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Friday, 8 May 2015

In his catechesis at the General Audience Francis praises the courage of Christian spouses

Behold the brave

On the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe the Pope launches another appeal for peace

May society "learn from the mistakes of the past" and "faced with the current conflicts that are tearing asunder various regions of the world", may civil leaders persevere "in the promotion of a culture of peace". These were the Pope's appeals at the end of the General Audience on Wednesday, 6 May, as he recalled the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. In his catechesis, he encouraged married couples to be brave as they participate in the Church's mission through the sacrament of their marriage. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

In our journey of catecheses on the family, today we touch directly on the beauty of Christian marriage. It is not merely a ceremony in a church, with flowers, a dress, photographs.... Christian marriage is a sacrament that takes place in the Church, and which also makes the Church, by giving rise to a new family community.

It is what the Apostle Paul says in his celebrated expression: "This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul says that the love between spouses is an image of the love between Christ and his Church. An unimaginable dignity! But in fact it is inscribed in the creative design of God, and with the grace of Christ innumerable Christian couples, with all their limitations and sins, have realized it!

St Paul, speaking of new life in Christ, says that Christians — each one of them — are called to love one

another as Christ has loved them, that is to "be subject to one another" (Eph 5:21), which means be at the service of one another. And here he introduces an analogy between husband-wife and Christ-Church. It is clear that this is an imperfect analogy, but we must take it in the spiritual sense which is very lofty and revolutionary, and at the same time simple, available to every man and woman who entrusts him and herself to the grace of God.

Husbands — Paul says — must love their wives "as their own body" (Eph 5:28); to love them as Christ "loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (v. 25). You husbands who are present here, do you understand this? Do you love your wives as Christ loves the Church? This is no joke, these are serious things! The effect of this radical devotion asked of man, for the love and dignity of woman, following the example of Christ, must have been tremendous in the Christian community itself. This seed of evangelical novelty, which reestablishes the original reciprocity of devotion and



respect, matured throughout history slowly but ultimately it prevailed.

The sacrament of marriage is a great act of faith and love: a witness to the courage to believe in the beauty of the creative act of God and to live that love that is always urging us to go on, beyond ourselves and even beyond our own family. The Christian vocation to love unconditionally and without limit is what, by the grace of Christ, is also at the foundation of the free consent that constitutes marriage.

The Church herself is fully involved in the story of every Christian marriage: she is built on their successes and she suffers in their failures. But we must ask in all seriousness: do we ourselves as believers and as pastors, accept deep down this indissoluble bond of the history of Christ and his Church with the history of marriage and the human family? Are we seriously ready to take up this responsibility, that is, that every marriage goes on the path of the love that Christ has for the Church? This is a great thing!

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Pontifical Swiss Guard

The banner of the Holy See



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Reflecting on Junípero Serra

A gust of holiness

As a "meaningful pre-amble" to his Apostolic Journey to the United States in September, the Holy Father visited the Pontifical North American College in Rome to celebrate Mass at the close of a meeting on Junípero Serra, whom he will canonize while he is in the US.

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Former Vice Gerent of Rome
Cardinal Canestri dies

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The daughter of St Peter

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Christian not only in word

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A fragile legacy

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 30 April

Bishop Robert Francis Prevost, OSA, titular Bishop of Sufar, Apostolic Administrator of Chiclayo, Peru

H.E. Mr James Alix Michel, President of the Republic of Seychelles with his entourage

Saturday, 2 May

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

Monday, 4 May

Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Archbishop José Horacio Gómez of Los Angeles, USA

Dr Antje Jackelén, Archbishop of Uppsala, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden with her entourage

Members of the Episcopal Conference of the Congo, on a visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*:

– Archbishop Anatole Milandou of Brazzaville

– Bishop Bienvenu Manamika Bafouakouhou of Dolisie

– Bishop Urbain Ngassongo of Gamboma

– Bishop Jean Gardin, CSSP, of Impfondo

– Bishop Louis Portella Mbuyu of Kinkala

– Bishop Daniel Mizonzo of Nkayi with Bishop emeritus Bernard Nsai

– Bishop Yves-Marie Monot, CSSP, of Ouesso with Bishop emeritus Hervé Itoua

– Bishop Victor Abagna Mossa of Owando

– Bishop Miguel Angel Olaverri Arroniz, SDB, of Pointe-Noire

Bishop Nunzio Galantino, Secretary General of the Italian Episcopal Conference

Tuesday, 5 May

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

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Denis Grondin as Archbishop of

Rimouski, Canada. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Campli and Auxiliary of Quebec, Canada (4 May).

Archbishop Grondin, 60, was born in Rimouski, Canada. He was ordained a priest on 21 May 1989. He was ordained a bishop on 25 February 2012, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Campli and Auxiliary of Quebec.

SPECIAL ENVOY

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Miloslav Vlk, Archbishop emeritus of Prague, as his Special Envoy to the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the death of Jan Hus, to be held in Prague on 5 and 6 July 2015 (4 May).

START OF MISSION

On 21 February, Msgr Janusz Urbańczyk, began his mission as the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the International Governmental Organizations in Vienna.

NECROLOGY

Bishop Symphorian Thomas Keep-rath, OFM cap, Bishop emeritus of Jullundur, India, at age 84 (3 May).

Archbishop Vicente Joaquim Zico, CM, Archbishop emeritus of Belém do Pará, Brazil, at the age 88 (4 May).

The Holy Father establishes commission for Vatican media

From 13-15 April the Council of Cardinals, assisting the Holy Father in the governance of the universal Church and aiding in the revision of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus* on the Roman Curia, met to examine the final report of the Vatican media committee. The committee – which was appointed to propose reforms of Vatican communications – had issued their final report on 5 March.

The Council of Cardinals proposed that the Pope establish a commission to study this final re-

port and to suggest feasible approaches for its implementation. The proposal was accepted by the Holy Father, who on 23 April decided to institute the commission and to appoint its members.

The new commission will be chaired by Msgr Dario Edoardo Viganò, Director of the Vatican Television Centre. The members of the commission will include: Paolo Nusiner, Editor-in-Chief of the Italian daily newspaper *"Avvenire"*, Milan; Msgr Lucio Adrian Ruiz, Head of the Vatican Internet Service, and of Telecommunications for the Governorate of Vatican City State; Fr Antonio Spadaro, SJ, Editor-in-Chief of *"La Civiltà Cattolica"*; and Msgr Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

The Pope meets with the President of the Republic of the Seychelles



On Thursday morning, 30 April, the Holy Father received in Audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the President of the Republic of the Seychelles, H.E. Mr James Alix Michel, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, accompanied by Msgr Antoine Camilleri, under Secretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussions, satisfaction was expressed for the good relations existing between the

Holy See and the Republic of the Seychelles. Mention was made of the Catholic Church's contribution to the service of society, especially in the fields of welfare and education, and themes of common interest were considered, such as the dignity and full development of the human person and the protection of the environment.

Finally, there was an exchange of opinions on the socio-political situation in the country and in the region.

Audience with the Queen of Sweden



On Monday morning, 27 April, Pope Francis received Her Royal Highness Silvia, Queen of Sweden, along with her family members and her entourage. The conversation took place mainly in Spanish, a language known well by the sovereign, who spoke to the Pope of the activities promoted by her in her country, in particular in favour of children. The Pope expressed his gratitude for the welcome given by Sweden to refugees and displaced persons.

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Behold the brave

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In the depths of this mystery of creation, acknowledged and restored in its purity, opens a second great horizon that marks the sacrament of marriage. The decision to “wed in the Lord” also entails a missionary dimension, which means having at heart the willingness to be a medium for God’s blessing and for the Lord’s grace *to all*. In deed, Christi-

an spouses participate *as spouses* in the mission of the Church. This takes courage! That is why when I meet newlyweds, I say: “Here are the brave ones!”, because it takes courage to love one another as Christ loves the Church.

The celebration of the sacrament must have this co-responsibility of family life in the Church’s great mission of love. And thus the life of the Church is enriched every time by the

beauty of this spousal covenant, and deteriorates every time it is disfigured. The Church, in order to offer to all the gifts of faith, hope and love, needs the courageous fidelity of spouses to the grace of their sacrament! The People of God need their daily journey in faith, in love and in hope, with all the joys and the toils that this journey entails in a marriage and a family.

The route is well marked forever, it is the route of love: to love as God loves, forever. Christ does not cease to care for the Church: he loves her always, he guards her always, as himself. Christ does not cease to remove stains and lines of every kind from the human face.

Moving and very beautiful to see is this radiation of God’s power and tenderness which is transmitted from couple to couple, family to family. St Paul is right: this truly is a “great mystery”! Men and women, brave enough to carry this treasure in the “earthen vessels” of our humanity, are – these men and these women who are so brave – an essential resource for the Church, as well as for the world! May God bless them a thousand times over for this!

SPECIAL GREETINGS:

In the next few days various capital cities will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. On this occasion I entrust to the Lord, by the intercession of Mary Queen of Peace, my hope that society may learn from the mistakes of the past and that, faced with the current conflicts that are tearing asunder various regions of the world, all civil leaders may

persevere in their search for the common good and in the promotion of a culture of peace.

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today’s Audience, including those from Denmark, Switzerland, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Canada and the United States. May Jesus Christ confirm you in faith and make your families witnesses to his love and mercy. May God bless you!

I address a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Last Friday we began the Marian month. May the Mother of God, dear *young people*, be your refuge in the most difficult moments; may she sustain you, dear *sick people*, in facing with courage your daily cross and may she be your reference point, dear *newlyweds*, so that your family may be a domestic source of prayer and mutual understanding.

Meeting at Santa Marta with disabled persons

With greatness



“Are you happy that we came? And now we can move forward ‘with greatness!’”. Gianfranco and Ivan – two boys with psychological difficulties – hugged Pope Francis thanking him for their meeting at the Casa Santa Marta at 9 am on Wednesday morning, 6 May. Before the General Audience the Pope met with disabled youth of the Villa Bianca and Casa Melissa in Mesagne, Puglia. The Pope responded, asking them also to pray for his mission in service to the people and the Church. Priests, he said, need the prayers and the support of the faithful. Then Pope Francis, before imparting the Apostolic Blessing, invited them “to pray to Our Lady together”. One by one he greeted the sick and those who work at the centres – 30 people in total – including the Daughters of San Camillo, led by the local superior, Sr Margherita, and by the President of the Cooperative of Associated Health Care Workers, Giuseppe Milanese. All those with disabilities – including children, young people and the elderly – gave Francis “letters and drawings prepared with excitement and joy”, explained Mr Milanese. At the end of the meeting Samantha Carozzo, a health care worker, addressed a greeting to the Pope, assuring him of their commitment to carrying out the mission of service to the people, building day by day a community of love.

Those who have hope

At the General Audience Pope Francis listened to the voices of those suffering and those seeking to build peace in countries around the world. Friar Minor Ibrahim Kalsabach, who has served for six months in Aleppo, told the Holy Father how his mission “is to take part in the pain of the people. Christians are strong, courageous, they choose not to respond to violence with violence”. I want “to share in the suffering of his people”, he said, stating that he “does not have the answers, rather he asks Jesus to help him be a reflection of His tenderness”. Among those also present at the audience was a North Korean exile Shin dong-Hyuk, who was born in a prison camp in 1982. He was later able to escape to South Korea where he now works in the field of human rights. During his long trip around the Square in the popemobile, Francis got out the jeep to greet a group of Chinese Catholics of the Diocese of Yongjia, Wenzhou holding their national flag. He also met with the President of CNN, Jeff Zucker, along with Vice President and Bureau Chief in London, Thomas Evans. The cable news network

in fact intends to begin producing more effective coverage of Pope Francis’ mission.

