

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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At the General Audience the Pope speaks about unity in the Church

## Less gossip in the parish

When one speaks of "sins against the unity" of the Church, one should consider not only the great schisms. Parishes, rather than being "places of sharing and communion", are often "sadly marred by envy, jealousy, antipathy". This was Pope Francis' reflection at the General Audience on Wednesday, 27 August, in St Peter's Square. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning,

Every time we renew our profession of faith by reciting the "Creed", we affirm that the Church is "one" and "holy". She is *one*, because her origin is in the Triune God, the mystery of unity and full communion. The Church, then, is *holy*, as she is founded by Jesus Christ, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, showered with his love and his salvation. At the same time, however, she is holy and made up of sinners, all of us, sinners, who experience our fragility and our misery every day. Thus, this faith which we profess urges us toward conversion, to have the courage to live unity and holiness daily, and if we are not united, if we are not holy, it is because we are not faithful to Jesus. But He, Jesus, does not leave us on our own, He does not abandon his Church! He walks with us, He understands us. He understands our weaknesses, our sins, He forgives us always, if we let him forgive us. He is always with



us, helping us to become less sinful, more holy, more united.

1. The first reassurance we have comes from the fact that *Jesus prayed so much for the unity of the disciples*. This is the prayer of the Last Supper, Jesus asks: "Father, that they may all be one". He prayed for unity, and He actually did so as the Passion was imminent, when He was about to offer His very life for us. That is what we are continually called to reread and meditate on, in one of the most intense and moving passages in Chapter 17 of the Gospel according to John (cf. vv. 11, 21-23). It is so beautiful to know that the Lord, shortly before dying, was not concerned about himself, but was think-

ing about us! And in his heartfelt dialogue with the Father, He prayed precisely that we might be one with Him and with each other. It is with these words that Jesus made himself our intercessor with the Father, so that we too may enter into full communion of love with Him; at the same time, he entrusts us with his spiritual testimony, so that unity may become ever more the distinctive mark of our Christian communities and the most beautiful response to whomsoever asks us to account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15).

2. "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and

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John Paul I's election

## A strengthening of spirit

VINCENZO BERTOLONE

Thirty days sufficed for Albino Luciani, elected Bishop of Rome on 26 August 1978, to leave his mark on the Church and point to the same path set down by the Popes of the Council, John XXIII and Paul VI, whose names he chose along with their prophetic style. And with the sudden death of John Paul I on the evening of 28 September, a 20-year period came to a close, what might be described as a triptych of humility: formed by Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, elected Pope on 28 October 1958; by Giovanni Battista Montini, elected Pope on 21 June 1963; and lastly, for little more than a month, almost like a strengthening of spirit, by Albino Luciani.

Truly an ode to humility, which will endure. "The Church, in this common effort to be responsible and so respond to the pressing problems of the day, is called to give to the world that 'strengthening of the spirit' which is so needed and which alone can assure salvation". Those words uttered by Luciani on 27 August, the day after his election, echo the opening passage of the Conciliar Dogmatic Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" and thus "this community realizes that it is truly and intimately linked with mankind and its history".

The condition of mankind today is unchanged: the joy and sorrow, the hope and anxiety; the response from the community of believers, of the Church, is the same: to give to the world that strengthening of spirit to which the Pope alludes. The Church is called to this, and the world is waiting, having "reached a peak, beyond which yawns the abyss". Indeed, the temptation is always that of "substituting for God one's own decisions, decisions that would prescind from moral laws".

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At the Angelus

## The stones of the Church



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The city of Saint Louis celebrates 250 years

## Saints, society and the primacy of God

"For generations to come the City of Saint Louis will glory in the inspiring example of St Louis of France. This Saint testifies forever to the need to acknowledge the primacy of God, which in turn ensures the dignity of every man, woman and child". These are the words of Cardinal Justin Rigali at a Mass in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis for the 250th anniversary of the City's founding.

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August Becker, "The Founding of St Louis" (circa 1862)

Data on priestly vocations

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Decentralized Christians

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# VATICAN BULLETIN

## AUDIENCES

Wednesday, 27 August

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, SDB, Bishop emeritus of Hong Kong

## CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop José Luis Castro Medellín, MSF, of Tacámbaro, Mexico. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (22 Aug.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Gerardo Díaz Vázquez from the clergy of San Juan de los Lagos, as Bishop of Tacámbaro, Mexico. Until now he has been parish priest of María Reina y Madre de los Campesinos, Tepatitlán (22 Aug.).

Bishop-elect Díaz Vázquez, 48, was born in La Angostura, Mexico. He was ordained a priest on 1 May 1993. He holds a licence in the pastoral care of the family. He has served in parish ministry and as diocesan assistant for the pastoral

care of the family; prefect and professor at the major seminary in San Juan de los Lagos; coordinator of the diocesan commission for the pastoral care of the family and member of the commission for the family of the Ecclesiastical Province of Guadalajara; confessor at the Monastery of the Dominican Sisters at San Miguel el Alto, and member of the diocesan council for pastoral care and director of San Rafael Assistance Fund.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Giuseppe Merisi of Lodi, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (26 Aug.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Maurizio Malvestiti from the clergy of Bergamo, Italy, as Bishop of Lodi, Italy. Until now he has been Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (26 Aug.).

Bishop-elect Malvestiti, 61, was born in Marne, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 11 June 1977. He holds a doctorate in theology. He

has served in parish ministry and as teacher and vice-rector of the middle school at the Bergamo Seminary; office head and then undersecretary at the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, head of the Studies and Formation office; member of the Bilateral Commission between the Holy See and the State of Israel and Palestine; professor at the Pontifical Oriental Institute and rector of the Church of St Blaise for Armenians in Rome.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Daniel Edward Thomas as Bishop of Toledo, USA. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Bardstown and Auxiliary of Philadelphia, USA (26 Aug.).

Bishop Thomas, 55, was born in Philadelphia, USA. He was ordained a priest on 18 May 1985. He was ordained a bishop on 26 July 2006, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Bardstown and Auxiliary of Philadelphia, USA.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Adolfo Zon Pereira, SX, as Coadjutor

Bishop of Alto Solimões, Brazil. Until now he has been parish priest of Santa Rosa de Lima Parish and regional treasurer of the Xaverians in North Brazil (27 Aug.).

Bishop-elect Zon Pereira, 58, was born in Orense, Spain. He made his religious vows for the Pious Society of St Francis Xavier for the Foreign Missions on 2 October 1982 and was ordained a priest on 21 June 1986. He studied philosophy and theology and holds a licence in catechesis and in social doctrine. He has served in parish ministry and as: missionary, vocational and youth animator; local treasurer in Pamplona, Spain. He went to Brazil as a missionary. He was parish priest in the Diocese of Abacletuba; regional vice-superior for the Xaverians in Brazil; professor of the Social Doctrine of the Church at the Regional Institute for Priestly Formation.

## NECROLOGY

Bishop emeritus Ramón Echarren Ystúriz of the Canary Islands, Spain at age 84 (25 Aug.).

## A strengthening of spirit

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These are the dangers and the consequences identified by John Paul I, but they are at the same time human spheres in which Christians can and must give their own strength of soul. He also spells out what the tragic conclusion of removing God would be: "The danger for modern man is that he would reduce the earth to a desert, the person to an automaton, brotherly co-existence to planned collectivization, often introducing death where God wishes life".

Creation, human life, the family, society are still today not only unresolved but in even more critical condition. It is up to the Church, then, to revive, enlighten and form consciences in the fundamental principles that guarantee authentic civilization and a real brotherhood between peoples: respect for one's neighbour, for his life and dignity, care for his spiritual and social progress, "patience and the desire for reconciliation in the fragile building up of peace", the new Pope said on 31 August to members of the Diplomatic Corps.

*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*, Terence once wrote. Sure, there are no easy solutions to difficult problems, "we do not have miracle-solutions for the great world problems", but the Christian community has its own special gift, indeed "very precious" the Pontiff said on 4 September: "a spirit which



helps to unravel these problems and sets them along the course which is essential, that of universal charity and opening to transcendent values, that is opening to God. We will try to carry out this service in simple, clear and trustful language."

These are the terms of spiritual strengthening that the Church and each the faithful has the duty to carry into every field of action; especially in the family, "the domestic Church" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 11). The family, despite adverse winds,

remains a community of love and conjugal love generates new life and is the reflection of God's love. The Church's task is therefore to support and defend the family, "encouraging families to fidelity to the law of God and the Church. We need never fear to proclaim the exigencies of God's word, for Christ is with us and says today as before: 'He who hears you, hears me.'"

In an essential way, therefore, "the indissolubility of Christian marriage is important; although it is a diffi-

cult part of our message, we must proclaim it firmly, because it is part of God's word, part of the mystery of faith. At the same time we are close to our people in their problems and difficulties. They must always know that we love them," the Pope said to a group of archbishops and bishops from the United States on 21 September. Starting again from the family: "We want you to know where our priorities lie" and "the holiness of the Christian family is indeed a most apt means for producing that serene renewal of the Church which the Council so eagerly desired", even if it must go against the tide and be the voice of a minority.

Pope Luciani in his humanity was aware that is not easy to combine the horse and the rider: freedom and authority. The war-horse from a passage in Job "leaps like a locust and snorts" and the prudent rider "mounts the horse and, now with gentle voice, now making judicious use of the spurs, of the bridle and of the whip, he urges it on or controls its impetuous course, curbs it and restrains it", the Pope said, as he took possession of the Basilica of St John Lateran on 23 September. The indispensable condition of this accord lies in following the word and the law of God, according to which "one cannot do good to anyone if one does not first of all wish him well". From this simplicity of heart and service sprang Albino Luciani's strengthening of the spirit.

