

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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At the close of the Synod, Pope Francis recalls that the Church must not condemn but proclaim mercy

Open up broader horizons

A Church with broader horizons and which does not “rubberstamp”, but instead “draws from the sources of her faith living waters to refresh parched hearts”. This is the “vivid image” which, according to Francis, emerged during the three weeks of work of the Synod on the family, which concluded on Sunday, 25 October, with the Mass celebrated in St Peter’s Basilica.

In both his address on Saturday afternoon during the final general congregation, and in his homily the following day, the Pontiff reviewed the principal steps of the Synod Assembly, whose final report had been consigned to him after being voted on and garnering the nearly unanimous approval of the Synod Fathers.

The Synod, the Pope stated, certainly “was not about settling all the issues having to do with the family”, and “surely it was not about finding exhaustive solutions for all the difficulties and uncertainties”. However, the Assembly’s approach of listening and open discussion showed “the vitality of the Catholic Church, which is not afraid to stir dulled consciences or to soil her hands”. It also showed a willingness to cast light on present realities “so as to kindle the flame of faith and enlighten people’s hearts in times marked by discouragement, social, economic and moral crisis, and growing pessimism”, while bearing witness that “for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would ‘indoc-

trinate’ it in dead stones to be hurled at others”.

Pope Francis emphasized that “the Church is a Church of the poor in spirit and of sinners seeking forgiveness, not simply of the righteous and the holy”. He once again called for “rising above conspiracy theories and blinkered viewpoints, so as to defend and spread the freedom of the children of God, and to transmit the beauty of Christian Newness, at times encrusted in a language which is archaic or simply incomprehensible”.

In short, he explained, “the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter, but its spirit; not ideas but people; not formulae but the gratuitousness of God’s love and forgiveness”.

The first duty of the Church, therefore, “is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy”, and “to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord”. Now “is a time of mercy”, he affirmed in the homily during the closing Mass, inviting the bishops and the entire Christian community to continue the journey undertaken, while “never allowing ourselves to be tarnished by pessimism or sin”.

FOR SYNOD COVERAGE SEE PAGES 6-10

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of ‘Nostra Aetate’

We are all brothers



At the express wish of the Holy Father, 28 October, the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Council’s Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, was the ideal moment for a special, interreligious General Audience in St Peter’s Square. The Pope took the opportunity to welcome and thank brothers and sisters of the world’s various religions, among them participants in an international conference organized for the occasion by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.



Trento Longaretti, “Family on a journey”

Just as at the Council

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

Why has the Synod that just concluded stirred interests and passions long unseen, and not only within the Catholic Church? Surely, the theme of the family touches and concerns everyone, without exception. Surely, the Pope’s decision to dedicate attention and energy to it for over two years, making it the dominant theme of the first part of his pontificate, alone highlighted its importance.

Half a century since its institution, the Synod of Bishops has shown its growth and potential, which consist primarily in the method, developed over the years and renewed in recent times by the decisions of Benedict XVI and Francis, along with the help of the General Secretariat, which, along with its collaborators has proven very effective in these months. In other words, despite pretextual polemics, the new method is functional and transparent, as was seen in recent days.

But there’s more, as Pope Francis explained so pointedly, concluding the work of this assembly which was followed by the media and in the Catholic sphere with interest that perhaps has not been seen since the days of Vatican II. The Synod did not attempt to settle all the issues, the Pope said, but rather sought to “see them in the light of the Gospel and the Church’s tradition and two-thousand-year history”, thereby remaining open to hope but avoiding repetition of “what is obvious or has already been said”.

The assembly, in this sense, was neither expected nor predicted, because the Synod Fathers were able to look difficulties and uncertainties in the eye, “in the light of the Faith, ... fearlessly, without burying [their] heads in the sand”. Thanks to a large scale, world consultation, voice was indeed given to the entire Catholic Church, which in these three weeks has once again shown her vitality, holding “lively and frank discussions about the family”.

Fearless of discussion – to use the Pope’s words – but determined to avoid being conditioned by malevolent interpretations and

The Holy Father meets with the gypsy community

It’s time to turn the page

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Wednesday, 21 October

Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev, President of the Department of External Church Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Redovino Rizzardo, CS, of Dourados, Brazil. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (21 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Henrique Aparecido De Lima, CSSR, as Bishop of Dourados, Brazil. Until now he has been provincial superior of the Redemptorist Province of Campo Grande (21 Oct.).

Bishop-elect De Lima, 51, was born in Toledo, Brazil. He made his religious profession for the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer and was ordained a priest on 20 November 1999. He studied philosophy and theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: parish vicar; administrator of the Diocese of Jardim; vice provincial of the Redemptorists.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Luiz Demétrio Valentini of Jales, Brazil. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (21 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr José Reginaldo Andrietta from the clergy of Limeira, as Bishop of Jales, Brazil. Until now he has been parish priest of São Judas Tadeu Parish in Americana (21 Oct.).

Bishop-elect Andrietta, 58, was born in Pirassununga, Brazil. He holds a master's in catechesis and a licence in pastoral theology. He was ordained a priest on 18 March 1983. He has served in parish ministry and as: assessor for Brazil, for Argentina, for the international Young Christian Workers [YCW] in North, South and Central America and the Caribbean, for the United States and for the world. He worked in Belgium in pastoral ministry before returning to Brazil as formator at the diocesan seminary in Limeira. He has also served as member of the Presbyteral Council and professor of pastoral theology.

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Paulo Bosi Dal'Bó as Bishop of São Mateus, Brazil. Until now he has been vicar general of the Diocese of Colatina and parish priest of Nossa Senhora Medianeira de todas as Graças parish (21 Oct.).

Bishop-elect Bosi Dal'Bó, 53, was born in Colatina, Brazil. He holds a

degree in accounting sciences and a master's in social communications and one in the psychology of education. He was ordained a priest on 10 June 2000. He has served in parish ministry and as: director of the Nossa Senhora Mãe dos Pobres House of Formation; rector of the diocesan seminary and president of the Organization of Seminaries and Philosophical and Theological Institutes in Brazil.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Aristide Gonsallo from the clergy of Parakou, Bérun, as Bishop of Porto Novo, Benin. Until now he has been parish priest of St Martin Parish, Panape (24 Oct.).

Bishop-elect Gonsallo, 49, was born in Cotonou, Benin. He was ordained a priest on 27 December 1992. He holds a doctorate in theology and in modern letters. He has served in parish ministry and as: teacher at the minor seminary of Parakou; chaplain of the diocesan hospital; head of the reorganization of the Archdiocesan health service.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, from his office as Archbishop of Bologna, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (27 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Matteo Maria Zuppi as Archbishop of Bologna, Italy. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Villanova and Auxiliary of Rome (27 Oct.).

Archbishop Zuppi, 60, was born in Rome, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 9 May 1981. He was ordained a bishop on 14 April 2012, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Villanova and Auxiliary of Rome.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Cardinal Paolo Romeo,

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closures that eventually transform the doctrine into "dead stones" to be used "not in entirely well-meaning ways" to express legitimate opinions. Or, one might add, used to disturb with somewhat coarse manoeuvrings that have very little to do with journalism and synodal debate. Indeed, none of it even came close.

The dogmatic issues were not touched. This was stated firmly by the Successor to the Apostle Peter, who is the guarantor of Catholic communion and unity. But voices

Letter concerning the Roman Curia and other institutions

Correct procedures

An "observance of common norms" is necessary "to guarantee the correct procedure of the work" of the Curia and to ensure impartial treatment of all employees. Pope Francis wrote this in a letter to Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State. The following is a translation of the Pope's letter, which was written in Italian.

ment, including economic retribution, of all employees, I dispose that the provisions of the aforementioned documents, as well as the Regulations for the senior lay staff of the Holy See and of Vatican City State, and the Regulations of the independent evaluation commission for the engagement of lay personnel at the Apostolic See be scrupulously observed.

It also follows that the hiring and transferral of personnel must be effected within the framework of the organizational structure, excluding all other criteria, with the approval of the Secretariat of State and in keeping with the prescribed procedures, including reference to the established retributive scale.

All this, to the extent it is compatible with the Regulations themselves, also applies to the Governorate of Vatican City State and the Institutions which depend on the Apostolic See, even if not expressly indicated in the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, with the exception of the Institute for Works of Religion.

I therefore request that you, Your Eminence, inform the heads of the Dicasteries, the Offices and the Bodies of the Roman Curia, and also of the Commissions, Committees and related Institutions, as well as of the Governorate, of the dispositions that I have indicated, emphasizing in particular the aspects requiring greater attention, and to monitor their observance.

As I thank you for your cooperation, in the communion of prayers and intentions, I cordially salute you in the Lord.

From the Vatican, 14 October 2015

Franciscus

To my Dear and Venerable Brother
Cardinal PIETRO PAROLIN
Secretary of State

While the reform process of certain structures of the Roman Curia, on which the Council of Cardinals – that I instituted on 28 September 2013 – has been working, is progressing according to the established programme, I feel bound to disclose that in the meantime several issues have arisen, which I intend to address without delay.

I would like first of all to reemphasize that the current period of transition is certainly not a time of *vacatio legis*. Therefore, I confirm that the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, with the subsequent amendments thereto, and the *General Regulations of the Roman Curia* remain fully in force.

Since the observance of common norms is necessary both to guarantee the correct procedure of the work of the Roman Curia and the related Institutions of the Holy See, and to ensure impartial treat-

Just as at the Council

raised from various continents made clear the inherent need for inculturation in the Christian tradition. It must come about without "hand[ing] down condemnations or anathemas", because the Church's first duty is "to proclaim God's mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation".

In keeping with Vatican II, which was opened and closed with the hallmark of mercy, Francis repeated the words once spoken by Paul VI: "God is – let us say it with tears – good for us. He loves us, he seeks

us out, he thinks of us, he knows us, he touches our hearts and he waits for us". And as at the Council, Montini was able to maintain the unity of the largest assembly of bishops ever convened, thus today has his Successor managed to obtain a *de facto* unanimous consensus for nearly the entire Synod document. The sole aim now is to return to walk together in the world, to bring to "every situation, the light of the Gospel, the embrace of the Church and the support of God's mercy".

G.M.V.

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At the Interreligious General Audience, the Pope commemorates the 50th anniversary of 'Nostra Aetate'

We are all brothers

And we must walk together taking care of each other and creation

With representatives of the world's various religions, Pope Francis commemorated the 50th anniversary of 'Nostra Aetate', the Council's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.

The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address which was given in Italian during the General Audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday, 28 October.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

At the General Audiences there are often people or groups who belong to other religions; but today this presence is of particular importance, because we can remember together the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council *Nostra Aetate* on the Relation of the Catholic Church to Non-Christian Religions. This subject was dear to the heart of Bl. Pope Paul VI, who on the Feast of Pentecost the year before the close of the Council, had established the *Secretariat for non-Christians*, today called the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. For this reason I express my gratitude and my warm welcome to the people and groups of various religions, who today have wished to attend, especially to those who have come from afar.

The Second Vatican Council was an extraordinary time of reflection, dialogue and prayer which aimed to renew the gaze of the Catholic Church on herself and on the world. A reading of the signs of the times in view of an update oriented by a twofold faithfulness: faithfulness to the ecclesial tradition and faithfulness to the history of the men and women of our time. In fact God, who revealed himself in creation and in history, who spoke through the prophets and comprehensively through his Son made man (cf. Heb 1:1), speaks to the heart and to the spirit of every human being who seeks the truth and how to practice it.

The message of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* is always timely. Let us briefly recall a few of its points:

- the growing interdependence of peoples (cf. n. 1);
- the human search for the meaning of life, of suffering, of death, questions which always accompany our journey (cf. n. 2);
- the common origin and the common destiny of humanity (cf. n. 1);
- the uniqueness of the human family (cf. n. 1);
- religions as the search for God or of the Absolute, within our various ethnicities and cultures (cf. n. 1);
- the benevolent and attentive gaze of the Church on religions: she rejects nothing that is beautiful and true in them (cf. n. 2);
- the Church regards with esteem the believers of all religions, appreciating their spiritual and moral commitment (cf. n. 3);
- the Church, open to dialogue with all, is at the same time faithful to the truths in which she believes,

beginning with the truth that the salvation offered to everyone has its origin in Jesus, the One Saviour, and that the Holy Spirit is at work, as a font of peace and love.