Particularly touched by the Pontiff’s appeal for peace – recalling the end of the Second World War – were the 13 Jews of the United States who are leading The Dachau Album Project, which centres on the “artistic witness of the prisoners of the infamous Nazi camp”. The Pope also met with the Harlem Globetrotters on their 90th anniversary tour. The team presented the Holy Father with a number 90 uniform. It was the ninth time the team had met with a pontiff. “In 1926 and for many – too many – years”, they said, “blacks could not play basketball with whites, and thus the Globetrotters helped in overcoming discrimination by ways of sports and entertainment”.

Pope Francis also greeted some children, ages 6-18, of the Falcone and Borsellino Symphony of Catania, Sicily. The orchestra was named after two Sicilian judges who were murdered in 1992 by the mafia. This initiative, the directors stated, “is more of a school of life than a school of



Crystal Greer, “Family”



music”. The organization that runs the symphony has taken 5,000 Sicilian children off the streets, offering the children an opportunity to grow in a healthy and legal way”. The Pope then listened to them perform an Argentine tango, *Por una cabeza*, by Carlos Gardel.

He was Archbishop of Genoa and Cagliari and Vice Gerent of Rome

Cardinal Giovanni Canestri dies

Giovanni Canestri was born on 30 September 1918 in Castelspina, Piedmont, Italy. He entered the seminary of Alessandria at the age of 11. His brother Carlo – who died in 2004 – was also a priest. His family spoke often of St Luigi Orione, who was also from Piedmont. Orione accompanied Canestri his entire life. After completing high school he moved to Rome to continue his priestly formation at the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, studying at the Pontifical Lateran University where he earned a licence in theology.

He was ordained a priest on 12 April 1941 and began serving as the assistant parish priest in the Garbatella and Pietralata area and then for nine years at San Giovanni Battista De Rossi in the Appio-Latino neighbourhood which served 8,000 meals every day during the Second World War. In 1950 he became parish priest at Santi Ottavio e Compagni Martiri, and from 1951-59 he served in the parish of Santa Maria Consolatrice a Casalbertone, where he committed himself in particular to the community's youth.

In August 1959 he was appointed spiritual director of the Pontifical Roman Major Seminary, also serving as a member of the commission for the first diocesan Synod in Rome, making a special contribution to the commission for youth education. He also served as an apostolic examiner and taught religion at various secondary institutes.

He was ordained a bishop on 30 July 1961, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Tenedo and Auxiliary of Rome, where he served in pastoral care in the eastern sector. During this time the young bishop participated in all of the sessions of the Council, especially in is-



suces of ecumenism and religious freedom. As an auxiliary bishop he served as a delegate of Italian Catholic Action for the Diocese of Rome. In 1965 he started a centre of theology and of formation for lay people.

On 7 January 1971 he became Bishop of Tortona, the former diocese of Don Orione. After four years, on 8 February 1975, Paul VI called him back to Rome, appointing him as Vice Gerent and Archbishop of the titular episcopal See of Monterano. In February 1980 the Archbishop found himself at the centre of the controversy surrounding his condemnation of abortion.

On 22 March 1984 John Paul II appointed him as Archbishop of Cagliari. There he promoted vocations, empowered the laity, dialogued with workers and served the poor. His episcopate was marked by two important moments: the Pope's visit to Sardinia in October 1985 and the initial phases of the plenary

On Wednesday, 29 April, Cardinal Giovanni Canestri died at the age of 96 in Rome. He had served as Archbishop of Genoa and of Cagliari, Bishop of Tortona, Vice Gerent and Auxiliary of Rome. On learning of the Cardinal's death Pope Francis sent a telegram to Cardinal Agostino Vallini, the Vicar General of Rome. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's telegram which was written in Italian.

The passing of venerable Cardinal Giovanni Canestri, who was from the Diocese of Alessandria and belonged to the clergy of Rome, stirs in my soul sadness and sincere admiration for this esteemed man of the Church who, as a priest and bishop, humbly and faithfully served the Gospel and the souls entrusted to him. I recall with gratitude his fervent ministry first as assistant pastor during the difficult years of the war in the Roman suburbs, marked by suffering and poverty, then as a parish priest in two populous suburbs, working in particular to educate young people in the joy of faith. Appointed Auxiliary of Rome, he devoted himself intensely to the spiritual and material needs of the people, while participating assiduously in the work of the Second Vatican Council. Later in his episcopal ministry in Tortona, as Vice Gerent and then as Archbishop of Cagliari, and then of Genoa-Bobbio, he was an example of pastoral wisdom and generous attention to the needs of others. I raise fervent prayers of suffrage so that the Lord receives the late cardinal in eternal joy and peace, and I bestow upon you and those who share in sorrow the comfort of my Apostolic Blessing, with a special thought for the Sisters Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who lovingly cared for him especially in these last years of his infirmity.

FRANCISCUS PP.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, also sent a telegram of condolences.

council of the island. Then on 6 July 1987 he was appointed Archbishop of Genoa-Bobbio. In 1989 Bobbio was added to the diocese of Piacenza and Archbishop Canestri continued as Archbishop of Genoa. There he developed the commitment of the Church in Genoa to the mission of Guaricano in Santo Domingo in 1992, for the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of the Americas. He also addressed issues of work, unemployment and immigration.

On 20 April 1995 he resigned as Archbishop of Genoa. He was created a cardinal at the Consistory on 28 June 1988 and was given the Title of Sant'Andrea della Valle.

The cardinal's funeral was celebrated on Saturday morning, 2 May, in St Peter's Basilica. Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco concelebrated the Mass with the Bishops of Liguria. Cardinal Canestri was buried in the altar of the Most Holy Sacrament in the Cathedral of Genoa.

The Jubilee of Mercy presented

Inspired by the Spirit

A wealth of activities will mark Pope Francis' Holy Year of Mercy which will be celebrated from 8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization – the Council organizing the Jubilee – presented the events at a press conference at the Holy See Press Office on Tuesday, 5 May.

The idea of the Jubilee came from the Spirit, he explained, revealing that last year on 28 August, the Holy Father told him: "I would really like a jubilee of mercy". Thus it truly came from the Spirit, he said, not just from a desire rather the Pope was inspired through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The first event, which will be held from 19-21 January, will be dedicated to all those involved with the organization of pilgrimages. It will emphasize that the Holy Year is a true pilgrimage and should be lived as such. Pilgrims are asked to make a

journey on foot, preparing themselves to pass through the Holy Door in a spirit of faith and devotion.

Then on 22 February there will be an event for the Roman Curia and on 3 April there will be a celebration for those who in various ways are inspired by a charism of mercy (movements, associations, and religious institutes). On 4 September, charitable volunteers will gather from all over the world. Volunteers are dynamic witnesses of living the works of mercy in its various expressions and deserves to be celebrated in this special way. Similarly, for those who are inspired in a particular way by Mary, there will be a special day on 9 October to celebrate her as the Mother of Mercy. There will be a number of events dedicated particularly to youth, who upon receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation are called to profess their faith.

The World Youth Day in Krakow from 26-31 July will also be a Jubilee

for the youth. Another event will be for deacons who by their vocation and ministry are called to preside in works of charity in the life of the Christian community. Their Jubilee will be held on 29 May. On 3 June, the 160th anniversary of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, there will be a Jubilee celebration for priests. On 25 September there will be the Jubilee of catechists who, in transmitting the life of faith, support Christian communities and, in particular, our parishes in a decisive way. On 12 June, a large gathering for the sick and disabled will be held, as well as for those who care for them with such love and dedication. On 6 November, there will be a celebration for those in prison. "This will be held not only in prisons", said Archbishop Fisichella, "but we have been studying the possibility of giving many of those in prison the opportunity to celebrate their own Holy Year with Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica".



In addition to pointing to the most important events, the Archbishop recalled that the Pope will participate in a symbolic way in order to reach the "peripheries" of human existence and "to give testi-

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At the close of a meeting on Junípero Serra the Pontiff remembers his witness

Holiness sweeping through the land

A guide for his upcoming visits to North and South America

On Saturday, 2 May, Pope Francis went to the Pontifical North American College [NAC] to celebrate Holy Mass in the chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. It was at the close of a day of reflection on Blessed Junípero Serra, hosted by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and by the NAC, with the patronage of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, on the theme: "Friar Junípero Serra, the apostle of California, a witness to holiness". The following is the English text of the Pope's homily.

"I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47; cf. Is 49:6). These words of the Lord, in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles which we have just heard, show us the missionary nature of the Church, sent by Jesus to go out and proclaim the Gospel. The disciples experienced this from the first moment when, after the persecution broke out, they left Jerusalem (cf. Acts 8: 1-3). This was true also for the many missionaries who brought the Gospel to the New World and, at the same time, defended the indigenous peoples against abuses by the colonizers. Among these missionaries was Friar Junípero; his work of evangelization reminds us of the first "12 Franciscan apostles" who were pioneers of the Christian faith in Mexico. He ushered in a new springtime of evangelization in those immense territories, extending from Florida to California, which, in the previous 200 years, had been reached by missionaries from Spain. This was long before the pilgrims of the Mayflower reached the North Atlantic coast. There are three key aspects to the life and example of Friar Junípero: his missionary zeal, his Marian devotion and his witness of holiness.

First of all, he was a *tireless missionary*. What made Friar Junípero leave his home and country, his family, university chair and Franciscan community in Mallorca to go to the ends of the earth? Certainly, it was the desire to proclaim the Gospel *ad gentes*, that heartfelt impulse which seeks to share with those farthest away the gift of encountering Christ: a gift that he had first received and experienced in all its truth and beauty. Like Paul and Barnabas, like the disciples in Antioch and in all of Judea, he was filled with joy and the Holy Spirit in spreading the word of the Lord. Such zeal excites us, it challenges us! These missionary disciples who have encountered Jesus, the Son of God, who have come to know him through his merciful Father, moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit, went out to all the geographical, social and existential peripheries, to bear witness to charity. They challenge us! Sometimes we stop and thoughtfully examine their strengths and, above all, their weaknesses and their shortcomings. But I wonder if today we are able to respond with the same generosity and courage to the call of God, who invites us to leave everything in order to worship him, to follow him, to re-

discover him in the face of the poor, to proclaim him to those who have not known Christ and, therefore, have not experienced the embrace of his mercy. Friar Junípero's witness calls upon us to get involved, personally, in the mission to the whole continent, which finds its roots in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Secondly, Friar Junípero entrusted his missionary activity to the Blessed Virgin Mary. We know that before leaving for California, he wanted to consecrate his life to Our Lady of Guadalupe and to ask her for the grace to open the hearts of the colonizers and indigenous peoples, for the mission he was about to begin. In this prayer we can still see this humble brother kneeling in front of the "Mother of the true God", the *Morenita*, who brought her Son to the New World. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was and has been present in the 21 missions that Friar Junípero founded along the coast of California. Since then, Our Lady of Guadalupe has become, in fact, the Patroness of the whole American continent. You cannot separate her from the hearts of the American people. She represents our shared roots in this land, the shared roots of this continent. Indeed, today's mission to the continent is



entrusted to her, the first, holy missionary disciple, a constant presence and companion, our source of comfort and hope. For she always hears and protects her American children.

Thirdly, brothers and sisters, let us contemplate the *witness of holiness* given by Friar Junípero. He was one of the founding fathers of the United States, a saintly example of the Church's universality and special patron of the Hispanic people of the country. In this way may all Americans rediscover their own dignity, and unite themselves ever more closely to Christ and his Church.

With the universal communion of saints and, in particular, with the assembly of American saints, may Friar Junípero Serra accompany us and intercede for us, along with the many other holy men and women who have distinguished themselves through their various charisms:

- contemplatives like Rose of Lima, Mariana of Quito and Teresita de los Andes;

- pastors who bear the scent of Christ and of his sheep, such as Toribio de Mogrovejo, Francois de Laval, and Rafael Guizar Valencia;

- humble workers in the vineyard of the Lord, like Juan Diego and Kateri Tekakwitha;

- servants of the suffering and the marginalized, like Peter Claver, Martín de Porres, Damian of Molokai, Alberto Hurtado and Rose Philippine Duchesne;

- founders of communities consecrated to the service of God and of the poorest, like Frances Cabrini, Elizabeth Ann Seton and Katharine Drexel;

- tireless missionaries, such as Friar Francisco Solano, José de Anchieta, Alonso de Barzana, Maria Antonia de Paz y Figueroa and Jose Gabriel del Rosario Brochero;

- martyrs like Roque Gonzalez, Miguel Pro and Oscar Arnulfo Romero;

and so many other saints and martyrs, whom I do not mention here, but who pray before the Lord for their brothers and sisters who are still pilgrims in those lands.

