

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Friday, 15 January 2016

At the General Audience

Love takes the first step



"It is love which takes the first step, which does not depend on human merit but on immense gratuitousness". Pope Francis defined divine mercy in this way during the General Audience on Wednesday, 13 January. With the faithful present in the Paul VI Hall, the Pontiff began a new cycle of reflections dedicated to the theme of the Jubilee, according to the biblical perspective through which we learn "by listening to what God himself teaches us through his Word".

PAGE 3

The Baptism of 26 babies in the Sistine Chapel

Our greatest legacy



PAGE 12

Pope Francis to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See

People at the heart of policy

In his speech to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Francis spoke about "the grave crisis of migration which we are facing". Diplomats accredited to the Holy See gathered in the Regia Hall of the Apostolic Palace, on Monday morning, 11 January, for the traditional audience at the beginning of the year. The Pope wished to help discern the causes of the crisis and "consider possible solutions", in order to defeat "the inevitable fears associated with this massive and formidable phenomenon".

During the meeting the Pontiff took the opportunity to review the international situation. His reminders were preceded by a meaningful report on the results of the Holy See's diplomatic efforts in 2015, a year in which the number of ambassadors residing in Rome increased and in which important international agreements were reached. The work found new motivations and perspectives in the "common thread" of mercy indicated by Pope Francis to the Church and to the world with the induction of the extraordinary Jubilee. The Pontiff reaffirmed the need to "set out anew and resume dialogue" and to reject every attempt to use religion as a reason to "kill in the name of God", as has happened in the recent terrorist attacks in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Turning to current global complexities, laden with "challenges"

Christians persecuted everywhere

What are we doing for them?



and "more than a few tensions", the Pope focused attention on migration issues in which, he observed, the consequences of the great humanitarian tragedies afflicting the planet have become concentrated. Wars, human rights violations, religious-based persecution, extreme poverty, malnutrition, climate change: all are tragic situations that fuel events of genuine mass exodus, forcing millions of men, women and children to flee their lands in order to escape violence and "unspeakable acts of cruelty towards vulnerable persons".

Francis observed realistically that "many of the causes of migration could have been addressed some time ago". Yet today there is still much that "could be done to end these tragedies and to build peace".

A global phenomenon

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

In the traditional inaugural address to ambassadors at the start of the year, the Pope outlined a panorama confirming that the Church of Rome's gaze upon "our world, so loved and blessed by God, and yet fraught with so many ills" has a truly universal perspective. This global focus embraces with both lucidity and hope the two phenomena that most unsettle and concern the international community: the growing wave of violence which misuses and therefore blasphemes in the name of God, and the drama surrounding the situation of migration as a whole.

In the face of this emergency the Pontiff reaffirmed the central theme of mercy, which is at the heart of the Gospel. This is why, from the very start of his Pontificate, Pope Bergoglio has taken a firm stand on this position, to the point of proclaiming the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which he chose to open in the Central African Republic. Indeed, mercy was the common thread linking last year's international journeys, and it is in fact mercy that allows us to advance together and to repeat, as Francis did with Muslims in Bangui, that "those who claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace".

Like his Predecessors, Francis emphasized in his address that "every authentic practice of religion cannot

Fourth centenary of his death

Shakespeare lives on



ON PAGE 6/7

DONALD WUERL ON PAGE 11

PAGES 4 AND 5

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Saturday, 9 January

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

Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati Andrello, SDB, Archbishop of Santiago de Chile, Chile, President of the Episcopal Conference of Chile; with Bishop Alejandro Goic Karmelic of Rancagua, Vice-President; and Bishop Cristián Contreras Villarroel of Melipilla, Secretary General

Fr Adolfo Nicolás Pachón, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, with Fr Mauro Jöhri, OFM Cap., Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, President of the Union of Superiors General (USG)

Hon. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, President of the Region of Lazio, Italy

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Juarez Sousa da Silva as Coadjutor Bishop of Parnaíba, Brazil. Until now he has been Bishop of Oeiras, Brazil (6 Jan.).

Bishop Sousa da Silva, 54, was born in Barras, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 19 March 1994.

He was ordained a bishop on 17 May 2008, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Oeiras.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Luiz Gonzaga Féchio as Bishop of Amparo, Brazil. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Putia in Byzacena and Auxiliary of Belo Horizonte, Brazil (6 Jan.).

Bishop Féchio, 50, was born in Matão, São Paulo. He was ordained a priest on 14 December 1990. He was ordained a bishop on 19 March 2011, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Putia in Byzacena and Auxiliary of Belo Horizonte.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Miguel José Asurmendi Aramendía, SDB, of Vitoria, Spain. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (8 Jan.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Juan Carlos Elizalde Espinal from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Pamplona y Tudela, Spain, as Bishop of Vitoria. Until now he has been episcopal vicar for the Pamplona-Cuenca-Roncesvalles area (8 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Elizalde Espinal, 55, was born in Mezkiriz, Spain. He holds a licence in philosophy and in

theology and one in spiritual theology. He was ordained a priest on 3 October 1987. He has served in parish ministry and as: a member of the Secular Institute of the Cruzados de Santa María for a time; chaplain to the Polytechnic University of Madrid; in charge of the diocesan university lodgings; professor of theology; head of pastoral ministry at the State university of Navarra; co-ordinator of the diocesan centre for spiritual direction; canon-prior of the Royal Collegiate Church of Roncesvalles.

The Holy Father appointed Fr António Augusto de Oliveira Azevedo as Auxiliary Bishop of Porto, Portugal, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Cemerinianus. Until now he has served as rector of the Major Seminary in Porto (9 Jan.).

Bishop-elect de Oliveira Azevedo, 53, was born in São Pedro de Avioso, Portugal. He was ordained a priest on 13 July 1986. He has served in parish ministry and as: military chaplain to the paratroopers based in Tancos; diocesan assistant for the apostolate to workers and to the centre for preparation for marriage; prefect of the formation team at the major Seminary; professor of theology at the Catholic University; judge at the ecclesiastical tribunal of Porto and secretary of the presbyteral council.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Euzébio Chinekezy Ogbonna Managwu as Bishop of Port-Gentil, Gabon. Until now he has been episcopal vicar of the Archdiocese of Libreville, Gabon (12 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Ogbonna Managwu, 56, was born in N'Djamena, Chad. He was ordained a priest on 1 November 1992. He holds a licence in spiritual theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: spiritual director and rector of the Saint Jean Minor Seminary in Libreville. He also studied in Rome and at the Foyer de Charité in the Chateau Neuf de Gallaume, France, before returning to Gabon.

EASTERN CHURCHES

The Holy Father established the Apostolic Exarchate for Syro-Catholics resident in Canada, with territory taken from the Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance of Newark for Syro-Catholics, USA, with its headquarters in Montreal, Canada. The Pope also appointed Fr Antoine Nassif as the first Apostolic Exarch, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Serigene. Until now he has been rector of the Patriarchal Major Seminary of Charfet, Lebanon (7 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Nassif, 46, was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He was ordained a priest for the Syrian Cath-

olic Patriarchal Eparchy in 1992. He has served in parish ministry and as principal of the school in Charfet, Lebanon.

The Synod of Bishops of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church, meeting at Mount St Thomas, Kerala, India, with Pontifical assent, in accord with can. 184 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches [CCEO], has canonically elected Fr Jose Pulickal as Auxiliary Bishop of the Eparchy of Kanjirapally for Syro-Malabars, India, at the same time assigning him the titular episcopal See of Lares. Until now he has been protosyncellus in charge of the clergy (12 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Pulickal, 51, was born in Inchiyani, India. He was ordained a priest on 1 January 1991. He holds a doctorate in biblical theology. He has served as: vicar of the Cathedral of Kanjirapally; director of the Snehashram Jesus Fraternity; vicar forane of Pathanamthitta; eparchial consultant; head protosyncellus of Ranni and Pathanamthitta.

APSA

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, Archbishop of Valladolid, Spain, as member of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA) (8 Jan.).

START OF MISSION

On 27 October 2015, Archbishop Paolo Rocco Gualtieri, titular Archbishop of Sagona, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in the Republic of Mauritius with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic.

NECROLOGY

Bishop Daniel Leo Ryan, Bishop emeritus of Springfield in Illinois, USA, at age 85 (31 Dec. 2015).

Bishop Raymond William Lessard, Bishop emeritus of Savannah, USA, at age 85 (3 Jan. 2016).

Bishop Barnabas R. Halem 'Imana, Bishop emeritus of Kabale, Uganda, at age 89 (3 Jan.).

Bishop Carlos Milcíades Villalba Aquino, Bishop emeritus of San Juan Bautista de las Misiones, Paraguay, at age 91 (8 Jan.).

Bishop Paul-Marie Rousset, Association of the Priests of Prado, Bishop emeritus of Saint-Étienne, France, at age 94 (9 Jan.).

Archbishop Francis Thomas Hurley, Archbishop emeritus of Anchorage, USA, at age 88 (10 Jan.).

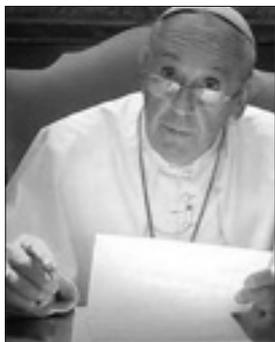
In a video message

Dialogue between religions

"The majority of the earth's inhabitants profess to be believers. And this ought to provoke dialogue between religions. We must never cease praying for this and collaborating with those who have a different point of view". Francis expressed this imperative in a video message disseminated on Wednesday, 6 January. The message was delivered in Spanish with subtitles in nine languages, and addressed to subscribers of the Pontiff's worldwide prayer network, Apostleship of Prayer. The video was recorded by the Vatican Television Centre, while production and distribution were undertaken by *La Machi* communications agency.

