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States; Msgr Peter Bryan Wells, Assessor; Msgr Antoine

Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States; and Msgr José Avelino Bettencourt, Chief of Protocol. Also present were Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, and Cardinal Raffaele Farina, as well as Archbishop Georg Gänswein, Prefect of the Papal Household, Dr Patrizio Polisca, and the Editor-in-Chief of our newspaper, Prof. Giovanni Maria Vian. The Mass was served by representatives from the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Music for the Solemnity was sung by the Sistine Chapel Choir, directed by Massimo Palmibella, and was accompanied by the Mater Ecclesiae Choir, the Laudate Pueri Choir of

Gozo and several choirs from the United States of America. During the Mass, the date of Easter Sunday was announced — 30 April 2014 — as well as the dates of other liturgical events related to the Solemnity of the Resurrection of Christ: Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, 5 March; the Ascension will be celebrated on 29 May, Pentecost on 8 June, and Corpus Domini on 19 June 2014. It was also announced that the first Sunday of Advent 2014 will be celebrated on 30 November. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily, which was given in Italian.

"Lumen requirunt lumine". These evocative words from a liturgical hymn for the Epiphany speak of the experience of the Magi: following a light, they were searching for the Light. The star appearing in the sky kindled in their minds and in their hearts a light that moved them to seek the great Light of Christ. The Magi followed faithfully

119:105). Listening to the Gospel, reading it, meditating on it and making it our spiritual nourishment especially allows us to encounter the living Jesus, to experience him and his love.

The first reading echoes, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, the call of God to Jerusalem: "Arise, shine!" (Is 60:1). Jerusalem is called to be the city of light which reflects God's light to the world and helps humanity to walk in his ways. This is the vocation and the mission of the People of God in the world. But Jerusalem can fail to respond to this call of the Lord. The Gospel tells us that the Magi, when they arrived in Jerusalem, lost sight of the star for a time. They no longer saw it. Its light was particularly absent from the palace of King Herod: his dwelling was gloomy, filled with darkness, suspicion, fear, envy. Herod, in fact, proved himself distrustful and preoccupied with the birth of a frail Child whom he thought of as a rival. In reality Jesus came not to overthrow him, a wretched puppet, but to overthrow the Prince of this world! Nonetheless, the king and his counsellors sensed that the foundations of their power were crumbling. They feared that the rules of the game were being turned upside down, that appearances were being unmasked. A whole world built on power, on success, possessions and corruption was being thrown into crisis by a child! Herod went so far as to kill the children. As St Quodvultdeus writes, "You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart" (*Sermo 2 de Symbolo*: PL 40, 655). This was in fact the case: Herod was fearful and on account of this fear, he became insane.

The Magi were able to overcome that dangerous moment of darkness before Herod, because they believed the Scriptures, the words of the prophets which indicated that the Messiah

would be born in Bethlehem. And so they fled the darkness and dreariness of the night of the world. They resumed their journey towards Bethlehem and there they once more saw the star, and the gospel tells us that they experienced "a great joy" (Mt 2:10). The very

"As we recall Jesus' manifestation to humanity in the face of a Child, may we sense the Magi at our side, as wise companions on the way. Their example helps us to lift our gaze towards the star and to follow the great desires of our heart. They teach us not to be content with a life of mediocrity... but to let ourselves be attracted always by what is good, true and beautiful"

star which could not be seen in that dark, worldly palace.

One aspect of the light which guides us on the journey of faith is holy "cunning". This holy "cunning" is also a virtue. It consists of a spiritual shrewdness which enables us to recognize danger and avoid it. The Magi used this light of "cunning" when, on the way back, they decided not to pass by the gloomy palace of Herod, but to take another route. These wise men from the East teach us how not to fall into the snares of darkness and how to defend ourselves from the shadows which seek to envelop our life. By this holy "cunning", the Magi guarded the faith.

We too need to guard the faith, guard it from darkness. Many times, however, it is a darkness under the guise of light. This is because the devil, as St Paul, says, disguises himself at times as an angel of light. And this is where a holy "cunning" is necessary in order to protect the faith, guarding it from those alarmist voices that exclaim: "Listen, today we must do this, or that...". Faith though, is a grace, it is a gift. We are entrusted with the task of guarding it, by means of this holy "cunning" and by prayer, love, charity. We need to welcome the light of God into our hearts and, at the same time, to culti-

ate that spiritual cunning which is able to combine simplicity with astuteness, as Jesus told his disciples: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16).

On the feast of the Epiphany, as we recall Jesus' manifestation to humanity in the face of a Child, may we sense the Magi at our side, as wise companions on the way. Their example helps us to lift our gaze towards the star and to follow the great desires of our heart. They teach us not to be content with a life of mediocrity, of "playing it safe", but to let ourselves be attracted always by what is good, true and beautiful... by God, who is all of this, and so much more! And they teach us not to be deceived by appearances, by what the world considers great, wise and power-



"The Nativity" (From Gospel dated 1465, Pontifical Armenian Liturgy)

that light which filled their hearts, and they encountered the Lord. The destiny of every person is symbolized in this journey of the Magi of the East: our life is a journey, illuminated by the lights which brighten our way, to find the fullness of truth and love which we Christians recognize in Jesus, the Light of the World. Like the Magi, every person has two great "books" which provide the signs to guide this pilgrimage: the book of creation and the book of sacred Scripture. What is important is that we be attentive, alert, and listen to God who speaks to us, who always speaks to us. As the Psalm says in referring to the Law of the Lord: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps



In the afternoon of 6 January Pope Francis visited the living Nativity scene at the Parish of Sant'Alfonso Maria de Ligori in the Gustiniana neighborhood of Rome. According to the parish priest, Fr Dario Pompeo Grisavoli, this year 2000 people participated in the Nativity scene, a Palestinian village constructed to look as though it were from Jesus' time. The Pope visited with the participants for more than an hour and a half, speaking with them and trying their local products. He also spoke with families of the parish, specifically with pregnant mothers, and those playing the roles of Mary, Joseph and Jesus. At the end of the visit the Pope thanked the parish and led them in a prayer for their community.

The Angelus in St Peter's Square

Like the flower of the almond tree

God is like "the flower of the almond tree" — the first tree to bloom — since he is "always the first to seek us, he takes the first step". Pope Francis said this at the Angelus on Monday, 6 January, in St Peter's Square after celebrating Holy Mass for the Solemnity of the Epiphany. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning! Today we are celebrating the Epiphany, that is, the "manifestation" of the Lord. This Solemnity is tied to the biblical narrative of the coming of the Magi from the East to Bethlehem in order to pay homage to the King of the Jews: an episode on which Pope Benedict gave a magnificent commentary in his book on the infancy of Jesus. This precise moment was the first "manifestation" of Christ to the nations. Thus, the Epiphany brings to the fore the universal opening of the salvation brought by Jesus. The Liturgy today acclaims: "Lord, every nation on earth will adore you", because Jesus came for us all, for every nation, for everyone!