There have been so many events, initiatives, institutional or personal relationships with the non-Christian religions in these last 50 years, that it is difficult to recall them all. A particularly meaningful event was the meeting in Assisi on 27 October 1986. It was willed and sponsored by St John Paul II, who the year before, thus 30 years ago, addressing the Muslim youth in Casablanca, hoped that all believers in God would favour friendship and unity between men and peoples (19 August 1985). The flame, lit in Assisi, has spread throughout the world and is a permanent sign of hope. Deserving of special gratitude to God is the veritable transformation of Christian-Jewish relations in these 50 years. Indifference and opposition have changed into cooperation and benevolence. From enemies and strangers we have become friends and brothers. The Council, with the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, has indicated the way: "yes" to rediscovering Christianity's Jewish roots; "no" to every form of anti-Semitism and blame for every wrong, discrimination and persecution deriving from it. Knowledge, respect and esteem for one another are the way. Indeed, if this applies in a particular way to relations with Jews, it likewise applies to relationships with other religions as well. I am thinking in particular of Muslims, who – as the Council recalls – "worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men" (*Nostra Aetate*, n. 3). They acknowledge Abraham's paternity, venerate Jesus as a prophet, honour his virgin Mother, Mary, await the day of judgment, and practice prayer, almsgiving and fasting (cf. *ibid.*).



The dialogue that we need cannot but be open and respectful, and thus prove fruitful. Mutual respect is the condition and, at the same time, the aim of interreligious dialogue: respecting others' right to life, to physical integrity, to fundamental freedoms, namely freedom of conscience, of thought, of expression and of religion.

The world, looking to us believers, exhorts us to cooperate amongst ourselves and with the men and women of good will who profess no religion, asking us for effective responses regarding numerous issues: peace, hunger, the poverty that afflicts millions of people, the environmental crisis, violence, especially that committed in the name of religion, corruption, moral decay, the crisis of the family, of the economy, of finance, and especially of hope. We believers have no recipe for these problems, but we have one great resource: prayer. We believers pray. We must pray. Prayer is our treasure,



from which we draw according to our respective traditions, to request the gifts that humanity longs for.

Because of violence and terrorism an attitude of suspicion or even condemnation of religions has spread. In reality, although no religion is immune to the risk of deviations of a fundamentalist or extremist nature in individuals or groups (cf. *Address to the United States Congress*, 24

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A silent prayer recited together

A silent prayer recited together each according to his or her religion. Accepting this invitation by the Pope were numerous representatives of the world's religions in St Peter's Square on Wednesday during the General Audience, in celebration of the Declaration of Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*. The meeting – called for by Pope Francis – was an invocation for peace, for fraternal dialogue and for taking a stand against violence.

During the special interreligious audience, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, introduced the participants to the Pope. Cardinal Tauran thanked Francis for his testimony which "encourages us to continue on the path of interreligious dialogue". In his presentation, Cardinal Koch said that "we can remember with gratitude that, also after the Council, all the Pontiffs that have followed have confirmed and deepened the encouraging perspectives that are at the heart of *Nostra Aetate*".

During the audience, passages of *Nostra Aetate* were read in different languages. Then the Holy Father personally greeted the religious representatives present. Among them were Bellanwila Wimalaratna representing Buddhists; Claudio Epelman and David Rosen representing Jews; Swami Chidananda Saraswati representing Hindus; Rasoul Rasoulipour and Abdellah Redouane representing Muslims; Samani Pratibha Pragya representing Jains, and Brinder Singh Mahon representing Sikhs.

At the General Audience

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September 2015), it is necessary to look to the positive values that religions live and propound, and that are sources of hope. It is a matter of raising our gaze in order to go further. Dialogue based on confident respect can bring seeds of good that in their turn may bud into friendship and cooperation in many fields, especially in service to the poor, to the least, to the elderly, through welcoming migrants, and attention to those who are excluded. We can walk together taking care of one another and of creation. All believers of every religion. Together we can praise the Creator for giving us the garden of the world to till and keep as a common good, and we can achieve shared plans to overcome poverty and to ensure to every man and woman the conditions for a dignified life.

The Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, which is before us, is a propitious occasion to work together in the field of the works of charity. In this field, where compassion counts above all else, we may be joined by many people who are not believers or who are in search of God and of

the Truth, people who place at the centre the face of another person, in particular the face of a needy brother or sister. The mercy to which we are called embraces all of creation, which God entrusted to us so that we keep it, not exploit it or worse still, destroy it. We must always seek to leave the world better than we found it (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, n. 194), beginning with the environment in which we live, and the small gestures of our daily life.

Dear brothers and sisters, as for the future of interreligious dialogue, the first thing we have to do is pray, and pray for one another: we are brothers and sisters! Without the Lord, nothing is possible; with Him, everything becomes so! May our prayer – each one according to his or her own tradition – adhere fully to the will of God, who wants all men and women to recognize they are brothers and sisters and live as such, forming the great human family in the harmony of diversity.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I address a cordial welcome to Italian-speaking pilgrims.



On the Feast Day of Sts Simon and Jude, I hope that the memory of the Apostles, first witnesses of the Gospel, may increase faith and encourage charity.

I offer a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*.

At the end of the month of October let us invoke Mary, Mother of Jesus. Dear *young people*, learn to pray to her with the simple and effective prayer of the Rosary; dear *sick people*, may Our Lady be your support in the trial of pain; dear *newlyweds*, emulate her love for God and for brothers and sisters.

Now, to conclude this Audience, I invite everyone, each one on his or her own, to pray in silence. May each one do so according to his or her own religious tradition. Let us ask the Lord to make us more brotherly and sisterly among ourselves, and more ready to serve our needier brothers and sisters. Let us pray in silence.

[Silent prayer]

And may God bless us, every one!

'Nostra Aetate' promulgated on 28 October 1965

The 28th October 1965 was truly a historic day when, during Vatican II, Paul VI promulgated five Council documents: *Christus Dominus* on bishops, *Perfectae Caritatis* on renewing religious life, *Optatum Totius* on the formation of priests, *Gravissimum Educationis* on Christian education and *Nostra Aetate* on interreligious relations. The framework of the first four texts – three decrees and one declaration – were approved almost unanimously, and the declaration on non-Christian religions received an overwhelming majority of approval votes.

Originally designed as a text on relations with Judaism, *Nostra Aetate* had initially received very strong opposition for mostly political reasons but also ones of a theological nature. Thanks to long and patient meditation, the framework was ultimately given the title: "*De ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non Christianas*" because it was in fact extended, in five short paragraphs, to apply to relations with other religions. The second paragraph was dedicated to other non-Christian religions, the third to Islam and the fourth to Judaism. According to journalist Gian Franco Svidercoschi who wrote *Storia del concilio* [The History of the Council] in 1967 and followed Vatican II for ANSA news, the Council Fathers were overwhelmed by anti-Semitic libel. One pamphlet, entitled: "No Council, no Pope can condemn Jesus, the Roman Apostolic Catholic Church, the Pontiffs and the most distinguished Councils. The declaration concerning the Jews implicitly involves a condemnation.



Promulgation of the Decree on the pastoral duties of bishops (28 October 1965)

For this reason it must be rejected", was sent to 30 Catholic and Christian organizations in various countries, some of whom later would deny having signed it. In the first vote held on 15 October, the text was approved by 1763 of the 2023 votes, receiving 250 non placets and 10 invalid ballots. "Without delay", continues Svidercoschi, "the Pope decided to subject this declaration to conclusive scrutiny in the public session of 28 October. That day, after the five passages were read aloud and voted on, the Pontiff concelebrated the Mass with 24 Fathers", after which "the outcome

of the individual ballots was announced. The last and most anticipated was followed by a long round of applause. There were 2,312 Fathers voting on the declaration on the "Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions": 2221 placets, 88 non placets and three invalid ballots. Within two weeks the many fearful 250 nays had decreased by 65 per cent", concludes Svidercoschi. The patient resolve and courage of Paul VI had once again received markedly widespread concurrence regarding one of the most defining and important texts of Vatican II.

Organized by Palestinian youth

Interreligious prayer vigil in Jerusalem

On Saturday evening, 24 October, the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Palestine, a prayer vigil – organized by the Christian Youth of Palestine – was held in the homeland of Jesus Christ. In the face of escalating violence, not only in Palestine but also in Israel and Jordan, all Catholic parishes came together to ask the Lord for the gift of peace.

Before the event, the organization's chaplain, Fr Bashar Fawardleh said that "young people want to pray for peace throughout the Middle East, but especially for peace in Jerusalem, which has recently again become a scene of blood, violence, oppression and death". All young people of the Holy Land, Christians, Muslims and Jews alike were invited to participate. Together, Fr Bashar said, we "ask God, who is almighty and merciful, to touch the hearts of men and to free them from hatred, fear and the thirst for revenge".

The Pope meets with the Synod of the Chaldean Church

Peace to those devastated in Iraq and Syria

The Pope renewed his "heartfelt appeal to the international community to adopt every useful strategy aimed at bringing peace to countries terribly devastated by hatred". On Monday morning, 26 October, the Holy Father met with the Synod of the Chaldean Church, which met in Rome from 25 to 29 October. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's address, which was delivered in Italian.

Your Beatitude,
Dear Brother Bishops,

I welcome you with joy and I thank His Beatitude Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako for his kind words. I take this occasion to reach out, through you, to the faithful and all those dwelling in the beloved lands of Iraq and Syria in this particularly troubled and sensitive moment, with a message of comfort and Christian solidarity. With the approach of the Jubilee Year, may God's mercy soothe the wounds of war afflicting the heart of your communities, that no one may feel discouragement in this time when the din of violence seems to drown out our heartfelt prayers for peace.

Today the situation in your lands of origin is gravely compromised by the fanatical hatred sown by terrorism, which continues to cause a great hemorrhage of faithful who leave the lands of their fathers, where they grew up firmly rooted in the furrow of tradition. This state of

affairs clearly undermines the vital Christian presence in that land which witnessed the beginning of the journey of the Patriarch Abraham, heard the voice of the Prophets who called Israel to hope during the Exile, and saw the foundation of the first Churches upon the blood of many martyrs. There too Christians bore witness to the fullness of the Gospel, made their specific contribution to the growth of society over centuries of peaceful coexistence with our Islamic brothers and sisters. Sadly, these are times which are instead marked by countless examples of persecution, and even martyrdom.

The Chaldean Church, which suffers from the war, is also conscious of the needs of the faithful in the diaspora, who desire to maintaining their solid roots while becoming part of new situations. So I confirm, today more than ever, the complete support and solidarity of the Apostolic See in favour of the common good of the entire Chaldean Church. I pray that Christians will not be forced to abandon Iraq and the Middle East – I think especially of the sons and daughters of your Church, and their rich traditions.

I urge you to work tirelessly as builders of unity in all the provinces of Iraq, fostering dialogue and cooperation among all those engaged in public life, and contributing to healing existing divisions while preventing new ones from arising.

Your visit enables me to renew my heartfelt appeal to the international community to adopt every useful strategy aimed at bringing peace to countries terribly devastated by hatred, so that the life-giving breeze of love will once more be felt in places which have always been a crossroads for peoples, cultures and nations. May the peace for which we all hope arise on the horizon of history, so that the grievous tragedies caused by violence may yield to a climate of mutual coexistence.

The Synod which you are celebrating these days in *Urbe*, is a "journeying together", a favourable moment of exchange amid the diversities which enrich your fraternal communion under the gaze of Christ, the Good Shepherd. As I had the occasion to say in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, "Journeying together is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.... Let us never forget this! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross. As the Master tells us: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise



authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Mt 20:25-27). *It shall not be so among you: in this expression we touch the heart of the mystery of the Church, and we receive the enlightenment necessary to understand our hierarchical service" (Address for the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015).*

I ask you, then, to take up the Apostle Paul's exhortation to have among you the mind of Christ (cf. Phil 2:5), acting with mercy, humility, patience and a mutual acceptance which gives rise to communion.

