

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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At the General Audience the Pope recalls that God wants not our condemnation but our salvation

Another kind of justice

"God wants not our condemnation, but our salvation". The "Lord of mercy" was at the heart of the Pope's reflection during the General Audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday, 3 February. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

Sacred Scripture presents God to us as infinite mercy and as perfect justice. How do we reconcile the two? How does one reconcile the reality of mercy with the demands of justice? It might appear that the two contradict each other; but in fact it is not so, for it is the very mercy of God that brings true justice to fulfillment. But what kind of justice are we talking about?

If we think of the legal administration of justice, we see that those who consider themselves victims of injustice turn to a judge in a tribunal and ask that justice be done. It is retributive justice, which inflicts a penalty on the guilty party, according to the principle that each person must be given his or her due. As the Book of Proverbs says: "He



who is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die" (11:19). Jesus, too, speaks about it in the parable of the widow who went repeatedly to the judge and asked him: "Vindicate me against my adversary" (Lk 18:3). This path however does not lead to true justice because in reality it does not conquer evil, it merely checks it. Only by responding to it with good can evil be truly overcome.

There is then another way of doing justice, which the Bible presents to us as the royal road to take. It is a process that avoids recourse to the

tribunal and allows the victim to face the culprit directly and invite him or her to conversion, helping the person to understand that they are doing evil, thus appealing to their conscience. In this way, by finally repenting and acknowledging their wrong, they can open themselves to the forgiveness that the injured party is offering them. And this is beautiful: after being persuaded that what was done was wrong, the heart opens to the forgiveness being offered to it. This is the way to resolve conflicts in the family, in the relationship between

spouses or between parents and children, where the offended party loves the guilty one and wishes to save the bond that unites them. Do not sever that bond, that relationship.

Certainly, this is a difficult journey. It requires that those who have been wronged be ready to forgive and desire good and salvation for their offender. Only in this way can justice triumph, because thus, if the culprit acknowledges the evil done and ceases to do it, the evil is no more; and he who was unjust becomes just, because he is forgiven and is helped to rediscover the path of goodness. And this is where forgiveness and mercy come in.

This is how God acts towards us sinners. The Lord continually offers us his pardon and helps us to accept it and to be aware of our wrongdoing so as to free us of it. For God wants not our condemnation, but our salvation. God does not want to condemn anyone! One of you might ask me: "But Father, didn't Pilate deserve condemnation? Did God

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The first Jubilee Audience

My name is Christopher

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At the Angelus
No one
is excluded



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The Holy Father closes the Year of Consecrated Life

A sea of mercy

The Year of Consecrated Life, which began on the First Sunday of Advent, 30 November 2014, came to a close on Tuesday, 2 February, with a Papal Mass in St Peter's Basilica. Pope Francis called on consecrated men and women to make courageous and prophetic decisions and not to be afraid to walk the geographical and existential peripheries of mankind today.

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 28 January

H.E. Mr Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, President of the Republic of Togo, with his entourage

Archbishop George Panikulam, titular Archbishop of Arpaia, Apostolic Nuncio in Uruguay

Mr Leonardo DiCaprio

Friday, 29 January

Cardinal Domenico Calcagno, President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA)

Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

Archbishop Luciano Suriani, titular Archbishop of Amiterno, Apostolic Nuncio in Serbia

Saturday, 30 January

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

Monday, 1 February

Bishop Marcelo Daniel Colombo of La Rioja, Argentina

Bishop Hugo Nicolás Barbaro of San Roque de Presidencia Roque Sáenz Peña, Argentina

Mother Zulema Nelly Zayas, Superior General of the Hijas del Divino Salvador

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Fr Adilson Pedro Busin, CS, as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Guardalifera. Until now he has been Regional Vicar for the South American

region with its headquarters in Porto Alegre (27 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Busin, 50, was born in Sarandi, Brazil. He holds degrees in philosophy and in theology and a licence in pedagogy. He made his religious profession for the Missionaries of St Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians) on 31 May 1992 and was ordained a priest on 9 January 1993. Within the Congregation he has served as: vocation animator; rector of the minor seminary in Ciudad del Este, Paraguay; master of novices and provincial superior; president of the Scalabrinian Association for the service to migrants.