Thus, this Feast lets us see a double movement: in one direction, the movement of God towards the world, towards humanity — the whole of the history of salvation, which culminates in Jesus — and in the other, the movement of men towards God — let us think of religions, of the quest for truth, the journey of the nations toward peace, interior peace, justice, freedom. And this double movement is driven by a mutual attraction. What is it that draws God? It is love for us: we are his children, he loves us and wants to free us from evil, from sickness, from death, and to bring us to his home, to his Kingdom. "God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 112). And from us too there arises a love, a desire: the good always draws us, truth draws us,

happiness, beauty attracts us... Jesus is the meeting point of this mutual attraction, of this double movement. He is God and man: Jesus. God and man. But who took the initiative? God, always! God's love always comes before our own! He always takes the initiative. He waits for us, he invites us, the initiative is always his. Jesus is God made man, made flesh, he is born for us. The new star that appears to the Magi was a sign of the birth of Christ. Had they not seen the star, these men would not have set out. The light goes before us, truth goes before us, beauty precedes us. God goes before us. The Prophet Isaiah said that God is like the flower of the almond tree. Why? Because in that region the almond is the first to flower. And God goes ever before, he is always the first to seek us, he takes the first step. God goes ever before us. His grace precedes us and this grace appeared in Jesus. He is the Epiphany. He, Jesus Christ, is the manifestation of God's love. He is with us.

The Church stands entirely within this movement of God toward the world: her joy is the Gospel, to mirror the light of Christ. The Church is the people who have experienced this attraction and bear it within, in their hearts and in their lives. "I would like to say — sincerely — I would like to say to those who feel far from God and from the Church — I would like to say respectfully — to all those who are fearful of indifference: the Lord is also calling you to be a part of his people and he does so with deep respect and love!" (cf. *ibid.*, n. 113). The Lord is calling you. The Lord is seeking you. The Lord is waiting for you. The Lord does not proselytize, he loves, and this love seeks you, waits for you, who at this moment do not believe or are far away. And this is the love of God.

Let us ask God, on behalf of the whole Church, let us ask for the joy of evangelizing, for we were "sent by Christ to reveal and communicate the love of God to all men and to all peoples" (*Ad Gentes*, n. 10). May the Virgin Mary help us all to be missionary-disciples, little stars that mirror his light. Let us pray too that hearts be open to receiving the proclamation, and that all men and women may be "partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (Eph 3:6).

After the Angelus, the Pope said: Brothers and sisters, I extend my warm wishes to our brothers and sisters of the Eastern Churches who tomorrow will celebrate Holy Christmas. May the peace that God granted to humanity by the birth of Jesus, the Word Incarnate, strengthen in all faith, hope and charity, and may it give consolation to the Christian community, to the Churches under trial.

The Epiphany is the Missionary Day of children, organized by the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood. Many children in parishes play a leading role in acts of solidarity towards their peers, and by so doing they broaden the horizon of their fraternity. Dear little children, boys and girls, through your prayer and your commitment you co-operate in the mission of the Church. I thank you for this and I bless you!

I greet all of you present here: families, parish groups and associations. In particular I greet young people from the "Movimento Tra Noi" [movement among us] and those from the Oratory of San Vittore di Verbania; scouts from Minori and Castellforte; the Choir of St Anthony from Lamezia Terme; the choir from Gozo "Laudate Pueri", who together with the Sistine Chapel Choir performed at today's Liturgy; the Catholic school "Giacomo Schirollolo" from Rovigo; and the protagonists of the historical-folkloric procession which was sponsored this year by families from the City of Leonesa and other localities in the Province of Rieti.

To everyone I wish a good celebration of the Epiphany and a good lunch, good bye!



Be true prophets, not just pretenders

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

prayer in order that the Gospel might grow. The fulfillment of the evangelical command 'Go to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature' (Mk 16:15) can be accomplished with this hermeneutic key shifted to the existential and geographical peripheries. It is the most concrete way of imitating Jesus, who went out to all the peripheries. Jesus went out to everyone, truly everyone. I would not feel at all uncomfortable in going to the periphery: do not feel uncomfortable in reaching out to anyone".

And so what is the priority of consecrated life? The Pope answered: "Prophesying the Kingdom, which cannot be negotiated. The emphasis should fall on being prophets, and not in pretending to be them. Naturally the devil puts his temptations before us; and one of them is: pretending to be prophets without being one, playing the part. But you can't play with these things. I myself have seen very sad things in this regard. No: religious are men and women who illumine the future".

In his interview with *Civiltà Cattolica*, Pope Francis had clearly stated that religious are called to a prophetic life. This is what is particular to them: "To be prophets who bear witness to how Jesus lived on this earth, and who proclaim what the Kingdom of God shall be like in its perfection. A religious must never renounce prophecy. (...) Let us think of what so many saintly monks, men and women religious have done, since the time of St Anthony the Abbot. Being prophets can sometimes mean making noise [Pope

Francis used the Spanish, *ruído*]. I do not know how to put it.... Prophecy makes noise, an uproar, some say 'a mess'. But in reality its charisma is to be a leaven: prophecy announces the spirit of the Gospel" (*ibid.* 63f).

And do, how can we be prophets while living out our own particular religious charisma? For Pope Francis, it is necessary "to strengthen what is institutional in the consecrated life and not confuse the institute with apostolic work. The former remains; the latter passes away". The Pope continued: "The charisma remains, it is strong; work passes away. Sometimes we confuse the institute with the work. The institute is creative, it is always seeking out new paths. Thus the peripheries also change and we can always make a different list of them".

At this point the questions asked centred around the theme of vocations. We are witnessing a profound change in the human geography of the Church and so too of religious institutes. Vocations in Africa and Asia are on the rise, which alone account for the majority of their total number. All of this poses serious challenges: inculturation of the charisma, vocational discernment and the selection of candidates, the challenge of interreligious dialogue, the search for a more equitable representation in the governmental organization of the institutes and, more generally, in the structure of the Church. The Pope was then asked to offer some guidance on the matter.

Pope Francis said he is well aware that the geography of the consecrated life has changed greatly and that "all cultures are capable of be-

ing called by the Lord, that he is free to stir up more vocations in one part of the world or in another. What does the Lord want with the vocations which he sends us from the younger Churches? I cannot say. But I ask myself the question. We have to ask it. The Lord's will is present in all this. There are Churches who are bearing new fruit. At one time perhaps they were not so fertile, but now they are. This naturally obliges us to rethink the inculturation of charisms. The charisma is one but, as St Ignatius used to say, it needs to be lived out according to the place, time and people. A charisma is not a bottle of distilled water. It needs to be lived energetically as well as reinterpreted culturally. But there is thus also the danger of making mistakes, you will say, of falling into error. It is risky. Certainly, certainly: we will always make mistakes, no doubt about it. But this should not stop us, because there is the chance of making greater mistakes. In fact, we should always ask for forgiveness and look shamefully upon apostolic failures caused by a lack of courage. Just think, for example, of the pioneer intuitions of Matteo Ricci which were allowed to crumble at that time" (The lack of understanding was due to the fact that, in their missions, the Jesuits were trying to adapt the proclamation of the Gospel to the local culture and rituals. This worried some, and several voices were raised in the Church that objected to the spirit of such an approach, fearing that it might contaminate the Christian message. Prophetic positions were not accepted at the time because they went beyond the ordinary way of understanding the facts).

"I am not referring to folkloric adaptations of customs," the Pope continued. "It is a question of mentality, of mindset. For example: there are peoples who think in a more concrete than abstract way, or whose way of abstraction is different from the West. I experienced this difference when I was the Jesuit provincial in Argentina. I remember how much effort a Jesuit Brother and I expended when we talked even about simple things of daily life; he was from an area where the Guarani live, a people who have developed a very concrete way of thinking. We need to live courageously and face these challenges when they deal with important subjects as well. In short, I cannot form a person as a religious without considering his or her life, experience, mentality and cultural context. This is the way to proceed. This is what the great religious missionaries did. The extraordinary adventures of the Spanish Jesuit Segundo Llorente come to mind. A tenacious and contemplative missionary in Alaska, he not only learned the language but also the concrete way of thinking of the people.