"Many [people] think in different ways", the Pope continued, "feel in different ways, see God or find God in different ways. Within this multitude, within this vast array of religions, there is only one certainty for us: we are all children of God". He then gave his final invitation: "I trust in you to spread this month's intention: 'That sincere dialogue among men and women of various religions may bear fruits of peace and justice'. I trust in this prayer".

The video message is the first of a series of 12, to be offered each month. They will convey the Pope's comments on his universal intentions entrusted to the Apostleship of Prayer for this year. The streaming of the Pontiff speaking from a desk is interspersed with a series of images of him encountering representatives of other Churches and religions. The sequence is also accompanied by the words of Rinchen Kandro, a Buddhist monk; Fr Guillermo Marcó, a Catholic priest; Omar Abboud, an Islamic leader; and Daniel Goldman, a Jewish rabbi. The latter three are respectively the president and vice presidents of the Institute for Interreligious Dialogue in Buenos Aires.



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At the General Audience the Pope speaks of the Father's mercy

He who takes the first step

At the General Audience in the Paul VI Hall on Wednesday, 13 January, the day following the tragic terrorist attack in Istanbul, Pope Francis invited the faithful to pray for the victims of the onslaught. He concluded the Audience with an appeal that "the Lord, the All Merciful grant eternal peace to the victims, comfort to their families, steadfast solidarity to society as a whole, and convert the hearts of the aggressors". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he gave in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today we shall begin the catechesis on mercy according to the biblical perspective, in order to learn mercy by listening to what God himself teaches us through his Word. We shall start with the *Old Testament*, which prepares us and leads us to the full revelation of Jesus Christ, in whom the mercy of the Father is fully revealed.

In Sacred Scripture, the Lord is presented as a "merciful God". This is his name, through which he unveils, so to speak, his face and his heart to us. As the Book of Exodus recounts, on revealing himself to Moses he defined himself in this way: "the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (34:6). We also find this formula in other texts, with certain variations, but the emphasis is always placed on mercy and on the love of God who never tires of forgiving (cf. Gen 4:2; Joel 2:13; Ps 86 [85]: 15, 103 [102]: 8,

145[144]:8; Neh 9:17). Together let us consider, one by one, these words of Sacred Scripture which speak to us about God.

The Lord is "merciful": this word evokes a tender approach like that of a mother toward her child. Indeed, the Hebrew term used in the Bible evokes the viscera or even the maternal womb. Therefore, the image it suggests is that of a God who is moved and who softens for us like a mother when she takes her child in her arms, wanting only to love, protect, help, ready to give everything, even herself. This is the image that this term evokes. A love, therefore, which can be defined in the best sense as "visceral".

Then it is written that the Lord is "gracious", in the sense of having grace, he has compassion and, in his greatness, he bends down to those who are weak and poor, ever ready to welcome, to understand, to forgive. He is like the father in the parable recounted in the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 15:11-32): a father who does not withdraw in resentment at the younger son for having forsaken him, but on the contrary, he continues to await him – he begot him – and then he runs to meet him and embraces him. He does not even let him explain – as though he had covered his mouth – so great is his love and joy at having found him again. Then the father also goes to call the older son who is offended and does not want to join in the celebration, the son who always stayed home and who lived more as a servant than as a son. To him too, the



father bends down, invites him to enter, tries to open his heart to love, so that no one is excluded from the celebration of mercy. Mercy is a celebration!

It is also said of this merciful God that he is "slow to anger", literally, "of great breadth", that is, having a broad capacity of forbearance and patience. God knows how to wait, his time is not the impatient one of man; he is like the wise farmer who knows how to wait, allowing time for the good seed to grow, in spite of the weeds (cf. Mt 13:24-30).

Lastly, the Lord proclaims himself "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness". How beautiful this definition of God is! It is all-encompassing. For God is great and powerful, and this greatness and power are used to love us, who are so small, so incompetent. The word "love", used here, indicates affection,

grace, goodness. It is not soap opera love.... It is love which takes the first step, which does not depend on human merit but on immense gratuitousness. It is divine solicitude that nothing can impede, not even sin, because it is able to go beyond sin, to overcome evil and forgive it.

Abounding in "faithfulness": this is the final word of God's revelation to Moses. God's faithfulness never fails, because the Lord is the guardian who, as the Psalm says, never slumbers but keeps constant vigil over us in order to lead us to life: "May he not suffer your foot to slip; may he slumber not who guards you: Indeed he neither slumbers nor sleeps, the guardian of Israel.... The Lord will guard you from all evil; he will guard your life. The Lord will guard your coming and your going, both now and forever" (Ps 121[120]:3-4, 7-8).

This merciful God is faithful in his mercy and St Paul says something beautiful: if you are not faithful to him, he will remain faithful, for he cannot deny himself. Faithfulness in mercy is the very being of God. For this reason God is totally and always trustworthy. A solid and steadfast presence. This is the assurance of our faith. Thus, in this Jubilee of Mercy, let us entrust ourselves to him totally, and experience the joy of being loved by this "God who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness".

SPECIAL GREETINGS

Before concluding our meeting, in which we have reflected together on the Mercy of God, I encourage you to pray for the victims of the attack that occurred yesterday in Istanbul. May the Lord, the All Merciful, grant eternal peace to the victims, comfort to their families, steadfast solidarity to society as a whole, and convert the hearts of the aggressors.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including the pilgrimage groups from Ireland, Finland and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that the Church's celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for all, I invoke upon you and your families an abundance of joy and peace in the Lord. God bless you all!

New book by Francis

Divine and earthly justice

"Only this Pope could have thought to organize a book presentation with a cardinal from the Veneto, an inmate originally from China and a comedian from Tuscany!". As usual, Roberto Benigni was met with a sea of laughter in his funny yet spiritual presentation of the new book *The Name of God is Mercy*, Pope Francis' conversation with Italian journalist Andrea Tornielli. The volume, which is being published in 86 countries around the world, was consigned to the Pontiff on 11 January.

Moderated by the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Fr Federico Lombardi, the book was presented on Tuesday, 12 January, at the Patristic Institute Augustinianum. Joining Benigni and Tornielli, were Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State; Fr Giuseppe Costa, Director of the Vatican Publishing House and the young Chinese man, Zhang Agostino Jianqing, an inmate in a prison in Padua, who spoke of his conversion and his experience of God's mercy and forgiveness. These themes were the basis of the Pope's responses in the new book. "I believe that Jesus' most important

message", Bergoglio tells Tornielli, highlighting how his focus on "the centrality of mercy slowly increased (...) as a result of his experience as a confessor and of the many positive and beautiful stories" which he had heard. In addition to divine justice we must also pursue earthly justice, he concluded. Crimes must be punished but "after one's debt is justly paid", those who have erred must find work and cannot "remain on the margins of society". It was for this reason, the Pope explains, that he "used the pastoral staff made of olive wood by a carpentry workshop which is part of a reintegration programme for inmates and former drug addicts".

It is a decision which points to mercy's role in society because "the lack of forgiveness means running the risk of fomenting a never-ending spiral of conflict".

At the press conference, Cardinal Parolin called the volume "a book that opens doors". It isn't full of personal anecdotes or unknown facts, but instead with this text the Pope wants to guide us into "the great and comforting mystery of the mercy of God".



Teófilo Patini, "The Good Samaritan", Pesaro, Italy

In his address to the Diplomatic Corps the Pope discusses the refugee crisis

People at the heart of policy

And he calls Europe to keep its principles and values

In reflecting on "the grave crisis of migration which we are facing, in order to discern its causes, to consider possible solutions, and to overcome the inevitable fears associated with this massive and formidable phenomenon", Pope Francis underlined the need to place "the person and human dignity at the heart of every humanitarian response" at an audience with the members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. The audience, which is held annually, took place on Monday morning, 11 January, in the Regia Hall and, as is traditional, the Pontiff examined the international situation. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's address which was given in Italian.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer you a cordial welcome to this annual gathering. It allows me to offer you my best wishes for the New Year and to reflect with you on the state of our world, so loved and blessed by God, and yet fraught with so many ills. I thank your new Dean, His Excellency Armindo Fernandes do Espírito Santo Veira, the Ambassador of Angola, for his kind greeting in the name of the entire Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. In a special way, I would also like to remember the late Ambassadors of Cuba, Rodney Alejandro López Clemente, and of Liberia, Rudolf P. von Ballmoos, both of whom left us in this past month.

A global phenomenon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fail to promote peace". He once again condemned the terrorist attacks, massacres and abuse that are escalating against defenceless and helpless people, which force entire minority populations – such as the countless Christians in the Near and Middle East so often recalled by the Pontiff – into mass exodus, and even to suffer "martyrdom solely on account of their religion". What was also striking about the papal discourse was the interweaving of these current phenomena with teaching and words from Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Previously in 1952, in the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* which broadly addressed the migratory phenomenon, Pius XII recalled the family of Jesus, which sought refuge by fleeing to Egypt, as a model and support for all refugees who, "whether compelled by persecution or by need, are forced to leave their native land". Likewise, in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah and of Matthew the Evangelist, Pope Pius' Successor today asks us to "hear Rachel weeping for her children who are no more", in order to confront this tragic worldwide situation with humanity and courage.