May the work of the Synod reflect a sense of responsibility, participation and service. Keep always before you the image of the Good Shepherd who is concerned for the salvation of his sheep, and is especially concerned for those who have strayed. May you imitate him: zealous in seeking the *salus animarum* of priests as well as laity, realizing full well that the exercise of communion sometimes demands a genuine *kenosis*, a self-abasement and self-spoilation.

I encourage you to be a father to your priests and all consecrated men and women, who are your primary collaborators, and, in respect for tradition and canonical norms, to be accepting of them, benevolent and understanding of their needs, discerning ways to help them be ever more aware of the demands of their ministry and service to the faithful. In doing so, you will bridge distances and discern the response to be given to the pressing needs of the Chaldean Church today, in your native lands and in the diaspora. In this way the reflections which emerge from your discussions will be able to provide fruitful solutions to your current needs and points of convergence for resolving liturgical and more general issues.

As I urge you to carry on your pastoral responsibilities with fraternal communion and a missionary spirit, I ask all of you, their pastors, to bring my words of encouragement to the faithful of the Chaldean Church. May they echo on your lips as a caress from the Pope which warms their hearts.

Entrusting the Chaldean Church to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary, I impart to you, your priests and religious, and all the faithful, my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of hope and consolation in the love of our Merciful God.

VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

from his office as Archbishop of Palermo, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (27 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Corrado Loreface from the clergy of Noto, as Archbishop of Palermo, Italy. Until now he has been parish priest of St Peter Apostle parish in Palermo, vicar forane of Modica and episcopal vicar for the apostolate (27 Oct.).

Archbishop-elect Loreface, 53, was born in Ispica, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 30 December 1987. He holds a doctorate in theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: treasurer and vice-director of the Episcopal Seminary; professor of moral theology; director of the diocesan centre for vocations; member of the council of the National Centre for Vocations; director of the formation of permanent deacons; director of the diocesan catechetical office.

DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Giacomo Morandi as Undersecretary

of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Until now he has been vicar general of the Archdiocese of Modena-Nonantola, Italy (27 Oct.).

Msgr Morandi, 50, was born in Modena, Italy. He holds licences in Biblical Sciences and in the Theology of Evangelization (missiology). He has served in parish ministry and as: episcopal vicar for catechesis, evangelization, culture and, later, archpriest of the Cathedral Chapter and vicar general of the Archdiocese of Modena-Nonantola; teacher of Sacred Scripture at the Interdiocesan Theological Studio of Reggio Emilia-Modena-Parma-Carpi and at the Higher Institute of Religious Sciences in Modena; and teacher of Patristic Exegesis at the "Atelier di Teologia Card. Tomás Špidlík" in Rome at the Aletti Centre, associated with the Pontifical Oriental Institute.

SPECIAL ENVOY

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, SDB, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar, as his Special Envoy to the celebrations for the 51st International Eucharistic

Congress to be held in Cebu, the Philippines from 24 to 31 January 2016 (24 Oct.).

RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Paolo Rocco Gualtieri, titular Archbishop of Sagona, as Apostolic Nuncio in Mauritius. Until now he has been Apostolic Nuncio in Madagascar and in Seychelles (24 Oct.).

NECROLOGY

Bishop Gilberto Jiménez Narváez, titular Bishop of Apollonia, Auxiliary emeritus of Medellín, Colombia, at age 78 (20 Oct.).

Bishop Gaston Poulain, PSS, Bishop emeritus of Périgueux, France, at age 88 (24 Oct.).

Cardinal Ján Chryzostom Korec, Bishop emeritus of Nitra, Slovak Republic, at age 91 (24 Oct.). *See next week's edition for the Pope's telegram and a brief biography

Bishop Giuseppe Nazzaro, OFM, titular Bishop of Forma, Bishop emeritus of Aleppo for Latins, Syria, at age 77 (26 Oct.).

The Synod Fathers' appeal for the Middle East, Africa and Ukraine

Stop violence terrorism and persecution

The Synod Fathers directed their thoughts to the families of the Middle East in a declaration they approved on Saturday, 24 October. In it, they called for an immediate end to hostility, while assuring prayers for "all families that find themselves involved in similar situations in other parts of the world, especially in Africa and Ukraine". The following is a translation of the message which was written in Italian.

Gathered around the Holy Father Francis, we the Synod Fathers, along with the fraternal delegates and auditors participating in the 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, turn our thoughts to all families of the Middle East.

For years now, due to bloody conflicts, they have been victims of unspeakable atrocities. Their living conditions have been further aggravated in recent weeks and months.

The use of weapons of mass destruction, indiscriminate killings, beheadings, the kidnapping of human beings, the trafficking of women, the enlistment of children, persecution on the basis of religious belief or ethnicity, the destruction of cultural heritage, and countless other atrocities have forced thousands of families to flee their homes in search of refuge elsewhere, often in conditions of extreme precariousness. Currently they are prevented from returning and exercising their right to live in dignity and safety on their own soil, from contributing to the reconstruction and the material and spiritual well-being of their respective countries.

In this dramatic context, there are continuous violations of the fundamental principles of human dignity,

of peaceful and harmonious coexistence among persons and peoples, of the most basic rights, such as the rights to life and religious freedom, and of international humanitarian law.

Therefore, we wish to express our closeness to the patriarchs, bishops, priests, consecrated persons and faithful, as well as all the inhabitants of the Middle East, to demonstrate our solidarity and to assure them of our prayers. We think of all the people who have been kidnapped and we ask for their freedom. Our voices unite with the cry of so many innocent people: no more violence, no more terrorism, no more persecution! May the hostilities and weapons trafficking cease immediately!

Peace in the Middle East must be sought not with choices imposed by force, but rather with political decisions that respect the cultural and religious particularities of individual Nations and their various components.

While we are grateful especially to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and many European countries for the welcome they have granted to refugees, we wish to make a further plea to the international community, that in the search for solutions they set particu-



lar interests aside and make use of the tools of diplomacy, dialogue and international law.

Let us recall the words of Pope Francis to "all communities who look to Abraham: may we respect and love one another as brothers and sisters! May we learn to understand the sufferings of others! May no one abuse the name of God through violence! May we work together for justice and peace!" (*Address at the Building of the Great Council on the Esplanade of the Mosques, Jerusalem, 26 May 2014*).

We are convinced that peace is possible, and that it is possible to stop the violence in Syria, Iraq, Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land that every day involves increasing numbers of families and innocent civilians and aggravates the humanitarian crisis. Reconciliation is the fruit of fraternity, justice, respect and forgiveness.

Our sole wish, like that of the people of good will who form part of the great human family, is that we

may all live in peace, so that "Jews, Christians and Muslims find in other believers brothers and sisters to be respected and loved, and in this way, beginning in their own lands, give the beautiful witness of serenity and concord between the children of Abraham" (*Ecclesia in Medio Oriente, n. 19*).

Our thoughts and our prayers extend, with equal concern, solicitude and love, to all families who find themselves involved in similar situations in other parts of the world, especially in Africa and Ukraine. We have kept them in mind during this Synod Assembly, like the families of the Middle East, and for them too, we make an impassioned plea for their return to a calm and dignified life.

Let us entrust our intentions to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, well acquainted with suffering, so that the world may soon become one family of brothers and sisters.

The final days of the Ordinary General Assembly

15th general congregation

After discussion of all three parts of the *Instrumentum laboris*, the Synod Fathers began working on the final report. The proposed text was presented on Thursday afternoon, 22 October, during the 15th general congregation, in the presence of the Pope. There were 264 Synod Fathers present and Cardinal Vingt-Trois presided. At the beginning of the congregation, the Pope announced his decision to establish a new dicastery for laity, family and life.

During the course of the congregation, an election was held, appointing 12 members of the council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Then Cardinal Péter Erdő briefly introduced the proposed final report, edited by the *ad hoc* commission appointed by the Pope. Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri described the methodology for developing the text and, he explained, among other things, that 1,355 changes were presented by the *circuli minores* for the drafting of the text which included all three parts of the *Instrumentum laboris*. The draft of the final report was then given to the Synod Fathers.

During the course of the congregation a draft of the declaration of the Synod Fathers regarding the situation of families in the Middle East was presented. The definitive text (*see above*) was then voted on the following day.

Then on Friday morning, 23 October, 51 Synod Fathers took the floor, proposing to the Commission for the drafting of the final report,

suggestions, changes, observations, additions and clarifications to the text which had been presented to them the day before. Numerous written statements were also presented to the Secretariat. The Commission took into consideration all contributions to further improve the text which was read on Saturday morning and voted on that afternoon.

16th general congregation

Presided by Cardinal Tagle, the 16th general congregation was the final congregation that included spoken interventions before the conclusion of the Assembly. Two hundred sixty-five Synod Fathers took part.

The 16th general congregation opened with a prayer, then Bishop Jan Vokál of Hradec Králové, Czech Republic, delivered a homily in which he warned of the risk of losing one's identity in the chaos of today's society. He also commemorated the feast day of John Paul II which was being celebrated that day.

The interventions, which each lasted three minutes, expressed unanimous appreciation and gratitude for the noteworthy work of the Commission which edited the text, accounting for everything that was proposed in the hall and in the *circuli minores*.

As mentioned in various interventions, the Synod desires to relaunch the mission of the Church with her strong and courageous message, one full of tenderness and hope espe-



"Moments of suffering and conflict are for God occasions of mercy". The Pope recalled this at the Mass for the closing of the 14th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on Sunday morning, 25 October, in St Peter's Basilica. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily which was delivered in Italian.

The three Readings for this Sunday show us God's compassion, his fatherhood, definitively revealed in Jesus.

In the midst of a national disaster, the people deported by their enemies, the prophet Jeremiah proclaims that "the Lord has saved his people, the remnant of Israel" (31:7). Why did he save them? Because he is their Father (cf. v. 9); and as a Father, he takes care of his children and accompanies them on the way, sustaining "the blind and the lame, the women with child and those in labour" (31:8). His fatherhood opens up for them a path forward, a way of consolation after so many tears and great sadness. If the people remain faithful, if they persevere in their search for God even in a foreign land, God will change their captivity into freedom, their solitude into communion: what the people sow today in tears, they will reap tomorrow in joy (cf. Ps 125:6).

We too have expressed, with the Psalm, the joy which is the fruit of the Lord's salvation: "our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongues with shouts of joy" (v. 2). A believer is someone who has experienced God's salvific action in his life. We pastors have experienced what it means to sow with difficulty, at times in tears, and to rejoice for the grace of a harvest which is beyond our strength and capacity.

At the Angelus the Pope recalls that the People of God is a family of families

Walking in step with the least

The People of God is "a family of families in which one who toils is not marginalized". Instead, it "manages to stay in step with the others, because this people walks in step with the least". With these words the Holy Father spoke to the faithful in St Peter's Square on Sunday, 25 October, for the recitation of the Angelus. The following is a translation of his words, which were given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

This morning, with the Holy Mass celebrated in St Peter's Basilica, the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family has concluded. I invite everyone to give thanks to God for these three weeks of intense work, enlivened by prayer and by a spirit of true communion. It was demanding, but it was a true gift of God, which will surely bear much fruit.

The word "synod" means "walking together". And what we have experienced was an experience of the Church on a journey, journeying especially with the families of the holy People of God spread



Holy Mass for the closing of the Synod of Bishops

Today is the time of mercy

The passage from the Letter to the Hebrews shows us Jesus' compassion. He also "is beset with weakness" (5:2), so that he can feel compassion for those in ignorance and error. Jesus is the great high priest, holy and innocent, but also the high priest who has taken on our weakness and been tempted like us in all things, save sin (cf. 4:15). For this reason he is the mediator of the new and definitive covenant which brings us salvation.

Today's Gospel is directly linked to the First Reading: as the people of Israel were freed thanks to God's fatherhood, so too Bartimaeus is freed thanks to Jesus' compassion. Jesus has just left Jericho. Even though he has only begun his most important journey, which will take

him to Jerusalem, he still stops to respond to Bartimaeus' cry. Jesus is moved by his request and becomes involved in his situation. He is not content to offer him alms, but rather wants to personally encounter him. He does not give him any instruction or response, but asks him: "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mk 10:51). It might seem a senseless question: what could a blind man wish for if not his sight? Yet, with this question made face to face, direct but respectful, Jesus shows that he wants to hear our needs. He wants to talk with each of us about our lives, our real situations, so that nothing is kept from him. After Bartimaeus' healing, the Lord tells him: "Your faith has made you well" (v. 52). It is beautiful to

see how Christ admires Bartimaeus' faith, how he has confidence in him. He believes in us, more than we believe in ourselves.