Fr Segundo Llorente (Mansilla, Mayor, León, Spain, 18 November 18 1906 – Spokane, Washington, USA, 26 January 1989) was a Spanish Jesuit who spent more than 40 years as a missionary in Alaska. He was

the Representative to the United States Congress for the State of Alaska, of which he is considered a co-founder. He was buried in an Indian cemetery in De Smet, Idaho, where only indigenous native Americans can be buried. When he arrived in Akulurak at the age of 29 his first problem was not only learning Eskimo but also speaking about God to people with a way of thinking radically different from Europe. He wrote 12 books about his missionary experience.

"Inculturating the charisma, therefore, is fundamental, and this never means relativizing it. We must not make the charisma rigid or uniform. When we make our cultures uniform we kill the charisma," the Pontiff concluded decisively, indicating the necessity of "introducing persons of various cultures into the central governance of the Orders and Congregations, who express diverse ways of living the charisma."

Pope Francis is certainly aware of the risks, even in terms of "vocational recruitment" in younger Churches. He recalled that in 1994, in the context of the Ordinary Synod on Consecrated Life and its Missions, that the Filipino bishops criticized the "novice trade," i.e., the mass arrival of foreign congregations that were opening houses in the archipelago hoping to recruit vocations to be sent back to Europe. "We need to keep our eyes open for such situations," the Pope said.

He then spent some time on the vocation of brothers and, more generally, religious who are not priests. He lamented that an adequate awareness of this specific vocation has not yet been developed. He referred to a document related to this subject that never appeared, and that perhaps should be taken up again and completed so as to facilitate a more satisfactory reflection. At this point the Pope signaled to Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and to the secretary of the Congregation, Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, who were present in the Assembly, inviting them to consider the question. He concluded: "I do not believe at all that the vocational crisis among religious who are not priests is a sign of the times telling us that this vocation has come to an end. Rather, we should understand what God is asking us". The, responding to a question concerning religious brothers as superiors in clerical orders, the Pope replied that this was a canonical issue that needs to be dealt with at that level.

Pope Francis then listened to a few questions about formation. He answers immediately, indicating what the priorities are: "formation of candidates is fundamental. There are four pillars of formation: spiritual, intellectual, communal and apostolic. The ghost to fight against is the image of religious life understood as an escape or hiding place in the face of a difficult and complex "outside" world. The four pillars should be integrated from the very first day of

Gentle and loving

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

of the altar. We now know how much this "reformer priest" has been a model of life for Pope Francis, and how much he has desired his canonization from the earliest days of his pontificate. In his interview with Fr Antonio Spadaro, Pope Francis outlined in seven key words the spiritual profile of the new Saint: "[his] dialogue with all, even the most distant and even with his opponents; his simple piety, a certain naïveté perhaps, his being available straightaway, his careful interior discernment, the fact that he was a man capable of great and strong decisions but also capable of being so gentle and loving".

What did the Pope have in mind when, in describing Faber, he paused at the word "gentle", "dolce"?

Perhaps he was thinking of the way St Ignatius used to describe him in praising his gift for conducting the Spiritual Exercises: "Peter makes water gush forth from the rock". Perhaps he was thinking of Faber's desire to be helpful to

all, of his love for humble service. "The more we are united to God", he once said, "the more abundant shall be the blessing poured upon these humble works by Him on whom they depend, and for whom they are carried out". Perhaps Pope Francis was looking into the mirror of Peter Faber's deeds, of his work of interior reform which strengthened the Church of his day.

In 1543, the prior of the Cologne Charterhouse wrote that Faber, with his amiable charm, could touch even the hardest of hearts and rekindle faith where it was almost extinguished, by his words and deeds which bore witness to the love and mercy of God for sinful man. The prior had hoped to see this man of God soon in order that Faber might direct him, through the Spiritual Exercises, along the way of interior reform and union with God. For this is the level where man learns to converse with God and sense the depths of his mystery. This is where great decisions are made, for one's personal life and for the life of the Church.



entrance into the novitiate and should not be arranged sequentially. There needs to be interaction”.

The Pope is aware of the fact that the problem of formation today is not easy to deal with: “Today’s culture is much wealthier and restless than what we experienced in our day, years ago. Our culture was simpler and more ordered. Inculturation today calls for a different attitude. For example: problems are not solved simply by forbidding this or that action. Much dialogue and confrontation are needed. To avoid problems, in some houses of formation, young people grit their teeth, try not to make obvious mistakes and try to follow the rules with a smile, waiting for the day when they are told: ‘Well done. You have finished formation’. This is the hypocrisy that comes from clericalism, which is one of the worst evils. I said as much to the bishops of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) this summer in Rio de Janeiro: we need to overcome this propensity toward clericalism in houses of formation and seminaries. I can sum it up with some advice that I was given as a young man: ‘If you want to advance, think clearly and speak obscurely’. That was a clear invitation to hypocrisy. We need to avoid that at all costs”. In Rio, in fact, the Pope identified clericalism as one of the causes of the “lack of maturity and Christian freedom” in the People of God (*Address at the meeting with the coordinators of CELAM during the general organizational meeting at the Centro Studi di Sumaré*, Rio de Janeiro, 28 July 2012).

Therefore: “If the seminary is too large, it ought to be divided into smaller communities with formators who are prepared to accompany adequately those in their charge. Dialogue must be serious, free of all fear, and sincere. It is important to recall that the language of young people in formation today is different from those who came before them: we are living through an epochal change. Formation is the work of an artisan, not a policeman. We must form their hearts. Otherwise we are creating little monsters. And then these little monsters mold the People of God. This really gives me goose bumps.”

The Pope then insisted on the fact that formation must be oriented not only towards personal growth

but also with a view to its final goal: the People of God. It is important to think about the people to whom these persons will be sent while forming them: “We must always think of the faithful, of the faithful People of God. People must be formed who are witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus. The formator should keep in mind that the person in formation will be called to care for the People of God. We always must think of the People of God in all of this. Just think of religious who have hearts that are as sour as vinegar: they are not made for the people. In short, we must not form administrators and managers, but fathers, brothers, traveling companions.”

Lastly, Pope Francis wanted to highlight a further risk: “accepting a young man in a seminary who has been asked to leave a religious institute because of problems with formation or for serious reasons is a huge problem. I am not speaking about people who recognize that they are sinners: we are all sinners, but we are not all corrupt. Sinners are accepted, not the corrupt”. Here the Pope recalled Benedict XVI’s important decision in dealing with cases of abuse: “This should be a lesson to us to have the courage to approach personal formation as a serious challenge, always bearing in mind the People of God”.

The Synod on the New Evangelization asked religious to be witnesses of the humanizing power of the Gospel through a life of fraternity. Taking a cue from this call, the Pope was asked a few questions about how religious should live together as brothers: “How can we keep our commitments to the mission as well as those to community life? How can we combat the tendency towards individualism? How should we act towards brothers in difficulty or who live or create conflict? How can we combine justice and mercy in difficult cases?”

Pope Francis recounted that the previous day he met with the Prior of Taizé, Frère Alois: “Monks at Taizé – among them, Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, etc. – all live a real life of brotherhood together. They are an impressive apostolic role model for young people. The fraternal community has an enormous power to call people together. Meanwhile the illnesses of the community have a power that destroys.