G.M.V.

This occasion also allows me to offer a particular word of welcome to those of you who join us for the first time. I note with satisfaction that the number of resident Ambassadors in Rome has increased over the past year. This is an important sign of the interest with which the international community follows the diplomatic activity of the Holy See, as for that matter are the international agreements signed or ratified in the course of this last year. Here I would mention the specific fiscal

agreements reached with Italy and the United States of America, reflecting the increased commitment of the Holy See to greater transparency in economic matters. No less important are the more general agreements aimed at regulating essential aspects of the Church's life and activity in different countries, such as the agreement sealed in Dili with the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

At the same time, I would like to mention the exchange of instruments of ratification of the agreement with Chad on the juridical status of the Catholic Church in that country, as well as the agreement signed and ratified with Palestine. These two agreements, together with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretariat of State and the Foreign Affairs Minister of Kuwait, demonstrate, among other things, how peaceful co-existence

between the followers of different religions is possible when religious freedom is recognized and practical cooperation in the pursuit of the common good, in a spirit of respect for the cultural identity of all parties, is effectively guaranteed.

For that matter, every authentic practice of religion cannot fail to promote peace. Our recent celebration of Christmas reminds us of this: we contemplated the birth of a vulnerable child who is "named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (cf. Is 9:5). The mystery of the Incarnation shows us the real face of God, for whom power does not mean force or destruction but love, and for whom justice is not vengeance but mercy. It is in light of this that I wished to proclaim the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, exceptionally inaugurated in Bangui during my Apostolic Journey in Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic. In a country sorely tried by hunger, poverty and conflict, where fratricidal violence in recent years has left deep wounds, rending the nation and creating material and moral destitution, the opening of the Holy Door of Bangui Cathedral was meant as a sign of encouragement to look ahead, to set out anew and resume dialogue. There, where God's name has been misused to perpetrate injustice, I wanted to reaffirm, together with the Muslim community of the Central African Republic, that "those who claim to believe in God must also be men and women of peace"¹ and consequently of mercy, for one may never kill in the name of God. Only a distorted ideological form of religion can think that justice is done in the name of the Almighty by deliberately slaughtering defenceless persons, as in the brutal terrorist attacks which occurred in recent months in Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

Mercy was the common thread linking my Apostolic Journeys in the course of the past year. This was the case above all with my visit to Sarajevo, a city deeply scarred by the war in the Balkans and the capital of a country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is uniquely significant for Europe and the entire world. As a crossroads of cultures, nations and religions, it is working successfully to build new bridges, to encourage those things which unite, and to see differences as opportunities for growth in respect for all. This is possible thanks to a patient and trusting dialogue capable of embracing the values of each culture and accepting the good which comes from the experience of others.²

I think too of my Journey to Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay, where I encountered peoples who have not given up in the face of difficulties, and who are facing with courage, determination and solidarity their many challenges, beginning with widespread poverty and social inequality. During my Journey to Cuba and the United States of America, I was able to embrace two



Four agreements signed in 2015

There are currently 180 States which maintain diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The European Union, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and the permanent mission of the State of Palestine also enjoy diplomatic relations. Regarding international organizations, the Holy See became an observer to the Caribbean Community and Common Market on 4 June. Currently there are 86 embassies to the Holy See in Rome, including those of the European Union and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. In 2015 the embassies of Belize, Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea transferred to Rome. Also located in Rome are the mission of the State of Palestine and the offices of the League of Arab States, of the International Organization for Migration, and of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. Over the course of 2015 four agreements were signed: a fiscal convention between the Holy See and the Government of the Italian Republic on 1 April; an agreement between the Holy See, also in the name and on behalf of the Vatican City State, and the United States of America, favouring international observance of fiscal obligations and the implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) on 10 June; a global agreement between the Holy See and the State of Palestine on 26 June; and an agreement between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on the juridical status of the Catholic Church on 14 August. An agreement – that had been signed on 6 November 2013 – between the Holy See and the Republic of Chad on the juridical status of the Catholic Church was ratified on 22 June 2015. Then on 10 September, a Memorandum of Understanding was finalized between the Secretariat of State and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait on conducting bilateral consultations.



countries which were long divided and which have decided to write a new page of history, embarking on the path of closer ties and reconciliation.

In Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families, during my Journey to Sri Lanka and to the Philippines, and more recently with the Synod of Bishops, I reaffirmed the centrality of the family, which is the first and most important school of mercy, in which we learn to see God's loving face and to mature and develop as human beings. Sadly, we recognize the numerous challenges presently facing families, "threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life".³ Today there is a widespread fear of the definitive commitment demanded by the family; those who pay the price are the young, who are often vulnerable and uncertain, and the elderly, who end up being neglected and abandoned. On the contrary, "out of the family's experience of fraternity is born solidarity in society",⁴ which instills in us a sense of responsibility for others. This is possible only if, in our homes and our societies, we refuse to allow weariness and resentment to take root, but instead make way for dialogue, which is the best antidote to the widespread individualism of today's culture.

Dear Ambassadors,

An individualistic spirit is fertile soil for the growth of that kind of indifference towards our neighbours which leads to viewing them in purely economic terms, to a lack of concern for their humanity, and ultimately to feelings of fear and cynicism. Are these not the attitudes we often adopt towards the poor, the marginalized and the "least" of society? And how many of these "least" do we have in our societies! Among them I think primarily of migrants, with their burden of hardship and suffering, as they seek daily, often in desperation, a place to live in peace and dignity.

Today, then, I would like to reflect with you on the grave crisis of migration which we are facing, in order to discern its causes, to consider possible solutions, and to overcome the inevitable fears associated with this massive and formidable phenomenon, which in 2015 has mainly concerned Europe, but also various regions of Asia and North and Central America.

"Be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Jos 1:9). This is the promise which God

makes to Joshua, revealing his concern for every person, but particularly those in precarious situations such as people seeking refuge in a foreign country. The Bible as a whole recounts the history of a humanity on the move, for mobility is part of our human nature. Human history is made up of countless migrations, sometimes out of an awareness of the right to choose freely, and often dictated by external circumstances. From the banishment from Eden to Abraham's journey to the promised land, from the Exodus story to the deportation to Babylon, sacred Scripture describes the struggles and sufferings, the desires and hopes, which are shared by the hundreds of thousands of persons on the move today, possessed of the same determination which Moses had to reach a land flowing with "milk and honey" (cf. Ex 3:17), a land of freedom and peace.

Now as then, we hear Rachel weeping for her children who are no more (cf. Jer 31:15; Mt 2:18). Hers is the plea of thousands of people who weep as they flee horrific wars, persecutions and human rights violations, or political or social instability, which often make it impossible for them to live in their native lands. It is the outcry of those forced to flee in order to escape unspeakable acts of cruelty towards vulnerable persons, such as children and the disabled, or martyrdom solely on account of their religion.

Now as then, we hear Jacob saying to his sons: "Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die" (Gen 42:2). His is the voice of all those who flee extreme poverty, inability to feed their families or to receive medical care and education, hopeless squalor or the effects of climate change and extreme weather conditions. Sadly, we know that hunger continues to be one of the gravest banes of our world, leading to the death of millions of children every year. It is painful to realize, however, that often these migrants are not included in international systems of protection based on international agreements.

How can we not see in all this the effects of that "culture of waste" which endangers the human person, sacrificing men and women before the idols of profit and consumption? It is a grievous fact that we grow so inured to such situations of poverty and need, to these tragedies affecting so many lives, that they appear "normal". Persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when poor or disabled, or "not yet useful" – like the unborn, or "no longer

needed" – like the elderly. We have grown indifferent to all sorts of waste, starting with the waste of food, which is all the more deplorable when so many individuals and families suffer hunger and malnutrition.⁵

The Holy See trusts that, amid today's sad context of conflicts and disasters, the First World Humanitarian Summit, convened by the United Nations for May 2016, will succeed in its goal of placing the person and human dignity at the heart of every humanitarian response. What is needed is a common commitment which can decisively turn around the culture of waste and lack of respect for human life, so that no one will feel neglected or forgotten, and that no further lives will be sacrificed due to the lack of resources and, above all, of political will.

Sadly, now as then, we hear the voice of Judah who counsels selling his own brother (cf. Gen 37:26-27). His is the arrogance of the powerful who exploit the weak, reducing them to means for their own ends or for strategic and political schemes. Where regular migration is impossible, migrants are often forced to turn to human traffickers or smugglers, even though they are aware that in the course of their journey they may well lose their possessions, their dignity and even their lives. In this context I once more appeal for an end to trafficking in persons, which turns human beings, especially the weakest and most defenceless, into commodities. The image of all those children who died at sea, victims of human callousness and harsh weather, will remain forever imprinted on our minds and hearts. Those who survive and reach a country which accepts them bear the deep and indelible scars of these experiences, in addition to those left by the atrocities which always accompany wars and violence.

Now as then, we hear the angel say: "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you" (Mt 2:13). His is the voice heard by many migrants who would never have left their homeland had they not been forced to. Among these are many Christians who in great numbers have abandoned their native lands these past years, despite the fact that they have dwelt there from the earliest days of Christianity.

Finally, we also hear today the voice of the Psalmist: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion" (Ps 137:1). His is the cry of those who would readily return to their

own country, if only there they could find adequate conditions of security and sustenance. Here too my thoughts turn to the Christians of the Middle East, who desire to contribute fully as citizens to the spiritual and material well-being of their respective nations.