May a powerful gust of holiness sweep through all the Americas during the coming Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy! Confident in Jesus' promise, which we heard today in the Gospel, we ask God for this special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There was so much holiness, so much holiness planted in America!

We ask the Risen Jesus, Lord of all ages, that the life of our American continent may be rooted ever more deeply in the Gospel it has received; that Christ may be ever more present in the lives of individuals, families, peoples and nations, for the greater glory of God. We pray too that this glory may be manifested in the culture of life, brotherhood, solidarity, peace and justice, with a preferential and concrete love for the poor, through the witness of Christians of various confessions and communities, together with believers of other religious traditions, and people of upright conscience and good will. Lord Jesus, we are merely your missionary disciples, your humble co-workers so that your Kingdom may come!

With this heartfelt prayer, I ask Our Lady of Guadalupe, Friar Junípero and all the American saints to lead me and guide me during my approaching apostolic journeys to South America and North America. I ask all of you to keep this intention in your prayers, and to continue to pray for me. Amen.

A meaningful preamble

At the end of the celebration the Pope gave a final greeting.

I would like to thank you from my heart for your invitation and the welcome I received in the Pontifical North American College. I greet with great affection the Rector, all those who reside here, the North American priests who work in the Roman Curia, who study in Rome or who are spending their sabbatical year in this place.

I am very grateful to the cardinals and bishops who concelebrated with me and, in a special way, I would like to express my warmest gratitude for the presence of Archbishop Joseph Edward Kurtz, President of the Bishops' Conference of the United States, and Archbishop José Horacio Gómez of Los Angeles.

This encounter, in your College and around the Eucharistic table, is a beautiful and meaningful preamble to my Apostolic Journey to the United States of America.



The Pope's appreciation for the Pontifical Swiss Guard

The banner of the Holy See

A "banner of the Holy See". It was in this way that the Pope described the Pontifical Swiss Guard, expressing his appreciation for their kindness and competency. During the audience on Monday, 4 May, in the Clementine Hall the Holy Father met the Guards in honour of the swearing-in ceremony of the new recruits, which was held on 6 May. The following is a translation of his address which was given in Italian.

Dear Commandant,
Reverend Chaplain,
Dear Guards, Dear Parents and
Relatives,

On the occasion of your swearing-in ceremony I have the pleasure of meeting you, Guards and your families to build a friendship which is important because the service you carry out is so close to me.

It is a special friendship because it is based on the love of Christ, that "greater" love which he experienced and gave to his disciples: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13).

In the history of the Church, many men and women made this

call to great love their own. The Swiss Guards, who fought during the Sack of Rome and who gave their life defending the Pope, followed this call. Responding to this call with dedication means following Christ.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius of Loyola, who was a soldier in his youth, speaks of the "call of the King", i.e. Christ, who desires to build his kingdom and chooses his collaborators. The Lord wants to build His kingdom in collaboration with mankind. He needs decisive and courageous people. Thus, according to St Ignatius, Christ the King asks those who want to go with Him to be content with the



same food, the same drink and the same clothes as Him. He asks them to be prepared to toil during the day and stay awake at night, because in this way they will participate in the victory (cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, 91ss.).

At the same time, Ignatius compares the world to two military camps: one with the banner of Christ and the other with the banner of Satan. There are only these two camps. The choice is clear for a Christian: he follows the banner of Christ (cf. *ibid.*, 136ss.).

Christ is the true King. He moves forward and his friends follow. A soldier of Christ participates in the life of his Lord. This is also the call which awaits you: take on Christ's concerns, be his companion. It is in this way that day by day you learn how "to feel" with Christ and with the Church: a Swiss Guard is someone who truly searches to follow the Lord Jesus and who loves the Church in a special way. He is a Christian with genuine faith.

You too, dear young men, like every Christian, can live all this through the Sacraments of the Church: by going to Mass regularly and Confession frequently. You can

live it by reading the Gospel every day. I tell you what I tell everyone: always keep a small Gospel in your pocket and read it when you have a quiet moment. Your personal prayer, especially the Rosary, during the "pickets of honour" will also help you. Service to the poor, to the sick, to those who are in need of a good word will help you....

And so when you meet the people, pilgrims, your kindness and competency instills this "greater love" which comes from friendship with Christ. Thus you Swiss Guards are a "banner" of the Holy See! I thank you and I encourage you all in this.

I know your service is demanding. When there is extra work, we always count on the Swiss Guards. I know. I thank you all with affection and I express my great appreciation for all that you do for the Church and for me, as the Successor of Peter. Most of all I thank you for your prayers. Do not forget! I too pray for you and those dear to you, and I entrust you to the intercession of your Patrons St Martin, St Sebastian and St Nicholas of Flüe. I wholeheartedly bless you all.



From the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Promulgation of Decrees

On Wednesday, 5 May, the Pope Francis received in audience Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. During the Audience, the Holy Father approved the request by the members of the Ordinary Session of Cardinal and Bishops of the Congregation for the upcoming canonization of Bl. Junipero (in the world: Miguel José Serra), professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor, born in Petra, Spain on 24 November 1713 and died in Monterrey, USA on 24 November 1784.

The Pope also authorized the Congregation to promulgate the following decrees:

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Vincenzo Grossi, Italian diocesan priest and founder of the Institute of the Daughters of the Oratory, born in Pizzighettone, Italy on 9 March 1845 and died in Vicobellignano on 7 November 1917;

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Maria of the Immaculate Conception (in the world Maria Isabel Salvat Romero), Superior General of the Sisters of the Company of the

Cross, born in Madrid, Spain on 20 February 1926 and died in Seville on 31 October 1998;

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of Venerable Servant of God Giacomo Abbondo, diocesan priest born in Salomino, Italy on 27 August 1720 and died in Tronzano on 9 February 1788;

— the martyrdom of the Servant of God Mario Borzaga, Italian professed priest of the Congregation of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and Paul Thoj Xyooj, lay catechist, killed in hatred of the faith in Laos in April 1960;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Jacinto Vera, Bishop of Montevideo, born off the coast of the Atlantic Ocean on 3 July 1813 and died in Pan de Azúcar, Uruguay on 6 May 1881;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Antonio Antić, professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor, born in Privić-Šepurine, Croatia on 16 April 1893 and died in Zagreb on 4 March 1965;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Juliette Colbert in Falletti di Barolo, laywoman, widow and foundress of the Daughters of Jesus the

Good Shepherd, born in Maulévrier, France on 26 June 1786 and died in Turin, Italy on 19 January 1864;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Brigida Maria Postorino, foundress of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, born in Catona di Reggio Calabria, Italy on 19 November 1865 and died in Frascati on 30 March 1960;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Rafaela of Jesus Host (in the world: Rafaela Martínez-Cañavate Ballesteros), professed nun of the Order of Capuchin Poor Clares, born in Maracena, Spain on 31 March 1915 and died in Chauchina on 29 May 1991;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Sergio Bernardini, layman and father, born in Sassoguidano, Italy on 20 May 1882 and died in Verica on 12 October 1966;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Domenica Bedonni in Bernardini, laywoman, mother and widow, born in Verica, Italy on 12 April 1889 and died in Modena on 27 February 1971.

To the Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala Scandalous division

Christians of other Churches and confessions are not "adversaries" or "competitors" but "brothers and sisters in Christ". Pope Francis recalled this at an audience on Monday, 4 May, when he received Ms Antje Jackelén, Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala, along with a Delegation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's words which were delivered in Italian.

Esteemed Ms Jackelén, Esteemed Sister, Dear Friends!

I cordially greet you and thank you for the kind words you have addressed me. With gratitude to God, last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II *Unitatis Redintegratio*, which still represents a fundamental point of reference for the Catholic Church's commitment to ecumenism. This document underlined that ecumenism must be contemplated. It invites all faithful Catholics to set out – recognizing the signs of the times – on the path of unity to overcome division among Christians which not only openly opposes the will of Christ but is also a scandal to the world and damages the holiest of causes: preaching the Gospel to every creature.

In speaking of the seamless robe of Christ (n. 13), the Decree expresses profound respect and appreciation regarding those separated brothers and sisters to which in daily coexistence at times one risks paying but little consideration. In reality, they must not be perceived as adversaries or competitors but known for what they are: brothers and sisters in faith. Catholics and Lutherans are expected to seek and promote unity in the dioceses, parishes and communities all over the world. There is still much work to be done on the path to full and visible unity in faith, in sacramental life and in the ecclesial mystery, but we can be certain that the Spirit of the Paraclete will always be the light and strength for spiritual ecumenism and theological dialogue.

I also recall with pleasure the recent document entitled "From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration

of the Reformation in 2017", published by the Lutheran-Catholic Commission for Unity. It is our heartfelt hope that this initiative will encourage – with the help of God, and our cooperation with Him and among ourselves – taking the next steps on the path to unity.

The call to unity in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ also involves a pressing exhortation to work together to set up a charitable plan for all those in the world who are suffering due to poverty and violence, and are in special need of our mercy. The testimony of our persecuted brothers and sisters especially impels us to grow in fraternal communion. Of pressing urgency is the issue of the dignity of human life, always to be respected, as well as the issues related to the family, marriage, sexuality which cannot be silenced or ignored for fear of jeopardizing the ecumenical consensus already achieved. It would be a shame if in these important matters new confessional differences were to be reinforced.

Dear friends, thanks again for your visit. In the hope that collaboration between Lutherans and Catholics may be strengthened, I pray the Lord to bless abundantly each one of you and your communities. Indeed, I would also like to thank you for two things. First of all, I thank the Lutheran Church in Sweden for welcoming many South American migrants during the time of the dictatorship. That fraternal welcome made families increase. And secondly, I would like to thank you, dear sister, for your consideration in appointing my dear friend, Pastor Anders Root: I shared with him the chair of spiritual theology and he helped me a lot in my spiritual life. Thank you.



Lutheran Cathedral in Uppsala Sweden



On Anglican-Catholic dialogue

A new era for ecumenism

"There is a strong bond that already unites us: it is the testimony of Christians victims of persecution and violence. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment". With these words the Holy Father addressed the Members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, whom he received on Thursday, 30 April. The following is the English text of the Pope's address.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
1. It is a pleasure to be with you, the members of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. In these days you are gathered for a new session of your dialogue, which is now studying the relationship between the universal Church and the local Church, with particular reference to processes for discussions and decision making regarding moral and ethical questions. I cordially welcome you and wish you a successful meeting.

Your dialogue is the result of the historic meeting in 1966 between Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Ramsey, which gave rise to the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. On that occasion, they both prayed with hope for "a serious dialogue which, founded on the Gospels and on the ancient common traditions, [would] lead to that unity in truth for which Christ prayed" (The Common Declaration by Pope Paul VI and the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Michael Ramsey, Rome, 24 March 1966).

We have not yet reached that goal, but we are convinced that the Holy Spirit continues to move us in that direction, notwithstanding new difficulties and challenges. Your presence here today is an indication of how the shared tradition of faith and history between Anglicans and Catholics can inspire and sustain our efforts to overcome the obstacles to full communion. Though we are fully aware of the seriousness of the challenges ahead, we can still realistically trust that together great progress will be made.