The Holy Father appointed Fr José Hiraís Acosta Beltrán as Bishop of Huejutla, Mexico. Until now he has been Administrator of the said Diocese (28 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Acosta Beltrán, 49, was born in Pezmatlán, Brazil. He holds a licence in philosophy. He was ordained a priest on 11 June 1993. He has served in parish ministry and as: vice-rector of the Minor Seminary; professor and formator at the Major Seminary; judge at the Ecclesiastical Tribunal in Huejutla; prefect of studies and spiritual director at the Major Seminary of Huejutla; defender of the bond at the diocesan tribunal and member of the College of Consultors.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Raffaele Calabro of Andria, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (29 Jan.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Luigi Mansi from the clergy of the Diocese of Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano, Italy, as Bishop of Andria. Until now he has been President of the National Apostolic Union of Clergy (29 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Mansi, 63, was born in Cerignola, Italy. He holds a licence in theology and a doctorate in theological anthropology. He was ordained a priest on 29 June 1975. He has served in parish ministry and as: vice-rector of the episcopal seminary in Foggia; rector of the diocesan seminary in Cerignola-Ascoli Satriano; head of the vocational pastoral ministry; director and professor of theology; master of ceremonies and chancellor of the diocese; spiritual director of Pio XI seminary in Molfetta; diocesan assistant to Catholic Action; episcopal vicar for pastoral ministry; member of the episcopal council, the presbyteral council, and the College of Consultors.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, as titular Bishop of Luperiana. Until now he has been Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (29 Jan.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Virgilio Do Carmo Da Silva, SDB, as Bishop of Dili, East Timor. Until now he has been Provincial Superior of the Salesians in East Timor (30 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Do Carmo Da Silva, 48, was born in Vanilale, East Timor. He made his perpetual profession for the Salesian Society of Don Bosco on 19 March 1997 and was ordained a priest on 18 December 1998. He studied philosophy and theology and holds a licence in spirituality. He has served in parish ministry and as: formator; treasurer of the Formation House in Venilale; master of novices; director of the Salesian House and of the Don Bosco Technical High School in Fatumaca.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Carlos Alberto Salcedo Ojeda, OMI, as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Huancayo, Peru, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Matiana. Until now he has been Episcopal Vicar and Parish Priest of San Francisco de Asís Parish and of El Señor de la Ascensión Parish in the said Archdiocese (30 Jan.).

Bishop-elect Salcedo Ojeda, 55, was born in Comas, Peru. He made his solemn vows for the Congregation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate on 30 August 1993 and was ordained a priest on 6 January 1996. He has served in parish ministry and as: counsellor to the Delegation of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Peru; head of the pre-novitiate in Lima; secretary to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate team for formation in the Latin American region; assistant to the master of novices at the International Novitiate in Asunción, Paraguay.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Vincent Cadioux, OMI, of Moosonee and Hearst, Canada, Dioceses united in *persona episcopi*. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (2 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Robert Bourgon as Bishop of Hearst, Canada, and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Moosonee. Until now he has been Vicar General of Sault Sainte Marie, Canada (2 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Bourgon, 59, was born in Sudbury, Canada. He holds a degree in psychology and philosophy, a Master of Divinity and a doctorate in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 8 May 1981. He has served in parish ministry and as: member of the College of Consultors; judicial vicar of Sault Sainte Marie and adjunct judicial vicar of

The Holy Father receives the President of the Republic of Togo

On Thursday, 28 January, The Holy Father received in audience the President of the Republic of Togo, H.E. Mr Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States.

During the cordial discussions the parties acknowledged the good existing relations between the Holy See and Togo, and the prospects for their further consolidation. Mention was made of the contribution of the Catholic Church to the development of the country and the integral progress of the Togolese population, especially in the field of education.

Attention then turned to various challenges affecting West and Sub-Saharan Africa, with special emphasis on the need for joint commitment to the promotion of security and peace in the Region.



'Our Sunday Visitor' bids farewell to Greg Erlandson

At the end of January Greg Erlandson resigned as Editor-in-Chief of *Our Sunday Visitor*. Erlandson joined the Catholic weekly paper in 1989 after working as a Rome correspondent for *Catholic News Service* and as news editor for the *National Catholic Register* in Los Angeles. Under his leadership *Our Sunday Visitor* was redesigned and won numerous awards from the Catholic Press Association. Erlandson has written for a number of publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. He is a consultant for the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and was part of the Vatican task force to reform Vatican media, which was headed by Lord Patten. In a farewell statement to the staff of the newspaper, he wrote: "By God's grace I believe we have made a difference in many people's lives".