The individualistic tendency is the most disruptive to progress in consecrated life. St John Berchmans – John (Jan) Berchmans (Diest, Belgium, 12 March 1599 - Rome, 13 August 1621) was a Jesuit, canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1888. He made his first religious profession as a Jesuit on 24 September 1618 and moved to Rome to complete his philosophical studies at the Roman College, where he fell ill. He died only two years later. True to his favorite mottos: *Age quod agis* (“Do what you are doing well”) and *Maximi facere minima* (“Do the most with the least”), he succeeded in accomplishing ordinary things in an extraordinary way and became the patron saint of community life – used to say that his greatest penance was community life. Sometimes living in a spirit of brotherhood is difficult, but if it is not lived out, there is no fruit. Work, even that which is ‘apostolic’ can become an escape from fraternal life. If a person does not manage to live in brotherhood, he cannot live in religious life.”

“Religious brotherhood”, continued the Pope, “with all its possible diverse forms, is an experience of love that goes beyond conflict. Conflicts in the community are inevitable: in a certain sense they need to exist if a community is living in real and honest relationships. That’s life. To think about a community without brothers experiencing difficulties in their lives does not make sense, and it does do any good. Something is missing from communities where there is no conflict. Reality dictates that there are conflicts in all families and all groups of people. And conflict must be faced head on: it should not be ignored. Covering it over just creates a pressure cooker that will eventually explode. A life without conflicts is not life.”

The stakes are high. We know that one of the fundamental principles of Pope Francis is that “unity is higher than conflict”. His words to religious should be read in light of *Evangelii Gaudium* (n. 226-230), where he wonders about “the acceptance of bearing conflict, of resolving it and transforming it into a link that leads to a new process” (n. 227). It is important to recall that for Bergoglio personal fulfillment is never an exclusively individual undertaking, but collective, communal (cf. Jorge Mario Bergoglio, *È l’amore che apre gli occhi*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2013, p. 46). Conflict in this sense can, and even should evolve in a process of maturation.

In any case conflict must be accompanied: “We should never act like the priest or levite in the parable of the good Samaritan, who simply passed by. But what should we do? I recall,” says the Pope, “the story of a young man, 22 years old, who was suffering from a deep depression. I am not speaking of a religious, but of a young man living with his mom, who was a widow and who did the laundry for wealthy families. This young man no longer went to work and lived in an alcoholic haze. His mother could do nothing: every morning before leaving she would simply look at him with great tenderness. Today this young man is an important person: he overcame that problem, because

in the end that look of tenderness from his mom worked up. We have to recapture that tenderness, including motherly tenderness. Think of the tenderness that St Francis lived, for example. Tenderness helps to overcome conflicts. If this is not enough, then it might be necessary to change communities”.

“It is true,” Pope Francis continued, “sometimes we are very cruel. We all experience the temptation to criticize for personal satisfaction or to gain personal advantage. Sometimes the problems in the brotherhood are due to fragile personalities, in which case the help of a professional, a psychologist, should be sought. There is no need to be afraid of this: one need not fear necessarily succumbing to psychologism. But never, never should we act like managers when dealing with conflicts in the brotherhood. We should involve the heart”.

“Brotherhood is a delicate thing. In the hymn of First Vespers of the Solemnity of St Joseph in the Argentine breviary the Saint is asked to take care of the Church with *ternura de eucaristia*, ‘Eucharistic tenderness’ (*Guarda a la Iglesia de quien fue figura / la inmaculada y maternal Maria; / guárdala intacta, firme y con ternura / de eucaristia*).

“This is how we should treat brothers: with Eucharistic tenderness. We need to caress conflicts. I recall when Paul VI received a child’s letter with many drawings. Paul said that receiving such a letter on a desk covered only with letters that dealt with problems did him a lot of good. Tenderness does us good. Eucharistic tenderness does not mask conflict but rather helps us to confront it like men”.

At this point the Superiors General asked the Pope several questions on integrating religious communities in local Churches and about their relationship with bishops: how can the charisms of the various Institutes be both respected and promoted for the welfare of the Church where they live and work? How can communion among the distinct charisms and forms of Christian life be fostered so as to cultivate the growth of all and a better development of mission?

Pope Francis answers that the request to review the directive criteria that were promulgated in 1978 by the Congregation for religious and by the Congregation for Bishops (*Mutuae relationes*) concerning the relations between bishops and religious in the Church has been pending for quite a few years now. The Pope is of the opinion that the time is ripe now because “that document was useful at the time but is now outdated. The charisms of the various Institutes need to be respected and fostered because they are needed in dioceses. I know from experience the problems”, he continued, “that can arise between a bishop and religious communities”. For example: “if the religious decide one day to withdraw from one of their works due to a lack of manpower the bishop often finds himself suddenly left with a hot potato in his hand. I myself have had such difficult experiences. I would be informed that a work was being

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae on 7 January

If our heart is like the local market

In his homily at morning Mass on Tuesday, 7 January, Pope Francis commented on the first Reading from the Letter of St John (3:22-4:6) in which the Apostle, he said, "seems almost obsessive" in repeating various counsels, particularly the counsel: "abide in the Lord".

"Abide in the Lord," the Holy Father repeated, and he added: "the Christian, man or woman, is one who abides in the Lord". But what does this mean? Many things, the Holy Father said. And yet, he explained, the passage from the Letter of John emphasizes a particular attitude that a Christian must adopt if he wishes to remain in the Lord, i.e. the full awareness of "what is happening in his heart".

The Christian who abides in the Lord knows "what is happening in his heart". That, the Pope noted, is why "the Apostle says: 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits'; know how to discern the spirits, to discern what you are feeling, what you are thinking, what you want, and whether it is truly to abide in the Lord or something else which distances you from the Lord". "Our hearts," he continued, "always have desires, wants, thoughts: but are all of these from the Lord? That is why the Apostle says: test what you are thinking, what you are feeling, what you want... If it is in line with the Lord alright; but if not...".

It is then necessary "to test the spirits," the Holy Father repeated, "to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world". Not only can the prophets be false, the Pope warned, but also their prophecies and suggestions. That is why we always need to be watchful. "Indeed," he said, a Christian is precisely a man or woman "who knows how to watch his or her heart".

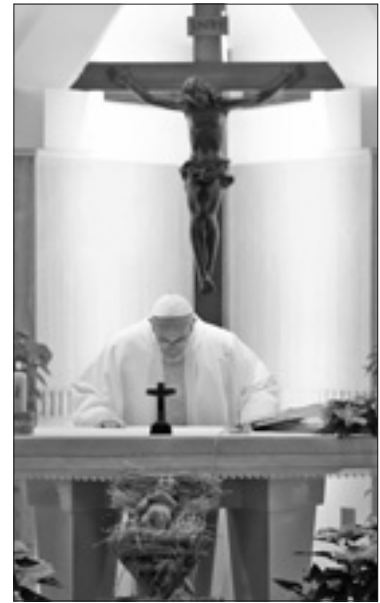
A heart in which "many things come and go," he added, "is like a local market where you find everything". This is precisely the reason why the constant work of discernment is so needed, in order to understand what is truly of the Lord. "But how do I know," he asked, "that something is of Christ?". The Apostle John indicates the criteria we should follow. Again citing the Letter of St John, he said: "every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already".

"It is so simple: if what you desire, or what you think travels down the road of the Incarnation of the Word, of the Lord who comes in the flesh," it means that it is of God. However, if it does not travel by that road, then it does not come

from God. Essentially, it is a matter of recognizing the road travelled by God, who "emptied himself, who humbled himself unto death on the Cross". Self abasement, humility and also humiliation: "this," the Holy Father said, "is the way of road of Jesus Christ".