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cd.english@ossrom.va  
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GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN  
Editor-in-Chief

Carlo Di Cicco  
Assistant Editor

don Sergio Pellini S.D.B.  
Director General

Editorial office  
via del Pellegrino, 00120 Vatican City  
telephone +390669899300, fax +390669883675

Service photo  
photo@ossrom.va www.photo.va

Advertising Agency  
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segreteria@dirizzionesystem@ilsol24ore.com

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## Less gossip in the parish

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn 17:21). The Church has sought from the very start to accomplish this purpose which Jesus had so much at heart. The Acts of the Apostles remind us that the first Christians distinguished themselves by the fact of being "of one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32); the Apostle Paul, then, exhorted his communities not to forget that they "are one body" (1 Cor 12:13). Experience tells us, however, that *there are so many sins against unity*. And let us consider not only the schisms, let us consider the very common lapses in our communities, "parochial" sins, those sins in the parishes. Sometimes, in fact, our parishes, called to be places of sharing and communion, are sadly marred by envy, jealousy, antipathy... And gossip which everyone passes on. There is so much gossip in parishes! It is not good. For example, when one is elected president of that association, they gossip about him. And when another is elected president of Catechesis, the others gossip about her. But this is not the Church. This is not what one should do, we must not do it! We must ask the Lord for the grace not to do it. This happens when we aim for first place; when we place ourselves at the centre, with our personal ambitions and our ways of seeing things, and we judge others; when we look at our brothers faults instead of their talents; when we give more weight to what divides us instead of to what we have in common....

Once, in another diocese I had before, I heard an interesting and kind comment. It was about an older woman who had worked all her life in the parish, and a person who knew her well said: "This woman never criticized, she never gossiped, she always wore a smile". A woman like this could be canonized tomorrow! This is a good example. And if we look at the history of the Church, there are so many divisions among us Christians. Even now we are divided. Also in history, we Christians have made war among ourselves for theological differences. Let us think of the 30 Years' War. But, this is not Christian. We must also work for the unity of all Christians, to take the path of unity which is what Jesus wanted and prayed for.

3. In the face of all of this, we must *make a serious examination of conscience*. In a Christian community, *division is one of the gravest sins*, because it makes it a sign not of God's work, but of the devil's work, who is by definition the one who separates, who destroys relationships, who insinuates prejudice.... Division in a Christian community, whether in a school, a parish, or an association, it is a very grave sin, because it is the work of the Devil. God, instead wants us to develop the capacity to welcome, to forgive and to love each other, to be ever more like Him, who is communion and love. The Church's holiness consists in this: in recognizing herself in God's image,



Greeting the mother and brother of Shahbaz Bhatti, the Christian Pakistani politician assassinated on 2 March 2011

showered with his mercy and his grace.

Dear friends, let these words of Jesus resound in our hearts: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt 5:9). Let us ask sincerely for forgiveness for all the times in which we have caused division or misunderstanding within our communities, knowing well that communion is not achieved except through constant conversion. What is conversion? It is asking the Lord for the grace not to speak ill, not to criticize, not to gossip, to love everyone. It is a grace which the Lord gives us. This is what it means to convert the heart. And let us ask that the daily fabric of our relationships may become an ever more beautiful and joyous reflection of the relationship between Jesus and the Father.

### SPECIAL GROUPS

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Malta and Canada. May Jesus Christ confirm you in faith and make you witnesses of the holiness and unity of the Church. May God bless you all!

I address a cordial welcome to Arabic-speaking pilgrims, especially to those from the Middle East! Dear friends, let us ask sincerely for forgiveness for all the times in which we have caused division or misunderstanding within our communities, knowing well that communion is not achieved except through constant conversion. May the Lord bless you!

Dear Italian-speaking pilgrims: welcome! I greet the Sisters of St Anna, who are celebrating their

General Chapter; the "Comitato Nobile Quartiere Monte" of Piazza Armerina, Sicily, with Bishop Gisana; the "pilgrims of peace" cyclists from Tuscany, accompanied by Bishop Tardelli of San Miniato. I greet the Associations and parish groups, in particular those from Campocavallo, with Bishop Menichelli of Ancona-Osimo. May the visit to the Tombs of the Apostles increase in everyone the sense of belonging to the Church.



Finally, I address the *young people*, the *sick*, and the *newlyweds*. Today we celebrate the memory of St Monica, mother of St Augustine. May her love for the Lord reveal to you, dear *young people*, the centrality of God in your life; may it encourage you, dear *sick people*, to confront moments of suffering with faith; and may it inspire you, dear *newlyweds*, to educate in a Christian manner, the children that the Lord may give you. Thank you.

## For dialogue and peaceful coexistence

Continue to pray for persecuted Christians, especially in Iraq, and visit Pakistan "with the spirit of the father who is beside his children". This was what Martha Jacob, mother of Shahbaz Bhatti, a Pakistani Christian politician assassinated on 2 March 2011, requested of the Pope. They met on Wednesday, 27 August, during the General Audience in St Peter's Square.

Alongside the 89-year-old woman was her son, Paul Jacob Bhatti, who has followed in his brother's footsteps, dedicating himself to politics and becoming a Minister for National Harmony and Minority Affairs, and then President of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance. Bhatti explained, that his "family has always felt the heartfelt closeness of the universal Church and we also remember with gratitude the sensitivity of Pope Benedict XVI". It was this steadfast support, he explained, that "allowed us to never feel alone and is helping us to carry on with our commitment and to promote the rights of Christians". In Pakistan, as in every other "hot zone" on the planet, "we must focus more on dialoguing between religions, tirelessly, especially with the Islamic world", Bhatti said. And we must support "especially those Muslims who seek dialogue and peaceful coexistence with Christians". From our part, he concluded, "we always say that hatred is defeated with love and not with more hate". This is another reason that, despite threats, he has decided not to leave Pakistan.

Before entering St Peter's Square, at the Arch of the Bells the Pontiff also blessed a large artistic float, made entirely of interwoven wheat, portraying St Peter's Square and Basilica. It was created by the residents of Campocavallo di Osimo, Italy. Archbishop Edoardo Menichelli of Ancona-Osimo explained that this tradition dates back to 1939. "The whole town is involved and has a collective experience in communion, in the spirit of cooperation but especially of faith". The prelate also recalled that "in 1994, these genuine artists recreated, also out of wheat, Argentina's Basilica of Luján". In attendance were also several of the Pontiff's distant relatives from the province of Córdoba, Argentina. Among them was Eduardo Bergoglio, Mayor of Alicia, who said that "the testimony of Pope Francis is fostering new spiritual vitality in our people".

Archbishop emeritus of Detroit

## Cardinal Edmund Casimir Szoka dies

*Cardinal Edmund Casimir Szoka, Archbishop emeritus of Detroit, USA, President emeritus of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate of Vatican City State, died on Wednesday night, 20 August, at Providence Park Hospital in Novi, Michigan. He was 87 years old. Having learned of his death, the Pope expressed his condolences in a telegram sent to Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit. The following is the English text of the telegram.*

Having learned with sadness of the death of Cardinal Edmund Casimir Szoka, Archbishop emeritus of Detroit, I offer heartfelt condolences to you and to the clergy, religious and lay faithful of the Archdiocese. Recalling with gratitude the late Cardinal's tireless episcopal ministry in Gaylord and Detroit, and his years of service to the Apostolic See and Vatican City State, I willingly join you in commending the soul of this generous servant of Christ and the Church to the merciful love of God our heavenly Father. To all who mourn Cardinal Szoka in the hope of the Resurrection, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of consolation and peace in the Lord.

FRANCISCUS PP.

*A similar telegram was sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State.*

## Thirty churches reopen in the Philippines after typhoon

More than 30 places of Catholic worship destroyed by Typhoon Yolanda in November 2013 have reopened. These places include the parishes and chapels of Samar and Leyte, the islands hardest-hit by the hurricane. According to Fr Emerson Luego, Director of Caritas for the regions of Visayas and Mindanao "the people are truly happy and excited to see - after so many months - their churches back on their feet". The plan for reconstruction developed by Caritas Manila began at the beginning of 2014 and aims at reopening at least 38 damaged churches and chapels for the community. Fr Luego said that the work will

take place in the Archdiocese of Palo and the Dioceses of Borongan and Calbayog and they hope to conclude before November of this year - in time for Pope Francis' visit to the country in January 2015. The visit which the Pope, according to Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Archbishop of Manila, will bring "solidarity and hope to those who survived the typhoon".

## King of Bahrain donates land for cathedral

Bishop Camillo Ballin, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, has announced that a cathedral will be built in Bahrain on land donated personally by its sovereign and that will be dedicated to Our Lady of Arabia. The Bishop expressed appreciation for this significant gesture at a time when religious minorities are under attack in many Middle Eastern regions. According to the Bishop, the King "has stated his willingness to assist some 200 Christian families from Mosul and receive them in Bahrain, demonstrating his generosity toward Christians".

Edmund Casimir Szoka was born on 14 September 1927 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to a family of Polish immigrants. After his primary studies at St Michael Elementary School in Muskegon, he entered St Joseph's Seminary in Grand Rapids, and then St John's Provincial Seminary in Plymouth. He was ordained a priest on 5 June 1954.

Szoka began his priestly ministry as parish assistant at St Francis Parish in Manistique, but soon thereafter became secretary to Bishop Thomas Noa of Marquette, whom he accompanied to the First Session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. During this time he also served as chaplain at St Mary's Hospital and K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base.

From 1957 to 1959, he studied canon law at the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. Upon returning to the United States in 1960, Szoka served in parish ministry and as chancellor of the Diocese of Marquette and as an official at the matrimonial tribunal in the same diocese.

On 11 June 1971, he was appointed Bishop of Gaylord, Michigan and chose "To live in faith" as his motto, which, according to those who knew him well, was a good description of his spiritual profile and style of service to the Church. A year later, the Bishops of the Fourth Pastoral Region of the U.S. episcopal conference elected him president for the period of 1972-77. At the same time, he was treasurer and secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Michigan.