We, at the English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, would like to thank Greg Erlandson for his collaboration and wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours.

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Another kind of justice

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want that?" No! God wanted to save Pilate as well as Judas, everyone! He, the Lord of Mercy, wants to save everyone! The difficulty is in allowing him to enter our hearts. Every word of the prophets is a passionate appeal full of love which seeks our conversion. This is what the Lord says through the Prophet Ezekiel: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked... and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?" (18:23; cf. 33:11), that's what pleases God!

This is the heart of God, the heart of a Father who loves and wants his children to live in goodness and in justice, and thus that they might live to the fullest and be happy. The heart of a Father who goes beyond our little concept of justice to open us to the limitless horizons of his mercy. His is the heart of a Father who does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults, as the Psalm says (103[102]:9-10). His is precisely the heart of the father whom we want to encounter when we go to the confessional. Perhaps he will say something to help us better under-

stand our sin, but we all go to find a father who helps us to change our lives; a father who gives us the strength to go on; a father who forgives us in the name of God. That is why being a confessor is such an important responsibility, because that son, that daughter who comes to you is only looking for a father. And you, priest in the confessional, you are there in the place of the Father who does justice with his mercy.

SPECIAL GREETINGS:

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from the United States of America. May you open your lives to the Lord's gift of mercy, and share this gift with everyone you know. May you be children of the Good Father, missionaries of his merciful love. May God bless you all!

A warm welcome to the Italian-speaking pilgrims! I am delighted to welcome the faithful from the Diocese of Livorno, with Bishop Simone Giusti; participants of the seminar hosted by the University of Santa Croce; students of the Swiss School of Rome and artists of the American Circus. And I thank you! I would like to repeat what I said a week ago, when there was a show like this. You create beauty, and beauty brings us ever closer to God. Thank you for this. But there is another thing that I would like to stress: this is not improvised; behind this spectacle of beauty, there are hours and hours of training that is exhausting. Training is exhausting! The Apostle Paul tells us that in order to arrive at the end and in order to overcome we must train; and this is an example for us all, that the seduction of the easy life, finding a good outcome without making any effort, is a temptation. With what you have done today, and with all the training behind it, you bear witness to us that life without continuous effort is a mediocre life. Thank you so much for your example.

I address an affectionate thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Today we remember St Blaise, the martyr of Armenia. This holy bishop reminds us of the commitment to proclaim the Gospel even in difficult conditions. Dear

young people, become courageous witnesses of your faith; dear sick people, offer up your cross every day for the conversion of those far from the light of Christ; and you, dear newlyweds, be proclaimers of his love, beginning in your family.



For a purification of memory

At the conclusion of the General Audience, Mr Rinaldo Marmara presented to Pope Francis a copy of his book *La Squadra Pontificia ai Dardanelli 1657 / İlk Çanakkale Zaferi 1657*. This volume is an Italian and Turkish transliteration of a manuscript from the Chigi collection of the Vatican Apostolic Library, which is an account of the papal fleet that participated in the Second Battle of the Dardanelles in 1657. During his book presentation on Tuesday evening, the author stated that his objective was to make important archival material from the Vatican Archives and Vatican Library accessible to Turkish historians and researchers. The book, notwithstanding the painful memories of history, illustrates the importance of scholarly research and of opening

up archives to historical investigation in the service of truth and building bridges of cooperation and mutual understanding. In light of this goal, there is much appreciation for Turkey's continued commitment to open its archives to historians and researchers of interested parties in order to arrive jointly at a better understanding of historical events and the pain and suffering endured by all parties caught up in war and conflict, including the tragic events of 1915, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity.