Therefore, if a thought or a desire "leads you on the road of humility, of self-abasement and of service to others, it is of Jesus; but if it leads you on the road of self-importance, of vanity and of pride, or on the road of abstract thought, it is not of Jesus". The temptations Jesus underwent in the desert attest to this. "All three of the devil's temptations to Jesus were suggestions aimed at distancing Jesus from this path, from the path of service, from humility, from humiliation, from the act of love he made by his life".

"Let us think about this today," the Pope said. "It will do us good. First: what is going on in my heart? What am I thinking? What am I feeling? Do I pay attention to what comes and goes or do I let it go? Do I know what I want? Do I test what I desire? Or do I simply take everything? Beloved, do not believe every spirit; but test the spirits".



Pope Francis added that often our hearts are "like a road that everyone takes". This is precisely why we need to "test" and ask ourselves "if we always choose the things that come from God, if we know what comes from God, if we know the right criteria by which we should discern" our desires and our thoughts. And, Pope Francis concluded, we must never forget that "the true criteria is the Incarnation of God".

Be true prophets, not just pretenders

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

dropped and I did not know what to do. I was once actually told after the fact. I can also speak about other, positive developments. The fact is: I know the problems, but I also know that the bishops are not always acquainted with the charisms and works of religious. We bishops need to understand that consecrated persons are not functionaries but gifts that enrich dioceses. The involvement of religious communities in dioceses is important. Dialogue between the bishop and religious must be rescued so that, due to a lack of understanding of their charisms, bishops do not view religious simply as useful instruments". For this reason the Pope confided to the Congregation for religious the task of resuming reflection on the document *Mutuae relationes* and to work on a revision.

The last questions regarded the frontiers of the mission of consecrated persons. The Pope has often spoken about "going forth", "going out", and "frontiers". The Superiors General therefore inquired what these frontiers might be: "How do you perceive the presence of consecrated life in the reality of exclusion in our world? Many institutes are engaged in the work of education: how to you see this kind of service? What would you say to religious who are engaged in this field?"

The Pope first stated that geographical frontiers still exist, and we

need to be able to go there. However, there are also symbolic frontiers which are not predetermined and are not the same for everyone, rather they "should be sought out on the basis of the charisms of each institute. Therefore discernment should be carried out according to one's own proper charism. Of course the realities of exclusion remain the most significant priorities, but they call for discernment. The first criterion is to send the best, most gifted people into these situations of exclusion and marginalization. These are the most risky situations which call for courage and a great deal of prayer. And it is necessary that superiors support and encourage the people dedicated to this work". There is always the risk, the Pope recalled, to allow oneself to be overcome by enthusiasm; this might result in sending religious who have good will but who are not prepared. We must not make decisions concerning the marginalized without ensuring that there is adequate discernment and support.

Along with this challenge of the marginalized, the Pope referred to two other ever present and important challenges: one cultural and the other relative to education in schools and universities. Consecrated life can be of great service in these areas. He recalled: "When the Fathers of *Civiltà Cattolica* came to visit me I spoke with them about the frontiers of thought, thought that is unique and fragile. I recommended

these frontiers to them. As the Rector or Major of the Salesians knows, everything for them began on the basis of a dream of education at the frontier, the dream of Don Bosco that thrust his Salesians to the geographical peripheries of Patagonia. We could give many other examples".

For the Pope the pillars of education are: "to convey understanding, to convey ways of doing things, to convey values. Faith is conveyed through these. The educator have to be qualified to teach those whom he educates, he or she has to consider how to proclaim Jesus Christ to a generation that is changing". He insisted, therefore: "Education today is a key, key, key mission!" And he recalled some of his experiences in Buenos Aires regarding the preparation necessary to welcome children in an educational context, little boys and girls, young adults who live in complex situations, especially family ones: "I remember the case of a very sad little girl who finally confided to her teacher the reason for her state of mind: 'my mother's girlfriend doesn't like me'. The percentage of children studying in schools who have separated parents is very high. The situation in which we now live provides us with new challenges which sometimes are difficult for us to understand. How can we proclaim Christ to these boys and girls? How can we proclaim Christ to a generation that is changing? We

must be careful not to vaccinate them against the faith".

Pope Francis reflected here for a while, as he has done in the past, on themes of education in various interventions in his capacity of Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires. See in particular *Scegliere la vita. Proposte per tempi difficili* (Milan: Bompiani, 2013).

At the end of three hours, around 12:30, the Pope said he was sorry to have to end the conversation: "Let's leave some questions for next time", he said smiling. He confessed that the dentist was waiting for him. Before saying goodbye to the Superiors General he had an announcement to make: 2015 will be a year dedicated to consecrated life; these words were greeted with a long applause. The Pontiff looked smiling at the Prefect and the Secretary for the Congregation for religious and of Institutes of Apostolic Life, saying: "It's their fault; it was their idea: it's dangerous when these two get together," provoking laughter among all in the Assembly.

As he left the hall he stated: "I thank you, I thank you for this act of faith that you have made in this meeting. Thank you for what you do, for your spirit of faith and your pursuit of service. Thank you for your witness, for the martyrs that you continue to give to the Church, as well for the humiliations to which you must submit: this is the way of the Cross. Thank you from the bottom of my heart".

The Holy Father's Message to the Order of the Most Holy Trinity

At the service of new captives

In a letter recently sent to the Minister General of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity, Pope Francis invited members of the Order "never to cease imitating Christ" in the service of the poor and the captives of our time. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's letter, which was written in Spanish.

To the Most Reverend Father
Fra' José Narlaly
Minister General of the Order
of the Most Holy Trinity
and of Captives

Dear Brother,

This year, as the Order of the Most Holy Trinity and of Captives, and all those who are joined to it by spiritual bonds, remember the eighth centenary of the death of its holy Founder, John of Matha, and the 400th anniversary of the felicitous passing away of St John Baptist of the Conception, Reformer of the same Order, I wish to join in giving thanks with you to God the Trinity for these emblematic figures of the Church, by sending you this simple message of encouragement and spiritual closeness. My hope is that it may serve as a stimulus, and accompany you with enthusiasm and determination along the spiritual path which they traced out, to the glory of the Thrice Holy One, and for the good of all those who are undergoing various trials.

The ancient motto: *Hic est Ordo adprobatus, non a sanctis fabricatus, sed a solo summo Deo* (St John Baptist of the Conception, *Obras* III, 45), which the Trinitarian religious have always heralded, is rooted in your profound awareness that this charism is a gift of God, welcomed by the Church from its beginnings through papal approval. God has gone before us [*primerado*], he has taken the initiative in choosing these his servants so as to reveal his mercy through them. They were able to accept the challenge, with docility to the Church who discerns charisms. Thus, if today we celebrate the *dies natales* of your Founder and of your Reformer, we do so precisely because they were able to deny themselves, to take up the Cross of Christ with simplicity and docility, and to put themselves completely and unconditionally in the hands of God, in order that he might accomplish his Work.

We are all called to experience the joy that flows from encountering Jesus, to vanquish our egoism, to step out of our own comfort and to have the courage to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 20). This is what St John of Matha and St John Baptist of the Conception did by their lives and apostolic courage. They, who were leading a religious, respectable, albeit somewhat comfortable and secure life, received a call from God that disrupted their lives and impelled them to expend themselves and toil for the good of the most needy, of those suffering uncommon hardships, to proclaim to them their faith in the

Gospel, of those who would have been deprived of this joy. Over the centuries, in perfect harmony with their founding spirit, the *Home of the Holy Trinity* has been a home to the poor and marginalized, a place where wounds of body and soul are cared for, and where everything is accompanied by prayer, which, as your holy Reformer said so well, is a medicine that is better than any remedy, and by your unconditional dedication and selfless and loving service. Work, effort and freely given love are all summed up in the Rule of St John of Matha, in the words *Ministro e sine proprio* (Trinitarian Rule, n. 1). Indeed, the Trinitarians know, and we should all learn from



Juan Carreño de Miranda, "Mass of St John of Matha" (1666, The Louvre)

them, that every responsibility or authority in the Church should be lived out as a service. Therefore, our action must be divested of any desire for profit or personal promotion and must always aim at sharing any talents we have received from God, in order to direct them, as good stewards, towards the end for which they have been granted to us, so as to give relief to the less fortunate. This is what interests Christ and that is why the homes of your Family are homes whose "doors are always open" in fraternal welcome (*Direttorio primitivo delle Suore Trinitarie*, n. 2, cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 46).