Then on 21 March 1981 he was appointed Archbishop of Detroit. During his ministry in Detroit he welcomed John Paul II during his pastoral visit in 1987. In 1981 he was appointed President of the executive board of St John's Provincial Seminary in Plymouth, Michigan,



and of Sts Cyril and Methodius Seminary near Orchard Lake Village, Michigan. He was also president of the board of directors of the Episcopal Conference of Michigan, member of the executive committee of The Catholic University of America, and president of the Committee for University Relations. As administrator of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, he served as treasurer of the episcopal conference, where he also served on various committees including those dedicated to human values, bishops, dioceses and provinces, and economic affairs.

In 1983 he participated in the Sixth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Following this experience he attended all the working sessions of the Synod of Bishops until 2005.

At the Consistory, held on 28 June 1988, John Paul II created him a cardinal with the Title of Santi Andrea e Gregorio al Monte Celio. Two years later he was appointed President of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See. On 14 October 1997 he was appointed President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and then on 22 February 2001 as President of the Governorate of Vatican City State.

Cardinal Szoka was often appointed as the Holy Father's Special Envoy to various events including the National Eucharistic Congress of the Philippines in 1990; the Holy See Day at the Taejon International Exposition in 1993; the fourth centenary of Japanese martyrs in 1997; the reconsecration of the Cathedral of Minsk in 1997; the 450th anniversary of the first evangelization in Japan in 1999; the Millennium celebration of the Archdiocese of Wroclaw, Poland in 2000. In 2001 he participated at the inauguration of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, D.C.

Cardinal Szoka was one of the cardinal electors who participated in the 2005 Conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI. On 22 June 2006, the Holy Father accepted his resignation, but, asked him to continue working until 15 September 2006.

Cardinal Szoka's funeral was celebrated on 26 August in the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit and he was laid to rest in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield, Michigan. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals, will also preside at a Mass of suffrage for the President emeritus of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State and of the Governorate in the Church of Maria Madre della Famiglia, located in the building of the Governorate.

## Mass of suffrage for journalist killed by militants in Iraq



On Sunday, 24 August in Rochester, New York, a Mass of suffrage was celebrated for James Wright Foley, the U.S. journalist beheaded in Iraq. He had been taken captive two years ago while covering the conflict in Syria. The Mass, presided by Bishop Peter Libasci of Manchester, was attended by Foley's family members.

Pope Francis sent a letter of condolence, joining "all who mourn him in praying for an end to the senseless violence and the dawn of reconciliation and peace among all the members of the human family" and invoking "the consolation and strength borne of our hope in Christ's Resurrection". The Holy Father's letter, addressed to Bishop William Francis Murphy of Rockville Center, was read at the end of the rite.

At the Angelus the Pontiff speaks of a Christian community founded on the baptized

## The stones of the Church

*At the Angelus on Sunday, 24 August in St Peter's Square, Pope Francis spoke of Christ as the "unique cornerstone" of the Church, and all of the baptized, who, with their "lowly but sincere faith", are called to be "living stones" of the community. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning,

This Sunday's Gospel reading (Mt 16:13-20) is a well-known passage, central to Matthew's account, in which Simon, on behalf of the Twelve, professes his faith in Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God"; and Jesus calls Simon "blessed" for this faith, recognizing in him a special gift of the Father, and tells him: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church".

Let us pause on this very point, on the fact that Jesus gives Simon this name, "Peter", which in Jesus' language is pronounced "Kefa", a word which means "rock". In the Bible this term, "rock", refers to God. Jesus gives it to Simon not because of his character or for his merits as a human, but for his *genuine and steadfast faith*, which comes to him from above.

Jesus feels great joy in his heart because, in Simon, he recognizes the hand of the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit. He recognizes that God the Father has given Simon "steadfast" faith on which He, Jesus, can build his Church, meaning his community, that is, all of us. Jesus intends to give life to "his" Church, a



people founded no longer on heritage, but on *faith*, which means on the relationship with Him, a relationship of love and trust. The Church is built on our relationship with Jesus. And to begin his Church, Jesus needs to find solid faith, "steadfast" faith in his disciples. And it is this that He must verify at this point of the journey.

The Lord has in mind a picture of the structure, an image of the community like a building. This is why, when he hears Simon's candid profession of faith, he calls him a "rock", and declares his intention to build his Church upon this faith.

Brothers and sisters, what happened in a unique way in St Peter, also happens in every Christian who develops a sincere faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Today's Gospel passage also asks each of us, is your faith good? Each one answer in his or her heart. Is my faith good? How does the Lord find our hearts? A heart that is firm as a rock, or a heart like sand, that is doubtful, diffident, dis-

believing? It will do us good to think about this throughout the day today. If the Lord finds in our heart, I don't say a perfect, but sincere, genuine faith, then He also sees in us living stones with which to build his community. This community's foundation stone is Christ, the unique cornerstone. On his side, Peter is the rock, the visible foundation of the Church's unity; but every baptized person is called to offer Jesus his or her lowly but sincere faith, so that He may continue to build his Church, today, in every part of the world.

Even today, so many people think Jesus may be a great prophet, knowledgeable teacher, a model of justice... And even today Jesus asks his disciples, that is, all of us: "Who do you say that I am?". What do we answer? Let us think about this. But above all, let us pray to God the Father, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary; let us pray that He grant us the grace to respond, with a sincere heart: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". This is a

confession of faith, this is really "the Creed". Let us repeat it together three times: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"

*At the end of the Marian prayer, the Holy Father turned his thoughts to the "beloved land of Ukraine" as they celebrated their National Independence Day, and asked the faithful to pray especially for the peoples suffering from the continuing tension and conflict. He then greeted several of the numerous groups in the Square.*

Dear brothers and sisters,

today my thoughts go particularly to the beloved land of Ukraine, whose National Holiday is today, to all its sons and daughters, to their longing for peace and serenity, threatened by a situation of tension and conflict which continues unabated, generating so much suffering among the civilian population. Let us entrust the entire nation to the Lord Jesus and to Our Lady and join in prayer above all for the victims, their families and for all those who are suffering. I have received a letter from a Bishop who informs me of all this distress. Let us pray together to Our Lady for this beloved land of Ukraine on the day of its National Holiday: Hail Mary... Mary, Queen of peace, pray for us!

I cordially greet all the pilgrims of Rome and those from various countries, in particular the faithful from Santiago de Compostela, Spain; the children from Maipù, Chile; the young people from Chiry-Ourscamp, France; and the many attending the international meeting promoted by the Diocese of Palestrina, Italy.

I greet with affection the new seminarians of the Pontifical North American College, who have come to Rome to study theology.

I greet the 600 young people from Bergamo, Italy, who, together with their Bishop have come on foot from Assisi to Rome, that is, "from Francis to Francis", as it is written there. You are good *Bergamaschi!* Last evening your Bishop, along with one of the priests accompanying you, told me how you have lived these days of pilgrimage: my compliments! Dear young people, may you return home with the wish to witness to all the beauty of Christian faith. I greet all the young people from Verona, Montegrotto Terme and Valle Lione, as well as the faithful from Giussano and Bassano del Grappa.

Please, kindly remember to pray for me. Have a happy Sunday and a good lunch! *Arrivederci.*

Marian statue blessed in the Gardens

## Cuba's Patroness in the Vatican

Beginning Thursday, 28 August, a piece of Cuba's religious history has a special place in the Vatican Gardens. A statue of the Our Lady of Charity of Cobre, Patroness of the Caribbean island, has been placed along Via Pio XI, near St John's Tower.

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Camerlengo of Holy Roman Church, who presided at the blessing ceremony, highlighted that Mary, "in Latin American history, has made herself the spokesperson of the necessities of the peoples to know the good news and to adhere to faith in Jesus Christ. In her, the aspirations of humanity and the promise of God come together in mysterious fruitfulness". The Cardinal remarked in particular that in shrines which "emerged in all the countries of Latin America, the people respond to faith and do so with expressions of their culture and their dress". Indeed, in every Marian shrine "the fundamental evangelical words are repeated: the choice of the lowly as God's beloved, the message of salvation which Mary gives us together with the life of the Son, the purification which



gives direction to man's path, the search for the light which illuminates earthly day, the courage of suffering which opens the heart to hope, the encounter with the sacred, so present in the world and so available to all".

It is in this context that the Cuban people venerate Mary as "Our Lady of Charity of Cobre": they consider her their Patroness and "they simply and with affectionate sensitivity call her *Cachita*,

always feeling the benefits of her motherly protection". At the benediction of the statue, the Cardinal added, "a deep spiritual bond between the Vatican and the Shrine of El Cobre is forged". Cardinal Bertone also assured the "benevolence of Pope Francis, who is aware of the homage that we direct to Mary today in these gardens of the Vatican", as well as the blessing and greeting of Benedict XVI, who visited the Shrine during his "unforgettable journey to Cuba" and who "follows us with special love".

The President of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba, Archbishop Dionisio Guillermo García Ibañez of Santiago, recalled the story of the discovery of the image of the Our Lady of Charity. It was found at the beginning of 17th century, in the sea of Bay of Nape, by three slaves working in the Barajagua copper mine. The Archbishop then underlined the great difficulties the population of Cuba had to overcome in the course of the centuries, and affirmed that the Virgin has always been a point of reference for the people.

Helen Kyung Soo Kwon tells the story of a Korean martyr beatified by Pope Francis

## Columba's treasure

CRISTIAN MARTINI GRIMALDI

"Columba Kang Wan Suk, catechist and martyr of the first Korean Catholic community, was born in 1761, in the province of Chungcheong".

These are the words of Helen Kyung Soo Kwon, an elegant woman of genteel manners who speaks English extremely well and is so involved in her community that it took two months to fix an appointment with her. A brief look at her CV gives one an idea of the breadth of her involvement. She was President of the Archdiocese of Seoul's Catholic Women's Organization; Vice-President of the Archdiocese of Seoul's Council for Laity; a member of the Lay Apostolate's Sub-Committee on Women; President of the Organization for Korean Catholic Women; a member of the Steering Committee for Pro-Life Activities for the Korean Bishops' Conference; and currently a member of the Permanent Committee for the World



Helen Kyung Soo Kwon

Union of Organizations of Catholic Women.