The memory of the suffering and pain of both the distant and the more recent past – as in the case of the June 1977 assassination of Taha Carım, Ambassador of Turkey to the Holy See at the hands of a terrorist group – urges us also to acknowledge the suffering of the present and to condemn all acts of violence and terrorism, which continue to claim lives today. The violence and terrorism committed in the name of God or religion is particularly offensive. As Pope Francis stated during his visit to the Central African Republic: "Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters... Together, we must say no to hatred, no to revenge and no to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself" (*Address to the Muslim Community, Central Mosque of Koudoukou, Bangui, Central African Republic, 30 November 2015*). May these words inspire all people of good will to remember and affirm their brotherhood, solidarity, compassion and shared humanity and to reiterate their common stand against all violence.

Lenten sermons

At 9 am on Friday, 19 February, in the Redemptoris Mater Chapel, the preacher of the Papal Household, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., will begin preaching the Lenten sermons. The themes of the meditations are "Fifty years after the Second Vatican Council: A review from a spiritual point of view". Cardinals, archbishops, bishops, prelates of the papal family, of the Roman Curia, of the Vicariate of Rome, superiors general and procurators of religious orders belonging the papal chapel have been invited to the sermons which will be held on Fridays during Lent (26 February, and 4, 11 and 18 March).

Venerating the relics of Padre Pio and Leopold Mandić

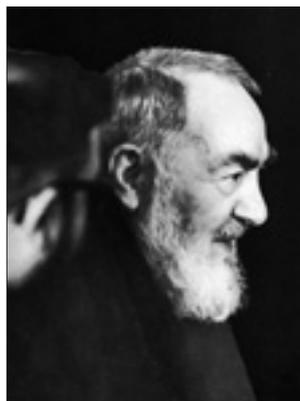
Two saints and champions of Christian holiness

On Wednesday, 3 February, urns containing the relics of St Leopold Mandić and St Pio of Pietrelcina arrived in Rome at the Church of St Lawrence Outside-the-Walls. The event began at 3 pm with a welcome celebration. Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar of Rome, celebrated Holy Mass that evening. In his homily, he called the two saints "champions of Christian holiness". The relics remained in exposition until 8:30 pm the following day, during which time a number of celebrations were reserved for the vast Franciscan family.

An all-night vigil was held at 10 pm on Thursday, 4 February, in the Jubilee Church of San Salvatore in

Lauro. Prayer continued until Friday with various celebrations and concluded with Holy Mass at 2 pm presided by Archbishop Michele Castoro of Manfredonia - Vieste - San Giovanni Rotondo.

At 4 pm on Friday the two urns containing the relics were carried in a procession from San Salvatore in Lauro, proceeding the entire length of Via della Conciliazione which arrived at the altar of St Peter's Basilica. Then Cardinal-Archbishop Angelo Comastri received the relics and after a moment of prayer, accompanied the relics into the Basilica where they were placed for veneration in the central nave before the Altar of the Confession.



To the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

The truth lived in love

The "synodal dynamic" is to be promoted and implemented in the Church at all levels. This was the Pope's recommendation during an audience in the Clementine Hall on Friday morning, 29 January, to participants in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The following is a translation of the Pope's address, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am meeting with you at the close of your Plenary Session. I cordially greet and thank the Cardinal Prefect for his kind words.

We are now in the Holy Year of Mercy. I hope that in this Jubilee Year all members of the Church may renew their faith in Jesus Christ who is the face of the Father's mercy, the path that unites God and man. Thus, mercy is the cornerstone that supports the life of the Church: the first truth of the Church, indeed, it is the love of Christ.

So, how could we not hope that all Christian people – pastors and

faithful – rediscover and place back at the centre, during the Jubilee, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? And when, in the twilight of life, we are asked if we fed the hungry or gave drink to the thirsty, likewise we will be asked if we helped people overcome doubt, whether we were committed to welcoming sinners, admonishing or correcting them, whether we were able to combat ignorance, above all that regarding the Christian faith and an upright life. This attention to works of mercy is important: this is not a devotion. It is how we, as Christians, further the spirit of mercy in practice. Once, in these years, I received an important Movement in the Paul VI Hall; it was packed. And I touched upon the subject of the works of mercy. I stopped and I posed the question: "Who among you remembers the spiritual and corporal works of mercy? Whoever remembers them, raise your hand". No more than 20 did, in a hall of 7,000. We must go back to teaching this to the faithful; it is so important.