Now, in joining your hymn of praise to the Most Holy Trinity for these great Saints, I wish to beg you, following their example, never to cease imitating Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to dedicate yourselves humbly to serving the poor and those who are enslaved. Today there are so many of them. We see them every day and we cannot pass them by, contenting ourselves with a good word. That is not what Christ did. We must acquire the mind of Christ, in order to see his face in the one who suffers and to offer the consolation and the light that pour from his pierced Heart. Dare, as well, to take the first step (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24), as St John Baptist of the Conception proposed to his brothers through the endearing image of a card game, seeking to make them understand that, when we

take this risk for a poor man, we win an authentic and a joyful life.

For the Saint, this is the challenge that God proposes to us: his poor, and if we lose this hand – he tells us – we are utterly lost (*Obras* III, 79). Therefore, in your apostolic endeavours and initiatives, do not seek any foundation other than "the root of charity" and "the interest of Christ", which my Predecessor, Innocent III, considered to be the essential pivot of this new way of life, which he approved by his Apostolic authority (*Operante divine dispositionis clementia*, Bull 17.12.1198).

In taking my leave, as I impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of the members of the Order and to the entire Trinitarian Family, I ask you, as does your immemorial tradition, not to cease to pray for the Pope. I know that this is one of your continual intentions, together with your intention for the poor, and that you present them to the Lord each evening. I rejoice greatly to think that, in your prayer, you place the Bishop of Rome next to the poorest, for it reminds me that I must never forget them, just as Jesus never forgot them, for he felt in the depths of his Heart that he was sent to bring Good News to them, and that by his poverty, he made us all rich (cf. Lk 4:18; 2 Cor 8:9). May he bless you and may the Holy Virgin take care of you!

Fraternally,

From the Vatican, 17 December, the Solemnity of St John of Matha, in the year 2013, the first of my Pontificate.

FRANCIS PP.

Message to the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil

Prophets of a new heaven and earth

Pope Francis invited participants in the 13th Interecclial Meeting of the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) to witness and proclaim the prophecy of "a new heaven and a new earth" to the poor. The interecclial meeting is being held in Juazeiro do Norte, Brazil until 11 January. The following is a translation of the Pope's message, which was written in Portuguese.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with great joy that I address this message to all of you who are participating in the 13th Interecclial Meeting of the Basic Ecclesial Communities, which is taking place from 7 to 11 January 2014, in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, in Ceará, on the theme "Justice and Prophecy at the Service of Life". First, I wish to assure you of my prayers that this Meeting may be blessed by our heavenly Father, with the light of the Holy Spirit, that you may be helped to live with renewed fervour the commitments to Jesus'

Gospel in the heart of Brazil's society. In fact, the motto of this meeting, "BECs Pilgrims of the Kingdom, in the Countryside and the City", must resound like a call so that they might increasingly assume their very important role in the Church's mission of evangelization. As the *Document of Aparecida* recalled, BECs are an instrument that allows people "to attain greater knowledge of the Word of God, a greater social commitment in the name of the Gospel, for the birth of new forms of lay service and adult education in the faith" (n. 178). Recently, in addressing the whole Church, I wrote that the Basic Communities "bring a new evangelizing fervour and a new capacity for dialogue with the world whereby the Church is renewed" but, to do this it is necessary that they do "not lose contact with the rich reality of the local parish and to participate readily in the overall pastoral activity of the particular Church" (Apostolic Exhortation

Evangelii Gaudium, n. 29). Dear friends, evangelization is a duty of the whole Church, of the whole People of God: we all must be pilgrims, in the countryside and in the city, bringing the joy of the Gospel to every man and woman. I wish from the depths of my heart that the words of St Paul, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16) may resound in the heart of each of you! Therefore, entrusting the work and the participants attending the 13th Interecclial Meeting of the Basic Ecclesial Communities to the protection of Our Lady of Aparecida, I invite everyone to experience it as an encounter of faith and of mission, as missionary disciples who walk with Jesus, proclaiming and witnessing to the poor the prophecy of a "new heaven and a new earth", and I impart to you my Apostolic Blessing

From the Vatican, 17 December 2013

FRANCIS

Between relativism and fundamentalism

Christianity and freedom

DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI

In speaking of Christians and religious freedom, it is easy to bring up the all too frequent cases where that freedom is violated as a result of intolerance or discrimination – we can think of the recent case of a television journalist who was removed from her job because she wore a small cross around her neck – or the more serious situations of persecution. Sadly, we have to acknowledge that in many parts of the world Christians have become a target of violence and are often forced to abandon their culture and the lands where, in some cases, they have been living for centuries, not infrequently because they are deprived of their civil rights and even threatened with physical harm.

Here, however, I would like to move beyond a mere presentation of cases and examples, which ultimately does no more than cast blame on those responsible. Rather, I would like to address the relationship between Christianity and freedom, not least with the aim of discrediting the erroneous and outdated notion that Christianity is the enemy of personal freedom and conscience, and that its claim to truth surely leads to violence and oppression. Indeed, the concept of “human rights” itself originated in a Christian context.

The link between Christianity and freedom is thus original and profound. It has its roots in the teaching of Christ himself and St Paul

At the Urbaniana

“Christians and Religious Freedom” is the title of address given by the Archbishop Secretary for Relations with States delivered on Friday, 13 December, at the Pontifical Urbaniana University at a conference organized by Georgetown University of Washington, D.C., entitled: “Christianity and Freedom: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives”. The following are excerpts from his address.

appears as one of its most strenuous and brilliant defenders. Freedom is intrinsic to Christianity, for it was, as Paul says, for freedom that Christ set us free (cf. Gal 5:1). The Apostle, of course, was referring primarily to the interior freedom enjoyed by Christians, but this interior freedom naturally also has consequences for society. This year marks the 1,700th anniversary of the Edict of Milan, which crowned the expansion throughout society of that interior freedom of which St Paul spoke. At the same time, from an historical and cultural standpoint, the Edict represented the beginning of a process which has marked European history and that of the entire world, leading in the course of the centuries to the definition of human rights and the recognition of religious freedom as “the first of human rights, for it expresses the most fundamental reality of the person” (Benedict XVI, *Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 9 January 2012) and as “the litmus

test for the respect of all the other human rights” (John Paul II, *Address to Members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE*, 10 October 2003).

History shows that there is a virtuous circle between that characteristically human openness to the transcendent and the growth of society. The restriction of religious freedom thus proves harm to society, as well as to individual men and women in their deepest needs and aspirations for what the medievals called the transcendentals of being: truth, goodness and beauty. The exercise of religious freedom is inseparably linked to these.