Not much has been written on the history of Christianity in Korea, even less on the role played by women. Why? "For a long time, until the opening of the country at the end of the 18th century", Helen Kyung Soo Kwon tells us, "Korea was a very closed society; it's no accident that in the West it was called the Hermit Kingdom. Society at that time was regulated by a political ideology, i.e. Confucianism, which did not allow many opportunities for women at the social level, especially if the women belonged to the wealthy class."

Columba Kwang Wan Suk was beatified by Pope Francis during his visit this month. Can you tell us her story? "Columba was an illegitimate child but she belonged to a noble family. She married Hong Ji-yeong, who already had a son from a prior union. It wasn't until this time," Helen Kyung Soo Kwon explains to us, "that Columba became familiar with the Catholic religion through reading books written by Jesuits and others who had come from China. During the first persecution in

1791, she tended to the health of Christians who had been imprisoned. She had her adopted son learn about Catholicism; he too would later be martyred during the first great persecution. Her husband, on the contrary, constantly criticized her religious passion and ultimately preferred a concubine over her. At this point Columba moved to Seoul, where she'd heard Christians were very numerous. Here – after making contact with the community of the faithful thanks to her social status and therefore to her strong economic power – she decided to "sponsor" messengers to China so that priests might finally come to Korea".

At that time, Helen Kyung Soo Kwon continued, "there was no truly organized Catholic community. It was only with the arrival in the country of Fr James Zhou Wen Moe, i.e. the first priest to step foot in the Kingdom of Choson, that the first baptisms began to occur through the hands of an ordained priest. Columba was among the first to be baptized. She was then chosen by Fr James to be a catechist, and thus spent the whole of her life teaching the catechism. She also hosted Fr James at her home in Seoul during the long period when the priest was being persecuted by the local authori-

ties who had learned of his presence in the city. At the time, inspections in homes owned by women were prohibited. That is how the first priest to enter Korea managed to escape death sentence for many years".

The decision to host a man in her home, even a priest, was a strong break from the conventions of the time, especially considering that noble women could not even leave their homes during the day. They waited until evening when the streets were deserted. As late as 1807 Elizabeth Bird wrote that at around 8 pm the great bells in central Seoul would ring. That was the signal for men to retire to their homes, and for the women to go out.

Helen Kyung Soo Kwon smiles: "Of course, Columba was a true leader and precursor for women's emancipation. I also think of her decision to leave a husband, who preferred a concubine to her. Many women at the time silently



Wooden box covered with sheets of painted buffalo horn (Korea, early 20th century, Vatican Museums Ethnological collections)

endured the presence of another woman in their home. It was through her great charisma, together with the work of Fr James, that the royal family entered the Catholic Church".

Helen Kyung Soo Kwon continues: "The king's half-brother, Mary Song and her adopted daughter Mary Sin – also relatives of the royal family – were all baptized by Fr James. With Christianity then came the first female presidents of the Catholic associations. Even before the Korean Church had a structured hierarchy organized by the foreign missionaries, women had cre-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

From the writings of the author Kyung-sook Shin

## Brushstrokes of Christianity

"One night," Professor Yoon tells his University of Seoul students, "Christopher was fast asleep when he heard a faint voice calling his name. (...) There in the darkness beside the river was a small child. The child told him he had to get to the other side before the night ended, and he asked Christopher to carry him across. The child was so young and his plea so earnest that Christopher agreed to help, despite the late hour. He put the child on his shoulders and entered the river. But the moment he stepped into the river, the water began to rise. In an instant, it nearly reached tall Christopher's head. And that was not all. The child, so light at first, grew heavier as the waters rose. The weight, like a massive piece of iron, unbelievable for such a small child, pushed down on Christopher's shoulders. The waters rose inch by inch, and the child pressed down on him with his enormous weight. The always confident Christopher began for the first time to tremble with fear at the thought that he might drown. Wasted from exhaustion and fear, Christopher plowed his way through the water with the child on his shoulders, barely making it to the other side. As he set the child down, he said, 'I thought I was going to die because of you. Though you are small, you were so heavy that it felt as if I was carrying the weight of the world. I have carried many across the river, but I have never carried one so heavy as you'. At that moment, the child vanished and Jesus appeared before him, surrounded by a dazzling light".

Professor Yoon paused and looked around the room and asked his speechless students: Are you Christopher or are you the child? The scene is taken from the novel *I'll Be Right There* by Kyung-sook Shin. It's a story about the memory of a distant friendship between three young girls, conceived in response to the struggles of a young generation to find its place at a time when South Korea was living through the upheaval of a political revolution. Professor Yoon shows the three girls the way, by encouraging them to take risks, to open themselves up to the world, and to protect one another along the journey to adulthood.

The story of Christopher is only a flash, but it leaves interesting brushstrokes. For, as though illuminated from behind, there shines forth from the pages of Kyung-sook Shin a country touched by Christianity in its encounter (sometimes successful, sometimes less) with traditional Korean society.

Born in 1963 in a mountainous region of South Korea, the fourth of six children, Shin moved to Seoul at the age of 16. She worked by day (sending the money home), and she went to school at night. She made her literary debut in 1985, at the age of just 22, with the short story, *Winter's Fable*.

The first woman and the first Korean to win the Man Asian Literary Prize, the most prestigious on her continent, Kyung-sook Shin became famous in the literary world with the novel, *Please Look After Mom*, which tells



Koh-Varilla Guild, "Korean Pietà" (2013)

the story of a family whose mother, afflicted with Alzheimer's, goes missing. The brushstrokes here are wonderful. Once the faint traces of the old woman have disappeared, the young-est daughter, passing through Rome and having bought the rosary that her mother had asked for long before, goes to pray at St Peter's. "Please look after Mom": in a city that has nothing in common with her mother's story, the daughter is finally able to utter her cry of sorrow before the Pietà, turning to the Mother holding her lifeless son in her arms.

Standing before the one who does what no mother should ever have to do, the daughter learns to trust. (Giulia Galotini)

"I was in Rome when Benedict XVI resigned: I realized it was true when I saw that the Pope's Twitter account had been suspended". Yu-jin Shin, a recent graduate in computer programming, is 27 by Korean calculation. For us, she would be 25. In Korea age includes the nine months spent in the womb – the greatest political statement regarding the beginning of life – and another year is added immediately on 1 January.

Yu-jin Shin, who was in Daejeon to take part in Asian Youth Day, sings and is the leader of her parish choir. She also leads a group of young Catholics who study the Bible. "The Catechism speaks to us about real life issues. It's a way of relating the Bible to the lives of young people, and a way of sharing experiences with the other members of the group", Yu-jin Shin converted 14 years ago. "I was baptized through the influence of my mother, Lucia. And it's also to her that I owe my passion for singing, which I've had since my years in elementary school". The young lady denied being talented, but Rena, who was right next to her, corrected her: she is truly the best, otherwise she wouldn't be the group's soloist and leader.

If her mother was a major influence on Yu-jin Shin's religious choice, her grandmother had been so for her mother. "My grandmother secretly became a Catholic. Her husband was totally against it". The history of Korea has been marked by long periods of persecution. The decision to be baptized in secret had long been almost obligatory in order to avoid being driven out of the community; if one were captured by the authorities, imprisonment and torture were inevitable.

"My grandmother fell ill at the age of 56," Yu-jin explained. "She was then admitted to Seoul St Mary's Hospital. Her roommate was a Catholic who greatly helped her spiritually. From then on my grandmother began secretly to attend Mass. One day, however, she suddenly fainted during a celebration, and thus her family learned that she was being drawn to Catholicism. My grandfather, who was quite taken aback, no longer hindered her. Shortly thereafter my grandmother was baptized; 15 days later she died. Her funeral was held in a Catholic Church. My mother was baptized exactly one year later, at the age of 32. My father, Augustine, however, was convinced to convert by my brother, who had wanted to become a priest, but died very young, at the age of 13".

For Elizabeth, the decision to participate in Asian Youth Day was painful: she had been looking for work, and job hunting in Korea – despite the official unemployment rate of just three percent (in reality, youth unemployment is very high) – requires absolute commitment. Elizabeth explained that devoting even one day a month to choir practice was valuable time taken away from job hunting. It's not surprising, then, that many analysts list the stress of seeking employment as one of the causes of the country's high suicide rates. Yet even when one finds a job, things do not necessarily improve:



Elizabeth, Rena and the other young ladies in the parish choir

The faces and lives of the girls at Asian Youth Day

## The choir girls

Koreans have the longest workdays in the world and very few days off.

It is a very high-pressure work environment, in which one must submit him/herself to senior colleagues and superiors. This often results in real abuse. According to a recent study, nearly half of all nurses have experienced sexual harassment by doctors in the workplace.

Rena – she emphasized that her name comes from reincarnation; her Korean name is You-jung Song – is 22 years old and was baptized four years ago on Easter Sunday. After Catholic school, she entered the Jesuit Sogang University. "My conversion came during a time of high stress from studying in preparation for the KSAT (Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test, i.e. university entrance exam). These exams are another hurdle and source of stress that every Korean has to overcome to reach adulthood. The very challenge of preparing for the exam, quite apart from what it demands, is a rite of passage. It is perhaps the most important moment for every teenager. Nearly 75 percent of the student population participates in additional private lessons to prepare for the exam.

"At the time, I fell ill because of too much studying," Rena recalls. "In addition, my grandmother also fell ill, and my aunt had financial problems, a series of quite unfortunate situations".

The problems began for the girl when her mother put her under too much pressure. So-called "tiger mothers" are a phenomenon which are as much Chinese as they are Korean. An English teacher in Seoul recently asked her 16-year-old students what they fear most: the most common answer by far was "my mother".