In faith and charity there is a cognitive and unifying relationship with the mystery of Love, which is God himself. And, although God remains a mystery in himself, God's mercy became effective in Jesus, who is affective mercy, as he himself became man for the salvation of men. The task entrusted to your Dicastery finds here its ultimate foundation and its proper justification. The Christian faith, indeed, is not simply knowledge to be preserved in memory, but rather truth to be lived in love. Thus, together with the Doctrine of the Faith, we also need to safeguard the integrity of customs, especially those in the most sensitive areas of life. Adhering in faith to the Person of Christ implies both an act of reason and a moral



response to his gift. In this regard, I thank you for all the commitment and responsibility that you exercise in treating cases of abuse of minors by members of the clergy.

Care for the integrity of the faith and of customs is a delicate task. Collegial commitment is important in carrying out this mission effectively. Your Congregation highly values the contribution of the Consultors and Commissions, whom I would like to thank for their valuable and humble work; and I encourage you to continue your method of treating questions in your weekly congress and the more substantial ones in the Ordinary or Plenary Session. Correct synodality must be promoted at all levels of ecclesial life. In this regard, last year you organized a timely meeting – with the representatives of the Doctrinal Commissions of the European Episcopal Conferences – to collegially address some doctrinal and pastoral challenges. Thus, you contributed to awakening in the faithful a new missionary impetus

and a greater opening to the transcendent dimension of life, without which Europe is at risk of losing that humanistic spirit that it loves and defends. I invite you to continue to intensify with such advisory bodies, which help Episcopal Conferences and individual bishops in their solicitude for sound doctrine, at a time of rapid change and the growing complexity of problems.

Another of your important contributions to the renewal of ecclesial life is the study on the complementarity between hierarchical and charismatic gifts. According to the logic of unity – a logic that characterizes every authentic form of communion in the People of God –, hierarchical and charismatic gifts, legitimately different, are called to work in synergy for the good of the Church and of the world. The testimony of this complementarity is all the more urgent today and it represents an eloquent expression of that ordered plurality that connotes every ecclesial fabric, as a reflection of the harmonious communion that lives in the heart of the Triune God. The relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts, in fact, refers back to its Trinitarian root, in the bond between the Divine Incarnate *Logos* and the Holy Spirit, who is always a gift of the Father and the Son. In fact, if this root is recognized and received with humility, it enables the Church to renew herself in every era as "a people united in one in the unity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", according to the expression of St Cyprian (*De Oratione Dominica*, n. 23). Unity and plurality are the seal of a Church that, moved by the Spirit, is able to set out with a sure and faithful step towards those goals that the Risen Lord indicates to her in the course of history. Here one clearly sees how the synodal dynamic, if correctly understood, is born of communion and leads to an ever more realized, deepened and expanded communion at the service of the life and mission of the People of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and I trust in yours for me. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady protect you.



A university course teaches Christians and Muslims mutual respect and coexistence

Friends in Bethlehem

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims in such a fragile area as the Middle East is growing and strengthening in places such as university classrooms. Fr Iyad Twal, who for three years has served as dean of the Department of Religious Studies at Bethlehem University, has experienced this dialogue firsthand.

In discussing the interreligious dialogue programme, Fr Twal explained that when students first register, "their first goal is marks, high marks to get their degree. However, over time, they realize that their degree goes beyond marks, and becomes a life lesson". In class, the dean said in an AsiaNews report on 26 January, "we want to provide a better understanding of the other, with a positive outlook, so that both Christians and Muslims can speak truly and honestly." Bethlehem University is the only academic institution of higher learning in the area that offers this kind of programme. For students and their families, the programme offers "a step forward towards co-existence and mission. This means that religion can become part of the solution and a tool of peace in this land".

Established in 1973 at the initiative of Pope Paul VI, the university has welcomed thousands of students over the past 40 years. At the university, students can study in one of five departments including Business Administration and Nursing and Health Sciences.



Over the past few years, opportunities for interreligious dialogue have been offered to Christian and Muslim students from various faculties and departments who are interested in learning the basics of these two great religions. The goal is not academic per se, but the opportunity is meant to highlight the human side of dialogue.