Many of the causes of migration could have been addressed some time ago. So many disasters could have been prevented, or at least their harshest effects mitigated. Today too, before it is too late, much could be done to end these tragedies and to build peace. But that would mean rethinking entrenched habits and practices, beginning with issues involving the arms trade, the provision of raw materials and energy, investment, policies of financing and sustainable development, and even the grave scourge of corruption. We all know, too, that with regard to migration there is a need for mid-term and long-term planning which is not limited to emergency responses. Such planning should include effective assistance for integrating migrants in their receiving countries, while also promoting the development of their countries of origin through policies inspired by solidarity, yet not linking assistance to ideological strategies and practices alien or contrary to the cultures of the peoples being assisted.

Without overlooking other dramatic situations – in this regard, I think particularly of the border between Mexico and the United States of America, which I will be near when I visit Ciudad Juárez next month – my thoughts turn in a special way to Europe. Over the past year Europe has witnessed a great wave of refugees – many of whom died in the attempt – a wave unprecedented in recent history, not even after the end of the Second World War. Many migrants from Asia and Africa see in Europe a beacon for principles such as equality before the law and for values inherent in human nature, including the inviolable dignity and equality of every person, love of neighbour regardless of origin or affiliation, freedom of conscience and solidarity towards our fellow men and women.

All the same, the massive number of arrivals on the shores of Europe appear to be overburdening the system of reception painstakingly built on the ashes of the Second World War, a system that is still an acknowledged beacon of humanity. Given the immense influx and the inevitable problems it creates, a number of questions have been raised about the real possibilities for accepting and accommodating people, about changes in the cultural and social structures of the receiving countries, and about the reshaping of certain regional geopolitical balances. Equally significant are fears about security, further exacerbated by the growing threat of international terrorism. The present wave of migration seems to be undermining the foundations of that "humanistic spirit" which Europe has always loved and defended.⁶ Yet there should be no loss of the values and principles of humanity, respect for the dignity of every person, mutual subsidiarity and solidarity, however much they may prove, in some mo-

Celebrating the fourth centenary of his death

Shakespeare forever our contemporary

From China to Iraq, from Denmark to Zimbabwe, this year the world is celebrating the fourth centenary since the death of William Shakespeare. In this commemorative year, his works are being brought to the stage at every latitude, demonstrating – as if it were necessary – the truly global dimensions of his theatrical and literary accomplishments. Shakespeare can be equally appreciated in Mandarin, Arabic, Danish and even in the languages of Africa. Of course some of the unrivaled wit that distinguishes the English playwright might be lost in the varying translations, but the charm and evocative nature of the Shakespearean texts remain intact. This is due to the strength of verse which paradoxically transcends linguistic contingency, establishing itself in an area that could be described as neutral – and therefore belonging to nothing and no one – in which the spectator himself is called to play a role. The Shakespearean word draws on the public imagination, asking each person to give it substance.

At the very foundation of this point lies the creative power of the English wordsmith. It is thus up to the spectator to bring to life those scenes evoked by only a few words, as happens, for example, in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*. Precisely for this particular interaction between text, actors and public, Shakespearean plays are best set on the stage – the environment in which a sort of collective ritual occurs, by virtue of which everyone is individually involved. It is a kind of free space, where the audience of the Shakespearean work can add a piece of themselves, in their own way, in order to capture the full depth of the story. That is why every generation for the past 400 years uses the images and verses of William Shakespeare to interpret the events of its own era: Shakespeare, a writer who, to paraphrase the renowned Polish critic Jan Kott, will forever be our contemporary. (Giuseppe Fiorentino)

All the world's his stage

DAVID CAMERON*

This year's 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare is not just an opportunity to commemorate one of the greatest playwrights of all time. It is a moment to celebrate the extraordinary ongoing influence of a man who – to borrow from his own description of Julius Caesar – "doth bestride the narrow world like a Colossus". Shakespeare's legacy is without parallel: his works translated into over 100 languages and studied by half the world's schoolchildren. As one of his contemporaries, Ben Jonson, said: "Shakespeare is not of an age, but for all time." He lives today in our language, our culture and society – and through his enduring influence on education, Shakespeare played a critical role in shaping modern English and helping to make it the world's language. The first major dictionary compiled by Samuel Johnson drew on Shakespeare more than any other writer. Three thousand new words and phrases all first appeared in print in Shakespeare's plays. I remember from my own childhood how many of them are found for the first time in *Henry 4*: Words like dishearten, divest, addition, motionless, leapfrog – and phrases like "once more unto the breach", "band of brothers" and "heart of gold" – have all passed into our language today with no need to reference their original context. Shakespeare also pioneered innovative use of grammatical form and structure – including verse without rhymes, superlatives and the connecting of existing words to make new words, like bloodstained – while the pre-eminence of his plays also did much to standardise spelling and grammar. But Shakespeare's influence is felt far beyond our language. His words, his plots and his characters continue to inspire much of our culture and wider society. Nelson Mandela, while a prisoner on Robben Island, cherished a quote from Julius Caesar which said "Towards die many times before their death, the valiant never taste of death but once". While Kate Tempest's poem "My Shakespeare" captures the eternal presence of Shakespeare when she wrote that Shakespeare "...is in every lover who ever stood alone beneath a window ... every jealous whispered word and every ghost that will not rest."

Shakespeare's influence is everywhere, from Dickens and Goethe to Tchaikovsky, Verdi and Brahms; from West Side Story to the Hamlet-inspired title of Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap" – the longest-running theatre production in London's West End today. While his original plays continue to entertain millions – from school halls across the world to the overnight queues as hundreds scrambled for last minute tickets to see Benedict Cumberbatch playing Hamlet at London's Barbican last year. But perhaps one of the most exciting legacies of Shakespeare is his capacity to educate. As we see from the outreach work of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe and the impact of pioneering British charities like the Shakespeare Schools Festival, studying and performing Shakespeare can help improve literacy, confidence and wider educational attainment. Every day throughout 2016, Britain is inviting you to join us in celebrating the life and legacy of William Shakespeare. On 5 January, *Twelfth Night*, we launched "Shakespeare Lives" – an exciting global programme of activity and events to highlight his enduring influence and extend the use of Shakespeare as an educational resource to advance literacy around the world. The programme will run in more than 70 countries, led by the British Council and the Great Britain campaign. The Royal Shakespeare Company will tour China; Shakespeare's Globe will perform across the world from Iraq to Denmark. Young people will reimagine Shakespeare in Zimbabwe. A social media campaign called "Play your Part" (#PlayYourPart) will invite the next generation of creative talent to produce their own digital tribute to the Bard – and, in partnership with the British charity Voluntary Services Overseas, we will raise awareness of the huge chal-



Eugène Delacroix, "Hamlet and Horatio in the Cemetery" (1839)

enge of global child illiteracy and use Shakespeare to increase educational opportunities for children around the world. Beyond the great gift of language, the bringing to life of our history, his ongoing influence on our culture and his ability to educate, there is just the immense power of Shakespeare to inspire. From the most famous love story to the greatest tragedy; from the most powerful fantasy to the wittiest comedy; and from the most memorable speeches to his many legendary characters, in William Shakespeare we have one man, whose vast imagination, boundless creativity and instinct for humanity encompasses the whole of the human experience as no one has before or since. So, however you choose to play your part, please join us in this unique opportunity to celebrate the life and enduring legacy of this man; ensuring that, as he himself put it, "all the world's a stage" and that through his language, truly, Shakespeare Lives.

*Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

Paul VI mistakes a copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays as a gift

A near diplomatic disaster

NIGEL BAKER*

We do not know much about Shakespeare. He is probably the most famous "unknown" in early modern history. Many claim to be certain about his "real" identity, including the nature of his religious belief. Usually, those who shout the loudest are those who wish to claim the Bard for themselves or their tribe. By doing so, they are missing the point, which is that Shakespeare is, rightly, considered a universal genius, his cascade of words applicable to all people, at all times. Choose a language into which Shakespeare has been translated, or a culture through which he has been interpreted, and the genius emerges, burnished and intact. He was a truly great Briton, who belongs to the world.

This was something well understood by Pope Paul VI. In November 1964, the Pope attended a Shakespearean recital at Palazzo Pio, performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. In brief remarks at the event, the Pope celebrated

Shakespeare as "this supreme writer", noting "how the profound humanity of Shakespeare, ever open to adventurous and poetic exploration, leads to the discovery of the moral laws, which make life great and sacred, and lead us back to a religious understanding of the world. His lofty genius and powerful language induce men to listen with reverence to the great verities he expounds, of death and judgement, of hell and heaven. The plots of his plays are a salutary reminder to modern man

the greatest in the canon, and it will be performed by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre at the Palazzo della Cancelleria as a central element in their ambitious Globe to Globe world tour, during which they are performing their latest production of *Hamlet* in every country in the world.

Hamlet is appropriate for many reasons, not least because Pope John XXIII is on record as referring to Archbishop Montini of Milan as the "Hamlet Cardinal". Later, as Pope, shortly after the November 1964 Royal Shakespeare Company performance, Paul VI told the media that:

"His lofty genius and powerful language induce men to listen with reverence to the great verities he expounds, of death and judgement, of hell and heaven"

that God exists, that there is a life after this life, that evil-doing is punished and good rewarded."

It is therefore more than appropriate that during this year's commemoration in April 2016 of the fourth centenary since Shakespeare's death, for the first time one of his plays will be performed in its entirety on Vatican territory. The play will be *Hamlet*, often considered



the truth, that is the question". All the journalists present at that 3 December conference immediately understood which Shakespearean character the Pope was quoting.