2. Shortly you will publish five jointly agreed statements of the second phase of the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue, with commentaries and responses. I offer my congratulations for this work. This reminds us that ecumenical relations and dialogue are not secondary elements of the life of the Churches. The cause of unity is not an optional undertaking and the differences which divide us must not be seen as inevitable. Some wish that, after 50 years, greater

progress towards unity would have been achieved. Despite difficulties, we must not lose heart, but we must trust even more in the power of the Holy Spirit, who can heal and reconcile us, and accomplish



what humanly does not seem possible.

3. There is a strong bond that already unites us which goes beyond all divisions: it is the testimony of Christians from different Churches and traditions, victims of persecution and violence simply because of the faith they profess. And not only at this moment are there many. I am also thinking of the martyrs of Uganda, half of them Catholic, the other half Anglican. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment, a fervent desire to fulfil the last will and testament of the Lord: that all may be one (cf. Jn 17:21). The witness by these our brothers and sisters demands that we live in harmony with the Gospel and that we strive with determination to fulfil the Lord's will for his Church. Today the world urgently needs the common, joyful witness of Christians, from the defence of life and human dignity to the promotion of justice and peace.

Together let us invoke the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to respond courageously to "the signs of the times" which are calling all Christians to unity and common witness. May the Holy Spirit abundantly inspire your work. Thank you very much for your service.

At the Regina Caeli the Pope speaks about Christian life

The tree and the fruit

Unity with Christ "does so much good for neighbour and society", Pope Francis recalled at the Regina Caeli on Sunday, 3 May, in St Peter's Square. He underlined that "one is recognized as a true Christian by this attitude, as a tree is recognized by its fruit". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's words which were delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today's Gospel shows us Jesus during the Last Supper, in the moment He knows His death is close at hand. His 'hour' has come. For it is the last time He is with His disciples, and now He wants to impress firmly a fundamental truth in their minds: even when He will no longer be physically present in the midst of them, they will still be able to remain united to Him in a new way, and thus bear much fruit. Everyone can be united to Jesus in a new way. If, on the contrary, one should lose this unity with Him, this union with Him, would become sterile, or

rather, harmful to the community. And to express this reality, this new way of being united to Him, Jesus uses the image of the vine and the branches: Just "as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:4-5). With this image, He teaches us how to abide Him, to be united to Him, even though He is not physically present.

Jesus is the vine, and through Him – like the sap in the tree – the very love of God, the Holy Spirit is passed to the branches. Look: we are the branches, and through this parable, Jesus wants us to understand the importance of remaining united to him. The branches are not self-sufficient, but depend totally on the vine, in which the source of their life is found. So it is with us Christians. Grafted by Baptism in Christ, we have freely received the gift of new life from Him; and thanks to the Church we are able to remain in vital communion with Christ. We must remain faithful to Baptism, and grow in intimacy with the Lord through prayer, listening and docility to His Word – read the Gospel –, participation in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

When one is intimately united to Jesus, he enjoys the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are – as St Paul tells us – "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22). These are the gifts that we receive if we remain united in Jesus; and therefore a person who is so united in Him does so much good for neighbour and so-

ciety, is a Christian person. In fact, one is recognized as a true Christian by this attitude, as a tree is recognized by its fruit. The fruits of this profound union with Christ are wonderful: our whole person is transformed by the grace of the Spirit: soul, understanding, will, affections, and even body, because we are united body and soul. We receive a new way of being, the life of Christ becomes our own: we are able to think like Him, to act like Him, to see the world and the things in it with the eyes of Jesus. And so we are able to love our brothers, beginning with the poorest and those who suffer the most, as He did and love them with His heart, and so bear fruits of goodness, of charity, and of peace in the world.

Each one of us is a branch of the one vine; and all of us together are called to bear the fruits of this common membership in Christ and in the Church. Let us entrust ourselves to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, so that we might be able to be living branches in the Church and witness to our faith in a consistent manner – consistency of one's own life and thought, of life and faith – knowing that all of us, according to our particular vocations, participate in the one saving mission of Christ.

After the Regina Caeli, the Pope recalled the beatification of Luigi Bordinò in Turin and greeted those present:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Turin Luigi Bordinò, consecrated layman of the Congregation of the Brothers of St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, was proclaimed blessed. He dedicated his life to the ill and suffering and worked ceaselessly on behalf of the poor, treating and washing their wounds. Let us thank the Lord for his humble and generous disciple.

A special greeting today goes to the *Mater* Association, on the Day of Children Victims of Violence. I thank you for your commitment to seeking to prevent these crimes. We must all work so that every human person and especially children maybe be defended and protected.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch and *Arrivederci!*



Pope Francis visits the Parish of Santa Maria Regina Pacis in Ostia Lido

Christians Not only in word

On Sunday, 3 May, Francis visited the parish community of Santa Maria Regina Pacis in Ostia Lido, on the outskirts of Rome. In his homily, he focused on the Gospel of the Fifth Sunday of Easter, stressing that Christian life means "to abide in Jesus" and recalling that "if we break from Him, if we do not abide in the Lord, we are Christians in name only, but not in life; we are Christians, but dead ones, because we do not bear fruit, like branches broken from the vine". The following is a translation of the Pope's homily, which was given in Italian.

Something Jesus often repeats, especially during the Last Supper, is: "Abide in me". Do not tire of me, abide in me. And Christian life is precisely this: to abide in Jesus. This is Christian life: to abide in Jesus. And Jesus, in order to explain to us what he means by this, uses this beautiful figure of the vine: "I am the true vine, you the branches" (cf. Jn 15:1). And every branch that is not joined to the vine ends up dying; it bears no fruit; and then is thrown away to feed the fire. Many are used for this, to feed the fire – they are very, very useful – but not in bearing fruit. Rather, the branches that are united to the vine receive the lifeblood and thus develop, grow and bear fruit. It's a simple, simple image.

To abide in Jesus means to be united to Him in order to receive life from Him, love from Him; the Holy Spirit from Him. It's true, we are all sinners, but if we abide in Jesus, like the branches to the vine, the Lord comes. He prunes us a little, so that we can bear more fruit. He always takes care of us. But if we detach from Him, if we do not abide in the Lord, we are Christians in name only, but not in life; we are Christians, but dead ones, because we bear no fruit, like branches broken away from the vine.

To abide in Jesus means to be willing to receive life from Him, as well as pardon, even pruning, but to receive it from Him. To abide in Jesus means to seek Jesus, to pray, prayer. To abide in

Jesus means to approach the sacraments: the Eucharist, Reconciliation. To abide in Jesus – and this is the most difficult thing – means to do what Jesus did, to have the same attitude as Jesus. But when we "slur" someone else [speaking badly of others], for example, or when we gossip, we do not abide in Jesus. Jesus never did this. When we are liars, we do not abide in Jesus. He never did this. When we cheat others with the dirty deals that are available to everyone, we are dead branches, we do not abide in Jesus. To abide in Jesus is to do the things that he did: to do good, to help others, to pray to the Father, to care for the sick, to help the poor, to have the joy of the Holy Spirit.

A beautiful question for us Christians is this: do I abide in Jesus or am I far from Jesus? Am I united to the vine that gives me life or am I a dead branch, that is incapable of bearing fruit, giving witness? And there are other branches too, of which Jesus does not speak here, but he speaks about them elsewhere: those who make them-



selves look like disciples of Jesus, but they do the opposite of Jesus' disciple: these are hypocritical branches. Perhaps they go to Mass every Sunday, perhaps their face looks like a holy

card, all pious, but then they live like pagans. And Jesus calls them hypocrites in the Gospel. Jesus is good, he invites us to abide in Him. He gives us the strength, and if we slide into sin – we are all sinners – He forgives us, because He is merciful. But what He wants are these two things: that we abide in Him and that we are not hypocrites. And with this a Christian life moves forward.

And what does the Lord give us if we abide in Him? We just heard it: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (Jn 15:7). The power of prayer: "Ask whatever you will", that is, prayer is so powerful that Jesus does whatever we ask of him. However if our prayer is weak – if it is not done sincerely in Jesus – prayer

does not bear its fruit, because the branch is not united to the vine. But if the branch is united to the vine, that is, "if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you". And this is the almighty prayer. Where does the omnipotence of this prayer come from? From abiding in Jesus; from being united to Jesus, like the branch to the vine. May the Lord grant us this grace.



Witness and joy

MAURIZIO FONTANA

"Witness and joy". Pope Francis left the children of the Parish of Regina Pacis with these two words, inviting them not to forget them, so that they may become a guiding force in their life. The Pope responded to questions from two teenagers: "You know that we are restless spirits. How can we continue to animate the souls of others?". The other asked, "How can we maintain a joy that is alive and strong in our service to others?".

A girl in the crowd gave him a t-shirt that read: "Francis, one of us". And he immediately showed himself to be one of them, chatting informally

with the children. He thanked them, saying: "Today is a day of temptation. You are here but you could have gone to the beach with this sun, but you didn't go".

This was the light starting point of the day which then turned to a discussion of more challenging issues such as the choices that each person is called to make in life. Often, the Pontiff said, choices that seem to be the most fun, do not lead to true joy. The criteria in making these decisions is "the difference between what is cheerful and what is just". The Pope's words were crystal clear, touching the hearts of the young people who had gathered in the courtyard. Francis encouraged them:

"In life we make many wrong choices", recalling that "we all fall, we all make mistakes, sins too, we all do, everyone. But where is the testimony? Getting back up with the grace of God".

That was the first word: "testimony": a testimony which does not require perfect and presumptuous Christians but people able to get back up after making a mistake, with the understanding that the Lord is with us. "The world needs you", he said. "This will give you joy". A joy which is pursued but which cannot be "bought", said Pope Francis. It is instead "a gift of the Holy Spirit and we must ask for it". It is everyone's

duty: "When I am sad, when I am down, if I am lazy and I don't know what to do, I must ask for joy from the Holy Spirit and he will give it to me", because the Church needs happy people who have a "natural smile, not a cardboard smile", people who know how "give light and give joy, to have joy".

A tabernacle in an amusement park

A tabernacle sits in a caravan in an amusement park. It is the source of strength for two nuns who evangelize in the park, located next to the Parish of Regina Pacis. These Little Sisters of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld have spent the last 46 years proclaiming the Gospel between the rides, bumper cars and shooting galleries of amusement parks. On Sunday, Pope Francis placed his hand on the wooden tabernacle, after entering the caravan, stopping to pray for a few moments. Then after blessing the park, he returned to the parish. "Pope Francis' profound humanity has struck us", said one of the nuns, Sr Geneviève, 72 years old. "It's clear that he has been among the people and understands our problems".

After this unscheduled stop, Francis met with the bishops and priests of the area. Next he went to the parish basketball gym where he greeted the sick and elderly. "This is beautiful", he said, we are "in the gym where children and young people play, today there is the sick and the elderly – those who have the wisdom of life and those who have the wisdom of pain and patience!".

Francis greeted the sick each individually and underlining his closeness he joked: "Pray for me too. I too am a little bit elderly and sick, but not too much".

Later the Bishop of Rome met with the families of those who have received the Sacrament of Baptism over the past year. He visited with the mothers who held their babies in their arms, caressing them and even asking for a little kiss from some. Then speaking to all the parents, he invited them to protect the treasure of faith, to remain faithful on their path alongside their children, warning them not to be those who occasionally receive the sacraments. Always be "close", "always on the journey".

Then the Pope went to the sacristy for Mass where he greeted the Pallottine Fathers who guide the parish and confessed four of the faithful: a priest, two children and a nun. During the Mass, the Pope used a chalice which belonged to Pope Pius XI, which was donated to Pope Ratti Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli for the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination.



After Mass, the parish priest thanked the Pope for his daily witness. "In spite of the difficulties and even some fear", we are all commit to be "more courageous" and to "carry out the good news with joy". Lastly the Pontiff bid farewell to the faithful in the Square around 7 pm and returned to the Vatican. (Maurizio Fontana)

Pope Francis with Italian representatives of the Community of Christian Life on the hope and hardship of daily life

Wounds of Christ and man

The following is a translation of the transcript of Pope Francis' answers to questions posed to him by Italian representatives of the Community of Christian Life on Thursday, 30 April, in the Paul VI Hall.