There is an interesting detail. Jesus asks his disciples to go and call Bartimaeus. They address the blind man with two expressions, which only Jesus uses in the rest of the Gospel. First they say to him: "Take heart!", which literally means "have faith, strong courage!". Indeed, only an encounter with Jesus gives a person the strength to face the most difficult situations. The second expression is "Rise!", as Jesus said to so many of the sick, whom he took by the hand and healed. His disciples do nothing other than repeat Jesus' encouraging and liberating words, leading him directly to Jesus, without lecturing him. Jesus' disciples are called to this, even today, especially today: to bring people into contact with the compassionate Mercy that saves. When humanity's cry, like Bartimaeus', becomes stronger still, there is no other response than to make Jesus' words our own and, above all, imitate his heart. Moments of suffering and conflict are for God occasions of mercy. Today is a time of mercy!

There are, however, some temptations for those who follow Jesus. Today's Gospel shows at least two of them. None of the disciples stopped, as Jesus did. They continued to walk, going on as if nothing were happening. If Bartimaeus was blind, they were deaf: his problem was not their problem. This can be a danger for us: in the face of constant problems, it is better to move on, instead of letting ourselves be bothered. In this way, just like the disciples, we are with Jesus but we do not think like him. We are in his group, but our hearts are not open. We lose wonder, gratitude and enthusiasm, and risk becoming habitually unmoved by grace. We are able to speak about him and work for him, but we live far from his heart, which is reaching out to those who are wounded. This is the temptation: a "spirituality of illusion": we can walk through the deserts of humanity without seeing what is really there; instead, we see what we want



The Prophet says: "among them the blind and the lame". It is a family of families, in which one who toils is not marginalized, left behind, but manages to stay in step with the others, because this people walks in step with the least; as is done in families, and as we are taught by the Lord, who made himself poor with the poor, little with the little ones, last with the least. He did not do so in order to exclude the wealthy, the great and first, but because this is the only way to save even them, to save

At the 18th general congregation, Pope Francis concludes the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family

Open up broader horizons

The Church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy

The first duty of the Church "is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord". Pope Francis highlighted this to the Synod of Bishops on Saturday afternoon, 24 October, during the 18th and final general congregation of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The following is the English text of the Pope's address which was delivered in Italian.

Dear Beatitudes, Eminences and Excellencies, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like first of all to thank the Lord, who has guided our synodal process in these years by his Holy Spirit, whose support is never lacking to the Church.

My heartfelt thanks go to Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, Secretary General of the Synod, Bishop Fabio Fabene, its Under-Secretary, and, together with them, the Relator, Cardinal Peter Erdő, and the Special Secretary, Archbishop Bruno Forte, the Delegate Presidents, the writers, the consultants, the translators and the singers, and all those who have worked tirelessly and with total dedication to the Church: My deepest thanks! I would also like to thank the Commission which made the report; some of them were up all night!

I thank all of you, dear Synod Fathers, Fraternal Delegates, Auditors and

Assessors, parish priests and families, for your active and fruitful participation.

And I thank all those unnamed men and women who contributed generously to the labours of this Synod by quietly working behind the scenes.

Be assured of my prayers, that the Lord will reward all of you with his abundant gifts of grace!

As I followed the labours of the Synod, I asked myself: *What will it mean for the Church to conclude this Synod devoted to the family?*

Certainly, the Synod was not about settling all the issues having to do with the family, but rather attempting to see them in the light of the Gospel and the Church's tradition and 2,000-year history, bringing the joy of hope without falling into a facile repetition of what is obvious or has already been said.

Surely it was not about finding exhaustive solutions for all the difficulties and uncertainties which challenge and threaten the family, but rather about seeing these difficulties and uncertainties in the light of the Faith, carefully studying them and confronting them

fearlessly, without burying our heads in the sand.

It was about urging everyone to appreciate the importance of the institution of the family and of marriage between a man and a woman, based on unity and indissolubility, and valuing it as the fundamental basis of society and human life.

"Without ever falling into the danger of relativism or of demonizing others, we sought to embrace, fully and courageously, the goodness and mercy of God who transcends our every human reckoning and desires only that 'all be saved'"

It was about listening to and making heard the voices of the families and the Church's pastors, who came to Rome bearing on their shoulders the burdens and the hopes, the riches and the challenges of families throughout the world.

It was about showing the vitality of the Catholic Church, which is not

afraid to stir dulled consciences or to soil her hands with lively and frank discussions about the family.

It was about trying to view and interpret realities, today's realities, through God's eyes, so as to kindle the flame of faith and enlighten people's hearts in times marked by discouragement, social, economic and moral crisis, and growing pessimism.

It was about bearing witness to everyone that, for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would "indoctrinate" it in dead tones to be hurled at others.

It was also about laying bare the closed hearts, which frequently hide even behind the Church's teachings or good intentions, in order to sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families.

It was about making clear that the Church is a Church of the poor in spirit and of sinners seeking forgiveness, not simply of the righteous and the holy, but rather of those who are righteous and holy precisely when they feel themselves poor sinners.

It was about trying to open up broader horizons, rising above conspiracy theories and blinkered viewpoints, so as to defend and spread the freedom of the children of God, and to transmit the beauty of Christian Newness, at times encrusted in a language which is archaic or simply incomprehensible.

In the course of this Synod, the different opinions which were freely expressed – and at times, unfortunately, not in entirely well-meaning ways – certainly led to a rich and lively dialogue; they offered a vivid image of a Church which does not simply "rubber-stamp", but draws from the sources of her faith living waters to refresh parched hearts.¹

And – apart from dogmatic questions clearly defined by the Church's Magisterium – we have also seen that what seems normal for a bishop from one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous – almost! – for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion. Cultures are in fact quite diverse, and every general principle – as I said, dogmatic questions clearly defined by the Church's Magisterium – every general principle needs to be inculturated, if it is to be respected and applied.²

The 18th Synod, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, spoke of *inculturation* as "the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity, and the taking root of Christianity in the various human cultures".³ *Incul-*

turation does not weaken true values, but demonstrates their true strength and authenticity, since they adapt without changing; indeed they quietly and gradually transform the different cultures.⁴

We have seen, also by the richness of our diversity, that the same challenge is ever before us: that of proclaiming the Gospel to the men and women of today, and defending the family from all ideological and individualistic assaults.

And without ever falling into the danger of *relativism* or of *denaturing* others, we sought to embrace, fully and courageously, the goodness and mercy of God who transcends our every human reckoning and desires only that "all be saved" (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). In this way we wished to experience this Synod in the context of the Extraordinary Year of Mercy which the Church is called to celebrate.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Synod experience also made us better realize that the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter, but its spirit; not ideas but people; not formulae but the gratuitousness of God's love and forgiveness. This is in no way to detract from the importance of formulae – they are necessary – or from the importance of laws and divine commandments, but rather to exalt the greatness of the true God's joy.⁵

St John Paul II also stated that: "the Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy... and when she brings people close to the sources of the Saviour's mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser".⁶

Benedict XVI, too, said: "Mercy is indeed the central nucleus of the Gospel message; it is the very name of God... May all that the Church says and does manifest the mercy God feels for mankind. When the Church has to recall an unrecognized truth, or a betrayed good, she always does so impelled by merciful love, so that men may have life and have it abundantly (cf. Jn 10:10)".⁷

In light of all this, and thanks to this time of grace which the Church has experienced in discussing the family, we feel mutually enriched. Many of us have felt the working of the Holy Spirit who is the real protagonist and guide of the Synod. For all of us, the word "family" does have the same sound as it did before the Synod, so much so that the word itself already contains the richness of the family's vocation and the significance of the labours of the Synod.⁸

In effect, for the Church to conclude the Synod means to *return* to our true "journeying together" in bringing to every part of the world, to every diocese, to every community and every situation, the light of the Gospel, the embrace of the Church and the support of God's mercy!

means upholding all the more the laws and commandments which were made for man and not vice versa (cf. Mk 2:27).

In this sense, the necessary human repentance, works and efforts take on a deeper meaning, not as the price of that salvation freely won for us by Christ on the cross, but as a response to the One who loved us first and saved us at the cost of his innocent blood, while we were still sinners (cf. Rom 5:6).

The Church's first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God's mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord (cf. Jn 12:44-50).

Bl. Paul VI expressed this eloquently: "We can imagine, then, that each of our sins, our attempts to turn our back on God, kindles in him a more intense flame of love, a desire to bring us back to himself and to his saving plan... God, in Christ, shows himself to be infinitely good... God is good. Not only in himself; God is – let us say it with tears – good for us. He loves us, he seeks us out, he thinks of us, he knows us, he touches our hearts and he waits for us. He will be – so to say – delighted on the day when we return and say: Lord, in your goodness, forgive me. Thus our repentance becomes God's joy".⁹

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Thank you!



Voting on the final day of the Assembly

Nearly unanimous

The 94 points of the Final Report of the Synod of Bishops to the Holy Father received the nearly unanimous approval of the Synod Fathers gathered for the 18th and final congregation on Saturday afternoon, 24 October.

The document on "The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world" – which gathers the results of the Extraordinary Synod held last year, the recommendations added from dioceses throughout the world and the fruit of the three weeks of discussion which characterized the 14th General Assembly, which opened on 4 October and solemnly concluded on Sunday the 25th with the Mass celebrated in St Peter's Basilica – is now in the hands of Pope Francis. It falls to him to evaluate what the Synod Fathers, in their "walk together", have proposed *cum Petro et sub Petro*.

There were 269 Synod Fathers present in the New Synod Hall, and as a result, the qualified two-thirds majority was set at 177 preferences. The concentration of votes was remarkable: 87% of the paragraphs were approved by over 90% of the voters.

Voting procedures were undertaken swiftly and with no particular glitches, except for a few brief pauses due to technical difficulties. At the end, after a long round of applause the entire hall ratified the approval of the document, Cardinal Raymundo Damasceno Assis, the Delegate President, and Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, the Sec-



retary General, each took to the podium.

"An exceptional experience of collegiality" was how the Cardinal President described the three weeks experienced by the Synod Fathers. A time in which we shared "the deepest longings" of various peoples, their "desires for happiness and joy" but also their "sufferings and wounds", he said. The Synod Fathers, the Cardinal pointed out, sought "to consider with humility the reality of many families" and at the same time to contemplate this reality "with the eyes of Christ", speaking with "frankness and *parthenia*". Now, he said, we are all awaiting the Pontiff's "directions so as to be able to accompany, with the heart of the Good Shepherd", all the families of the world. In particular, he added, "we want to be close with tenderness and understanding to those families

who find themselves in complex situations for various reasons. To all we wish to proclaim the Gospel of the family with renewed enthusiasm and with words of support and comfort."

Cardinal Damasceno Assis' expressions of gratitude to the Pontiff and to the entire Assembly, were joined by those of Cardinal Baldisseri.

In particular, the Secretary General, bolstered by a hearty round of applause, thanked Francis "for accompanying" the synodal journey "with his presence and his guidance". Turning directly to the Pope, the Cardinal then added: "His words and his example have helped us not to slow our pace and to stand in docile contemplation of the Word of God and the voice of the men and women of our time".

The congregation concluded with the *Té Deum* prayer. At the end Francis paused briefly to greet several Synod Fathers, fraternal delegates and auditors; he then stopped for a moment of prayer in the chapel before descending to the atrium of the Paul VI Hall for a photograph with the staff of the Secretariat of the Synod and to bid final farewells. Afterwards he returned to his residence in Casa Santa Marta.

¹ Cf. Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina on the Centenary of its Faculty of Theology, 3 March 2015.

² Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Fede e cultura alla luce della Bibbia. Atti della Sessione plenaria 1979 della Pontificia Commissione Biblica*, LDC, Leumann, 1981; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, *Gaudium et Spes*, 44.

³ *Final Relatio* (7 December 1985), *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 December 1985, 7.