I am sure that at this year's performance of *Hamlet* we can avoid what was a near diplomatic disaster back in 1964. The Royal Shakespeare Company owns a copy of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, and brought it to Rome, carefully and delicately packaged, for the Pope to bless after the performance. Having bestowed his Apostolic Blessing upon the actors and those accompanying them, Paul VI was shown the prized copy of the First Folio. He would have been told that it was printed in 1623, that only 233 (mostly incomplete) copies remain, and that it is one of the most valuable books in the world. His Holiness, perhaps misunderstanding the gesture, leafed through some of the precious pages, and then graciously accepted the kind gift for the Vatican Apostolic Library!

It is not recorded how the First Folio was extracted back from the Pope. Perhaps my predecessor, the then British Minister to the Holy See Sir Peter Scarlett, had to exercise some of his well-honed diplomatic skills. Be that as it may, it is now safely kept at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Shakespeare's birthplace of Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, having survived its encounter with the Bishop of Rome.

It is right that, finally, after so many years. Shakespeare's greatest play will be performed on Vatican territory, in rooms beside those decorated by William Shakespeare's near contemporary, Giorgio Vasari. It is also appropriate that this special event will occur during this Jubilee of Mercy. Paul VI said back in 1964: "Our enjoyment of the poet's vision of humanity should not make us overlook the high moral lessons and admonitions contained in his works". We do not know whether or not Shakespeare ever came to Rome in his lifetime. However, even 400 years after his death is not too late for this universal genius.

*British Ambassador to the Holy See

The Pope on 12 November 1964

The truth about hell and heaven

The following is the address delivered by Pope Paul VI on 12 November 1964 for the fourth centenary of the birth of William Shakespeare.

We feel it Our duty to thank the promoters of this commemoration of the fourth centenary of the birth of William Shakespeare, for the kind invitation which they have extended to this admirable evocation of the life and art of the great poet.

We also express Our pleasure to the British Catholic communities in Rome for this undertaking, and We are happy to note the generous collaboration given by friends, by artists and by the Italian authorities. Particular praise is due to the directors and actors of the Royal Stratford Theatre for their presentation of scenes and recitations from the works of Shakespeare, which we have all enjoyed and appreciated.

This brief spectacle brings many thoughts to Our mind, starting with the visit We made about thirty years ago, as an enquiring and hasty tourist, to the city and the home of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, and continuing with the impression of fantastic riches and psychological truth which We experienced through the limited knowledge which school lessons and private reading gave Us of the work of the great poet; and concluding today with the thought that this commemora-

tion is particularly adapted to Rome, always avid and prompt as she is to honour the high achievements of the human spirit, and happy as she is today to celebrate, in this supreme rite, the magnificent cultural tradition and artistic genius of the English people. We take especial pleasure in noting how the profound humanity of Shakespeare, ever open to adventurous and poetic exploration, leads to the discovery of the moral laws, which make life great and sacred, and lead us back to a religious understanding of the world.

His lofty genius and powerful language induce men to listen with reverence to the great verities he expounds, of death and judgment, of hell and heaven. The plots of his plays are a salutary reminder to modern man that God exists, that there is a life after this life, that evil-doing is punished and good rewarded.

Our enjoyment of the poet's vision of humanity should not make us overlook the high moral lessons and admonitions contained in his works. With the prayer that meditation and consideration may bear this valuable fruit, We gladly bestow upon the actors and their colleagues, upon all of you and your loved ones at home. Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.



Page of the Italian daily edition of L'Osservatore Romano covering Paul VI's address

The Holy Father's address to the Diplomatic Corps

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

ments of history, a burden difficult to bear. I wish, then, to reaffirm my conviction that Europe, aided by its great cultural and religious heritage, has the means to defend the centrality of the human person and to find the right balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to ensure assistance and acceptance to migrants.⁷

Here I likewise feel obliged to express gratitude for all initiatives aimed at providing a dignified reception to these persons; I think, for example, of the Migrant and Refugee Fund of the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the generous solidarity shown by a number of countries. I also have in mind the nations neighbouring Syria, which have responded immediately with help and acceptance, especially Lebanon, where refugees make up a fourth of the total population, and Jordan, which has not closed its borders despite the fact that it already harbours hundreds of thousands of refugees. Nor should we overlook the efforts made by other countries on the front lines, especially Turkey and Greece. I wish to express particular gratitude to Italy, whose decisive commitment has saved many lives in the Mediterranean, and which continues to accept responsibility on its territory for a massive number of refugees. It is my hope that the traditional sense of hospitality and solidarity which distinguishes the Italian people will not be weakened by the inevitable difficulties of the moment, but that, in light of its age-old tradition, the nation may prove capable of accepting and integrating the social, economic and cultural contribution which migrants can offer.

It is important that nations in the forefront of meeting the present emergency not be left alone, and it is also essential to initiate a frank and respectful dialogue among all the countries involved in the problem – countries of origin, transit, or reception – so that, with greater boldness and creativity, new and sustainable solutions can be sought. As things presently stand, there is no place for autonomous solutions pursued by individual states, since the consequences of the decisions made by each inevitably have repercussions on the entire international community. Indeed, migrations, more than ever before, will play a pivotal role in the future of our world, and our response can only be the fruit of a common effort respectful of human dignity and the rights of persons. The Development Agenda adopted last September by the United Nations for the next 15 years, which deals with many of the problems causing migration, and other documents of the international community on handling the issue of migration, will be able to find application consistent with expectations if they are able to put the person at the centre of political decisions at every level, seeing humanity as one family, and all people as brothers and sisters, with respect for mutual differences and convictions of conscience.

In facing the issue of migrations, one cannot overlook its cultural implications, beginning with those linked to religious affiliation. Extremism and fundamentalism find fertile soil not only in the exploitation of religion for purposes of power, but also in the vacuum of ideals and the loss of identity – including religious identity – which dramatically marks the so-called West. This vacuum gives rise to the fear which leads to seeing the other as a threat and an enemy, to closed-mindedness and intransigence in defending preconceived notions. The phenomenon of migration raises a serious cultural issue which necessarily demands a response. The acceptance of migrants can thus prove a good opportunity for new understanding and broader horizons, both on the part of those accepted, who have the responsibility to respect the values, traditions and laws of the community which takes them in, and on the part of the latter, who are called to acknowledge the beneficial contribution which each immigrant can make to the whole community. In this context, the Holy See reaffirms its commitment in the ecumenical and interreligious sectors to inaugurating a sincere and respectful dialogue which, by valuing the distinctness and identity of each individual, can foster a harmonious coexistence among all the members of society.

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps, 2015 witnessed the conclusion of important international agreements, which give solid hope for the future. I think first of the so-called Iran nuclear deal, which I hope will contribute to creating a climate of détente in the region, as well as the reaching of the long-awaited agreement on climate

at the Paris Conference. This significant accord represents for the entire international community an important achievement; it reflects a powerful collective realization of the grave responsibility incumbent on individuals and nations to protect creation, to promote a “culture of care which permeates all of society”.⁸ It is now essential that those commitments prove more than simply a good intention, but rather a genuine duty incumbent on all states to do whatever is needed to safeguard our beloved earth for the sake of all mankind, especially generations yet to come.

For its part, the year which has just begun promises to be full of challenges and more than a few tensions have already appeared on the horizon. I think above all of the serious disagreements which have arisen in the Persian Gulf region, as well as the disturbing military test conducted on the Korean peninsula. It is my hope that these conflicts will be open to the voice of peace and a readiness to seek agreements. Here I note with satisfaction certain significant and particularly encouraging gestures. I think especially of the climate of peaceful coexistence in which the recent elections in the Central African Republic were held; these are a positive sign of the will to persevere on the path to full national reconciliation. I also think of the new initiatives under way in Cyprus to heal a long-standing division, and to the efforts being made by the Colombian people to leave behind past conflicts and to attain the long-awaited peace. All of us look with hope to the important steps made by the international community to achieve a political and diplomatic solution of the crisis in Syria, one which can put a long

overdue end to the sufferings of the population. The signals coming from Libya are likewise encouraging and offer the hope of a renewed commitment to ending violence and reestablishing the country's unity. On the other hand, it appears increasingly evident that only a common and agreed political action will prove able to stem the spread of extremism and fundamentalism, which spawn terrorist acts which reap countless victims, not only in Syria and Libya, but in other countries like Iraq and Yemen.

May this Holy Year of Mercy also be the occasion of dialogue and reconciliation aimed at consolidating the common good in Burundi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in South Sudan. Above all, may it be a favourable time for definitively ending the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Of fundamental importance is the support which the international community, individual states and humanitarian organizations can offer the country from a number of standpoints, in order to surmount the present crisis.

Yet the greatest challenge we face is that of overcoming indifference and working together for peace,⁹ which remains a good which must constantly be sought. Sadly, among the many parts of our beloved world which long fervently for peace, there is the land for which God showed a particular love and chose to show to all the face of his mercy. I pray that this new year can heal the deep wounds dividing Israelis and Palestinians, and enable the peaceful coexistence of two peoples who – of this I am sure – in the depths of their heart ask only for peace!

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the diplomatic level, the Holy See will never cease its efforts to enable the message of peace to be heard to the ends of the earth. I thus reiterate the complete readiness of the Secretariat of State to cooperate with you in favouring constant dialogue between the Apostolic See and the countries which you represent, for the benefit of the entire international community. I am certain that this Jubilee year will be a favourable occasion for the cold indifference of so many hearts to be won over by the warmth of mercy, that precious gift of God which turns fear into love and makes us artisans of peace. With these sentiments I renew to each of you, to your families and your countries, my heartfelt good wishes for a blessed New Year.