Paola asked the first question. After describing her experience serving in a prison in Reggio Calabria, she asked the Pope how to speak about hope to those serving life sentences and how those called to be close to them can refine their consciences.

Paola, I wrote down your two questions – there are two of them! You know that I like to say – it's just a saying but it is the truth of the Gospel – that we must go forth to the peripheries. To go forth and head for the periphery of divine transcendence in prayer, always to go forth. Prison is one of the harshest peripheries, one with the most pain. To go to a prison means first of all to say to yourself: "If I am not here, like this woman, like this man, it is only by the grace of God". The pure grace of God. If we did not slip into making these mistakes, offences or crimes, some of them grave, it is because the Lord held us by the hand. You can't enter a prison with the spirit of "I come here to tell you about God, because, forgive me, you are an inferior class, you are a sinner...". No, no! I am a bigger sinner than you are, and this is the first step. In prison one can say it with great courage; and we must always say it. When we go to preach Jesus Christ to people who do not know him or who do not live a life that seems morally correct, think about how I sin more than he does, it is by the grace of God that I have not fallen in that situation. This is the indispensable condition. We cannot go out to the peripheries without this awareness. Paul, Paul had this awareness. He says that he is the greatest of sinners. He also says something very ugly about himself: "I am untimely born" (cf. 1 Cor

15:8). But this is in the Bible, it is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit! It is not – as they say – putting on a holy face of the saints. The saints felt like sinners because they understood this! And the grace of the Lord sustains us. If you, if I, if each one of you does not have this awareness it's impossible to carry out Jesus' mandate, Jesus' mission: "Go to the ends of the earth, to all nations, to all margins" (cf. Mt 28:19). And who are those who are incapable of receiving this?



Caravaggio, "Doubting Thomas" (1602, detail)

Closed people, doctors, those doctors of the law, those closed people who did not accept Jesus, did not accept his message to go forth. They seemed just, they seemed like people of the Church, but Jesus uses a word that is not very nice: "Hypocrites". This is what Jesus calls them. And in order to help us understand what they are like, the image Jesus makes out of them is this: "You are like whitewashed tombs" (cf. Mt 23:27). The one who is closed cannot receive, he is incapable of receiving the courage of the

Holy Spirit, and remains closed and unable to go to the periphery. You ask the Lord to remain open to the voice of the Holy Spirit, to go to this periphery. Then tomorrow, maybe he will ask you to go to another, you don't know... But it is always the Lord who sends us. And in prison always say this, even with the many people who are suffering: why is this person suffering and not me? Why doesn't this person know God? Why doesn't he hope in eternal life? He thinks everything ends here, and

who, if you caress them, will slap you because in their home they see the father slap their mother? How do we foster them? How do we advance people who have lost their jobs, how do we accompany and promote, helping them make their way? For without work a person feels like he or she has no dignity. Yes, it's good to bring them something to eat. But dignity lies in when he or she can bring food to their own home: this gives dignity! This is promotion – the president spoke about it [referring to the community's president who spoke before]: you do so many things.... One difference between habit-like charity – I don't mean the kind of charity that helps people out of very serious hardship – but habitual charity and *promotion* is that habitual charity eases one's mind: "Today I gave people food, now I will go peacefully to sleep". Promotion makes your soul restless. "I must do more... and tomorrow this, and the day after that, and what I'll do is...". That healthy restlessness of the Holy Spirit.

This is what I would like to tell you. May it not be mere charity for us but that it convert our hearts. And this restlessness that the Holy Spirit gives you to find ways to help, promote your brothers and sisters, this unites you to Jesus Christ: this is penitence, this is the cross, and this is joy. A great, great, great joy that the Holy Spirit gives you when you give this. I don't know if this helps you, what I said.... For, when they ask me these things, the risk – even for the Pope – is to believe that one has the answer to all things... But the only one who can answer every question is the Lord. My work is simply to listen and to say what comes from within. But its very insufficient and very little.

Tiziana from Cagliari spoke to the Pontiff about how young people today are susceptible to losing hope. She asked his help in understanding that God never abandons us.

To young people I like to say: "Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope". But your question goes further: "What hope are you talking about, Father?". Some may think that hope is for a life of comfort, a tranquil life, obtaining something.... It is a controlled hope, a hope that fits nicely into a laboratory. But if you dwell in life and work in life, with its many problems, with the overwhelming skepticism that life offers you, with its many failures, "what hope are you speaking about, father?". Yes, I can tell you: "we are all going to heaven". Yes, it's true. The Lord is good. But I want a better world, and I am fragile, and I don't see how this can be done. I want to "get involved", for example in politics or in medicine... but sometimes I find corruption there and jobs that were meant to *serve* become *business*. I want to "get involved" in the Church, and there too the devil sows seeds of corruption and there frequently is.... I re-

Inspired by the Spirit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

mony to his closeness and attention to the poor".

Archbishop Fisichella also presented the logo of the Holy Year which "represents a *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy. The motto, which accompanies the logo, is taken from the Gospel of Luke (6:36): merciful like the Father. The logo is the work of Fr Marko I. Rupnik. It shows a significant image to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul, demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of hu-

manity and does so with a love that has the power to change one's life. "One particular feature worthy of note", Archbishop Fisichella continued, "is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man". The three concentric ovals, with progressively lighter colours as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the darkness of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker colour suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

The Jubilee's website (www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va or www.im.va) is available in seven languages: Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German and Polish.

I do not. Why is this person accused in court, why is he corrupt... and not I? By the grace of the Lord! This is the most beautiful preparation for going out to the margins.

Then, you say: "What hope am I speaking about with these people in prison?". Many are condemned to death... No, in Italy, there is no death penalty, but there are life sentences.... A life sentence is a death sentence, because one knows that they will never be released. It's hard. What do I say to this man? What do I say to this woman? Maybe... say nothing. Take them by the hand, embrace them, cry with him, cry with her... Thus, have the same feelings as Jesus Christ. Approach the heart that suffers. We can often say nothing, nothing, because a word would be an offence. Only gestures. Gestures that show love. "You are a lifer, here, but I share with you this piece of life in prison". That sharing with love, nothing more. This is sowing love.

And then you put your finger on it: "How to sharpen our consciences, so that being with the suffering is not for us mere charity, but that it converts our hearts and makes us capable of fighting bravely for a more just world?". Charity is a small step: Are you hungry? – Yes – I will give you something to eat today. Charity is the first step towards helping others advance. And this is not easy. How do we advance hungry children? How do we promote them... we are speaking about children now: how do we help children without education move forward? How do we promote children who don't know how to laugh and



the way. I tell you with sincerity: nothing else comes to my mind to say. Humility and service: these two things guard the *little* hope, the most humble virtue, but the one that life gives you.

Fr Bartolo – a diocesan priest, formator and professor at the interregional seminary in Campania run by Jesuits – asked what specific contribution can an Ignatian movement make to the Christian formation of pastoral workers and to the education of and engagement with the youth?

member that *Via Crucis* of Pope Benedict XVI, when he invited us to drive out filth from the Church.... In the Church too there is corruption. There is always something that disappoints.... But the *real* hope is a gift from God, it is a present, and it never disappoints. But how do we understand that God never abandons us, that God is with us, that he is walking with us? Today, at the start of Mass, the Psalm we recited was very beautiful, so beautiful: "O God, when thou didst go forth before thy people, when thou didst battle at our side, the earth quaked and the heavens poured" (cf. Ps 68:7-8). Yes. But this is not always evident. It is just something of which I am sure – I am sure of it, but I don't always feel it, yet I am sure: God walks with his people. God never abandons his people. He is the shepherd of his people. But when I commit a sin, when I make a mistake, when I do something unjust, when I see many things, I ask: "Lord, where are you? Where are you?". Today, many innocents are dying: where are you, Lord? Can something be done? Hope is one of the most difficult virtues to understand, and some great people – I think it was Péguy, one of those who said that it was the most humble of virtues, hope, because it is the virtue of the humble. One needs to lower himself so that the Lord may give it to him, so that the Lord will grant it. It is He who sustains us. But tell me: what kind of hope can you have from a natural point of view, let us think of a hospital: a sister spends 40 years of her life in the terminal illness ward, and every day one, then another and another and another... Yes, I believe in God, but the love that woman gives always finishes, finishes, finishes.... and at a certain point that woman could say to God: "But is this the world you made? Can something be hoped for from you?". The temptation, when we are undergoing hardship, when we see the brutality that occurs in the world, hope seems to fall away. But in the heart of the humble it remains. This is hard to understand because your question is very profound. How do we not leave the fight and live the good life, as we are, without hope, it's much easier... Service is the work of the humble, today we have heard it in the Gospel. Jesus came to serve, not to be served. And hope is the virtue of the humble. I believe that this could be

The President mentioned an Ignatian motto: "Contemplative in action". To be contemplative in action is not to walk through life looking up at the sky, because you will fall in a hole certainly!... One needs to understand what contemplation means. You said something, a word that struck me: I touched with my hand the wounds of the Lord in the poverty of the people of our time. And this I believe to be one of the best remedies for the malady that plagues us: indifference. As well as skepticism: to believe that nothing can be done. The patron of the indifferent and of skeptics is Thomas: Thomas had to touch the wounds. There is a beautiful discourse, a tremendously beautiful meditation by St Bernard on the wounds of the Lord. You are a priest, you can find it in the Third Week of Lent, in the Office of Readings, I don't remember which day. To enter into the wounds of the Lord: to serve a Lord wounded by love; the hands of our God are hands wounded by love. To be capable of entering in.... And again Bernard continues: "Be trusting; enter into the wound at his side and you will contemplate the love of that heart". The wounds of humanity, if you approach them, if you touch them – and this is Catholic teaching – you touch the wounded Lord. This you will find in Matthew 25... so I'm not a heretic by saying this. When you touch the wounds of the Lord, you understand a little more about the mystery of Christ, of God Incarnate. This precisely is Ignatius' message, in spirituality: a spirituality where at the centre is Jesus Christ, not institutions, not people, no. Jesus Christ. Christ Incarnate! And when you do the Spiritual Exercises, he tells you that seeing the Lord who suffers, the wounds of the Lord, strains you to tears, to feel pain. And the Ignatian spirituality gives your Movement this path, offers you this road: to enter into the heart of God through the wounds of Jesus Christ. Christ wounded in the hungry, in the ignorant, in the discarded, in the elderly all alone, in the sick, in the imprisoned, in the insane... He is there. And what is the biggest mistake any one of you could make? You might be speaking about God, finding God, encountering God... but what it is just a god, a "god-spray", a common god, an ethereal god... Ignatius wanted you to encounter Jesus Christ, the Lord, who loves you and gave his life for you, wounded for your sin, for my

sin, for all people... And the wounds of the Lord are everywhere. In exactly what you said lies the key. We can speak a lot about theology, a lot... good things, speak about God... but the way is being able to contemplate Jesus Christ, to read the Gospel, what Jesus Christ did: It's He, the Lord! Fall in love with Jesus Christ and say to Jesus Christ that you choose to follow Him, to be like Him. And this is done through prayer and touching the wounds of the Lord. You will never know Jesus Christ if you don't touch his injuries, his wounds. He was wounded for us. This is the way, it is the way which the Ignatian spirituality offers to all of us: the journey... And I'll go a little further still: you are a formator of future priests. Please, if you see an intelligent boy, good but lacking in the experience of touching, embracing and loving the wounded Lord, advise him to go take a nice vacation for a year or two... and you will do him good. "But, Father, we priests are so few: we need them...". Please, don't let the illusion of quantity deceive us and cause us to lose sight of quality! We need priests who pray. And who pray to Jesus Christ, who challenge Jesus Christ for their people, as Moses who had the audacity to challenge God and save the very people God wanted to destroy, what bravery before God; priests who also have the courage to suffer, to bear the solitude and to give great love. Bernard's discourse on the wounds of the Lord holds for them too. Do you understand? Thank you.