⁴ "In virtue of her pastoral mission, the Church must remain ever attentive to historical changes and to the development of new ways of thinking. Not, of course, to submit to them, but rather to surmount obstacles standing in the way of accepting her counsels and directives" (Interview with Cardinal Georges Cottier, in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3963-3964, 8 August 2015, p. 272).

⁵ *Homily*, 23 June 1968: *Insegnamenti* VI (1968), 1177-1178.

⁶ *Dives in Misericordia*, 13. He also said: "In the paschal mystery... God appears to us as he is: a tender-hearted Father, who does not give up in the face of his children's ingratitude and is always ready to forgive (JOHN PAUL II, *Regina Coeli*, 23 April 1995; *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 1 [1995], 1025). So too he described resistance to mercy: "The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of 'mercy' seem to cause uneasiness..." (*Dives in Misericordia* [30 November 1980] 2).

⁷ *Regina Coeli*, 30 March 2008: *Insegnamenti* IV, 1 (2008), 489-490. Speaking of

the power of mercy, he stated: "it is mercy that sets a limit to evil. In it is expressed God's special nature – his holiness, the power of truth and of love" (*Homily* on Divine Mercy Sunday, 15 April 2007: *Insegnamenti* III, 1 [2007], 667).

⁸ An acoustic look at the word "family" [Italian: "*famiglia*"] can help us summarize the Church's mission as the task of: Forming new generations to experience life seriously, not as an individualistic search for a pleasure then to be discarded, and to believe once again in true, fruitful and lasting love as the sole way of emerging from ourselves and being open to others, leaving loneliness behind, living according to God's will, finding fulfilment, realizing that marriage is "an experience which reveals God's love, defending the sacredness of life, every life, defending the unity and indissolubility of the conjugal bond as a sign of God's grace and of the human person's ability to love seriously" (*Homily* for the Opening Mass of the Synod, 4 October 2015; *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5-6 October 2015, p. 7) and, furthermore, enhancing marriage preparation as a means of providing a deeper understanding of the Christian meaning of the sacrament of Matrimony: "Approaching others, since a Church closed in on herself is a dead Church, while a Church which does not leave her own precincts behind in order to seek, embrace and lead others to Christ is a Church which betrays her very mission and calling; Manifesting and bringing God's mercy to families in need; to the abandoned, to the neglected elderly, to children pained by the separation of their parents, to poor families struggling to sur-

Lerni, "Family portrait" (2014)

As the Synod approached its conclusion

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cially for those in fragile situations. The Church is not an end but a *lumen gentium*. Therefore the text, drafted with families in mind, intends to be a proposal to renew the pastoral attitude of the Church and begin new dialogues, especially with those in difficulty.

Several Synod Fathers underlined the spirit of synodality and collegiality with the Pope. While others thanked the Holy Father for his way of listening and for creating a Synod which lasted two years, so as to allow for deeper reflection. Many Synod Fathers spoke of the many famil-

ies that contributed to the work including through their prayers.

Among the topics discussed in the open debate was the situation of the divorced and remarried, homosexuality, spirituality in the family, the relationship between conscience and moral law, the formation of a pastoral ministry of the individual, attention to those with disabilities, and the issues of Christian persecution, war and migration. A number of specific proposals were made, including one to establish a patriarchal commission for the Middle East. Among those who took the floor were Cardinals Vegliò, Bassetti, Marx, Lacroix, Caffarra, Scola,

Müller, Eijk, Bagnasco, Nichols, Collins, Urosa Savino, Schönborn, Ouellet, Martínez Sistach, Amato and Sarah, as well as Patriarch Gregory III Laham, and Patriarch Louis Raphaël I Sako, Archbishop Forte, Archbishop Shevchuk, Archbishop Kurtz, Archbishop Arancedo, Bishop Solmi and Bishop Vesco.

17th general congregation

The proposed final report was read aloud during the 17th general congregation on Saturday morning, 24 October. After the 266 Synod Fathers present, along with the Pope, applauded, the Regulator General, Cardinal Péter Erdő took the floor and affirmed that the text – which had been updated to include 248 changes presented both in writing and aloud by the Synod Fathers on Friday – was unanimously accepted by the commission.

The proposed text, which was written in Italian, was read aloud by the Delegate President, Cardinal Raymundo Damasceno Assis; Cardinal Péter Erdő and Special Secretary, Archbishop Bruno Forte. For those who do not understand Italian, simultaneous translation was provided by the Secretariat of the Synod by way of experts and translators. The Synod Fathers also handed in to the Secretariat their proposal for the theme of the next Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Cardinal Baldisseri also illustrated the three gifts which the Pope gave to each Synod participant. These gifts included a reproduction of the Holy Family which Pope Francis displayed to them during the assembly. Participants were also given



a medal coined for the 50th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops and a book entitled: *Il profumo del pastore*, written by Diego Fares, Jesuit from Argentina, published by Ancora Editrice.

The congregation began by reciting the mid-morning prayer. Bishop Mario Iceta Gavicagogoesco of Bilbao, Spain, delivered a brief homily in which he spoke about how the Synod is a space for the spirit, an experience of collegiality and communion in order to truly accompany and support families. The Bishop invited pastors to have evangelical courage like Bl. Francisco Gárate, a lay Jesuit brother who served as the porter of the Catholic University of Bilbao for 41 years. Bishop Iceta Gavicagogoesco concluded his reflection by suggesting that they entrust themselves to the protection of the Mother of God with the understanding that it is the mothers of the world who are able to transform a house into a real domestic home and a hearth of warmth and mercy.

Open up broader horizons

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vive, to sinners knocking on our doors and those who are far away, to the differently able, to all those hurting in body and soul, and to couples torn by grief, sickness, death or persecution; illuminating consciences often assailed by harmful and subtle dynamics which even attempt to replace God the Creator, dynamics which must be unmasked and resisted in full respect for the dignity of each person; Gaining and humbly rebuilding trust in the Church, which has been gravely weakened as a result of the conduct and sins of her children – sadly, the counter-witness of scandals committed in the Church by some clerics have damaged her credibility and obscured the brightness of her saving message; labouring intensely to sustain and encourage those many strong and faithful families which, in the midst of their daily struggles, continue to give a great witness of fi-

delity to the Church's teachings and the Lord's commandments; Inventing renewed programmes of pastoral care for the family based on the Gospel and respectful of cultural differences, pastoral care which is capable of communicating the Good News in an attractive and positive manner and helping to banish from young hearts the fear of making definitive commitments, pastoral care which is particularly attentive to children, who are the real victims of broken families, pastoral care which is innovative and provides a suitable preparation for the sacrament of Matrimony, rather than so many programmes which seem more of a formality than training for a lifelong commitment; Aiming to love unconditionally all families, particularly those experiencing difficulties, since no family should feel alone or excluded from the Church's loving embrace, and the real scandal is a fear of love and of showing that love concretely.

At the Angelus

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everyone: to go with the least, with the excluded, with the lowliest.

I confess that I compared this prophecy of the people on a journey with refugees trudging the streets of Europe, a tragic reality of our time. To them too the Lord says: "With great weeping they departed, and with consolations I will lead them back". These greatly suffering families, uprooted from their lands, were also present with us in the Synod, in our prayers and in our work, through the voice of several of their pastors present in the Assembly. These people seeking dignity, these families seeking peace, are still with us, the Church does not abandon them, because they are part of the people that God wants to set free from slavery and guide to freedom.

Thus, both the synodal experience that we lived, and the tragedy of the refugees trudging the streets

of Europe are reflected in this Word of God. May the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, help us, too, to put [the Word of God] into practice by way of fraternal communion.

After the Angelus the Holy Father said:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you all, faithful of Rome and pilgrims from various countries.

In particular I greet the "Hermidad del Señor de los Milagros" of Rome. [In Spanish: there are so many Peruvians in the Square!], who with such devotion have carried in procession the Image venerated in Lima, Peru, and wheresoever Peruvians have emigrated. Thank you for your witness!

I wish everyone a pleasant Sunday, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci.*

Closing Mass

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

to see. We are capable of developing views of the world, but we do not accept what the Lord places before our eyes. A faith that does not know how to root itself in the life of people remains arid and, rather than oases, creates other deserts.

There is a second temptation, that of falling into a "scheduled faith". We are able to walk with the People of God, but we already have our schedule for the journey, where everything is listed: we know where to go and how long it will take; everyone must respect our rhythm and every problem is a bother. We run the risk of becoming the "many" of the Gospel who lose patience and rebuke Bartimaeus. Just a short time before, they scolded the children (cf. 10:13), and now the blind beggar: whoever bothers us or is not of our stature is excluded. Jesus, on the other hand, wants to include, above all those kept on the fringes who are

crying out to him. They, like Bartimaeus, have faith, because awareness of the need for salvation is the best way of encountering Jesus.

In the end, Bartimaeus follows Jesus on his path (cf. v. 52). He did not only regain his sight, but he joined the community of those who walk with Jesus. Dear Synod Fathers, we have walked together. Thank you for the path we have shared with our eyes fixed on Jesus and our brothers and sisters, in the search for the paths which the Gospel indicates for our times so that we can proclaim the mystery of family love. Let us follow the path that the Lord desires. Let us ask him to turn to us with his healing and saving gaze, which knows how to radiate light, as it recalls the splendour which illuminates it. Never allowing ourselves to be tarnished by pessimism or sin, let us seek and look upon the glory of God, which shines forth in men and women who are fully alive.

Message for the World Day of the Sick to be celebrated in Nazareth

Like the servants at Cana

Every hospital and nursing home in the Holy Land can be a visible sign of peace

In the Holy Land "every hospital and nursing home can be a visible sign and setting in which to promote the culture of encounter and peace, where the experience of illness and suffering, along with professional and fraternal assistance", can help "to overcome every limitation and division". Francis wrote this in the message for the 24th World Day of the Sick, to be celebrated in Nazareth on 11 February 2016. The followings is the English text of the Pope's message.



Entrusting Oneself to the
Merciful Jesus like Mary:
"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The 24th World Day of the Sick offers me an opportunity to draw particularly close to you, dear friends who are ill, and to those who care for you.

This year, since the Day of the Sick will be solemnly celebrated in the Holy Land, I wish to propose a meditation on the Gospel account of the wedding feast of Cana (Jn 2:1-11), where Jesus performed his first miracle through the intervention of his Mother. The theme chosen, *Entrusting Oneself to the Merciful Jesus like Mary: "Do whatever he tells you"* (Jn 2:5) is quite fitting in light of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The main Eucharistic celebration of the Day will take place on 11 February 2016, the liturgical memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, in Nazareth itself, where "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). In Nazareth, Jesus began his salvific mission, applying to himself the words of the Prophet Isaiah, as we are told by the Evangelist Luke: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).

Illness, above all grave illness, always places human existence in crisis and brings with it questions that dig deep. Our first response may at times be one of rebellion: Why has this happened to me? We can feel desperate, thinking that all is lost, that things no longer have meaning....

In these situations, faith in God is on the one hand tested, yet at the same time can reveal all of its positive resources. Not because faith makes illness, pain, or the questions which they raise, disappear, but because it offers a key by which we can discover the deepest meaning of what we are experiencing; a key that helps us to see how illness can be

the way to draw nearer to Jesus who walks at our side, weighed down by the Cross. And this key is given to us by Mary, our Mother, who has known this way first hand.

At the wedding feast of Cana, Mary is the thoughtful woman who sees a serious problem for the spouses: the wine, the symbol of the joy of the feast, has run out. Mary recognizes the difficulty, in some way makes it her own, and acts swiftly and discreetly. She does not simply look on, much less spend time in finding fault, but rather, she turns to Jesus and presents him with the concrete problem: "They have no wine" (Jn 2:3). And when Jesus tells her that it is not yet the time for him to reveal himself (cf. v. 4), she says to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5). Jesus then performs the miracle, turning water into wine, a wine that immediately appears to be the best of the whole celebration. What teaching can we draw from this mystery of the wedding feast of Cana for the World Day of the Sick?