At this point, however, there is a need to avoid possible misunderstanding, since the word “freedom” can be interpreted in many ways. Freedom cannot be reduced to mere caprice, or understood in a purely negative sense as the absence of constraint, as is often the case in today’s culture. Here we can recall the words of Benedict XVI: “A freedom which is hostile or indifferent to God becomes self-negating and does not guarantee full respect for others. A will which believes itself radically incapable of seeking truth and goodness has no objective reasons or motives for acting save those imposed by its fleeting and contingent interests; it does not have an ‘identity’ to safeguard and build up through truly free and conscious decisions. As a result, it cannot demand respect from other ‘wills’, which are themselves detached from their own deepest being and thus capable of imposing other ‘reasons’ or, for that matter, any ‘reason’ at all” (Benedict XVI, *Message for the 2011 World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2011, n. 3).

When the Second Vatican Council set forth the principle of religious freedom it was not proposing a new teaching. Rather, it was restating a common human experience: namely, that “all human beings, because they are persons, that is, beings endowed with reason and free will, and therefore bearing personal responsibility, are impelled by their nature ... to seek the truth” (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Declaration on Religious Freedom Dignitatis Humanae*, 2). At the same time it restated an ancient principle: namely, that human beings must be “immune from coercion by ... any human power” (ibid.). This, then, is the basis of religious freedom. But this is also the reason why religious freedom represents a “problem” in international debates, where it is frequently reduced to a matter of examining individual cases as they emerge, rather than being put on the same level as other fundamental freedoms. Underlying such an approach is the deliberate refusal to acknowledge any possible truth claim in human existence. Whether this rejection is based on relativism or fundamentalism matters very little, since both have a single



common denominator: fear, which arises from the iniquity which obscures what is good (cf. Wis 4:11-12) and corrupts the heart. As I mentioned above, the Christian vision is radically different. It is in the truth, seen not so much as an absolute which we already possess, but as the potential object of rational and relational knowledge (Francis, *Letter to a Non-Believer*, 4 September 2013), that we encounter the potential for a sound exercise of freedom. And it is precisely in this connection that we discover the authentic dignity of the

human person. In these days you will have an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the problem of the relationship between religious freedom and Christianity. I have sought to provide a framework for your labours, one which I trust will help in some way to stimulate a greater awareness of the important social role of religion, in the perspective of that “Constantinian spirit” which enabled the growth of that awareness of the dignity of the human person which is now part of the common heritage of humanity.

A new website for ‘L’Osservatore Romano’

A turning point

PIERO DI DOMENICANTONIO

More news, more photos, more sharing through social networks, and above all, the editions of the newspaper printed in the Vatican will be accessible at www.osservatoreromano.va, as *L’Osservatore Romano* renews and broadens its online presence and the information service it offers to the world. The new website was launched on Tuesday, 17 December, Pope Francis’ birthday. The restyling of the site was carried out in cooperation with the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and, regarding technical matters, by the Spanish agency 101. During the transition, a valuable contribution was also made by the Holy See’s Internet Office, which in 1995 assisted *L’Osservatore Romano* in making their network launch onto the Vatican’s website www.vatican.va. In 2011, on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of Pope Benedict XVI’s election, the office also collaborated in the launch of the newspaper’s own website.

With innovative graphics and a substantial improvement in accessibility, the new site marks a turning point in the spread of the newspaper. Together with the daily Italian edition, in fact, the other weekly editions – in French, English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish – and the monthly edition in Polish, will also be available online by any user at no cost, and with no registration needed. The editions will also be made available on smartphones and tablets at the same time they are being printed by the Vatican Printing Press.

L’Osservatore Romano’s audience of online readers, which already ex-

tends from the Vatican to New Zealand, will thus be enabled to extend even further. Even in those areas which are more difficult and expensive to reach with traditional means of distributing printed newspapers, everyone will be offered the opportunity of timely access to first-hand information on the activities of the Pope and the Holy See. Translated into seven languages, the site’s editions will provide summaries of papal addresses, speeches and documents, along with reflections and contributions on current international, cultural and religious events.

Another aspect of the site that has been refined is its ability to link with the world of social networking. Each page can easily be relaunched on Twitter and Facebook, thus multiplying the opportunities for sharing and discussion. A stream of data will also enable the real-time exchange of information between the information portal of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and the newspaper’s site on www.news.va.

A little more than a century and a half after its founding, *L’Osservatore Romano* is taking on this new adventure in the digital world. It is a great editorial and organizational undertaking to which readers will freely be able to contribute their support. A safe and secure transaction system will allow readers to make donations that will help the service to continue and to constantly improve. It will also allow them to share in what has always been the mission of the Vatican newspaper: to combine communion and communion.

In his Message for the World Day of the Sick the Pope invites us to love those who suffer

The smile of God amid the contradictions of the world

“Whenever we tenderly draw near to those in need of care” it is as though “the smile of God into the contradictions of this world”, Pope Francis wrote in his Message for the 22nd World Day of the Sick, which shall be celebrated 11 February 2012. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s Message.



Faith and charity: “and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn 3:16).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. On the XXII World Day of the Sick, which this year has as its theme *Faith and charity: “and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn 3:16)*, I turn in a special way to the sick and to all those who assist and care for them. The Church sees in you, dear sick, a special presence of the suffering Christ. So it is: beside, or rather within our suffering there is the suffering of Jesus, who carries its burden together with us and who reveals its meaning to us. When the Son of God was raised upon the Cross he destroyed the solitude of suffering and he illumined its darkness. In this way we

are placed before the mystery of God’s love for us, which inspires us with hope and courage: hope, for in God’s loving plan even the night of suffering opens to the dawn of Easter light; and courage, to face every adversity in his company, in union with him.

2. The Son of God made man did not remove illness and suffering from the human experience, but rather, by taking it upon himself, he transformed them and put them in their right perspective. He put them in their right perspective, for they no longer have the last word, which rather belongs to the fullness of new life; he transformed them, for in union with Christ what is negative can become positive. Jesus is the way, and by his Spirit we are able to follow him. As the Father gave his only Son in love, and the Son gave himself in the same love, so we also can love others as God has loved us, by laying down our lives for the brethren. Faith in the good God becomes goodness, faith in Christ Crucified becomes the power to love even our enemies to the very end. The proof of authentic faith in Christ is manifest in the gift of oneself, in pouring oneself out in love for one’s neighbour, especially for those who do not deserve it, for those who suffer and for the marginalized.

3. Through Baptism and Confirm-



ation we are called to be conformed to Christ, the Good Samaritan to all the suffering. “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn 3:16). Whenever we tenderly draw near to those in need of care, we bring the hope and smile of God into the contradictions of this world. Whenever generous dedication to others becomes the pattern of our actions we make room for the Heart of Christ and we are warmed by it, thus offering our

own contribution to the coming of God’s Kingdom.

4. In order to grow in tenderness, and in respectful and tender charity, we have a Christian model to whom we may confidently turn our gaze. She is the Mother of Jesus and our Mother who is attentive to God’s voice and to the needs and struggles of her children. Mary, moved by the divine mercy that took flesh within her, forgets herself and from Galilee goes in haste to Judea to meet and help her cousin Elisabeth; she intercedes with her Son at the Wedding Feast of Cana, when she sees that the wine at the feast is running out; she carries in her heart, along the pilgrimage of life, the words of the aged Simeon who foretold that a sword would pierce her soul; and with strength she stands at the foot of Jesus’ Cross. She knows how to travel down this road and that is why

she is the Mother of all the sick and suffering. We may turn trustingly to her with filial devotion, confident that she will help us, that she will stand by us and that she will never abandon us. She is the Mother of the Crucified and Risen One: she stays beside our crosses and she accompanies us on our journey toward resurrection and the fullness of life.