The connection between mercy and mission at the first Jubilee Audience

My name is Christopher

With Baptism, Christians receive a "new name in addition to the one given to us by our mom and dad; this name is 'Christopher'". During the first Jubilee Audience for the Year of Mercy – held on Saturday morning, 30 January, in St Peter's Square – the Pontiff invited all the faithful to be "a bearer of Christ" and to commit themselves to transmit the joy they have received from the Lord. The following is a translation of the address that the Holy Father delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Day by day we enter more deeply into the Holy Year of Mercy. By his grace, the Lord guides our footsteps as we pass through the Holy Door and he comes to meet us and stay with us always, despite our failings and contradictions. Let us never tire of feeling in need of his forgiveness. For when we are weak, being close to him strengthens us and enables us to live the faith with greater joy.

Today I wish to speak to you about the close relationship between *mercy* and *mission*. As St John Paul II reminds us: "The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy... and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior's mercy" (*Dives in Misericordia*, n. 13). As Christians, we are called to be missionaries of the Gospel. When we receive good news, or when we experience beautiful moments, we naturally seek to share

them with others. We feel inside that we cannot hold back the joy that we have been given; and we want to spread it. The joy that stirs within is such that it drives us to share it.

It ought to be the same when we encounter the Lord: the joy of this encounter and of his mercy, share the mercy of the Lord. Indeed, the concrete sign that we have truly encountered Jesus is the joy that we show in communicating it to others. And this is not "proselytizing", this is giving a gift: I give you what gives me joy. Reading the Gospel we see that this was the experience of the first disciples: after their first encounter with Jesus, Andrew went immediately to tell his brother Peter (cf. Jn 1:40-42), and Philip did the same with Nathanael (cf. Jn 1:45-46). To encounter Jesus is to experience his love. This love transforms us and makes us able to transmit to others the power it gives. In a way we could say that from the day of our Baptism each one of us is given a new name in addition to the one given to us by our mom and dad; this name is "Christopher". We are all "Christophers". What does that mean? "Bearers of Christ". It is the name of our attitude, the attitude of a bearer of the joy of Christ, of the mercy of Christ. Every Christian is a "Christopher", that is, a bearer of Christ!

The mercy that we receive from the Father is not given as a private

consolation, but makes us instruments that others too might receive the same gift. There is a wonderful interplay between mercy and mission. Experiencing mercy renders us missionaries of mercy, and to be missionaries allows us to grow ever more in the mercy of God. Therefore, let us take our Christian calling seriously and commit to live as believers, because only then can the Gospel touch a person's heart and open it to receive the grace of love, to receive this great, all-welcoming mercy of God.

At the end of the Jubilee Audience, the Pontiff greeted to the various language groups. The following are his greetings to English-speaking pilgrims and to young people, the sick and newlyweds.

I cordially welcome the English speaking pilgrims here at this Audience. May your stay in the Eternal City confirm you in the love of Christ, and may he make us his missionaries of mercy, especially for all those who feel distanced from God. May God bless you all!

Some of you might have wondered what the Pope's house is like, where the Pope lives. The Pope lives behind here, in the Casa Santa Marta. It is a large home where



about 40 priests and a few bishops – who work with me in the Curia – live, and there are also a few visiting guests: cardinals, bishops, laymen who come to Rome for meetings in the Dicasteries, and such things...

There is a group of men and women who carry out the housework, whether in cleaning, cooking, in the dining room. This group of men and women are a part of our family, they form a family: they are not distant employees, because we consider them part of our family. I would like to tell you that today the Pope is rather sad because yesterday a woman who has helped us so much for years passed away. Her husband also works here, with us, in this house. After a long illness, the Lord called her to him. Her name is Elvira. I ask you today, to do two works of mercy: to pray for the deceased and to comfort the suffering. I invite you to pray a Hail Mary for Elvira's eternal peace and eternal joy, and that the Lord comfort her husband and her children.

Lastly, I address *young people, the sick and newlyweds*. Tomorrow we will remember St John Bosco, Apostle of Youth. Look to him, dear *young people*, as the exemplary educator. You, dear *sick people*, learn from his spiritual experience in order to always trust in Christ crucified. And you, dear *newlyweds*, refer to his intercession in order to take on your conjugal mission with generous commitment.