Gianni asked about discernment in Ignatian spirituality as an aid to maintaining the relationship between faith in Jesus Christ and responsibility to build a more just and solid society.

I believe Fr Bartolomeo Sorge would do a much better job at answering the question than I – I don't know if he is here, no, I didn't see him. He's very good! He is a Jesuit who paved the way in this field of politics. One might say: "We ought to start a Catholic party!". This is not the way. The Church is a community of Christians who worship the Father, follow the path of the Son and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's not a political party. "No, let's not say party... a party only for Catholics". It serves nothing, and won't have the ability to engage, because it will be doing what it was not called to do. "But can a Catholic engage in politics?" – "She must!" – "But can a Catholic make a difference in politics?" – "He must!". Blessed Paul VI, if I'm not mistaken, said that politics is one of the highest forms of charity, because it seeks the common good. "But Father, politics is not easy, because in this corrupt world... in the end you can't get anywhere...". What do you want to say, that engaging in politics is a little like martyrdom? Yes. It is a kind of martyrdom. But it is a daily martyrdom: seeking the common good without letting yourself be corrupted. Seek the common good by thinking of the most fitting ways for this, the most fitting means. Seek the common good by working for the little things, the small ones, it gives little return... but one does it. Politics is important: small politics and big politics. In

the Church there are many Catholics who engaged in clean healthy politics; and those who have fostered peace among Nations. Think of the Catholics here, in Italy, after the war: think of De Gasperi. Think of France: Schumann, who has a cause for beatification. One can become a saint through politics. And I don't want to name more: two examples of those who pursued the common good are enough. Engaging in politics is martyrdom: truly a martyr's work, because one needs to go the whole day with that ideal, every day, with the ideal of building the common good. And always carrying the cross of many failures and carrying the cross of many sins. Because in the world it's difficult to do good in a society without getting your hands or your heart a little dirty; but that is why you go ask for forgiveness, you ask for pardon and continue to do it. Don't allow this discourage you. "No, Father, I don't do politics because I don't want to sin" – "That's not good! Go forward, ask the Lord to help you not to sin, but if you do get your hands dirty, ask forgiveness and go forward!". But do it, do it...

And fight for a more just and supportive society. What is the solution for politics that this globalized world offers us today? Simple: money is the core. Not men and women, no. Money. The god of money. This is the core. Everyone is at the service of god of money. But that is why what doesn't serve the god of money is thrown away. And what the globalized world today offers us is a throw-away culture: what is useless is thrown away. Children are thrown away, because people are not having children or because they are killed before they are born. The elderly are thrown away, because... old people are useless... and now whoever doesn't have a job goes and looks for his grandparents because their pension might help! But they are useful momentarily. The elderly are thrown away, abandoned. And now, work must diminish because the god of money can't do everything, and so young people are thrown away. Here in Italy 40-41% of young people 25 and under – I don't want to make a mistake, correct me – are unemployed. They are thrown away... But this is the path of destruction. Do I, a Catholic, watch from the balcony? You can't watch from the balcony! Get involved! Give it your best. If the Lord calls you to this vocation, get to it, engage in politics. It will make you suffer, it may be an occasion for sin, but the Lord is with you. Ask forgiveness and go forward. Let's not let this throw-away culture throw us all away! It throws away creation too, because creation is being destroyed more and more every day.

Do not forget what Blessed Paul VI said: politics is one of the highest forms of charity. I don't know if I answered [your question]...

I wrote an address... maybe it's boring, like all addresses; but I will consign it, because I preferred this dialogue...

[Then the Pope recited with the whole Assembly a Prayer to Our Lady of the Way]

And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.



The Pontiff to the Community of Christian Life

Beyond the walls

Solidarity with the people of Syria and Lebanon

The commitment to spreading a culture of justice and peace, pastoral care of the family and missionary life. These are the three priorities to which Pope Francis pointed in his meeting with

the Community of Christian Life on Thursday morning, 30 April, in the Paul VI Hall. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's consigned address which was written in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you, representing the *Community of Christian Life* in Italy, and the leaders of various groups of Ignatian spirituality, those close to your tradition of formation and committed to evangelization and human promotion. A special greeting goes to the students and former students of the "Massimo" Institute of Rome, as well as to representatives of other schools run by Jesuits in Italy.

I know your community well because I was a chaplain in Argentina, at the end of the 70s. Your roots are found in the Marian Congregations, which date back to the first generation of the companions of St Ignatius of Loyola. A long path has distinguished the Association throughout the world because of the intense spiritual life and apostolic zeal of its members, and it anticipated, in certain ways, the dictates of the Second Vatican Council concerning the role and service of the lay faithful in the Church. In line with this perspective, you chose as the theme of your gathering, which takes as its title "Beyond the walls".

Today I would like to offer you some guidelines for your spiritual and communal journey.

First: commitment to spreading a *culture of justice and peace*. In the face of a culture of lawlessness, corruption and conflict, you are called to dedicate yourselves to the common good, also through the service to people called politics. This, as Blessed Paul VI affirms, "is the highest and most effective form of charity". If Christians were to disengage in their direct involvement in politics, it would betray the mission of lay faithful, called to be salt and light in the world always in this kind of presence.

Second, the apostolic priority directs you towards *pastoral care* of the family, in the line of deepening upon the last Synod of Bishops. I encourage you to help diocesan communities in caring for the family, the vital cell of society, and in accompanying engaged couples toward marriage. At the same time, you can collaborate in welcoming those who are, so to speak, "distant": among them there are many separated persons, suffering from the failure of

their plan for married life, as well as other situations of family unrest, which can make even the journey of faith and the life of the Church tiresome.

The third line that I suggest to you is *missionary life*. I was pleased to learn that you have embarked on a common journey with the "Lega Missionaria Studenti", which led you down the paths of the world to encounter with the poor and with the communities that are in the greatest need for pastoral workers. I encourage you to maintain this capacity to go forth and move toward the most needy frontiers of humanity. Today you have invited delegations of members of your communities present in your sister countries, especially Syria and Lebanon: people martyred by terrible wars. To them I renew my affection and my solidarity. These people are experiencing the hour of the cross, therefore, let us allow them to feel the love, the closeness and the support of the whole of the Church. May your bond of solidarity with them confirm your vocation to build bridges of peace everywhere.

May your style of brotherhood, which you are undertaking in projects of welcoming of migrants in Sicily, make you generous in educating the young, both within your association and in schools. St Ignatius understood that it was essential to begin with youth in order to renew society and thus he encouraged the opening of schools. And from there the first Marian Congregations were born. In the wake of this bright and fruitful apostolic style, you too can be active in the various education institutions, Catholic and state, present in Italy, as you already do in many parts of the world. May there always be the joy of Gospel witness, together with a delicate approach and respect for others at the heart of your pastoral work.

May the Virgin Mary, who with her fiat inspired your founders, enable you to respond without hesitation to the vocation of being "the light and salt" in the fields where you live and work. May my heartfelt blessing that I impart to you and your families accompany you. Please, do not forget to pray for me.

The Pope denounces the paradox of abundance and calls for an increase in the fight against hunger

Bread and dignity

May no one be deprived of bread. The Pope expressed this wish in a live video message at the opening of the Milan Expo dedicated to the theme: "Feeding the planet, energy for life". At 12:30 pm on 1 May the message was broadcast at the ceremony inaugurating the world's fair in Milan. The following is a translation of the Pope's words which were delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

I am thankful for the opportunity to add my voice to those who have gathered for this inauguration. It is the voice of the Bishop of Rome, who speaks on behalf of the pilgrim people of God from the entire world. It is the *voice of the many poor* who are part of this people and who, with dignity and the sweat on their brow, seek to earn bread. I would like to make myself spokesperson of our brothers and sisters, Christians and non-Christians, whom God loves as children and for whom He gave his life, broke the bread of the flesh of His Son made Man. The Son taught us to ask God the Father: "Give us our daily bread". The Expo is a fitting occasion to *globalize solidarity*. Let us try not to waste it but to value it completely!

In particular, the theme "*Feeding the planet, energy for life*" brings us together. We must also thank the Lord for this; for choosing such an important theme, so essential... may it not be only a "theme", may it always be accompanied by the *conscience of the "faces"*: the faces of the millions of people who today are hungry, who do not eat in a way which is worthy of humanity. Beginning today, I would like that every person, every person who, passing the marvelous pavilions, visits the Milan Expo, may perceive the presence of those faces. It is a hidden presence but one which in reality must be the true *protagonist of the event: the face of the men and women who are hungry*, who fall ill, and who even die of an inadequate or harmful diet.

The "*paradox of abundance*" – an expression used by St John Paul II when he spoke to the FAO (*Address to the First Conference on Nutrition*, 1992) – still persists, despite the efforts made and with various positive results. Even the Expo in some respects is part of this "paradox of abundance", if it obeys the throw-away culture, the culture of waste, and does not contribute to a model of fair and sustainable development. Let us thus make this Expo an occasion

for a change in mentality, to stop thinking that our daily action – at every level of responsibility – does not impact the lives of those, whether near or far, who are suffering from hunger. I am thinking of the many men and women who suffer from hunger, especially the many children who are dying of hunger in the world.

There are other faces who will have an important role in the world's fair: the many workers and researchers of the field of nutrition. May the Lord grant each one of them the wisdom and courage, because their responsibility is great. My wish is that this experience will permit entrepreneurs, merchants, academics to feel involved in the *great project of solidarity*: to feed the planet in respect for every man and woman who inhabits it and in respect for the natural environment. This is a great challenge to which God calls the people of the 21st century: it's time to stop abusing the garden that God has entrusted to us, so that everyone can eat the fruits of this garden. Taking on this great project gives full dignity to the work



of those who produce and those who research in the field of food and nutrition.

Everything starts from perceiving the faces. Thus I do not want to forget the *faces of all the workers who laboured for the Milan Expo*, especially the most anonymous, the most hidden who, thanks to Expo, have earned bread to take home. May no one be deprived of this dignity! And may no bread be the result of a work unworthy of man!

May the Lord help us to take up this responsibility on this grand occasion. May He, who is Love, give us true "energy for life": love to share bread, "our daily bread" in peace and fraternity. And may neither bread nor dignity ever run short for any man or woman.

Thank you.

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 30 April

Memory and service

A Christian doesn't walk alone: he is part of a people and a secular history, and is called to place himself at the service of others. "Memory and service" were the key words of Pope Francis' reflection on Thursday morning, during Mass at Santa Marta. History, and thus the memory of it, along with service, the Pope said, are the "two features of Christian identity" contemplated in the day's Liturgy.

The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (13:13-25) speaks of Paul, who arrived in Antioch and "went as usual into the synagogue on the Sabbath day". There, "he was invited to speak". This, in fact, was "a custom of the Jews of that time" when a guest arrived. Paul took the floor and "began preaching Jesus Christ". However, the Pope emphasized, "he didn't say: 'I preach Jesus Christ, the Saviour; He came from Heaven; God sent Him; He saved us all and gave us this revelation'. No, no, no". To explain who Jesus is, the Apostle "began reciting the entire history of the people". The Scripture reads: "So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said.... 'Listen. The God of this People Israel chose our fathers...'. Thus, beginning with Abraham, Paul 'recounts the entire history'".

It wasn't a random choice, Francis pointed out. The same thing was done by "Peter in his sermons, after Pentecost" and also by "Stephen before the Sanhedrin". In other words, they "didn't proclaim Jesus without a history", but "Jesus within the history of the people, a people whom God made journey for centuries in order to mature, in the fullness of time, as Paul says". From this recitation it is also understood that "when this people reach the fullness of time, the Saviour comes, and the people continue to journey because this Saviour will return".

Here, then, the Pope highlighted, is one of the features of the Christian identity: "it is being men and women of history, by understanding that the story does not begin and end with me". Indeed, it all began when the Lord entered into history.