Parents place extremely high expectations on their children. They not only expect to be proud of them, something to brag about with their friends; they also expect them to support them financially in their old age. Even today it is an established custom that a son or daughter's first paycheck be given directly to the parents as a symbolic gesture of gratitude. The practice is also present among Koreans residing abroad. A young American man of

Korean origin who works for a company that builds oil refineries recently said that his mother demanded not only his first paycheck from his first job, but his first paycheck from every new job. The matter became quite a burden for him, since in the ten years that preceded, he had changed jobs every 12 months, on average.

"The KSAT," Rena continued, "is the most important test of our lives and I am not exaggerating". She's right: just consider that on the day of the exam in Korea, nearly one million high school students take an exam that will serve as the basis for entrance into the major universities. On that day the stock market opens an hour later. Even the flight schedules for several airlines are adjusted and police officers with ambulances escort students who are late to the various exam sites. Many offices and shops open one hour later in order to guarantee the least possible traffic so as to make it easier for students on their way to the exam.

"All of this seems exaggerated to Westerners", Rena said. "But in Korea, if you don't do well on this test, you won't be able to gain entrance to the universities that count, you won't be able to get a good job, and you might not find a spouse because of your low social status," she concluded almost in jest. Her expression, however, bore no hint of a smile.

It was precisely during this intensely stressful time that Rena drew near to Catholicism. "My mother was already Catholic; she had been baptized five years before. My father, who is a scientist and works at the university, is an atheist. Personally, I always had a good impression of Catholics, including through the stories I heard about John Paul II, who came here to Korea on two occasions before I was born. Some time ago I read an article about an official apology which Pope John Paul II made to each group that had suffered through the mistakes committed in the Church in the past, like the Jews and the Muslims. I was very struck by it and thought that this was truly a great gesture aimed at creating a climate of universal religious reconciliation. Then there are my Catholic friends who do a

lot of volunteer work, which is something quite unusual for young people my age. They inspired me to follow the same path of faith that inspired their own choices. Now, like them, I teach underprivileged children, which is something that fills me with joy. It is an activity that has given me a great deal of human perspective".

Do you ever speak about faith with your father? "No. Not that he was ever opposed to my mother and me becoming Catholic, but for now I do not dare broach the subject with him. My mother tried to draw him closer to the faith, but for now her attempts have failed. Fortunately, not in every respect my parents, for example, take part in monthly meetings in the parish that are called ME, Marriage Encounter: several couples discuss the Bible and their personal lives, their relationship, how to improve their married life, they share their problems. Now my father is also convinced about the benefits of going; perhaps it is a first step towards conversion".

According to a recent survey in Korea, the most trusted religion is Catholicism, while only 20 percent of those interviewed say they trust Protestantism. We asked Rena how she explained such a difference between confessions.

"Surely," Rena responded, "one of the explanations lies in the way they evangelize. Protestants can be very aggressive. For example, at the universities there are people who approach you boisterously (to say the least) in an attempt to lead you to their church. If you don't respond decisively, they don't go away. They insist, they continue to proselytize relentlessly. However, this isn't the only factor: my grandparents were Protestants, and I realize now that their way of living the faith is different than our own. They pray a lot for their own well-being; in prayer, their thoughts turn to the lone individual. But we Catholics live and experience the faith in a more participatory way; we pray for the good of the whole community and for society in general. Perhaps this reason also carries its own weight, maybe this is why Catholicism arouses greater sympathy". (Cristian Martini Grimaldi)

On 24 August in the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis, Cardinal Justin Rigali celebrated Mass in honour of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the City of Saint Louis. As Papal Envoy to the event, the Cardinal read a letter from Pope Francis, who observed that the city was named in 1764 for French King Louis IX, known as a pious reformer, canonized a saint in 1297. The following is Cardinal Rigali's homily at that mass.

It is a privilege for me as Special Envoy of Pope Francis to be here in this great Cathedral Basilica dedicated to St Louis of France, to celebrate with you the 250th anniversary of the City of Saint Louis.

In the name of Pope Francis, I extend greetings to Archbishop Carlson, Pastor of this renowned Archdiocese of Saint Louis, to Archbishop Viganò, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, to Archbishop Jordan, Archbishop of Reims, where St Louis was crowned King of France, to Bishop Rice, Auxiliary Bishop of Saint Louis, to Bishop Hermann, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus, to Bishop Zaidan, Maronite Bishop in Saint Louis, to Abbot Thomas of St Louis Abbey, and to all the bishops present here, so many of whom are sons of St Louis. It is a joy to be gathered also with Prince Louis de Bourbon, descendant of St Louis, with Princess Marguerite, with civic officials, with ecumenical and interreligious guests, and with all the priests, deacons, religious and laity who make up the faithful people of God.

The long-awaited event that we celebrate today in prayer and worship, in ardent thanksgiving to God, is the founding in 1764 of this City of Saint Louis.

We remember the French origin of the settlers who came here with hope for successful trade, but who at the same time launched an initiative that, in the providence of God, was destined in time to develop into a great city. This great city would come to embrace so many different people who would compose it and enrich it. Over the years this city would witness to human solidarity and achievement, as well as to numerous works of Christian service. It would become the Gateway to the West, and in the life of the Catholic Church, it would be known as the Rome of the West.



"St Louis, King of France, and a page"  
by El Greco (1592-95)



Cardinal Rigali's homily commemorating the founding of the City of Saint Louis in 1764

## Saints, society and the primacy of God

This Rome of the West would contribute in so many ways to help uplift in their human dignity the people of God whom divine Providence had brought together in Saint Louis. Among the many heroes of both the city and the Church are numerous women and men religious and numerous clergy, who served with generosity and joy alongside the laity, and whose legacy lives on today. The City of Saint Louis can recognize so much that has been

*St Louis stood as an inspiration to the new community being formed on the banks of the Mississippi. Already in this way there began a recognition of the primacy of God in society – a recognition of the role of religion in public life.*

done in Catholic education and healthcare – so much that has been done to assist those in need and to honor and promote the value of human life and human dignity. A memory of great pride for all of Saint Louis in the struggle for human dignity is the action of Cardinal Ritter, who as Archbishop anticipated the racial integration of Catholic schools seven years before the action of the Supreme Court required it for all schools in the nation.

As we know, the outstanding achievements of the past clearly remain intense challenges for the present and the future.

As we commemorate this important anniversary of the founding of the City of Saint Louis, and as we realize what has been accomplished since the beginning, we pause in admiration that the founders providentially named the city after St Louis of France. Louis IX, who was the patron saint of the reigning monarch Louis XV, stood as an inspiration to the new community being formed on the banks of the Mississippi. Already in this way there began a recognition of the primacy of God in society – a recognition of the role of religion in public life.

St Louis himself was to be-

come not only the patron of the city but eventually an example for thousands and thousands of people who would be edified, uplifted and encouraged by his holy Christian life. Today we look to St Louis, who accompanies us in this Eucharistic celebration. We are helped by his prayers and strengthened by the authenticity of his discipleship.

The word of God that the Church proclaims today in our liturgy helps us to understand this man St Louis and what he stood for. And St Louis helps us to grasp the challenge of God's word for our own lives.

St Louis of France was a faithful Christian, a loving husband and father, a just and compassionate ruler, who lived according to God's holy word. He understood and took to heart what Jesus called the greatest commandment in the law: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest ...". The second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself".

In the final analysis, this is what the City of Saint Louis is all about. This is how every city is meant to live: in the love of God and neighbor. Our patron St Louis knew that this is what life itself is all about. For this reason he loved his family, served his people and tried to lead others to Jesus Christ.

Today, the Church applies to St Louis these words of our responsorial psalm: "Blessed the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commands. His posterity shall be mighty upon the earth".

For generations to come the City of Saint Louis will glory in the inspiring example of St Louis of France and in the great ideals that he offers to its citizens. This Saint testifies forever to the need to acknowledge the primacy of God, which in turn ensures the dignity of every man, woman and child.

Pope Francis, who spiritually shares with us the joy of this occasion, points out how appropriate it is to render thanks to God for all that has been accomplished in the

history of this city. Our celebration rightly takes on this great dimension of thanksgiving, which we express today in humble prayer.

But the culminating expression of our thanksgiving comes about for us in this Mass, in this Eucharistic Sacrifice, in union with our Lord Jesus Christ as he offers himself to the Father for us. Jesus Christ himself thanks his Father for the countless blessings given to this city over the years and for all those who, notwithstanding human weakness, have striven earnestly, following the example of St Louis, to follow God's commandments.

Our resolution on this important anniversary is to move forward together, to continue to build, here on the banks of the Mississippi, a civilization of justice and love, where the primacy of God is upheld and where the dignity of every man, woman and child is respected and honored. To reach such an important goal we invoke the intercession of Mary, the Mother of God and ask again the prayers of our patron, St Louis, who is often depicted together with two other great intercessors, St Vincent de Paul and St Rose Philippine Duchesne, whose impact on the history of Saint Louis has also been felt so strongly over the years.

We remember finally a great saint of our own day, Saint John Paul II, who 15 years ago in this very Cathedral Basilica launched a challenge – today more relevant than ever – to Saint Louis and all America. And as we are called to pray for all our brothers and sisters affected by the current challenges in Ferguson and express to them our deep solidarity in the search for true and lasting solutions, we repeat those powerful words of John Paul II: "If you want peace, work for justice. If you want justice, defend life. If you want life, embrace the truth – the truth revealed by God".

In our quest, then, for peace and justice, for life and truth, we are called once more to acknowledge the primacy of God and accept his twofold commandment of love – love of God and love of neighbor – as the basis of our lives and the foundation of Saint Louis and of all society. Amen.

Message for the 35th Rimini Meeting

# Decentralized Christians

*The following is a translation of Pope Francis' message which was written in Italian for the opening of the 35th Meeting of Friendship held in Rimini, on Sunday, 24 August. The text was signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, and sent to Bishop Francesco Lambiasi of Rimini.*

Your Excellency,

On the occasion of the 35th Meeting for Friendship among Peoples, I am pleased to convey to You, to the organizers and volunteers, and to all those attending the cordial greeting and the blessing of His Holiness Pope Francis, together with my personal good wishes for the success of this important initiative.