Thank you.



Opening the Holy Door in Bangui on 29 November 2015

¹ Meeting with the Muslim Community, Bangui, 30 November 2015.

² Cf. Meeting with Authorities, Sarajevo, 6 June 2015.

³ Meeting with Families, Manila, 16 January 2015.

⁴ Meeting with Political, Economic and Civic Leaders, Quito, 7 July 2015.

⁵ Cf. General Audience, 5 June 2013.

⁶ Cf. Address to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 25 November 2015.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 231.

⁹ Cf. *Overcome Indifference and Win Peace*, Message for the 2016 World Day of Peace (8 December 2015).

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 7 January

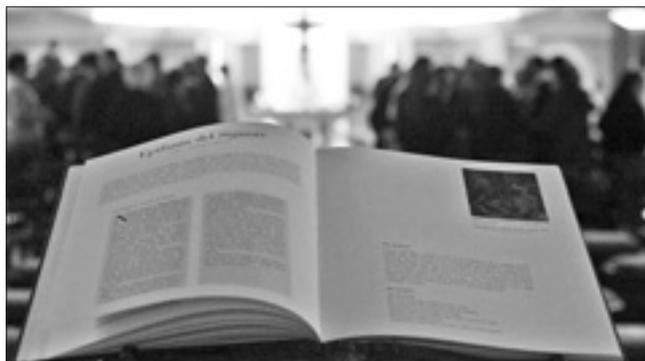
The only criterion

Those who put into practice the works of mercy confirm that their actions come from God. The only criterion to gauge this in fact turns on the very incarnation, on "Jesus Christ who has come in the flesh". Thus it is senseless to "create pastoral plans and new methods for drawing people close" if faith in Jesus incarnate does not lead one to serve others. Pope Francis emphasized this message during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning. He also warned against those who only have the appearance of being spiritual – because, he said, if that spirit doesn't come from God it comes from "the antichrist", it is the expression of "worldliness".

The Pope drew inspiration for his reflection from the First Letter of St John (3:22-4:6), noting at the outset that the Apostle uses "a word Jesus uses at the Last Supper: 'abide'". More precisely, the Pope said, John writes that "all who keep his commandments 'abide' in God, and God in them". The Pope then explained that "this 'abiding' in God is like the breath and the manner of Christian life". Thus we can say that "a Christian is one who abides in God". John also writes in his letter: "by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us". Therefore, Francis repeated, "a Christian is one who 'has' the Holy Spirit and is guided by God". We "abide in God and God abides in us by the Spirit which he has given us". The Pontiff then mentioned the Apostle's admonition to "be mindful. Then the problem comes. Be mindful, 'do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God'. This is precisely "the rule for daily life which John teaches us".

Therefore, we should "test the spirits", but "what does it mean to test the spirits? It seems as if they are ghosts...". However, that is not the case, the Pontiff stated, because John tells us to "test the spirits in order to gauge where they come from: to gauge the spirit, what is happening in my heart". Thus, "it leads us there, to the heart", to ask ourselves "what is happening, what do I feel in my heart, what do I want to do? The root of what is happening now, where does it come from?".

This, the Pope explained, "is testing in order to 'gauge'". Indeed, the verb 'gauge' is the most appropriate verb to truly determine "whether what I feel comes from God, from the spirit that enables me to abide in God, or if it comes from the other one". If the question is "who is the other one?", Pope Francis' answer is clear-cut: "the antichrist". After all, he explained, "John's reasoning is simple, direct, I would say circular, because it turns on the same topic: either you are of Jesus or you are of the world". John also takes up "what Jesus, too, asked of the Father for all of us: not to take us from the world, but to protect us from the world". Because "worldliness is the spirit which distances us from the Spirit of God that enables us to abide in the Lord".



At this point in the homily, Francis voiced a question which naturally arises on this topic: "Okay Father, yes it is all clear, but what are the criteria to truly discern what is happening in my soul?". John offers only one criterion, and he presents it in these words: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit – every emotion, every inspiration that I feel – which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God".

In other words, the Pope continued, "the criterion is that Jesus has come in the flesh, the criterion is the incarnation". This means that "I can feel many things inside, even good things, good ideas, but if these good ideas, if these feelings do not lead me to God who has come in the flesh, if they do not lead me to my neighbour, to my brother, then they are not of God". This is why "John begins this passage of his letter by saying: 'this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another'".

The Pontiff then applied this truth to everyday Christian life: "We can make many pastoral plans, conceive of new methods for drawing people close, but if we don't take the path of God who has come in the flesh, of the Son of God who became man in order to walk with us, then we are not on the path of the good spirit". Instead what prevails "is the antichrist, worldliness, the spirit of the world".

Yes, the Pope added, "how many people do we find in life who seem spiritual, but who do not speak of doing works of mercy? Yet why is this? "Because the works of mercy are precisely the concrete sign of our confession that the Son of God has come in the flesh: visiting the sick, feeding those who do not have food, taking care of outcast". We must perform "works of mercy", therefore, "because each of our brothers and sisters, whom we must love, is the flesh of Christ: God has come in the flesh to identify himself with us and, and one who suffers is Christ who suffers".

Hence, Francis said, "if you take this path, if you feel this, you are on the right path" because "this is the criterion of discernment, so as not to confuse feelings, spirits, so as not to go down a path that isn't right".

Returning then to the words of John: "do not believe every spirit – be mindful – 'but test the spirits to see whether they are of God'". For this reason, the Pope emphasized

"service to the neighbour, brother, sister who is in need – there are so many needs – of advice or of a listening ear: these are signs that we are on the path of the good spirit, that is, on the path of the Word of God who has come in the flesh".

Before resuming the celebration of the Mass, Francis asked "the Lord for the grace to be well aware of what is happening in our hearts, what we prefer doing, that is to say, what touches me most: whether it is the Spirit of God, which leads me to the service of others, or the spirit of the world that roams within me, in my closure, in my selfishness, in so many other things". Yes, the Pope concluded, "let us ask for the grace to know what is happening in our hearts".

Friday, 8 January

A surprising embrace

The Holy Year of Mercy reminds us that "God always loves first", unconditionally, and he welcomes us just as we are, by embracing us and forgiving us like a father. At Mass on Friday morning, Pope Francis addressed especially those who acknowledge themselves as sinners, reminding them of the certainty of God's love.

The Apostle John, the Pontiff began, "continues to speak to the early Christians about the two commandments that Jesus taught us: to love God and love our neighbour". In the passage from the First Letter of John proposed in the day's Liturgy (4:7-10), we read: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God". And, Francis noted, "this word, 'love', is a word that is often used but, when you use it, you don't know exactly what it means". What then, is love? Sometimes, the Pope said, "we think of the love in soap operas: no, that doesn't seem like love. Or love might seem like enthusiasm for a person, which then burns out".

The real question then, is: "where does true love come from?". John writes: "he who loves is born of God", for "God is love". The Apostle does not say: "all love is God". He says instead: "God is love". John continues, saying that "God loved us so much that he 'sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him'". Thus, "God gives his life in Jesus, in order to give us life", Francis affirmed. "Love is beautiful, to love is beautiful, and in heaven there will be only

love, charity. So says Paul". And if love "is beautiful, one is always strengthened and grows in the gift of one's own life: one grows by giving of oneself to others".

Francis then reread another passage of the Letter of John: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us". This confirms that "God loved us first; he gave us life out of love, he gave life and his Son out of love". Therefore, "when we find God, there is always a surprise: it is first he who waits for us; it is he who finds us".

With reference to a passage taken from the Gospel according to Mark, which recounts the episode of the multiplication of loaves (6:34-44), the Pope asked that we look to Jesus. "Those people followed him to listen to him, because he spoke like one with authority, not like the scribes", Francis explained. "He looked at those people and went further. Precisely because he loved, the Gospel says, 'he had compassion on them', which is not the same as having pity". The correct word is "compassion: love led him to 'suffer with' them, to be involved in the people's life". And, Francis said, "the Lord is always there, loving first: he is waiting for us, he is the surprise".

This is precisely what happens, the Pope recalled, to "Andrew when he goes to Peter to tell him: 'We have found the Messiah, come!'. Peter goes, and Jesus looks at him and says to him: 'Are you Simon? You shall be Peter'. He was waiting for him with a mission. [Jesus] loved him first".

The same happens "when Zacchaeus, who was small, climbs the tree to better see Jesus", who "passes by, lifts his eyes and says: 'Zacchaeus, come down, I want to go to supper at your house'. Zacchaeus, who wanted to meet Jesus, realizes that Jesus had been waiting for him".

Francis then recalled the story of Nathanael who, "a bit skeptical, goes to see the one whom they say is the Messiah". Jesus says to him: "when you were under the fig tree, I saw you". So, "God always loves first". The idea is also recalled in the parable of the Prodigal Son: "when the son – who had spent all of his father's inheritance on vices – returned home, he realized that his father had been waiting for him. God is always waiting for us first. Before us, always. And when the other son didn't want to come to the feast, because he did not understand his father's attitude, his father went to find him. And God is this way with us: he loves us first, always".

Thus, the Pope said, "we can see in the Gospel how God loves: when we have something in our heart and we want to ask the Lord's forgiveness, it is he who is waiting for us, to grant forgiveness".