5. St John, the disciple who stayed with Mary at the foot of the Cross, bids us rise to the source of faith and charity, to the heart of God who “is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16), and he reminds us that we cannot love God if we do not love the brethren. Whoever remains beneath the Cross with Mary, learns to love as Jesus loves. The Cross “is the certainty of the faithful love which God has for us. A love so great that it enters into our sin and forgives it, enters into our suffering and gives us the strength to bear it. It is a love which enters into death to conquer it and to save us.... the Cross of Christ invites us also to allow ourselves to be smitten by his love, teaching us always to look upon others with mercy and tenderness, especially those who suffer, who are in need of help, who need a word or a concrete action (*Via Crucis with young people*, Rio de Janeiro, 26 July 2013).

I entrust this XXII World Day of the Sick to Mary’s intercession, that she may help the sick to live their suffering in communion with Jesus Christ, and that she may sustain those who care for them. To all the sick, to health care workers and volunteers, from my heart I impart the Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 6 December 2013

Franciscans

National Migration Week in the United States

For the rights of migrants

Prayer and action. This is what Catholic Bishops of the United States are calling for in their campaign supporting the rights of migrants during National Migration Week. This traditional week asks all parish communities to work to support the reform of the laws con-

cerning foreigners in the country. The initiative with the theme “Out of the Darkness” is being held from 5-11 January. It is dedicated in particular to undocumented immigrants, but it also will offer solidarity with victims of human trafficking, refugees and all those who live in

conditions of restricted freedom. Bishop Eusebio L. Elizondo, Auxiliary of Seattle and chairman of the Committee on Migration, explained that Catholic communities are called “to bring the light of Christ to these populations, banish the darkness, and help to bring them from the margins of society to its center.” During this week, the prelate said, “we should not only pray for those who are marginalized but also advocate that protections are provided to them, for they need them most.”

Bishop Elizondo also referred to the reforms proposed in Congress and which have been awaiting approval for some time. The Church is hoping for a new system which balances the tradition of hospitality while respecting the law. In this respect, one of the key issues will be to allow immigrants a path that will ensure permanent residence in the country.



The story of the Magi as told by Benedict XVI

Precursors on the trails of truth

Pope Francis said at the Angelus on the Epiphany that the Solemnity "is tied to the biblical narrative of the coming of the Magi from the East to Bethlehem in order to pay homage to the King of the Jews: an episode on which Pope Benedict gave a magnificent commentary in his book on the infancy of Jesus". The following are excerpts from Benedict XVI's book, published in 2012.

If these wise men, led by the star to search for the king of the Jews, represent the movement of the Gentiles toward Christ, this implies that the cosmos speaks of Christ, even though its language is not yet fully intelligible to man in his present state. The language of the creation provides a great many pointers. It gives man an intuition of the Creator. Moreover, it arouses

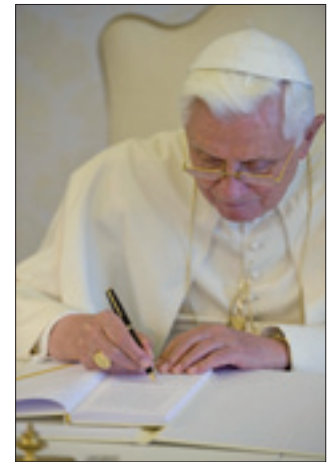
the expectation, indeed the hope, that this God will one day reveal himself. And at the same time it elicits an awareness that man can and should approach him. But the knowledge that emerges from creation, and acquires concrete form in the religions, can also become disoriented, so that it no longer prompts man to transcend himself, but induces him to lock himself into systems with which he believes he can, in some way, oppose the hidden powers of the world.

The star had evidently receded from view in Jerusalem. After their encounter with the words of Scripture, it shone for the wise men once more. Creation, interpreted by the Scriptures, speaks to humanity again. In describing the wise men's reaction, Matthew reaches for superlatives: "When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy" (2:10). It is the joy of one whose heart has received a ray of God's light and who can now see that his hope has been realized – the joy of one who has found what he sought, and has himself been found.

"Going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him" (Mt 2:11). Strikingly absent from this sentence is any mention of St Joseph, even though Matthew's infancy narrative was written from Joseph's perspective. We meet only "Mary, his mother" by the side of Jesus at the scene of adoration. I



"The Adoration of the Magi" (6th century, Ravenna, Sant'Apollinare Nuovo)



have yet to find a completely convincing explanation. There are one or two passages in the Old Testament where particular significance is attached to the figure of the queen mother (e.g. Jer 13:18). But this is probably not enough. No doubt Gnulka is correct when he suggests that this is Matthew's way of reminding us of the virgin birth and marking Jesus out as the Son of God (cf. *Das Matthäusevangelium*, p. 40).

The wise men do a *proskýnesis* before the royal child, that is to say they throw themselves onto the ground before him. This is the homage that is offered to a divine king. The gifts brought by the wise men may be explained in similar terms. They are not practical gifts, of a kind that the holy family might have had a use for at this moment. They express the same thing as the *proskýnesis*: they acknowledge the royal dignity of him to whom they are offered. Gold and incense are also mentioned in Is 60:6 as gifts of homage that the Gentiles will place before the God of Israel.

In the Church's tradition – with certain variations – the three gifts have been thought to represent three aspects of the mystery of Christ: the gold point to Jesus' kingship, the incense to his divine sonship, the myrrh to the mystery of his Passion.

The myrrh actually appears in St John's Gospel after the death of Jesus: John tells us that Nicodemus had prepared myrrh, among other ointments, for the anointing of Jesus' body (cf. Jn 19:39). Through the myrrh, then, the mystery of the Cross is once again associated with Jesus' kingship and mysteriously proclaimed in the worship offered by the wise men. Anointing is an attempt to resist death, which only becomes definitive with decomposition. By the time the women came to the tomb to anoint the body on Easter morning – a task that could not be carried out on the evening of the crucifixion because of the approaching feastday – Jesus had already risen. He no longer needed myrrh as a protection against death, because God's life itself had overcome death.

An unpublished note by Giovanni Battista Montini on Christmas

What we most desire

Among the documents kept in the archives of the Paul VI Institute in Brescia, Italy, is an unpublished note in which the future Pope reveals the wonder of a believer before the mystery of Christmas.

This is the fundamental aspect of Christmas: on that day "God's grace was shown to be saving for all men; ... "the goodness and love of God our Saviour for humanity appeared". As if heaven opened, and the light of the divine sun rained forth upon the world and inundated it with what we most desire, to be saved; with what can most transform our philosophy of life and the universe, that blessed day of Christmas was indeed revealed: God loves us, God saves us, God opens his plan before us, which was hidden for ages and generations (Col 1:26).



Paul VI visiting children cared for by Don Gnocchi in the centre of Rome on Christmas 1963 (above); The handwritten text by Giovanni Battista Montini (left).

Questo è l'aspetto fondamentale del Natale: in quel giorno "la grazia di Dio si è manifestata salutare per tutti gli uomini". Appare la bontà e l'amore di Dio Salvatore verso l'umanità. Come se il cielo si aprisse, e la luce del sole divino piovesse sul mondo, e lo inundasse di ciò che più noi possiamo desiderare, di essere salvati; di ciò che più noi possiamo ricevere, di essere saluti; di ciò che più può trasformare la nostra filosofia della vita e dell'universo, quel giorno benedetto di Natale ci fu appunto rivelato: Dio ci ama, Dio ci salva, Dio ci apre il suo disegno, finché rimane nei secoli (Col. 1, 26), il disegno di un'infinita misericordia.