To support his statement, the Pontiff recalled the beautiful Psalm recited at the start of the Mass: "O God, when you went forth before your people, marching with them and living among them – remember that God walked with his people – the earth trembled, heavens poured down rain. Alleluia". Hence "Christians are men and women of history, because they do not belong to themselves", but are instead "included within a people, a people who journey". This is why there can be no thought of "Christian selfishness". There is no such thing as a perfect Christian, "a manufactured spiritual man or woman", but rather, a spir-



itual man or woman is always included "within a people, who have a long history and continue to journey until the Lord should return".

Looking precisely at these actual events which unravel throughout the centuries, a history which still continues today, the Pontiff added that

*Amid so many problems,
even grave, may we not lose
our hope in the infinite mercy of God.*

(@Pontifex on 30 April)

if we assume "we are men and women of history", we also realize that this is the "history of God's grace, because God went forth with his people, paving the way, living among them". But it is also the "history of sin", the Pope recalled, of "how many sinners, how many criminals...". This can also be seen in the passage from the Acts of the Apostles, for example: "Paul mentions King David, a saint", but "before he became a saint he was a flagrant sinner". This, the Pope underscored, applies "even today" when "each one's personal history" must assume "her own sin and the grace of the Lord who is with us". God in fact accompanies us in sin "in order to forgive". He accompanies us "in grace".

Therefore, Francis' recollection in the homily is a very concrete reality throughout the centuries: "we are not without roots", he said. We have "deep roots" that we must never forget, which have come "from our father Abraham up to today".

To understand that we are not alone, that we are firmly linked to a people who have journeyed for centuries, means we must also understand a second Christian characteristic, which is "what Jesus teaches us in the Gospel: service". In the Reading from the Gospel according to John proposed for Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter, "Jesus

washes the feet of the Apostles. After washing their feet He says to them: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. Do unto others as I have done unto you. As I have come to you as a servant, you must be servants of one another, serve'".

Clearly, the Pontiff said, "the Christian identity is that of service, not selfishness". Although, he said, one might rebut: "Father, we are all selfish", but this "is a sin, it's an attitude we must break away from". We must "ask for forgiveness, that the Lord convert us". Being Christian "is not an appearance or a social practice, it isn't a makeover for the soul, so that it might be a little prettier". Being Christian, the Pope said decisively, "is doing what Jesus did: serving. He did not come to be served but to serve".

After this, the Pontiff offered several suggestions for each of us to practice in everyday life. First of all, "think about these two things: do I have a sense of history? Do I feel I belong to a people who have journeyed from afar?". It might be helpful to "take up the Bible, the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, and read it". Here, he said, we meet with "the memory, the memory of the just" and "how the Lord wants us to be *memoriosi*" – in other words, that we remember "the road travelled by our people". It will then be good to consider: "in my heart, what do I do more? Do I make others serve me, do I use others, the community, the parish, my family, my friends, or do I serve", am I a servant?

Thus, "Memory and service" are two Christian attitudes, with which we also participate in the Eucharistic celebration, "which is really the

memory of Jesus' service; the actual memory, with Him, of the service that He rendered: giving his life for us".

Tuesday, 5 May

The counsel of Paul

In the inevitable "hardships of life" a Christian must entrust herself to the Lord in prayer, with the certitude that she will receive that "true peace" that infuses "courage and hope". The Pope said this at morning Mass on Tuesday in the Chapel of the Casa Santa Marta.

"In today's liturgy", the Pope said, "there are three words that can help us on our journey of faith and hope". He then explained "at the beginning of the Mass we asked the Lord [in the Collect] to strengthen us in faith and hope... and the three words that shine out in the Readings are 'hardships', 'trust' and 'peace'".

The Pope recounted what happened to Paul, according to the Acts of the Apostles (14:19-28): after being stoned, he was dragged out of the city and left for dead. Paul, therefore, "suffered", but then, "he rose", and he exhorted them to "persevere in the faith, because we must enter the kingdom of God through much hardship". Francis remembers that "in life trials are waiting for us: it is part of life to pass through dark moments, difficult times".

But Paul's counsel "to enter the kingdom of God through many hardships is not a sadomasochistic attitude: it is the Christian struggle". And the reason, the Pontiff explained, is that, as Jesus says, "the prince of this world comes, he is close and seeks to sever us from the kingdom of God, from the word of Jesus, from faith, from hope". That is why "we ask the Lord to strengthen us in faith and hope".

"Hardships" there will always be, therefore. But Jesus encourages us to take courage: "I have conquered

*It is good for us to spend time
before the Tabernacle,
to feel the gaze of Jesus upon us.*

(@Pontifex on 5 May)

the world". And "he is above every tribulation, he helps us to go forward". The words Christ chooses to explain this are meaningful "parable of the sower": when "he speaks of the seed that falls on rocky ground he says it is like a person who receives the word with joy and then in a moment of tribulation no longer hears it and becomes discouraged".

This then is the meaning of "undergoing hardship". And "to endure", Francis stated, "is a word that Paul uses frequently: it is more than just having patience, it is carrying on your shoulders, bearing the weight of tribulation". And "the Christian's life has moments like

Giovanni Maria Vian on the mystery surrounding a saint venerated in the month of May

The daughter of St Peter

What remains of Petronilla is a Mass, a painting and a mysterious fresco. In honour of this saint, every year, on 31 May, Mass is celebrated in the Vatican Basilica at the altar dedicated to her, the daughter of the Apostle Peter, and in front of the great mosaic reproduction of the painting by Guercino which depicts her burial and glory. But the celebration and the huge 17th-century painting are only the culmination of a long and intricate history lasting nearly 20 centuries. At the beginning there is an allusion to the wife of Cephas in the authentic Letter of Paul (1 Cor 9:5) and a well-known Gospel episode, when Jesus heals the fever of the mother-in-law of the first of the Apostles (Mk 1:29-31). To these sparse historical references later, in the middle of the fourth century, an equally certain fact was superimposed: the image of a martyr, Petronilla, frescoed in the Roman catacomb of Domitilla.

Peter was married, and although in the texts of the New Testament there is no allusion to a descendant, there is no reason to think that he did not have any. His daughter came on the scene instead without name, later, in a Coptic fragment (fourth or fifth century) belonging to a Greek apocryphal text, the *Acts of Peter*, written toward the end of the second century. "Why did you not rescue your daughter, a virgin, who grew up beautiful and who has believed in the name of the Lord? See, she has a side completely paralyzed and is lying there helpless in a corner. We see those that you have restored to health while you have not helped your daughter in any way", said the crowd to the Apostle, almost scolding him.

From here the story takes a dramatic turn: to show that God can do anything, Peter obtained the girl's recovery, but only for a moment, and immediately after he ordered her to return to her previous state. When faced with the tears and entreaties of those present, he explains that his daughter was paralyzed as a result of his prayers, after being kidnapped by the rich Ptolemy, who finally returned her to her parents. "We took her away, praising the Lord that had spared his servant from violence, shame and corruption. That is why the girl is in this state", concludes the Apostle. The rich suitor repents and, after his death, leaves in his will a piece of land to the girl. Peter sells it but, keeping nothing for himself or his daughter, distributes the proceeds to the poor.

A text of Gnostic origin, the *Acts of Peter* presents the episode in a negative light, and consequently a radical lack of esteem for devaluation of the body, the sexual dimension and marriage. A tendency that was accentuated in the allusion to the same episode in another Gnostic apocryphal work, the *Acts of Philip*, written in Greek at the beginning of the fourth century: "Peter, the leader, thus fled from every place where there was a woman. Moreover he

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Veneranda and Petronilla
(Catacomb of Domitilla,
Rome)

was embarrassed on account of his daughter, who was very beautiful. Therefore he prayed to the Lord and she became paralyzed on one side, so that she might not be beguiled".

A correction in the orthodox sense of the Gnostic legend took place in the sixth century, when in the *Passion of Sts Nereus and Achilles* the name of Petronilla appears (which recalls by its similarity that of Peter), healed by her father and then betrothed to the pagan Flacco. However he died after three days, and she thus avoided the unwanted marriage. In the second half of the 13th century this version was inserted and widely circulated in the *Legenda Aurea* of the Dominican James of Voragine: the paralysis, however, was reduced to a fever, and Peter heals her completely, she only escapes the constraint to marry by dying. Here with the iconography up to the painting by Guercino.

With her story Petronilla, who died without issue in Late Antiquity, emphasizes the rejection of any dynastic claim to the succession of the Apostle, just as strict rules prohibit the appointment of a Successor by the Bishop of Rome who is in office. Meanwhile, the presence of the burial chamber of Petronilla – "a most sweet daughter" – in the catacombs of Domitilla suggests the identification with that of the Apostle as does the dedication of a church nearby. In the same catacomb there is an unnoticed fresco depicting a young Christian martyr, Petronilla, who leads another woman, Veneranda, into paradise.

Time passed, and half way through the ninth century, to symbolically support the strategic alliance with the Frankish kings, the sarcophagus of Petronilla was translated to the Basilica built by Constantine over the tomb of the Apostle, in a small Theodosian

mausoleum which became the Shrine of the new protectors of the See of Rome. So from then on, the daughter of St Peter was affiliated to "the eldest daughter of the Church". In fact it was a French cardinal who paid a very young Florentine sculptor, Michelangelo Buonarroti, for a marvellous Pietà that was placed in the ancient chapel, later demolished. But the new Basilica would host the one in honour of St Petronilla, to the right of the altar of the Chair by Bernini. And if modernity seems opposed to ties with France, it is precisely the French ambassadors to the Holy See, from Chateaubri to the representatives of the Republic, without distinction, who have kept it alive, even to restoring the annual Mass in the second half of the 19th century. In honour of a mysterious girl, but one of whom there remains certain Christian witness in the footsteps of Peter.

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

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this". But "Jesus tells us: 'Have courage in that moment. I have won, and you too will be winners'. Thus "this first word enlightens us" in facing "the most difficult moments in life, those moments that make us suffer".

Francis then recalled how Paul, "after having given this counsel, organizes the Church, prays over the presbyters, lays hands upon them and entrusts them to the Lord". And we come to the second word: "trust". Indeed, "a Christian can carry forward every tribulation and even outright persecution by entrusting himself to the Lord: only he is capable of giving us strength, of allowing us to persevere in the faith, of giving us hope".

We need to know how "to entrust something to the Lord, entrust this difficult moment to the Lord, entrust oneself to the Lord, entrust our faithful to the Lord, our priests,

bishops, entrust our families to the Lord, our friends". We need to know how to say to the Lord: "Take care of these, they are yours".

However, the Pope highlighted, it is "not a prayer that we always make: the prayer of entrustment". It is a beautiful Christian prayer when one says: "Lord I entrust to you this, I bring it here before you". It is "an attitude of trust in the power of the Lord, and in the tenderness of the Lord who is Father". That is why "when this prayer is said – but truly, from the heart – one feels that this person who was entrusted to the Lord is safe: he never disappoints".

In short, "hardship makes you suffer, trust in the Lord gives you hope and, from here, the third word rises: peace". All this, the Pope came to the point, "gives you peace". And it is also "what Jesus says as a farewell to his disciples: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you', as we read in the Gos-

pel of John (14:27-31). But, the Pope warned, this is not about "mere tranquility". Jesus is more precise: "My peace is not the kind of peace that the world gives", the kind that gives a sort of tranquility. Rather the peace that comes from Jesus "goes within", it is "a peace that gives you strength, that reinforces what today we asked of the Lord: our faith and our hope".

We should never forget that "in life we must go through hardship", because that "is the law of life"; but we should always remember in those moments to "entrust ourselves to the Lord". And "he will respond to us with peace". The Lord "is Father, he loves us very much and never disappoints us" the Pope reaffirmed. And he closed by asking that God "strengthen us in our faith and in our hope", granting us "the trust to overcome every tribulation, for He has overcome the world", and to all people everywhere he offers his peace.