This Year of Mercy, Francis said, is also in part so "that we may know that the Lord is awaiting us, each of us". He is waiting "to embrace us, nothing more, in order to say: 'Son, daughter, I love you. I let my Son be crucified for you; this is the value of my love; this is the gift of love'".

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The Pope recommended that this truth always be pondered: "The Lord is waiting for me, the Lord wants me to open the door of my heart, because he is there waiting to enter". It is unconditional.

Of course, someone might say: "Father, no, no, I would like to, but I have so many ugly things inside!". Francis' response to this was clear: "It is better! Better! Because he is waiting for you, just as you are, not as they tell you that 'one should be'. You should be as you are. This is how he loves you, he embraces you, kisses you, forgives you".

The Pope then offered a concluding exhortation, inviting us to go with haste to the Lord and say: "Lord, you know that I love you". Or if "I don't feel like it, to say this: 'Lord, you know that I would like to love you, but I am such a sinful man, such a sinful woman'. Do so with the certainty that he will do as the father did 'with the Prodigal Son who spent all his money on vices. I will not let you finish your speech, I will silence you with an embrace: the embrace of God's love'".

Tuesday, 12 January

A struggle with God

The power of prayer, which is the true driving force of the life of the Church, was the focus of Pope Francis' homily for the Mass at Santa Marta on Tuesday morning.

The Pontiff's reflection was inspired by the day's reading from the First Book of Samuel (1:9-20), which speaks of three protagonists: Hannah, Eli the priest, and the Lord. The woman, explained the Pope, "with her family, with her husband, went up to the Temple every year to worship God". Hannah was a devout and pious woman, full of faith; however, she "bore within her a cross that caused her a great deal of suffering: she was barren. She wanted a son".

The description of Hannah's fervent prayer shows how she "struggled with God", she implored him at length, with "deep distress, weeping bitterly". The prayer ends with a vow: "O Lord of hosts, if you look with pity on the misery of your handmaid, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the Lord for as long as he lives". With deep humility, Francis explained, recognizing herself as "miserable" and as a "handmaid", she "vowed to offer her son".

Therefore Hannah, the Pope emphasized, "gave her all in order to attain what she wanted". Her entreaty was noticed by the elderly priest Eli, who "watched her mouth". Hannah "was praying silently", only her lips were moving, and her voice could not be heard. The image offered by the Scripture is extraordinary, because it reflects "the courage of a woman of faith who, with her sorrow, with her tears, asks for the Lord's grace".

In this regard the Pontiff commented that in the Church there are "many such good women", who "pray as if it were a challenge", and

as an example, he recalled the figure of St Monica, Augustine's mother, "who with her tears managed to attain the grace of her son's conversion".

The Pope then analyzed the character of Eli, who was not wicked but was "a poor man" for whom Francis feels "a certain fondness", because "in myself too", he admitted, "I find defects that bring me close to him and enable me to really understand him".

This elderly priest "has become lukewarm, has lost his devotion" and "does not have the strength to stop his two sons", who are "delinquent" priests. Yes, they are truly wicked men "who exploit people". Eli a "poor and feeble man", is therefore incapable of "understanding this woman's heart". In seeing Hannah moving her lips in anguish, he thinks: "This woman has drunk too much!". The episode holds a lesson for all of us: "how easily", Francis said, "do we judge people, how easily do we lack the respect to ask: 'What must she have in her heart? I don't know, but I say nothing'". He then added: "When the heart lacks pity, we also think badly, judge badly, perhaps to justify ourselves".

Eli's misunderstanding is such that "finally he says to her: 'How long will you make a drunken show of yourself?'". Hannah, in her humility, does not respond: "Old man, what do you know about it?". On the contrary, she says: "It isn't that, my lord". And despite knowing all the deeds of Eli's sons, she does not rebuke Eli or point out: "What do your sons do?". Instead she explains to him: "I am an unhappy woman. I have had neither wine nor liquor; I was only pouring out my troubles to the Lord. Do not think your handmaid a ne'er-do-well; my prayer has been prompted by my deep sorrow and misery".

In these words Pope Francis identified Hannah's "prayer with sorrow and misery". She "entrusted her sorrow and misery to the Lord". And in doing so, the Pontiff added, Hannah reminds us of Christ. Indeed, "Jesus experienced this prayer in the Garden of Olives, when his sorrow and misery were so great that his sweat became blood, but he did not rebuke the Father: 'Father, if you are willing, remove this from me, but thy will be done'". On the contrary, "Jesus responded in the same way as

this woman: meekness". Pope Francis then observed how at times "we pray, we ask the Lord, but so often we do not know how to reach that struggle with the Lord, with tears, to ask, to ask for grace".

In this regard Francis described an event that happened in the Shrine of Luján, in Buenos Aires, where there was a family with a nine-year-old daughter who was very ill. "After weeks of treatment", the Pope recalled, the little girl "did not manage to escape that illness, it had worsened and the doctors, at around six o'clock in the evening" said that she had only a few hours left to live. So "the father, a humble man, a labourer, immediately left the hospital and went to the Shrine of Our Lady in Luján", 70 kilometres away. When "he arrived around 10 o'clock in the evening, everything was closed, and he grabbed hold of the gate and prayed to Our Lady and struggled in prayer". This, Pope Francis continued, "is a fact that really happened, at the time when I was there. The man remained like this until five in the morning".

He "prayed, he wept for his daughter, he struggled with God for his daughter through the intercession of Our Lady. Then he returned. He arrived at the hospital at about seven or eight, and went to find his wife. She was crying and the man thought that the girl had died, but the wife said: 'I don't understand, I don't understand.... The doctors came and said that they don't understand what happened'. And the little girl went home".

Gifts from Muslims to Catholics

Showing respect for other faiths

To demonstrate the respect that true Muslims nurture for other religions and religious expressions, several Islamic communities in Italy made meaningful gestures toward local Catholics.

In Taranto as a sign of respect for Christmas, Muslim faithful gave a statuette of the Child Jesus to Archbishop Filippo Santoro. The consignment – according to ANSA – took place at the opening

of the Holy Door of the Basilica of San Martino, in Martina Franca, on 21 December 2015. During the ceremony for the presentation of the statuette, the Catholic and Muslim communities "together condemned religious wars, where the name of God is used to kill and destroy, without respecting the message of peace which instead both religions convey".

Likewise, in Annone Veneto on 23 December, mayor Ada Toffolon received a nativity scene as a gift from the Islamic community. "It is a symbolic gesture" – Bouchaib Tanji, president of the Assalam Islamic cultural association, explained in a note – "by which we would like to demonstrate the respect of Muslims and of Islam for other religions". Tanji, who is also president of the Islamic Federation of Veneto, indicated that for several years, "disinformation campaigns" in Italy have misstated that Muslims "demand that nativity scenes not be placed in schools because they clash with their sensibilities. This is absolutely untrue", he concluded, "and even if according to our faith Jesus is not God, the Qur'an considers him one of the great prophets to venerate, and his mother, Mary, is one of the most respected women".

Dedicated to St Olaf and set to open in 2017

A new cathedral in Norway

Catholics in Trondheim, Norway are looking forward to a new cathedral, which will replace the old one which was consecrated in 1973 and later demolished for reasons which included structural problems. As reported on 2 January, estimates for the new building foresee costs of about 80 million coronas (roughly 10 million euros); however restoring the existing structure would have been more complicated than building a new one.

Over the past 42 years the local Catholic community has grown from 500 to over 6,000. The new cathedral will be able to accommodate 500 faithful, as opposed to 200 in the old building. The parish priest, Fr Egid Mogstad, explained to the French daily *La Croix* that "it would have been difficult to build a larger church in the city centre". Construction on the new church began on 29 October 2015.

The new cathedral dedicated to St Olaf will be located several hundred metres from the Lutheran Cathedral of Nidaros, and is a sign of more than geographical closeness. The city's mayor, Rita Ottervik, described it as "a symbol of integration".

DONALD WUERL

In many societies today, the utterance of a simple phrase, "I am a Christian", is a crime punishable by death. So widespread is this persecution that Pope Francis called it a "third world war, waged piecemeal ... a form of genocide".

The Holy Father spoke primarily of those many who are dying for the Faith today. Yet many more Christians live in constant danger. According to reliable estimates, more than 200 million Christians in 60 countries around the world face some form of restriction on their faith.

Persecution is happening today on a massive scale, and the perpetrators are from everywhere on the globe. They draw their motivation from a wide range of ideologies, from materialistic communism to radical Islam. They charge Christians with crimes such as sedition and blasphemy. Persecution is taking place in Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, India, China, Nigeria, Sudan, North Korea, and many other lands. It is happening in plain sight. Sometimes the perse-



Some 200 million Christians around the world are being persecuted

What are we doing for them?

body. When they suffer, I suffer, too. If my right hand were injured, ailing, or bleeding, I would seek immediate help. With this book I am seeking attention and relief for my fellow Christians who are in dire need.

Martyrdom, as we shall see, has proven to be a constant in the life of the Church. The Second Vatican Council confirmed that it always will be.

"Since Jesus, the Son of God, manifested charity by laying down his life for us, so too no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for Christ and his brothers. From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon – to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master by freely accepting death for the salvation of the world – as well as his conformity to Christ in the shedding of his blood. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men. They

must be prepared to make this profession of faith even in the midst of persecutions, which will never be lacking to the Church, in following the way of the cross" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 42).

Martyrdom may be constant, and it may be inevitable. But that does not mean we should allow it to take place without consequence and unremarked. Every injustice should rouse us to speak more loudly and effectively for justice.