The theme chosen for this year – *To the Ends of the Earth and of Existence* – echoes a constant solicitude of the Holy Father. Since his episcopate in Buenos Aires, he has realized that the “ends of the earth” are not only places, but also and above all people, as he said in his intervention during the pre-Conclave General Congregation meetings of the Cardinals: “The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all forms of misery” (9 March 2013).

Thus Pope Francis thanks the leaders of the Meeting for having accepted and taken up his invitation to journey in this perspective. According to the Gospel, an “outgoing” Church is the only way; this is shown by the life of Jesus, who went from village to village proclaiming the Kingdom of God and sent his disciples before him. This is why the Father sent him into the world.

The second part of the Meeting's theme – *Destiny Has Not Left Man Alone* – is an expression of the servant of God, Don Luigi Giussani, which reminds us that the Lord has not left us to ourselves, he has not forgotten us. In ancient times he

chose one man, Abraham, and he set him on a journey toward the Promised Land. And in the fullness of time he chose a young woman, the Virgin Mary, in order to take on flesh and come to live among us. Nazareth was truly an insignificant village, a “periphery” with respect to both politics and religion; but that was exactly where God looked to fulfil his plan of mercy and faithfulness.

A Christian is not afraid to decentralize, to go toward the ends of the earth, because his centre is in Jesus Christ. He frees us from fear; in his company we are able to move forward safely in any place, even through the dark times of life, knowing that, wherever we go, the Lord always goes before us with his grace, and it is our joy to share with others the good news that He is with us. Jesus' disciples, after completing a mission, returned with joy because of their success. But Jesus told them: “Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20-21). It is not we who save the world, it is only God who saves it. Today's men and women run the great risk of a sad, individualistic, isolated life, even in the midst of an abundance of consumer goods, from which many others, however, remain excluded. Often prevailing lifestyles lead to placing one's hope in financial security or in power or in purely earthly success. Christians also run this risk. The Holy Father has affirmed that “In some places a spiritual ‘desertification’ has evidently come about, as the result of attempts by some societies to build without God” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 86). But this must not discourage us, as Benedict XVI reminded us when he inaugurated the Year of Faith: “In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today's world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, with their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive” (*Homily at the Mass for the Opening of the Year of Faith*, 11 October 2012).

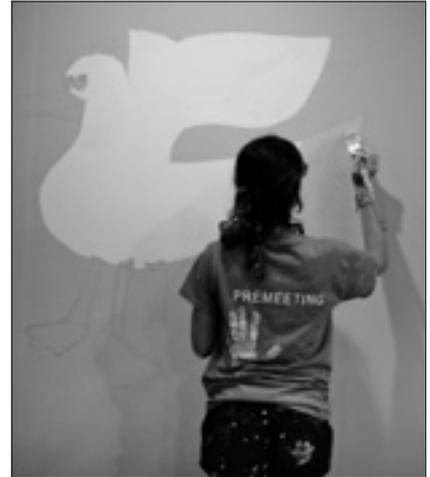
Pope Francis calls for collaboration, also from the Meeting for Friendship among Peoples, for this return to the essential, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction’” (*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 15), that is, “by way of a personal witness or gesture, or in a way which the Holy Spirit may suggest in that particular situation” (*ibid.*, n. 128).

The Holy Father calls the attention of the leaders and participants of the Meeting to two particular

points.

First and foremost, he asks them never to lose touch with reality, rather, to love reality. This too is part of the Christian witness: in the presence of a dominant culture which gives top priority to appearances, all that is superficial and temporary, the challenge is to choose and love reality. Don Giussani left this legacy as a plan of life, when he said: “The only condition for being truly and faithfully religious is always to live reality intensely. The formula for the journey to the meaning of reality, without preclusion, means without negating or forgetting anything. Indeed, it would not be human, that is to say, reasonable, to take our experience at face value, to limit it merely to the crest of the wave, without discerning the core of its motion” (*The Religious Sense*, p. 150).

Additionally, his invitation is to always keep one's gaze focused on the essential. The most serious problems, in fact, arise when the Christian message is identified by secondary aspects, which do not convey the heart of the message. In a world where, after 2,000 years, Jesus is once again unknown in so many countries, also in the West, “We need to be realistic and not assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel which gives it meaning, beauty and attractiveness” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 34). For this, a world in such rapid transformation calls Christians to be available to look for forms or ways to communicate with a language which comprehends the perennial newness of Christianity. In



this too it is important to be realistic. “Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way” (*ibid.*, n. 46).

His Holiness shares these reflections as his contribution to the week of the Meeting, to all those who will attend it, particularly to the leaders, the organizers and relators who will come from the peripheries of the world and of existence to witness that God the Father does not leave his children alone. The Pope hopes that many will be able to relive the experience of the first disciples of Jesus, those who, encountering him on the banks of the Jordan, heard him ask: “What are you looking for?”. May this, Jesus' question always accompany the journey of those attending the Meeting for Friendship among Peoples.

While asking us to pray for him and for his ministry, Pope Francis invokes the maternal protection of the Virgin Mother and from his heart imparts the Apostolic Blessing to Your Excellency and the entire community of the Meeting.

## Columba's treasure

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

ated their own associations with a female in charge. These were the first signs that female emancipation was possible”.

We already know the end of the story, but we ask Helen Kyung Soo Kwon to recount it for us. How did Columba die? “During the Sinyu persecution in 1801, Columba was reported for her religious activities. She was arrested on 6 April, together with other faithful who were in her home. She was tortured at length in an attempt to make her reveal the location where Fr James was hiding, but she didn't give in. On 2 July of that same year, she was condemned to death. She was beheaded outside Seoul's western door. She had just turned 40”.

## Case of former Nuncio Wesołowski

Former Nuncio Józef Wesołowski has recently appealed, within the prescribed limit of two months, against the most serious canonical sentence of a return to the lay state that has been imposed upon him. The appeal will be judged without delay over the course of the coming weeks, most likely in October 2014. This was announced by the Holy See Press Office on 25 August.

It is important to note that former Apostolic Nuncio Wesołowski has ceased functioning as a diplomat of the Holy See and has therefore lost his related diplomatic immunity, as has been previously stated, the punitive procedure of the Vatican's civil judiciary departments will continue as soon as the canonical sentence becomes definitive.

Regarding stories that have appeared over the past few days in various media, it is important to note that the Authorities of the

Holy See, from the very first moment that this case was made known to them, moved without delay and correctly in light of the fact that former Nuncio Wesołowski held the position of a diplomatic representative of the Holy See. This action relates to his recall to Rome and to the treatment of the case in relation to Authorities of the Dominican Republic. Far from any intention of a cover-up, this action demonstrates the full and direct responsibility shown by the Holy See even in such a serious and delicate case, about which Pope Francis is duly and carefully informed and indeed wishes to address justly and rigorously.

Finally we must state that since former Nuncio Wesołowski has ended all diplomatic activity and its related immunity, he might also be subjected to judicial procedures from the courts that could have specific jurisdiction over him.

VITTORIO FORMENTI  
and ENRICO NENNA\*

The potential for renewal of the apostolate depends on a series of factors, the first of which is the number of vocations, or candidates to the priesthood, estimated by the number of students enrolled in the faculties of philosophy and theology in diocesan and congregational seminaries.

Looking at the annual evolution of the number of seminarians in the Catholic world, one observes an almost uninterrupted, steady increase of 57,381 over the whole period from 1978 to 2012. From an analysis of smaller areas, however, different situations emerged.

#### Trends in vocation from 1978 to 2012

The Americas showed a fairly steady increase in the number of candidates up to 1998, with an increase of 63.9% with respect to the initial data collected. Thereafter the number began to stabilize at roughly 35,000-36,000. Africa and Asia showed steady growth, in spite of a pronounced downward trend in more recent years. During the period under study, Africa, Asia and the Americas registered a balance of 22,092, 24,139 and 13,830 units, respectively.

The European figures in absolute terms, can be divided into three distinct periods: from 1978 to 1992, growth from 23,000 to over 30,000; subsequently, up to 1998, a period of stability of around 28,000 units; and finally, the last years show an evident decrease, down to 19,928 units in 2012. Between 1978 and 2012, a deficit of 2,974 seminarians was observed.

In Oceania, trends were more varied and the increases far lower: an increase of 294 units was registered between 1978 and 2012.

The comparison of the number of priestly vocations on the different continents, which does not take into account the diverse entities of the various groups of seminarians, is shown by relative variations. In comparison to 1978, increases higher than the worldwide figure of 91.6% were registered in 2012 in Africa with 392%, and Asia with 213%; the increase registered in the Americas (63%) and in Oceania (38%) was below the average variation, while Europe registered a downward trend of 13%. However, an analysis of the Americas by subcontinent shows different situations: a significant increase in South America (131%) and other areas of Latin America (132% for the Antilles and 164% for Central America), countered by a heavy downturn in North America (36%). An increase in the number of vocations in Southeast Asia (216%) was also noteworthy.

The above-mentioned regional statistics are emblematic of two conditions currently experienced in the Catholic world: that of Europe and North America, which, until recently, carried out mission work in the rest of the world, are now un-



Detail  
of "Ordination  
of St Lawrence  
the Deacon"  
(1447-1448)  
by Fra  
Angelico

Data on priestly vocations throughout the world

## And the seeds continue to grow

able to supply them through an influx of new vocations; that of Africa and especially Southeast Asia, which are served by a greater number of priests in proportion to the Catholic faithful, and which expresses an important stream of new vocations.

A more analytical territorial study also conducted in Countries with a consistent number of major seminarians shows that – except for a small number of cases in which precise trends are not always noticeable – in the period of 1978-2012, in the vast majority of the areas studied there were trends similar to those seen previously; a drop followed by a steady increase, growth or decline.