To the Bishops of Benin the Pope recommends vigilance to reinforce harmony among the religions

A fragile legacy

"Benin is an example of harmony among the religions present on its territory". However, in the "current world climate", vigilance must be maintained to "preserve this fragile legacy". This was recommended by Pope Francis to the bishops of the African country, whom he received in audience on Monday morning, 27 April, on the occasion of their visit 'ad Limina Apostolorum'. The following is a translation of the French address which was consigned to the prelates.

Dear Brother Bishops,

I am very happy to welcome you on the occasion of your pilgrimage to the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul. I cordially greet Archbishop Antoine Ganyé, President of your Conference, and I thank him for his words. I hope that your visit to Rome may be for you a time of deep reflection and a peaceful return to the spiritual sources, may it give you the opportunity to give thanks for the fine work carried out in your dioceses to proclaim the Gospel, and may it offer you the necessary help to persevere in your mission as pastors.

Our meeting manifests the fraternal communion which exists among all bishops, and with the one who presides over this communion: the Successor of Peter.

I formulate the vow that, once you have returned to your dioceses, you may keep in mind this profound and supernatural reality: you are never alone. We are all united at the service of one Lord.

First of all I should like to thank the Lord for the progress which, through the exercise of your ministry, the Church in Benin is able to make. You bear a witness of beautiful enthusiasm by the visible expression of the faith of the People of

withstand and conquer the headwinds that are rising throughout the world and which will not fail to blow in your land too. I know that you are vigilant regarding the numerous ideological and media attacks. The spirit of secularism is at work in your country too, although not clearly seen yet. Only a faith deeply rooted in the hearts of the faithful, and lived concretely, will enable you to confront all of this.

I am thinking in particular of the main challenges to the family to which the next Synod in Rome will seek to respond. I thank you for your prayers in this respect, and for your prayers for me; I also thank you for the programme you have planned with your dioceses, in order to take part in this most important reflection. I cannot but encourage you to continue with determination the efforts undertaken to support families, in their faith as well as in their daily life. I know that the pastoral care of marriage is still difficult, bearing in mind the actual, social and cultural situation of your people. One must never become discouraged, however, but persevere without pausing, so that the family the Catholic Church defends is a reality wanted by God; it is a gift of God that brings to people as well as to societies: joy, peace, stability, hap-



many Catholic schools, and the young people are well integrated in the movements. This effort must be followed without pause, for the integral formation, both human and spiritual, of the young generations is important for the future of the society to which they can then make their precious contribution, especially in terms of solidarity, justice and respect for others. It is necessary in fact to foster in your country – naturally without compromising the truth revealed by the Lord – the encounter between cultures, as well as dialogue between religions, particularly with Islam. It is well known that Benin is an example of harmony among the religions present on its territory. It is important to remain vigilant, bearing in mind the current world climate, in order to preserve this fragile legacy. I am particularly pleased about the recent international conference on interreligious dialogue, held recently under Cardinal Tauran's presidency, which was appreciated by all.

By fostering accord and justice, dear brothers, your local Churches thus have a leading role to play in the advancement of your country. But this role is also fulfilled through works of health care and of human advancement. How much work has been accomplished in the name of the Gospel in your dioceses! While the worldwide economic crisis strikes a great number of countries, it is important to swim courageously against the tide, fighting against the widespread "throw-away" culture (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 53) and spreading the Gospel values of welcome and of encounter. "The service of charity is also a constituent element of the Church's mission and an indispensable expression of her very being" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 179). It is necessary, however, to be well aware that the works carried out by the Church have a finality which must be clearly identified: it is never simply a matter of social assistance, but of showing the tenderness and mercy of Jesus himself, who bends over the wounds and weaknesses of his own brothers and sisters. Thus, the joy of the Gospel is announced in the most efficient way to people. Warm gratitude goes to those who work with you, be they priests, lay faithful, or men and women religious. I invite the latter to live the *Year of Consecrated Life* intensely so

that their life and their actions may be even more deeply rooted in Christ Jesus. In this way we "will be empowered to love, in truth and mercy, every person who crosses our path. For we will have learned from Jesus the meaning and practice of love. We will be able to love because we have his own heart (cf. *Apostolic Letter to All Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 28 November 2014).

I also wish to pay homage to the generous commitment of priests to the service of the Good News. The Lord blesses your communities with the flowering of many priestly vocations. Formation in the seminary is decisive for the future, and I urge pastors to ensure its balance, which must always be human, spiritual and communitary, as well as intellectual. The Bishop must be a father to his priests, favour communion and brotherhood in the heart of the priestly family. He must take care of those who are in difficulty, of the most fragile, especially the young, who need to be accompanied more closely. Moreover, since there is no shortage of vocations, you are willing to share your resources generously with the Churches of other regions who are without. It is necessary however, when you send priests to study or on foreign mission, to do so with discernment, never forgetting the needs of your own Churches.

Dear Brother Bishops, the Church in Benin is on good terms with the civil authorities. The voice of the Church is listened to and her work is appreciated. I invite you to continue to fill your role in the public life of the country, especially in these times. I know you are engaged in an on-going endeavour to encourage relations among the different members of society. I invite you to persevere on this path, being careful not to enter directly into politics nor party disputes. The management of public affairs lies with the laity while your important, constant duty is to form and encourage.

May the Virgin Mary sustain you and enlighten you in your ministry, and lead you, as well as your priests, consecrated people, catechists and all the lay people of your dioceses, to her Son Jesus. To all I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing.



"Last Supper"

God. Parish life is lively, large numbers of faithful attend the celebrations, conversions to Christ are numerous, as well as priestly and religious vocations. Nevertheless you are right to emphasize in your reports that this faith, although increasingly widespread, is sometimes superficial and lacks soundness. It is therefore important that the desire for a profound knowledge of the Christian mystery may not be the exclusive right of the elite, but that it enliven all the faithful, for all are called to holiness. This is essential so that the Church in Benin may

pinness. What is at stake is important, since, the family is the basic cell both of society and of the Church, it is within it that the human and authentic Gospel values are passed on: "the educational mission of the Christian family [is] a true ministry through which the Gospel is transmitted and radiated, so that family life itself becomes an itinerary of faith and ... a school of following Christ" (*Familiaris Consortio*, n. 39).

Another important challenge that you are carefully addressing regards young people and education. In your dioceses you have opened

Message for the 750th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri

A prophet of hope

"Prophet of hope, a herald of humanity's possible redemption and liberation" who "invites us to regain the meaning of our human journey", travelling through the "many dark woods" which surround us and "making the pilgrimage towards the goal, the Love that moves the sun and all the other stars". With a message, entrusted to Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, Pope Francis thus participated in the ceremony celebrating the 750th anniversary of the birth of Dante, held in the hall of the Senate of the Republic of Italy with President Sergio Mattarella. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's message which was written in Italian.



To the Venerable Brother
Cardinal GIANFRANCO RAVASI
President of the
Pontifical Council for Culture

On the occasion of the solemn celebration of the 750th anniversary of the birth of the supreme poet Dante Alighieri, being held at the Senate of the Republic of Italy, I wish to address my cordial and friendly greeting to you and to those who will be participating in commemorating Dante. In particular I greet the President of the Republic of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, the President of the Senate, Pietro Grasso, to whom go warm congratulations for this important initiative, and Minister Dario Franceschini. I extend a greeting to all the authorities present, to the Dante Alighieri Society, to the scholars of Dante, to the artists and to those whose presence honours one of the most illustrious figures not only for Italians but for all of humanity.

With this message, I would like to add my voice to those who consider Dante Alighieri an artist of the greatest universal esteem, who through his immortal works still has much to say and offer to those who desire to travel the way to true knowledge, to the authentic discovery of self, of the world, of life's profound and transcendent meaning.

Many of my Predecessors solemnly commemorated anniversaries regarding Dante with documents of great importance, in which the figure of Dante Alighieri was proposed anew of his relevance and because of his greatness, not only artistically but also theologically and culturally.

Benedict XV dedicated the Encyclical *In praedara summorum*, dated 30 April 1921, to the Supreme Poet on the sixth centenary of his death. With this document, the Pope intended to affirm and highlight "the intimate union of Dante with this Chair of Peter". Admiring "the greatness and keenness of his genius", the Pontiff asked that "the measure in which he drew inspiration from the Divine Faith" be recognized and to consider the importance of a correct and non-reductive reading of the Dante's work, especially in schools and universities.

Later Blessed Paul VI, who had the figure and work of Dante particularly at heart, dedicated the very beautiful Apostolic Letter *Altissimi cantus*, at the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council – exactly 50 years ago – to him. He pointed out the fundamental features, which are always present in Dante's works, with great sensibility and depth. Paul VI with strength and intensity affirmed that "Dante is ours! Ours, meaning of the Catholic faith" (n. 9). So much so that at the end of the Dante's work, Paul VI clearly stated that "The aim of the *Comedy* is primarily practical and transformative. It does not only seek to be beautiful and morally good poetry but effectively able to change man radically leading him from chaos to wisdom, from sin to holiness, from poverty to happiness, from contemplating the horrors of hell to the beatitude of paradise" (n. 17). He then quoted the important passage from the Poet's letter to Can Grande della Scala: "the purpose of the whole as well as of the part is to bring those living in this life from the state of misery, to lead them to the state of bliss" (n. 17).

St John Paul II and Benedict XVI also often referred to works by the Supreme Poet and often quoted him. In my first Encyclical, *Lumen Fidei*, I also chose to draw on the immense heritage of images, sym-

bols, values constructed by Dante's work. To describe the light of faith, a light to be rediscovered and to be found once again so that it may illuminate all of human existence, I used the Poet's evocative words who described it as "spark, which then becomes a burning flame and like a heavenly star within me glimmers" (n. 4; cf. *Paradiso* XXIV, 145-147).

On the Vigil of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which will open on 8 December 50 years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, I sincerely hope that the celebration of the 750th anniversary of Dante's birth, like that of the seventh centenary of his death in 2021, may make the figure of Alighieri and his work understood and appreciated again, to accom-



The Popes and the Comedy

On 4 May Italy celebrated its greatest poet. The Pio Rajna Centre, a place of literary, linguistic and philological research, and the Casa di Dante, organized the event honouring Dante on the 750th anniversary of his birth. At the ceremony Roberto Benigni performed a reading of the 33rd canto of *Paradise* and Rosa Feola sang the *Canto dalla Vita nuova*, which was composed by Nicola Piovani for the occasion. Dante – poet of theologians and a theologian of poets – has always been loved by pontiffs, even if he wasn't always kind to the Successors of Peter. During this journey in the *Comedy*, Dante meets five Popes in hell and three – Adrian V, Martin IV and Clement IV – in purgatory. Paul VI often asked his secretary to read him a canto of the *Divine Comedy* or a chapter from *The Betrothed*. It was also Paul VI that gave all the bishops of Vatican II a special edition of the *Divine Comedy*.

pany us on our personal and community journey. In fact the *Comedy* can be read as a great itinerary, rather as a true pilgrimage, both personal and interior, as well as communal, ecclesial, social and historic. It represents the paradigm of every authentic voyage in which humanity is called to leave behind what Dante calls "the little patch of earth that makes us here so fierce" (*Par.* XXII, 151) in order to reach a new condition, marked by harmony, peace and happiness. This is the horizon of all authentic humanism.

Dante is therefore a prophet of hope, a herald of humanity's possible redemption and liberation, of profound change in every man and woman, of all of humanity. He invites us to regain the lost and obscured meaning of our human journey and to hope to see again the bright horizon which shines in the full dignity of the human person. Honouring Dante Alighieri, as Paul VI previously invited us to do, we can be enriched by his experience to pass through the many dark woods still widespread in our land and to complete happily our pilgrimage through history in order to arrive at the goal dreamt of and yearned for by every man and woman: "the Love that moves the sun and all the other stars" (*Par.* XXXIII, 145).

From the Vatican, 4 May 2015



Etchings of Canto 31 of 'Paradiso' by Gustave Doré

Franciscus