"The wedding feast of Cana is an image of the Church: at the centre there is Jesus who in his mercy performs a sign; around him are the disciples, the first fruits of the new community; and beside Jesus and the disciples is Mary"

The wedding feast of Cana is an image of the Church: at the centre there is Jesus who in his mercy performs a sign; around him are the disciples, the first fruits of the new community; and beside Jesus and the disciples is Mary, the provident and prayerful Mother. Mary partakes of the joy of ordinary people and helps it to increase; she intercedes with her Son on behalf of the spouses and all the invited guests. Nor does Jesus refuse the request of his Mother. How much hope there is in that event for all of us! We have a Mother with benevolent and watchful eyes, like her Son; a heart that is maternal and full of mercy, like him; hands that want to help, like the hands of Jesus who broke bread for those who were hungry, touched the sick and healed them. All this fills us with trust and opens our hearts to the grace and mercy of Christ. Mary's intercession makes us experience the consolation for which the apostle Paul blesses God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our affliction, so that we may be able to



"The wedding feast of Cana" by Fr Marko Ivan Rupnik

encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow" (2 Cor 1:3-5). Mary is the "comforted" Mother who comforts her children.

At Cana the distinctive features of Jesus and his mission are clearly seen: he comes to the help of those in difficulty and need. Indeed, in the course of his messianic ministry he would heal many people of illnesses, infirmities and evil spirits, give sight to the blind, make the lame walk, restore health and dignity to lepers, raise the dead, and proclaim the good news to the poor (cf. Lk 7:21-22). Mary's request at the wedding feast, suggested by the Holy Spirit to her maternal heart, clearly shows not only Jesus' messianic power but also his mercy.

In Mary's concern we see reflected the tenderness of God. This same tenderness is present in the lives of all those persons who attend the sick and understand their needs, even the most imperceptible ones, because they look upon them with eyes full of love. How many times has a mother at the bedside of her sick child, or a child caring for an elderly parent, or a grandchild concerned for a grandparent, placed his or her prayer in the hands of Our Lady! For our loved ones who suffer because of illness we ask first for their health. Jesus himself showed the presence of the Kingdom of God specifically through his healings: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them" (Mt 11:4-5). But love animated by faith makes

us ask for them something greater than physical health: we ask for peace, a serenity in life that comes from the heart and is God's gift, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, a gift which the Father never denies to those who ask him for it with trust.

In the scene of Cana, in addition to Jesus and his Mother, there are the "servants", whom she tells: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). Naturally, the miracle takes place as the work of Christ; however, he wants to employ human assistance in performing this miracle. He could have made the wine appear directly in the jars. But he wants to rely upon human cooperation, and so he asks the servants to fill them with water. How wonderful and pleasing to God it is to be servants of others! This more than anything else makes us like Jesus, who "did not come to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45). These unnamed people in the Gospel teach us a great deal. Not only do they obey, but they obey generously: they fill the jars to the brim (cf. Jn 2:7). They trust the Mother and carry out immediately and well what they are asked to do, without complaining, without second thoughts.

On this World Day of the Sick let us ask Jesus in his mercy, through the intercession of Mary, his Mother and ours, to grant to all of us this same readiness to serve those in need, and, in particular, our infirm brothers and sisters. At times this service can be tiring and burdensome, yet we are certain that the Lord will surely turn our human efforts into something divine. We too can be hands, arms and hearts which help God to perform his miracles, so often hidden. We too, whether healthy or sick, can offer up our toil and sufferings like the water which filled the jars at the wedding feast of Cana and was turned into the finest wine. By quietly helping those who suffer, as in illness itself,

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Tuesday, 20 October

The sister's nickname

We do not have “a petty God”, nor “a stationary God”. Ours is “a God who goes forth” to “seek out each one of us”. And when he finds us, “he embraces us, kisses us”, because he is “a God who celebrates” and in heaven there is more celebration “for a sinner who converts” than “for 100 who remain just”. At Tuesday’s Mass at Santa Marta, the Pontiff returned to the theme of the “boundless love” of the Father.

In his usual manner, Francis began from the day’s Readings, in particular the passage of the Letter to the Romans (5:12, 15, 17-19, 20-21), in which St Paul recalls that “as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned... much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many”. This, the Pope pointed out, is “a summary of salvation history”, in which the Apostle “tells us how God saved us, how he saves us: how he gives salvation, which is the friendship between us and him”.

The Pontiff connected this passage to that of the previous day’s Liturgy, in which, he recalled, “we spoke about almsgiving, we said that God gives without measure: he gives himself, his Son”. The discussion once again revolved around “this idea: how does God give, in this case friendship, our entire salvation?”. The Pontiff’s answer was that God “gives as he says he will give to us when we do good works: he will give us a good and firmly packed, filled to the brim, overflowing amount”. This generosity calls to mind the concept of “abundance”. By no coincidence, Francis observed, “this word, ‘abundance’, is repeated three times in this passage”.

Thus, “God gives in abundance”. Indeed, Paul, in the “final summary” of his discourse, affirms: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more”. This is how God’s love is: “without measure. His wholeself”. In fact, the Pope recalled, he “sent his Son, he lowered himself to become a companion on the path, to walk

does with the “lost sheep” or the woman with the “lost coin”. God “seeks: it is always so. God actively waits. He never tires of awaiting us”. His attitude is that of the “elderly father” who “saw his son coming, returning from afar” and immediately went to meet him and “embrace him”. God too, “awaits us: always, with the door open”. Because his

stand God’s love. We can understand in these gestures of the Lord, this overabundance, but understanding everything isn’t easy”.

To illustrate, the Pope referred to a nun he met during his ministry in Buenos Aires. She was “an elderly sister, very elderly, who worked her entire life on a hospital ward, and was still working there”. She was “over 84 years old” but was “always smiling. She surely experienced God’s love, because she always spoke about the love of God and let this love be felt”. For this reason, “they gave her a nickname”. She was called “Sr Love-of-God”. It is “a grace”, the Pontiff said, “to find such people, these saints, to whom the Lord has given the gift of understanding this mystery, this overabundance of his love”.

The fact remains that “we always have the attitude of gauging situations and things with the measures we have: and our measures are small”. This is why, Francis recommended, “it will do us good to ask the Holy Spirit for the grace, to pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to bring us at least a bit closer to understand this love and to have the will to be embraced, kissed, with that boundless measure”. St Paul, in reality, “understood how bad sin is” but also “how great is the overabundance of God’s love. To the point that he feels small and at one moment, moved by the Holy Spirit, he calls God ‘papa’”. He often “speaks of the Father” as “the Father” but, “at one moment he says: ‘papa’”. Thus, the Pope emphasized, “thanks to the Holy Spirit I can call him ‘papa’”. In conclusion he said: “Let us ask for the grace of feeling this love, that is the love of a papa, a great and boundless love”.

Thursday, 22 October

One step each day

As an athlete must train every day to achieve his goals, so too the life of a Christian is to be marked by a constant effort, the “daily task” of making room for God, to “open the door” to the gift of salvific grace. Pope Francis offered a reflection marked by Pauline thought during the Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning. The underlying theme was that of conversion.

The Pope’s homily was inspired by the Liturgy’s First Reading, a passage from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans (6:19-23), in which the Apostle “recalls salvation, the grace of salvation”, and speaks of “the path of sanctification. He tells the new Christians: ‘You were at the service of iniquity – of sin – and you are now at the service of the gift of God’, that is to say, at the service of grace and sanctification”. Paul gives substance to his words, using “this image: you were at the service of iniquity with your body, with your soul, with your heart and with your mind. Everything was at the service of iniquity. Now your body, your soul, your heart and your mind must be at the service” of grace and



Pietro Morando, “The Prodigal Son” (1926)

with us: he himself walked with us, from the beginning, with his people”.

What then is the meaning of “this overabundance of self giving that is God’s love?”. It means that “God is not a petty God: he does not know pettiness, he gives all”. It also means that “God is not a stationary God: he watches, he waits for us to convert”. Basically, the Pontiff said, God is a God who goes forth: he goes forth to search, to seek out each of us”. Every day “he searches, he is searching”, like the shepherd

heart “isn’t closed: it’s always open”. And “when we arrive like the son, he embraces us, kisses us: a God who celebrates”. Jesus “says it explicitly, speaking about justification, about forgiven sins: there will be a greater feast in heaven for a sinner who converts than for 100 who remain just”. This “is the love of God; God loves us this way, without measure”.

Of course, Francis recognized that “it isn’t easy, with our human criteria – we are small, limited – to under-

World Day of the Sick

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we take our daily cross upon our shoulders and follow the Master (cf. Lk 9:23). Even though the experience of suffering will always remain a mystery, Jesus helps us to reveal its meaning.

If we can learn to obey the words of Mary, who says: “Do whatever he tells you”, Jesus will always change the water of our lives into precious wine. Thus this World Day of the Sick, solemnly celebrated in the Holy Land, will help fulfil the hope which I expressed in the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy: “I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with [Judaism and Islam] and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness

and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination’ (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 23). Every hospital and nursing home can be a visible sign and setting in which to promote the culture of encounter and peace, where the experience of illness and suffering, along with professional and fraternal assistance, helps to overcome every limitation and division.

For this we are set an example by the two Religious Sisters who were canonized last May: St Marie-Alphonsine Danil Ghattas and St Mary of Jesus Crucified Baouardy, both daughters of the Holy Land. The first was a witness to meekness and unity, who bore clear witness to the importance of being responsible for one another, living in service to one another. The second, a humble and illiterate woman, was docile to the Holy Spirit and became an instrument of encounter with the Muslim world.

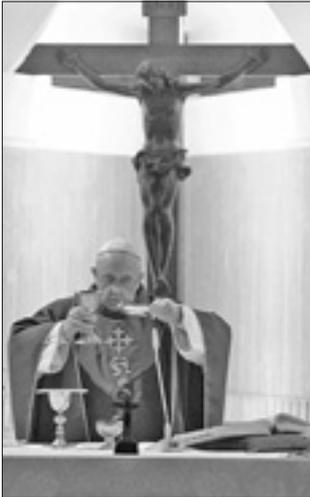
To all those who assist the sick and the suffering I express my confident hope that they will draw inspiration from Mary, the Mother of Mercy. “May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God’s tenderness” (*ibid.*, 24), allow it to dwell in our hearts and express it in our actions! Let us entrust to the Virgin Mary our trials and tribulations, together with our joys and consolations. Let us beg her to turn her eyes of mercy towards us, especially in times of pain, and make us worthy of beholding, today and always, the merciful face of her Son Jesus!

With this prayer for all of you, I send my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 15 September 2015
Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows

Francis

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sanctification. The Apostle indeed writes to his interlocutors that now they “have changed”, now something “fundamental” has happened to them, “namely, salvation in Jesus Christ, God’s gift”.

This, Pope Francis said, “is the catechesis of convert”. Paul, therefore, “exhorts us to convert”. And it is a message that extends to our present day. “We might think”, the Pope said, “that most of us were baptized as children, not knowing the meaning of iniquity. We then learned its meaning in catechesis”, and so Paul’s counsel is also for us when he writes: “Do not use your soul, your heart and your body for sin, at the service of evil, of iniquity; but use them at the service of God’s gift, of the joy” that leads us to “eternal life in Jesus”.

Therefore the Pope summarized the meaning of conversion: “for a Christian”, he explained, “conversion is an assignment, an everyday task”. So that it might be understood more clearly, Pope Francis recalled St Paul’s image of an athlete. Using the example of the “man training in preparation for a match, making a great effort”, the Apostle says that: “if he makes this effort to win a match”, then we, “who must reach the great victory of Heaven, how could we not do the same?”. He urges everyone on several occasions “to move forward in this effort”.

However, a misunderstanding could arise and someone might ask: “Father, might I think that sanctification is achieved based on my efforts, as a victory is achieved by athletes through training?”.

“No”, the Pope replied, explaining: “The efforts that we make, our daily efforts of serving the Lord with our soul, with our heart, with our body and with our whole lives”, only serve to open “the door to the Holy Spirit”. Then it is the Spirit “who enters us and saves us”; the Spirit “is the gift in Jesus Christ”. If it were not so, Pope Francis said, “we would resemble fakirs: no, we are not fakirs. With our efforts, we open the door”.