The Jubilee in Cambodia

Deepening religious dialogue

The Jubilee of Mercy is a favourable time to practice and deepen dialogue among religions. The Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, Bishop Olivier Michel Marie Schmitthausler, underlined this in a message sent to the faithful for the Holy Year. In the traditionally Buddhist country of Cambodia, there are a few thousand Catholics. According to a Fides News Agency report on 2 February, the Bishop invited the faithful to open their hearts to their neighbour and to cultivate candid and welcoming dialogue, recognizing the moral values present in the faithful of other religions.

The Holy Father's prayer for Elvira

Pope Francis asked the faithful at the first Jubilee Audience to pray a Hail Mary for Elvira Antobenedetto, an employee of the Casa Santa Marta, who died on Friday morning, 29 January, in Rome after a long illness. Antobenedetto, 49, served as a housekeeper and it was she who cleaned the Pontiff's room. She is survived by her husband, who is also an employee of the Casa Santa Marta, and their two children, 24 and 19. Elvira's coworkers affectionately remember her as "a humble woman with great dignity, who never complained in the 2-and-a-half years she suffered with cancer". The funeral will be celebrated in her hometown located in a province south of Rome. She was "a woman who helped us so much", Francis said, recalling his sadness and asking the faithful in St Peter's Square "to do two works of mercy: to pray for the deceased and to comfort the suffering". One of the symbols characterizing the first Jubilee Audience is a model ship in full sail, symbolizing freedom. It was built by Jack Benson, a young inmate from Côte d'Ivoire, incarcerated in a maximum security prison in Nuchis, Sardinia, who wanted to communicate his idea of freedom and hope to the Pope. Ciro Argentino, another detainee who

was able to come to St Peter's Square because he was awarded special permission, delivered the gift to the Pope. In a touching letter to the Pontiff, Jack wrote of his desire to build a boat with its sails unfurled "in order to express the hope that the Spirit's breath may provide in finding true freedom". Francis was also given a letter from all of the inmates. "We are sinners", the letter reads, "because at a certain point during our journey we were swallowed by darkness. However we have

experienced that when we hit bottom, the love of Jesus reaches out to us and brings to us forgiveness with His mercy". This initiative was started by the gospel choir of the Tel Thee Association of Telti which sponsored the Eleos project at the Sardinian prison. The President, Maria Dolores Angius, said that "mercy also creates collective security both inside and outside of prison". The group also gave Francis a clay image of Our Lady of Bonaria made by Gian Mario Inzaina.



At the Angelus with the children of Catholic Action

No one is excluded

"No human condition can constitute a reason for exclusion from the Father's heart". Pope Francis spoke to the faithful in St Peter's Square at the Angelus on Sunday, 31 January, reminding them of the day's Liturgy. The Pontiff underlined that "God comes to meet the men and women of all times and places, in their real life situations". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's words which were delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today's Gospel account once again, like last Sunday, brings us to the synagogue of Nazareth, the village in Galilee where Jesus was brought up in a family and was known by everyone. He, who left not long before to begin his public life, now returns and for the first time presents himself to the community, gathered in the synagogue on the Sabbath. He reads the passage of the Prophet Isaiah, who speaks of the future Messiah, and he declares at the end: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Jesus' compatriots, who were at first astonished and admired him, now begin to look sideways, to murmur among themselves and ask: why does he, who claims to be the Lord's Consecrated, not repeat here in his homeland the wonders they say he worked in Capernaum and in nearby villages? Thus Jesus affirms: "no prophet is acceptable in his own country", and he refers to the great prophets of the past, Elijah and



Elisha, who had worked miracles in favour of the pagans in order to denounce the incredulity of their people. At this point those present are offended, rise up, indignant, and cast Jesus out and want to throw him down from the precipice. But he, with the strength of his peace, "passed through the midst of them and went away" (cf. v. 30). His time has not yet come.

This passage of Luke the Evangelist is not simply the account of an argument between compatriots, as sometimes happens even in our neighbourhoods, arising from envy and jealousy, but it highlights a temptation to which a religious man is always exposed – all of us are exposed – and from which it is important to keep his distance. What is

this temptation? It is the temptation to consider religion as a human investment and, consequently, "negotiate" with God, seeking one's own interest. Instead, true religion entails accepting the revelation of a God who is Father and who cares for each of his creatures, even the smallest and most insignificant in the eyes of man. Jesus' prophetic ministry consists precisely in this: in declaring that no human condition can constitute a reason for exclusion – no human condition can constitute a reason for exclusion! – from the Father's heart, and that the only privilege in the eyes of God is that of not having privileges, of not having godparents, of being abandoned in his hands.