In my country, the United States, we have recently suffered some setbacks in the area of religious liberty, and these too must be addressed. Nevertheless, we still enjoy relatively plentiful freedom to worship as we wish. How blessed we are that we can celebrate the Eucharist, honor the Trinity, proclaim Christ truly Risen – and then leave our churches in peace and security.

Meanwhile, many – and I mean many thousands – of our co-religionists cannot attend Mass without worrying that one of the nearby cars will explode. Many cannot gather on Sunday without wondering whether this is the day the militia will surround the church and set it on fire.

Knowing what we know, we cannot rest content. We must make a commitment to live in solidarity with those Christians who are suffering in our time. They are offering their lives for us. Their blood is seed for our children's Church. What are we doing for them?

May the writing of this book, and your reading of it, serve as a beginning.

Martyrs

Published here is the preface written by the Cardinal-Archbishop of Washington to the volume *To the Martyrs. A Reflection on the Supreme Christian Witness* (Steubenville, Ohio, Emmaus Road, 2015, 135 pages), for which Carl A. Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, wrote the foreword.

cutors brazenly post video footage of the execution of Christians on social media.

Yet it is hardly remarked upon in major media outlets. It is barely noticed by diplomats and heads of state. It is, in fact, treated as a political liability. Christian martyrs, it has been said, are too religious to excite the interest of the American left and too foreign to rouse the interest of the right. And so martyrs are abandoned to their fight, left to suffer alone. We see the truth in the observation of the poet W.H. Auden: "even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course / Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot."

Pope Francis has called all Christians to rise up, cry out, and demand an end to the genocide. The end of the genocide must begin with an end to the silence.

I intend this book to be an act of solidarity with those who today are suffering for the Christian faith. Solidarity is the principle of unity in a society that extends beyond mere self-interest. Nowhere is the principle more essential and more real than in the Church of Jesus Christ. Since I share the Faith of the martyrs, we are members of a single

A new church in Pakistan

A new church dedicated to St Peter the Apostle is a gift that the Year of Mercy brings to the faithful of a small village outside of the city of Okara, Pakistan. The church – according to the Fides News Agency on 9 January – has been rebuilt since the previous chapel was too small. The new church was inaugurated and blessed in a Mass celebrated by Bishop Joseph Arshad of Faisalabad, in the presence of the local parish priest, Fr John Murad, and other priests and faithful. "The new church is a sign of unity among the faithful" and will hopefully serve as "a sign of love, unity and mercy towards the entire population of the village", remarked the Bishop during the celebration packed with local faithful, children, and even non-Christians. "The new church is a visible sign of Christ's presence among us", continued the Bishop, thanking all those who had helped build the church. "In the year of the Jubilee of Mercy, Christ wants us to be merciful like the Father", he said, urging to lay down any spirit of hatred and revenge and to "fill the whole territory and all of Pakistan with the mercy of God". The church of St Peter the Apostle will serve more than 100 Catholic families.

Jesuit Refugee Service assists 500 Syrian children in Lebanon

The primary work carried out by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) at its centre in Jbeil, Lebanon, is providing educational, psychological and material support to 500 Syrian children affected by the traumatic consequences of war. As reported 7 January, there are approximately 2.8 million Syrian children who do not attend school because of war, more than 5,000 of whom have taken refuge in Lebanon. All of the children are affected by conflicts, including domestic violence in some cases. For many, the school is their only happy place. Thus, according to Majed Mardini, a teacher at the JRS educational centre, "the Syrian children need something more than traditional training". All the teachers at the centre also provide social and psychological assistance, which includes teaching "the children how to behave and interact with others, but above all how to love one another". No matter where their future lies, whether in Syria or elsewhere, said Mardini, "education is the only way to build a future for these children".



Francis baptizes 26 infants in the Sistine Chapel

Our greatest legacy

The 26 crying babies (13 boys and 13 girls) baptized by Pope Francis composed an original "sound track" to the Mass he celebrated in the Sistine Chapel on Sunday, 10 January, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Armed with bottles and pacifiers, the parents — who work for the Vatican — had their work cut out for them. They aimed at calming the little ones as the Pope administered the Sacrament of Christian Initiation to Damiano Maria Acquaroni, Ginevra Francesca Maria Bellaveglia, Andrea Lucio Agostino Belisari, Matteo Bernardi, Thomas Biagetti, Gabriele Bondatti, Marlene Pola Caldiero, Rocco Cantore, Greta Cataldo, Arianna Francesca Censoni, Ginevra Maria Corradini, Anna Cordeschi, Edoardo De Leo, Emanuele Della Monaca, Lara Gigli, Aurelio Samuel Ianniello, Sofia Maria Guadalupe Lorenzo, Pier

Giorgio Massimilla, Aroid Jan Pavel Panchanka, Francesco Biagio Rinaldi, Vittoria Severin, Irene Maria Sonni, Chiara Tucci, Valentina Venanzi, Claudia Sonia Venia and Leonardo Alberto Francesco Zamponi. The children were accompanied by their godparents and a few relatives who participated in the liturgy. The following is a translation of the Pope's homily which he delivered in Italian.

Giorgio Massimilla, Aroid Jan Pavel Panchanka, Francesco Biagio Rinaldi, Vittoria Severin, Irene Maria Sonni, Chiara Tucci, Valentina Venanzi, Claudia Sonia Venia and Leonardo Alberto Francesco Zamponi. The children were accompanied by their godparents and a few relatives who participated in the liturgy. The following is a translation of the Pope's homily which he delivered in Italian.



Forty days after his birth, Jesus was taken to the Temple. Mary and Joseph brought him in order to present him to God. Today, on the Feast of Our Lord's Baptism, you parents have brought your children to receive Baptism, to receive what you asked for at the beginning, when I asked you the first question: "Faith. I want faith for my child".

In this way faith is passed on from one generation to the next, as a sequence, over the course of time.

These little boys, these little girls, years from now, will take your place with another child — your grandchildren — and will ask the same: faith. The faith that Baptism gives us. The faith that the Holy Spirit brings today to the heart, to the soul, to the life of these, your children.

You have asked for faith. When the Church hands you the lit candle, she will tell you to safeguard the faith of these children. Lastly, do not forget that the greatest legacy that you can give to your children is faith. Take care that it is not lost, make it grow and leave it as a legacy.

I wish you this today, on this day that is joyful for you. I wish that you may be able to raise these children in the faith and that the greatest legacy they receive from you is truly faith.

I have only one piece of advice. A baby cries because he or she is hungry, I say to the mothers: if your child is hungry, feed him or her here, you are completely free to do so.

At the Angelus the Pontiff encourages the faithful to remember the date of their Baptism

A homework assignment

Before the Angelus on Sunday, 10 January, the Holy Father reflected on Baptism as the day of "our rebirth as Children of God". The following is a translation of his reflection, given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

On this Sunday after the Epiphany, we celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, and we gratefully recall our Baptism. In this context, this morning I baptized 26 infants: let us pray for them!

The Gospel presents Jesus, in the waters of the River Jordan, at the centre of a wondrous divine revelation. St Luke writes: "when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'" (Lk 3:21-22). In this way Jesus is consecrated and manifested by the Father as the Saviour Messiah and liberator.

In this event — attested by all four Gospels — is the passing from the

baptism of John the Baptist, symbolized by water, to the Baptism of Jesus "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Lk 3:16). Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the principal artisan in Christian Baptism: it is he who burns and destroys original sin, restoring to the baptized the beauty of divine grace; it is he who frees us from the dominion of darkness, namely sin, and transfers us to the kingdom of light, namely love, truth and peace: this is the kingdom of light. Let us think about the dignity to which Baptism elevates us! "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are" (1 Jn 3:1), the Apostle John exclaims. This splendid reality of being Children of God entails the responsibility of following Jesus, the obedient Servant, and reproduces his lineaments in our very selves: namely docility, humility, tenderness. This is not easy, especially when there is so much intolerance, arrogance, harshness around us. But with the strength we receive from the Holy Spirit it is possible!

The Holy Spirit, received for the first time on the day of our Baptism, opens our heart to the Truth, to all

Truth. The Spirit impels our life on the challenging but joyful path of charity and solidarity toward our brothers and sisters. The Spirit gives us the tenderness of divine forgiveness and permeates us with the invincible power of the Father's mercy. Let us not forget that the Holy Spirit is a living and vivifying presence in those who welcome him, he prays in us and fills us with spiritual joy.

Today, the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, let us ponder the day of our Baptism. All of us were baptized, let us give thanks for this gift. I ask you a question: which of you knows the date of your Baptism? Surely not everyone. Therefore, I encourage you to find out the date, by asking, for example, your parents, your grandparents, your godparents, or going to the parish. It is very important to know it, because it is a date to be celebrated: it is the date of our rebirth as Children of God. For this reason, homework for this week: go and find out the date of your Baptism. Celebrating that day means and reaffirms our adherence to Jesus, with the commitment to live as Christians, members of the

Church and of a new humanity, in which all are brothers and sisters.

May the Virgin Mary, first Disciple of her Son Jesus, help us to live our Baptism with joy and apostolic zeal, welcoming each day the gift of the Holy Spirit, which makes us Children of God.

After the Angelus, the Pope said:

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

As I said, on this Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, according to tradition I baptized many children. Now I would like to convey a special blessing to all children who were recently baptized, but also to young people and adults who have recently received the sacraments of Christian initiation or are preparing for them. May the grace of Christ always accompany them!

I wish a happy Sunday to all. Do not forget the homework: find out the date of your Baptism. And please, do not forget to pray for me too. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*