One might make a legitimate objection here: “But Father, it’s difficult... It’s hard to make this effort every day”. This is true, “it is not easy”, the Pope said, “because of

our weakness, original sin, the devil always pulls us back”. Precisely in this regard, “the author of the Book of Hebrews warns against the temptation of moving backwards”, and he writes: “We are those who do not surrender”. Therefore, the Pope urged everyone “not to fall back, and not to yield”, recalling the striking image the Apostle Peter used to describe those “who tire of moving forward and in the end say: ‘I will stay here’”. They are, in fact, comparable to a “dog who returns to his vomit”. The day’s scripture passage, however, “exhorts and urges us to always move forward, a bit further every day”. Even when we are forced to face “a great difficulty”.

To provide even better understanding, Pope Francis spoke of a meeting that he had “several months ago” with a woman, “the young mother of a family – a good family – who had cancer, a horrible cancer”. Nevertheless, the Pope said, “she moved about with happiness, as if she were healthy. And speaking of this attitude, she told me: ‘Father, I am giving my all to beat this cancer’”. This is precisely the attitude that the Christian must have. “We have received this gift in Jesus”, the Pontiff explained, “and we have passed from sin, from the life of iniquity to the life of the gift in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, we must do the same”.

How? “One step each day. Every day a step”. And “there are many” opportunities. Pope Francis offered a few very simple examples: “Do I want to gossip about someone? Keep quiet”, or: “Am I a bit tired and do not want to pray? Go to pray a little”. We do not need to think of grand gestures, but of “little everyday things”. Because the “little things” are what “help us to not give up, to not fall back, to not return to iniquity; but to move forward towards this gift, Jesus’ promise that will be the encounter with him”.

As customary, the Pope concluded his homily with an invitation to prayer and personal commitment: “Let us ask the Lord for this grace: to be good in this exercise of life on the path to that encounter, because we have received the gift of justification, the gift of grace, the gift of the Spirit in Christ”.



Mirko Virius, “The Harvest” (1938)

Friday, 23 October

Times change

“Times change and we Christians must constantly change”. Pope Francis repeated this message throughout the Mass he celebrated on Friday morning in the Chapel of Santa Marta. It is a call to act “without fear”, to act “with freedom”, to avoid tranquillizing conformism, to be “steadfast in the faith in Jesus, steadfast in the truth of the Gospel”, but to “constantly move according to the signs of the times”.

Pope Francis started his reflection by referring to the day’s Readings, from the last part of the liturgical year, and particularly to the Letter to the Romans. “We have pointed out”, he recalled, “how Paul preached with such great intensity the freedom that we have in Christ”. This, he said, “is a gift, the gift of freedom, the freedom that has saved us from sin, that made us free”, that made us “children of God like Jesus; that freedom which brings us to call God ‘Father’”. The Pope added that “to attain this freedom we must open ourselves up to the power of the Spirit and really understand what is happening within us and around us”. And while in “recent days, last week”, we focused “on how to distinguish what happens within us: what comes from the good Spirit and what does not come from him”, in other words, the discernment of what “happens within us”, in the day’s Liturgy the Gospel passage from Luke (12:54-59) urges us instead “to look outside”. It impels us to “reflect on how we evaluate the things that happen around us”.

We need to ask ourselves “how do we judge: are we able to judge?”. Pope Francis said that “we have the capacity” and that Paul himself “tells us that we will judge the world: we Christians will judge the world”. The Apostle Peter says something similar when “he calls us the chosen people, the holy priesthood, the nation chosen for holiness”.

In short, the Pope explained, we Christians “have the freedom to judge what happens around us”. He warned, however, that “in order to judge we must really know what is

happening around us”. The Pope then posed a question: “how can one do this, what the Church calls ‘knowing the signs of the times?’”.

In this regard, the Pope noted that “times change. It is truly Christian wisdom to recognize these changes, to be familiar with the different times, to know the signs of the times”, to distinguish between “the meaning of one thing and another”. Naturally, the Pope said, this “is not easy, because we hear so many comments: ‘I heard that this happened here, or that happened there; I read this, they told me that...’”. However, he quickly added, “I am free, I must make my own judgement and understand what all this means”. He said that “this is a task we usually don’t do. Instead, ‘we conform, we become tranquillized with ‘they told me; I heard; people say; I read...’, and we remain comfortable’. Instead we should ask ourselves: ‘What is the truth? What is the message that the Lord wants to give me with that sign of the times?’”.

As customary, the Pope also proposed some practical suggestions “for understanding the signs of the times”. First and foremost, he said, “silence is necessary: to be quiet, to watch and observe. And afterwards to think within ourselves. For example: why are there so many wars now? Why did this thing happen? And to pray”. Therefore: “silence, reflection and prayer. Only then can we understand the signs of the times and what Jesus wants to tell us”.

In this sense there are no excuses. Though each of us may be tempted to say: “But, I have not studied much... I did not go to university nor even to secondary school...”, Jesus’ words leave no room for doubt. He does not say: “Watch how the academics act, how the doctors and intellectuals act”. On the contrary, he says: “Look to the farmers, to the humble: in their simplicity they understand that when the rain comes, the grass grows; they are able to distinguish wheat from weeds”. As a result “that simplicity – if accompanied by silence, reflection and prayer – will enable us to understand the signs of the times”. Because, he reiterated, “times change and we Christians must continually change. We must change, steadfast in the faith in Jesus Christ, steadfast in the truth of the Gospel, but our approach must constantly move according to the signs of the times”.

To conclude, the Pope returned to his initial thought. “We are free”, he said, “through the gift of freedom that Jesus Christ gave us. But our task is to examine what is happening within us, to discern our feelings and our thoughts, and to analyze what is happening around us, to discern the signs of the times”. How can we do this? “With silence, reflection and prayer”.

SERGIO MASSIRONI

There are public voices which recently have dared to play a very delicate game in local communities. This story, one of many, documents how unforeseen circumstances can call the Church to show her true face.

In Casazza, situated in the valleys surrounding the city of Bergamo, Italy, the change began a year ago on a summer night, when a bus carrying asylum-seekers drove through the town to the facility secretly destined to receive them. Such an event can only take place after nightfall. We revisit those moments today with the main protagonists to attempt a demanding evaluation.

So I listen, I pose my questions, I observe people completing each other's sentences with frankness.

Cristiana Bosio, a young social services councillor, remembers her shock and that of the newly-elected administration: "There was no official warning beforehand, only whispers three days earlier by the representative of a cooperative. The prefecture's announcement came afterwards, once it had all taken place: a



The parish of San Lorenzo in Casazza

former nursing home was made available by the diocese in the centre of the village. The cooperative was ordered to proceed and the first 25 refugees arrived. They would become 40, and then 70". This seemed like a necessary strategy for avoiding demonstrations by the people, road-blocks and tension that would prevent their passage. Bosio immediately thinks of the parish youth centre; she realizes that, in order to reassure the community, it is vital to communicate that the Church and the administration are united. The time will come for initiatives and responses. Emergencies are in fact educational; they offer keys to understanding, and affirming – despite any perplexities – the primacy of acceptance and of dignity.

Fr Pietro Gelmi, the parish priest, has shown himself to be both prudent and cautious, constrained between the uncertainty related to the transfer of his collaborator, the young parochial vicar, and the strong reactions that the arrival of



Even before the Pope's appeal to Europe, Church and city joined forces for integration

In the valleys of Bergamo

the asylum-seekers might generate. Amid fears of false steps, exploitation and isolation, the pastor's courage has prevailed: a letter, signed jointly by the mayor and the parish priest, was sent to each family. In it, while admitting surprise, they urged families to be understanding. Essential information was also provided: the number of refugees to be taken in; their provenance from situations of war and persecution; the responsibility for management of the Ruah Cooperative, near the Bergamo Caritas; financial explanations concerning the cost of accommodation and the source of funding; and the non-municipal ownership of the facility that has been made available.

Cristiana Bosio thus launched a door-to-door canvass of shopkeepers, intending to check whether shops are prepared to contract with the cooperative so that the city might begin to feel recompensed for the space offered. Beyond her professional experience, the municipal councillor grew up in the parish youth centre and is well aware that this is the most likely place for a sense of community to develop; she knew that where there are children and adolescents community spirit can take a quantum leap.

However the arrival of Fr Claudio Avogadri brought about a change of pace. With him the Church's educational activity has been at the forefront of integrating the ever increasing number of refugees. In the parish youth centre, for example, the task force for asylum-seekers has been formed, and consists of the councillor, the assistant priest, a parish teacher, those in charge of the cooperative, a lively association of pensioners and citizens concerned with the issue. As soon as conditions allowed, their meetings were moved to the welcome facility for asylum-seekers. In this way, the newcomers have gotten involved in the valley's volunteer activities and take part in caring for the area: 36 asylum-seekers in Casazza participate as volunteers. The parish youth centre, in the meantime, has invested in community events. It began with a proposal for teenagers to work with refugees on a drawing activity. The first meeting was to take place in their housing facility and then in

parish premises. Only three youths dared to attend the first time, but with time participation has increased. The subject of the drawings is "journey" – an obvious reference to lived experiences to be re-examined and shared – journeys filled with trauma and for now, at least in some respects, suspended. Daniela Testa, a teacher of the cooperative, tells how the works created later set the stage for an evening in which the community saw the screening of the documentary *Come il peso dell'acqua*, by Giuseppe Battiston, Stefano Liberti, Marco Paolini and Andrea Segre.

This was followed by organizing a meeting of the refugees with the entire group of adolescents, about 100 secondary school boys and girls, who then began spending Monday evenings at the parish youth centre for their own formative experience. They are young people who have different and often contradictory ideas about immigration. For this reason Fr Claudio Avogadri prefers to invest in a kind of shock therapy. The idea of swapping stories was abandoned, given the linguistic challenges. There are now 70 African guests. Thus the young people themselves launched into a kind of two-way interview: a way of seeing Bergamascans and asylum-seekers side by side, responding not so much to what distinguishes them but to what they have in common: who takes out the rubbish, who makes the bed, their favourite sport and music, love for their mother. In this way, fondness, instead of pity, has come about.

Fr Avogadri also remembers the case of Luzzana, a few kilometres from here, where the parish priest involved the refugees with parishioners of all age groups: from the parish youth centre to meetings with the elderly, from serving at the patron saint celebrations to children's summer camps. There, it seems that the refugees now speak the Bergamascan dialect rather than Italian.

Returning to Casazza, Ms Bosio tells me about what all consider to be a feather in the cap of communication between the parish and community: the organization of a surprising meal invitation. Although in northern Italian culture, it is not

common to open one's home to strangers, the proposal to invite two asylum-seekers to lunch on Palm Sunday allowed all the young Africans to find a table set for them. Friendships were born, a more personal type of knowledge, but above all an upheaval occurred in the hearts of some. Cristina Bettoni, a young mother, admits that upon opening her front door, she felt a new kind of embarrassment: the fear of being considered rich, the sensation of having too much and that it would seem scandalous to the arriving guests, lacking in everything but their load of sorrow. According to Fr Claudio Avogadri, the turning point

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Slovenian Catholics come to the aid of refugees

"We are experiencing a humanitarian crisis", but "the Church is close to refugees fleeing from war and religious persecution, and she is ready to welcome". This was stated by Fr Tadej Strehovec, general secretary and spokesperson of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference on Thursday, 22 October, with regard to the wave of refugees (over 34,000 in 5 days) seeking to enter the country. Logistical difficulties have been observed due to the high numbers seeking refuge: "We are a small country", said the spokesman for the episcopal conference, "with a limited number of police officers". The government has requested the intervention of the armed forces to better manage the flow of people passing through Slovenia en route to Austria and Germany, which are only two or three hours away. Local Caritas organizations are offering hot meals and assistance, also thanks to the help of volunteers.

Francis to the participants in the National Meeting of the Missionary Groups in Argentina

Learning to see like Jesus

“Let us always remember that we cannot show others what we have neither seen nor heard ourselves. This is why, to be a missionary, before proclaiming and communicating it is necessary to see; to see Jesus who made himself small in order to reach our weakness, who took on our mortal flesh to clothe it with his immortality and who comes to us every day to walk beside us and gives us his friendly hand when we are in difficulty”. These are the words of Pope Francis, contained in the message he sent to the more than 3,000 participants in the fourth National Meeting of Missionary Groups in Argentina which took place in Santiago del Estero from 10 to 12 October and whose theme was “Mission, a way of life”.