North America showed by a steady decrease in vocations up to 2004 and a subsequent rise in the following years which resulted, overall, in 3,450 fewer seminarians between 1978 and 2012. However the future trend may be similar to the parabolic trend, since the two largest North American countries seem to have surmounted the lowest point: in the United States in 2004, and in Canada in 2009. It is impossible to state with certainty that the crisis has passed, given the unsteady trend in vocations following the years indicated and due to the lowest percentage increase in the average number of seminarians that was registered annually in Canada and the United States during the said period.

Central America, on the other hand, demonstrated robust growth until 1999 (183.5% compared to 1978) and a subsequent period of stability at approximately 8,300 units, i.e., roughly 700 fewer seminarians in comparison to the 1999 figure. Mexico, with the highest demographic figures on the continent, reached a maximum in 2008, subsequent stability, but with consistent adjustment and a balance of 3,973 seminarians over the entire period; similarly there was an increase in vocations in Costa Rica, while the upward trend in Guatemala was like that of the Antilles. South America presented continuous growth in vocations until 2002, then a decrease in the following years slightly less than consistent with the maximum point. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela had an upward trend similar to that of the American subcontinent, while the trend in Paraguay and Peru was characterized by a decrease in vocations followed by an increase (but the minimum was reached at different times).

The steady growth noted in Africa was also seen in many of its coun-

tries. Several, in fact, demonstrated a percentage increase higher, already very high (392%), than that of the entire continent: Nigeria, where the increase was 572% was exceeded by Cameroon (751%), Madagascar (942%) and Angola, which showed the highest percentage increase in vocations (2,117%).

In Asia, the Republic of Korea registered an increase in vocations up to 1999 with a decrease in following years (with an overall percentage increase of 189.6%), but the continent's other large countries, including India, the Philippines and Indonesia, showed a steady increase in vocations for the entire period, and the overall percentage increase was significant: India (228%), the Philippines (116%) and Indonesia (291%).

In Europe all the principal countries registered a trend in vocations similar to that of the continent: first growth and then a fall. The crisis, however, began in different periods: it started in Austria in 1985, followed by Germany and Great Britain in 1987; Spain's was in 1989; the crisis began in Ireland and Portugal in 1991, then Poland in 1992, France in 1995, and lastly Italy, which entered the phase of decline in 1999. The results of the crisis estimated in 2012 were, for the principal European countries, similar for the most part to those of the entire continent: with the exception of Hungary, France and Italy, each of which showed a balance, all the others registered deficits which also reached considerable levels: Germany 1,574 units; Poland 1,230; Ireland 922; Spain 863; Great Britain 334; Austria 215; Portugal 49.

#### Presence of major seminarians among Catholics

Of the 120,051 seminarians worldwide, in 2012 the continents with the greatest number of priestly vocations were the Americas with 35,841 units. Asia followed with 35,476, Africa with 27,728, Europe with 19,928 and finally, Oceania with 1,078 seminarians. The ranking, however, is different when taking into account the number of Catholics on each continent. In fact, for every 100,000 Catholics there were: 26 seminarians in Asia, approximately 14 in Africa, 11 in Oceania, 7 in Europe and 6 in the Americas. The figure for the Americas is an average of the figures relative to their subcontinents: 7 for North America, 6 for Central America, 5 for the Antilles and approximately 6 for South America.

The number of seminarians per 100,000 Catholics worldwide in 2012 exceeded the 1978 figure (9.77 versus 8.36). However, the differences among the continents are noteworthy: from 1978 to 2012, the number of seminarians per 100,000 Catholics went from 10.29 to 13.96 in Africa, and from 19.49 to 26.35 in Asia; in Europe there was a decrease from 8.60 to 6.95; in Oceania from 13.96 to 11.11, and in the Americas there was a return to the 1978 level of 6.03. From 1978 to 2012, however, the ratio of the total number of seminarians to Catholics differed greatly among the various American subcontinents: in North America this ratio fell from 16.47 to 7.16 while the figure rose again on all the other subcontinents.

The presence in the Catholic world of seminarians from various countries underwent great changes during the period under study: the United States, which in 1978 ranked first with its 8,639 seminarians, followed by Italy (with 5,516 seminarians), was supplanted in 2012 by India (with 15,329 seminarians), Brazil (with 8,779), the Philippines (with 8,097), Mexico (with 6,671), Nigeria (6,352) and Italy (5,866). Poland dropped to eighth place from third, with 4,097 seminarians, overtaken not only by India, but by Brazil, the Philippines, and also Mexico and Nigeria. Similarly, Spain was overtaken by Mexico, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Nigeria, which, in 1978, however, it had overtaken.

The countries which in 2012 showed the highest numbers of seminarians per 100,000 Catholics were: India (77.57), Indonesia (52.24), the Republic of Korea (31.5), Nigeria (24.91), Kenya (12.88), Italy and Poland (11.06), the Philippines (10.09), Uganda (9.58), Tanzania (9.24) and Colombia (9.17).

#### Replacement of active priests

Short term predictions of ordinations and the replacement of active priests can be gleaned from the ratio existing between the number of major seminarians and the number of priests. The ratio used here is per 100 priests, and compares the number of seminarians to that of priests. It follows that the ratio can be read as the replacement of 100 priests by an equal number of seminarians. The replacement of active priests is thus guaranteed when this ratio is not lower than a given level. Ac-

Pope's interview with Argentine radio

# The people have a mother

Pope Francis spoke on topics ranging from Latin Americans' respect for vocations and the importance of prayer to the need for a Church that journeys on. The telephone interview on Friday, 8 July, to *Virgen del Carmen*, a small radio station in Argentina, was the result of the initiative of the parish communities of Campo Gallo and Huachana.

Beginning at 12:30 pm local time, 5:30 pm in the Vatican, the Pontiff answered questions posed by Fr Joaquín Giangreco and Fr Juan Ignacio Liébana, parish priests he has known since he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. "I carry you in my heart", he began, assuring his blessing to the two priests, the parishioners and all who live in one of the poorest areas in the north of the country, 200 km from Santiago del Estero, capital of the province of the same name.

When asked to speak about popular devotion, Francis said he was convinced that it could essentially be traced to Mary. "Like all of us who love and honour our mother", he affirmed, the people know that Mary from Heaven cares for her children. He added that "Our people are not orphans", but the people "have a mother, and one of the most beautiful things is a child's affection for his mother". It is for this reason that the people "come together to worship God and to remember their mother. This is the core of popular Latin American devotion". Because, he explained with very effective imagery, as "a motherless child has a wounded soul", so "a motherless people is an orphaned, lonely, withered people, perhaps without ideas and without that tenderness that only a mother gives".

But the Church, aside from the devotion of the faithful, also lives in prayer, in the Mass and in the Eucharist. People who go to church, pray and receive communion, recalled the Bishop of Rome, concretely support the priests and the parish. At this point the Pontiff thanked the faithful, especially the many who deprive themselves in order to help the Church. Francis also shared a special thought with the two priests regarding the elderly and children. "So many grandmothers and grandfathers pray for you, and so many children pray for you and support your work".

During the interview, rebroadcast by several local media outlets and posted on the social networks, the Pope then expanded the discussion to the whole Church, reaffirming that within the Church "everyone has a role, a duty to fulfil, a vocation". The important thing, he clarified, is that everyone allow himself to be guided by the image of the pilgrim. Because "the Church is a pilgrim. Jesus founded a Church that journeys on. When the Church remains still, it stops being a Church and becomes a civil as-

sociation. She must not tire of walking, because it is on the path that one finds the meaning of what God asks of his people". On the contrary, "when a community does not walk and does not maintain a pilgrim heart to adore God and to help its brothers" it "becomes moribund and it needs to be revived in haste". In other words, what happens in a Church that does not journey is what happens to "stagnant water: it corrupts". Then came an appeal to be a community open to dialogue, which "works for unity" and is able to avoid destructive criticism: "There will always be differences among us, there will always be conflicts, but it is necessary to talk about this and to talk about it with God. What does the most damage to communities is destructive criticism. Always being ready to speak ill of others is not Christian".

Finally the Pope spoke about vocation, asking for prayer "that God send pastors". And as for the young people who hear Jesus' call, he advised them not to be afraid and to know the value of the Christian message, which they are able to pass on by answering 'yes'. Indeed, "life is made to be given, not to be preserved". Only in this way "one becomes fruitful. If the Lord asks someone to give his life to the priesthood, don't be afraid! It is necessary to accept the great challenges, not the little ones". While to those who feel called to start a family, the Pontiff asked that they commit to giving life to "a large, beautiful Christian family, with many children who pass on the faith". And at the end, he concluded: "God made us to be happy and He accompanies us" even, he added, "in times of difficulty and sorrow".



Procession along the streets of Campo Gallo for the Feast of the Virgin of Mount Carmel

To members of the Work of Nazareth

# Let no one take away our joy

The joy of being disciples of Jesus becomes a witness, that is, apostolate, missionary. Pope Francis spoke about this to 25 members of the Work of Nazareth, whom he received in audience in the Casa Santa Marta on Wednesday afternoon, 20 August.

Addressing members of the organization, the Pontiff explained that the history of the Work of Nazareth is marked by two characteristics. The first is the identification of Jesus as mankind's way toward the Father. The second is joy, because when one discovers Jesus as the Way, joy enters one's life. It enters for ever, he added, and it is a joy rooted in us which no one can take away, as the Lord promised.

The group – accompanied by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and led by Maria Paola Azzali, President, and by Giuseppe Staccia, Vice-President – was composed of people from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, France, Ireland, Italy and Japan. Among them were two sons, Fr Nicola and Filippo, of the founder, Giovanni Riva, who died on 22 April 2012.

After a brief introduction by Cardinal Tauran, Ms Azzali recalled that the Work of Nazareth had celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding on 15 August, which marked 15th year of its ecclesial recognition as an international lay association of Pontifical Right.

The President retraced the Society's history recalled that in the 1970s, under Riva's guidance, through meetings, study groups, leaflets, after-school activities with young children and teenagers, Gospel readings, school newspapers and statements, the group grew out of the tireless presence of a few young people who were interested in various topics, above all education, peace, justice, freedom, understanding that the answer to all expectations and to all necessities is Jesus.

Because, as they love repeating, "without Jesus Christ, man is less than man".

## And the seeds continue to grow

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

ording to this estimate – of course approximate, as it does not take into account the average effective duration of the exercise of the priestly ministry or of the temporal trend of the two series of operative data in the ratio – the percentage of seminarians with respect to priests must be such as to guarantee the replacement of active priests if the assumed value is not lower than 12.5%. This threshold value is largely exceeded at the global level (28.98 seminarians per 100 priests in 2012). However there may be some growing concern with regard to Europe, with a percentage of 10.69, and to North America, whose level of 12.61% is close to the threshold replacement figure. Elsewhere the ratio is very high: 69% for Africa,

roughly 40% for Central and South America, 61% for Asia and 23% for Oceania.

The path to regain balance among the continents might be possible through a process of redistribution, i.e., by transferring seminarians, once they have become priests, from Africa, South and Central America and Asia to countries in Europe and North America lacking the possibility of renewal. The answer, however, is not that simple. In fact, in precisely the areas with an increase in priestly vocations, Catholicism is expanding and thus, maintaining the current level of pastoral service does not present an appropriate hypothesis. On the contrary, in order to ensure that the 2012 level of service is maintained in these areas, the number of pastoral workers, and

therefore of new priests, must increase.

Understanding the ratio between Catholics and priests should be convincing enough. It can be seen that the ratio is 4,948 in Africa, 7,008 in South America and 2,291 in Southeast Asia, versus 1,762 in North America, 1,538 in Europe and 2,054 in Oceania. Therefore, in those countries where Catholicism is expanding, what is necessary is not the replacement of active priests but an increase in their numbers. Thus, the replacement of priests needs to be studied above all for those countries with an established Catholic tradition. Here, with few exceptions, the number of vocations does not seem to have reached a high enough level to ensure the replacement of active priests. Indeed, excluding the countries in which replacement seems

guaranteed, namely Albania (28.2%), Hungary (15.7%), Kosovo (19.4%), Latvia (16.6%), Poland (13.6%), Romania (29.8%), Slovakia (16.2%), Ukraine (28.7%), and the United States (13.8%), the ratio for Italy, Norway, Montenegro and Serbia was close to 12.5% in 2012. For Canada and the other principal European countries, the figure was below the replacement threshold: Canada (6.0%), Austria (6.7%), Belgium (4.3%), Czech Republic (8.0%), France (7.1%), Germany (7.5%), Slovenia (8.7%) and Spain (8.1%). Thus for this last group, it is foreseeable that, in a situation of such imbalance, difficulties could arise in the near future in the priestly framework to replace priests, necessitated by the aging factor.

\*Central Office of Church Statistics

Interview with the Bishop of Manila as Filipinos look forward to Francis' arrival

# The voice of peace

MARIO PONZI

Memory, hope and witness. Those were the three words used by Pope Francis used during the General Audience on Wednesday, 20 August, to summarize the significance of his recent journey to Korea. It's no mystery that Asia represents a pastoral priority for him. And not just now. Last January he recalled that, from the time he was a young priest, he had wanted to be a missionary in Japan. What brought about his great aspiration was the story of the "hidden Christians" in Japan, those lay people who, for two centuries and with no priests, secretly lived their faith. Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Archbishop of Manila, who was in Korea for the meeting that the Holy Father held for the bishops of Asia on 17 August, noted that this interest remained alive because the witness conveyed by those lay Christians "shows that even in exceptional or difficult circumstances, the People of God pass on the faith, baptize their children and go on", maintaining "a strong community spirit" and "adapting intelligently to situations". To escape their persecutors, in fact, those first Japanese faithful hid the Crucifix in a statue of Buddha or worshipped the Madonna under the guise of the goddess Kannon. Thus they have a lot in common with the Korean martyrs whom Pope Francis beatified in Seoul. The Filipino cardinal spoke on this topic during an interview with our newspaper.

*What does the recognition of the martyrdom of the Fathers of the Church in Korea mean for the future of Asia?*

The Church in Asia has been blessed with many people of the faith, martyrs, saints. But the mystery of the Church in Asia is that it remains a small flock, a small minority in this vast continent, which Pope John Paul II said is the birthplace of Jesus; He was born on Asian soil. So this visit of the Holy Father, I think, is a source of great encouragement to the little flock. Even if it remains small, it is real. The faith can be real, deep, profound and active even if the number is small. And in our small ways we continue to witness to the faith, the beauty of the Christian faith, in silent ways and even in persecution, in martyrdom. So, as for the future of the Church in Asia, I hope the number of Christians will increase, but even if the number does not increase, it is the joy of the Gospel, the witness that we have seen in our ancestors, the martyrs and saints, that will be the future.

*The Pontiff also made it understood that without peace and reconciliation there can be no future for the continent.*

I think the Holy Father will continue the beautiful tradition that started with Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*; then Pope Paul VI, the first Pope to visit Asia, also called for peace and respect for human rights: *Populorum Progressio*, *Evangelium Nuntiandi* and of course Pope John Paul II visited many countries of

Asia. I think Pope Francis will continue this beautiful tradition of Popes being the voice of reconciliation and peace. It is a voice that we need all the time because as human beings we all want peace, but we do not find the way to peace. There are injustices, there is a lack of respect for human rights, so the voice of religious and moral leaders is important and I think Pope Francis will be able to do it very well.

*Will his appeals succeed in stopping the slaughter of Christians in the Middle East?*

The only tools the Pope has are his word and the Gospel. We must hope the world uses them. I hope the world realizes that when the Pope calls for peace and respect for human rights it is not just for Christians, he is speaking for all human beings because in the Middle East it is not just Christians whose rights are being threatened, there are a lot

of non-Christians and ethnic groups, and I am sure the Holy Father speaks for them too.

*Do you think what is happening in the Middle East, in Iraq above all, is the result of a religious war?*

No, no! We have seen a lot of that in Asia. Unfortunately some sectors of society break, represent the conflicts as a "fight of religions", but it is not. It is often political, economic, ethnic. And somehow they do not want to expose the truth, so instead they conveniently call it a "fight of religions".

*Speaking of religious differences, here in Korea, the divide between North and South is not also a religious divide, is that right?*

As the ordinary people of Korea say: 'we are one people'. Many of the Koreans in the North have family members in the South, and no political or ideological reason can separate families. The family is a basic human reality even before political nations and ideologies are born. So we hope the voice of the Holy Father will touch the political leaders to look at whole country as one family, one culture, one blood and we hope they can find the way to peace.

*And do you think they will understand this message?*



Pope Francis in Korea

There are many things that happen as blessings. It is a gift every time the Holy Father – any Holy Father – comes to visit. I do not know how it was planned, but it will enkindle the flame of faith and the appreciation for the Catholic Church here in Korea.

*Are the same things expected from the Pope's visit to the Philippines?*

Yes, we are already excited, we are anticipating his visit in January, we are already preparing with the help of the Vatican Offices. Yes, in the Philippines first, I think the Holy Father will encourage Filipino Catholics to take their missionary vocation in Asia and in the whole world seriously because half of the Catholic population of Asia is found in the Philippines. The Pope will encourage the Filipinos and also he will visit those who survived the typhoon. It will be a good encouragement to the victims, of the love, and the compassion of the pastor. We will be very happy to meet him.

Yes, all the people, all sectors. The youth, the poor, the sick everyone, the bishops and the religious, they are all excited to welcome him.



## Website for Papal visit launched

The Bishops of the Philippines have chosen mercy and compassion as the key words for Pope Francis' journey to the Asian archipelago from 15 to 19 January 2015. These two terms in fact stand out in the logo placed on the website, [papalvisit.ph](http://papalvisit.ph), recently launched by the Episcopal Conference. The site offers current news and information in relation to the the Pontiff's upcoming visit.

Francis will be the third Bishop of Rome to travel to one of the only predominantly Catholic countries in all of Asia. The first was Paul VI who visited Manila in the last pilgrimage of his pontificate, 44 years ago, from 27 to 29 November 1970. John Paul II travelled there twice: from 17 to 22 February 1981 and from 12 to 16 January 1995.

Thus this papal journey will take place 20 years after the historic Asian Youth Day in Manila, when more than five million people attended the concluding Mass at which Pope Wojtyła presided. The bishops and the faithful are particularly proud of that number, a sort of attendance record, and they are ready to bet that even higher figures will be recorded with Pope Francis. For this reason, Cardinal Archbishop Luis Antonio G. Tagle of Manila, after the Holy See Press Office confirmed the Bishop of Rome's visit, commented that "we must prepare ourselves as best we can, by turning to the Word of God and making acts of mercy".

The Cardinal assured that "the people of the Philippines love the Holy Father and the announcement of his voyage next year to Asia, to the Philippines in par-

ticular, has given so much joy to the people and has been a wonderful thing. Non-Catholics, the mass media, television, radio, everyone, all Filipinos, constantly speak of January as a month of grace. The Filipino people will again see a Vicar of Christ, in the person of Pope Francis", who, the Cardinal recalled, one year ago blessed the mosaic of St Pedro Calungsod in St Peter's Basilica, and "launched a message to the suffering people of the Philippines" battered by Typhoon Yolanda.

The significance of the themes of the logo, "mercy" and "compassion", was explained by Archbishop Socrates B. Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). It refers to two "cherished ideals of Jesus", which explicitly recall the guidelines of the magisterium of Pope Francis. It was not by chance the Bishop invited the faithful to prepare themselves for the visit by engaging the Pontiff's motto: *Miserando atque eligendo* [meaning 'having mercy and choosing']. He continued, "it is not the logistics, security and infrastructure that best prepare us for the papal visit. Let us be like Pope Francis in his humility and his compassion. Let us make his apostolic journey of mercy to be ours even before he arrives".

In addition to distinguishing the website's home page, the words mercy and compassion were first placed on the logo, under an image of the Pontiff with a white and gold cross, and a flame in the colours of the national flag of the Philippines.