The Pontiff urged them never to forget “the call, the first encounter with Jesus, the joy with which you received the first proclamation, perhaps from your parents, grandparents, catechists or teachers. And never cease praying, pray for one another, support one another with prayers, and you will see how Jesus, in your midst and despite your weakness, will work marvels among all peoples”. Francis recalls that the mission, apart from being a passion for Jesus, is a passion for his people: “Let us be seen by Jesus but let us also learn to see like Jesus; a gaze of

tenderness, understanding and mercy that leads us to touch the Lord's wounds in the flesh of our brothers in need. To see Jesus in others purifies the heart, freeing it of selfishness, of any ulterior motive, of any worldly desire”. The Pope ends his message by encouraging the participants to “continue building an outgoing Church, groups of solidarity working to communicate the joy the Lord has infused into our hearts”.

On Saturday, 10 October, the work of the meeting was opened by Bishop Vicente Bokalic Iglic of Santiago del Estero, President of the Episcopal Commission for Missions, who stressed the missionary work of the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Mercedarians and the Jesuits, recalling in particular the figures of St Francesco Solano and Mama Antula (Bl. María Antonia de San José). The prelate exalted the “sacred fire” present in lay people, especially in the young, who “devote their lives to the mission, who leave their closed circles to go beyond borders”. The missionary groups “are alive and are increasing in number; with so many years of history they are a visible, palpable expression over time; they have their history, patches of light and shade, but still today they attract numerous young people who wish to live their faith in Jesus,

servicing poor communities and distant populations”. Speaking at the meeting in Santiago del Estero, Bishop Bokalic Iglic explained that the aim was “to study how to make the mission a way of life, not just for a week or for the time of a summer break. As Pope Francis says in his exhortation, we are a mission”. The mission in the heart of the people “is not a unit of measurement or an ornament. It is something that I am unable to remove from my being. I am a mission and that is why I am in the world. We must consider ourselves as branded with such a mission and we find the true answer to this challenge in Jesus: his life was a mission”.

The participants from 16 Argentine dioceses worked in groups after listening to three presentations: “The identity of missionary groups in an outgoing Church”, by Fr Juan Ignacio Liébana, diocesan director of Misiones de Añatuya; “Seeking the mystique of the mission in the light of *Evangelii Gaudium*”, by Bishop Fernando Martín Croxatto,



Auxiliary of Comodoro Rivadavia and a member of the Episcopal Commission for Missions; and “Priorities of the ad gentes mission”, by María Andrea Green, of the Order of Consecrated Virgins. The meeting was enriched by many missionary testimonies, by exhibitions and by a cultural event held on the Sunday, 11 October, in Aguirre Park. The next day the closing ceremony took place in the Quimsa Stadium, with the celebration of Mass and the sending out on mission.

The national meeting takes place every four years, its aim being to increase and strengthen the missionary dimension of the Church in Argentina.

Church and city join forces to help migrants

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was the great tragedy in the Mediterranean on 20 April when 800 people died at sea. People at last managed to put faces to the numbers, comparing the young they knew now to those who had lost their lives to drowning. Within only a few hours the community had organized a silent march, in which once again the Church and the public administration stood side by side. Associations joined in as well as individual citizens. There were more than 400 people on the street, including many asylum-seekers, who prayed for the victims and lent themselves to questions about their stories. Everyone went home with a greater awareness of the weight of what happened, and what continues to happen.

The thought that accompanies Cristiana Bosio's administrative service is not an easy one: what future will these young refugees have? “Of course their arrival in the town unleashed contrasting energies, it set in motion opposing feelings. However, at the heart of the position that each person takes lies the question: what are we really doing? We have them here, suspended between a difficult past and an unknown future that none of us has the power to imagine. They are simply waiting, inactive, parked in this corner of the world, prisoners of regulations that cut short any first step. Measuring oneself against the powerlessness of our democra-

cies generates a twinge in the community, an outlet for which some find in protest and others in a surplus of commitment”.

Fr Avogadri confirms that this is precisely the point: “Any idea about ourselves collapses, we feel the impact when situations arise that cannot be resolved with commitment and money alone. A ghost of our own inadequacy cries out and we can only endeavour to distance it. The challenge of the parish youth centre, however, contin-

ues to be that of accepting every circumstance which reawakens the conscience: educating means taking the call by which reality comes to us, and gaining from it accepting a cultural turning-point”.

There is hope that many will believe this because – if this is how things are – with its expansive reach throughout the territory, the Italian Church has harnessed the power of a flywheel to effect an extraordinary change.

Parochial schools in Ireland open doors to young refugees

Catholic elementary schools in Ireland are welcoming refugee children. The country's 2,900 primary schools are glad to welcome and educate the children of families arriving to Ireland from Syria and other conflict zones. This statement was made on 23 September by Fr Tom Deenihan, the General Secretary of the Association of Catholic Elementary Schools in the Republic of Ireland. According to Fr Deenihan – SIR reports – the majority of the schools have the necessary space for enrolling these children, “and would be happy to do it”. Our parochial schools, he said, “are engaged at the forefront in help-

ing immigrants integrate into our local communities. Children of different faiths and nationalities contribute to giving Catholic schools across the country a multinational profile. All of our students”, he continued, “receive a quality education and, in turn, enrich the daily life of our schools. Pope Francis' recent appeal to open parish doors to people who have suffered, is also an invitation to Catholic schools, that they might give their support. As part of parish life in Ireland”, the priest concluded, “Catholic schools do not want to back away in the face of this critical time for refugees”.

In South Korea

Religious leaders call to abolish the death penalty

“On behalf of all leaders of the seven major religions of the country, I asked the Korean Parliament to abolish the death penalty by the end of the year. I have also met for half an hour with the Speaker of the National Korean Assembly, asking him to help to abolish capital punishment”. With these words, Bishop Lazzaro You Heung-sik of Daejeon and President of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace, described the recent meeting religious leaders had with Korean parliamentarians. The visit, which took place on Wednesday, 21 October, served as a follow-up to the meeting of 6 July, during which the same religious leaders presented a petition in order to support bipartisan legislation aimed at abolishing capital punishment in the country. Speaking to *AsiaNews*, Bishop Lazzaro said: “This time we were a federation representing seven major religions in the country”.

In an audience with the gypsy community the Pope calls for eradicating prejudice and mistrust which lead to discrimination

It's time to turn the page

"We no longer want to witness family tragedies in which children die from cold or are burnt alive, or become objects in the hands of depraved persons, or in which young people and women are involved in the trafficking of drugs or of human beings". Pope Francis addressed these words to participants of a world pilgrimage of the gypsy community, in an audience on Monday morning, 26 October, in the Paul VI Hall. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address which was delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome and greet you all cordially. I thank Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò for his words and for having organized this event in collaboration with: the "Migrantes" Foundation of the Italian Episcopal Conference; the "Migrantes" Office of the Diocese of Rome and the Sant'Egidio Community.

Dear gypsy friends, *o Del si tu-mentsa!* ["The Lord be with you!"]

Many of you come from afar and have undertaken a long journey to come here. Welcome! I thank you for wishing to commemorate together the historic meeting of Blessed

and hope to you and to the role you carry out, and all that you can do in the process of reconciliation within society and the Church. You are a link between two cultures and, therefore, you are asked to be witnesses of evangelical transparency to foster the birth, growth and care of new vocations. Accompany them not only on their spiritual journey but also in the routine of their daily life with all its toils, joys and concerns.

I know the difficulties of your people. Having visited some parishes on the outskirts of Rome, I have been able to understand your problems, your anxieties, and I have seen that these issues require the attention not only of the Church but also of the local authorities. I have been able to see the precarious conditions in which many of you live, due to negligence and unemployment and the lack of the necessary means of subsistence. This is contrary to the right of every person to a dignified life, to dignified work, to education and to health care. According to the moral and social order, every human being must be able to enjoy his fundamental rights and fulfil his duties. On this basis it is possible to build peaceful coexist-

persons, or in which young people and women are involved in the trafficking of drugs or of human beings. And this happens because we often fall prey to indifference and are unable to accept customs and ways of life that are different from our own.

I also hope that your people may start a new phase, a renewed history, so as to turn the page! The time has come to put an end to age-old prejudices, preconceptions and mutual mistrust that are often at the base of discrimination, racism and xenophobia. No one must feel isolated, and no one is authorized to trample on the dignity and rights of others. It is the spirit of mercy that calls us to fight in order to guarantee all these values. Therefore, let us allow the Gospel of mercy to shake our consciences and let us open our hearts and our hands to the neediest and most marginalized, beginning with the ones closest to us. In today's cities in which so much individualism is breathed, I urge you first and foremost to commit yourselves to build more human peripheries, strong bonds of fraternity and sharing; you have this responsibility, it is also your task. And you can do it if you are first of all good Christians, avoiding everything that is not worthy of this name: falsehood, fraud, cheating, quarrels. You have the example of Bl. Zeffirino Giménez Malla, a son of your people, who distinguished himself by his virtues, humility and honesty, and by his great devotion to Our Lady, a devotion that led him to martyrdom and to be known as the "Martyr of the Rosary". I hold him up to you again today as a model of life and religiosity, also because of the cultural and ethnic ties that link you to him.

Dear friends, do not give the media and public opinion any motive to speak ill of you. You yourselves are the protagonists of your present and of your future. Like all citizens, you can contribute to the wellbeing and the progress of society, respect-



ing the laws, fulfilling your duties and integrating yourselves also through the emancipation of each new generation. I see here in the hall many young people and many children: they are the future of your people but also of the society in which they live. Children are your most precious treasure. Today your culture is in a phase of change; technological development renders your youth increasingly aware of their potential and their dignity, and they themselves feel the need to work for the personal human advancement of your people. This calls for their being assured of adequate schooling. You must demand this: it is a right!

Education is certainly the basis for a person's healthy development. It is well known that the poor level of schooling of many of your young people today is the main obstacle to their access to the world of work. Your children have the right to go to school; do not prevent them from going! Your children have the right to go to school! It is important that the impetus to better education come from the family, come from the parents, come from the grandparents; it is the task of adults to ensure that the young ones attend school. Access to education will enable your young people to become active citizens, to participate in the political, social and economic life in their respective countries.

Civil institutions are called upon to guarantee appropriate training courses for young gypsies, giving families that live in the most difficult conditions the possibility to attend school and enter the world of work. The integration process challenges society to learn about the culture, history and values of the gypsy populations. May your culture and your values be known by all!

Many times, also on behalf of St John Paul II and Benedict XVI, you have been assured of the affection and encouragement of the Church. Now I would like to conclude with the words of Bl. Paul VI, who assured you: "You are not on the margins of the Church, but, under certain aspects, you are at the centre, you are at the heart. You are at the heart of the Church" (*ibid.*, n. 491-492). Mary is also in this heart, venerated by you as Our Lady of the Gypsies, whom we will shortly crown again to recall Pope Montini's gesture 50 years ago. I entrust you, your families and your future to her and to Bl. Zeffirino. And please, I ask you to pray for me. Thank you.



Paul VI with the nomadic people. Fifty years have passed since he came to visit you in the Camp at Pomezia. The Pope spoke to your grandparents and parents with fatherly care, saying: "Wherever you stop you are considered a bother and a stranger [...] Here not so; [...] here you find someone who loves you, esteems you, appreciates you and assists you" (cf. *Insegnamenti* III [1965], n. 491). With these words, he spurred the Church to a pastoral commitment with your people, encouraging you too at the same time to trust her. From that day until now, we have witnessed great changes, both in the field of evangelization, and in that of the human, social and cultural promotion of your community. We heard Dr Peter Pollák talk about his experience, and how this way must be promoted and continue to be promoted.

A strong sign of faith and spiritual growth of your ethnic groups is the ever-increasing number of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life. With us here today is Bishop Devprasad Ganawa, he too is a son of this people. Dear consecrated men and women, your brothers and sisters look with trust

ence, in which the different cultures and traditions protect their respective values, not by adopting a closed or opposing attitude, but through dialogue and integration. We no longer want to witness family tragedies in which children die from cold or are burnt alive, or become objects in the hands of depraved



Paul VI visits a gypsy camp in Pomezia, located outside of Rome (26 September 1965)