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). The 'today', proclaimed by Christ that day, applies to every age; it echoes for us too in this Square, reminding us of the relevance and necessity of the salvation Jesus brought to humanity. God comes to meet the men and women of all times and places, in their real life situations. He also comes to meet us. It is always he who takes the first step: he comes to visit us with his mercy, to lift us up from the dust of our sins; he comes to extend a hand to us in order to enable us to return from the abyss into which our pride made us fall, and he invites us to receive the comforting truth of the Gospel and to walk on the paths of good. He always comes to find us, to look for us.

Let us return to the synagogue. Surely that day, in the synagogue of Nazareth, Mary, his Mother, was also there. We can imagine her heart beating, a small foreboding of what she will suffer under the Cross, seeing Jesus, there in the synagogue, first admired, then challenged, then insulted, threatened with death. In her heart, filled with faith, she kept every thing. May she help us to convert from a god of miracles to the miracle of God, who is Jesus Christ.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father said:

Dear brothers and sisters, today we celebrate World Leprosy Day. This disease, although in regression, unfortunately continues to afflict especially people who are the poorest and most marginalized. It is important to keep solidarity alive with these brothers and sisters, disabled as a result of this disease. Let us assure them of our prayers and let us assure our support to those who assist them. Good lay people, good sisters, good priests.

I affectionately greet all of you, dear pilgrims from various parishes in Italy and other countries, as well as associations and groups.

Now I greet the young people of Catholic Action of the Diocese of Rome! Now I understand why there was such a clamour in the Square! Dear young people, again this year, accompanied by the Cardinal Vicar and by your leaders, you have come in great numbers at the end of your "Caravan of Peace".

This year your witness of peace, enlivened by faith in Jesus, shall be even more joyful and aware, because it is enriched by the gesture you have just made by passing through the Holy Door. I encourage you to be instruments of peace and mercy among your peers! Now let us listen to the message that your friends, here beside me, will read to us...

And now the young people in the Square will let loose the balloons, a sign of peace.

I wish to all a good Sunday and a good lunch. Please do not forget to pray for me. *Arrivederci!*

Archbishop Fisichella reviews the first two months of the Jubilee

Beyond the numbers

In the almost two months since the Year of Mercy started, over 1.39 million people have participated in Jubilee events. On Friday morning, 29 January, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, in a press conference in the Holy See Press Office, explained to journalists that "thousands of pictures and documents" have been received "from around the world, attesting to the commitment and the faith of believers". The President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization underlined that 40% of those attending the events have come from abroad, most of whom are Spanish and French speakers. "We have registered pilgrims", he said, "from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Korea, Kenya, Mozambique, El Salvador, New Zealand, Argentina, Mexico, the Fiji Islands, Russia, Belarus, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, the Ivory Coast, Chad, Kuwait, the United States of America and Albania".

Nevertheless, Archbishop Fisichella said, the number of pilgrims is not "the criteria by which to judge the actual outcome of the Jubilee. The Holy Year of Mercy goes well beyond the numbers, for it is intended to touch the hearts and minds of people in order to assist them in coming to understand the ways in which God's great love manifests itself in their daily lives". However the incredible participation in the events of the first two months of the Jubilee demonstrates that "the Pope's instinct corresponds to a genuine expectation of the People of God". And thus the Holy Year is being "lived out intensely around the entire world", and there are a significant number of pilgrims coming to Rome.

Among other things, Archbishop Fisichella discussed the upcoming celebration on Ash Wednesday, when



Antoine Lafré, "The Seven Churches of Rome" (1775)

the Pope will give the mandate to 1,071 missionaries of mercy. There will be 700 missionaries in Rome from Burma, Lebanon, China, South Korea, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Burundi, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Latvia, East Timor, Indonesia, Thailand, and Egypt. The Holy Father, the prelate said, "will meet with them on 9 February in order to express his feelings regarding this initiative which will certainly be one of the most touching and significant of the Jubilee of Mercy". On 10 February the missionaries will celebrate with Francis and on that occasion they will receive the "mandate, as well as the faculty to absolve those sins reserved to the Holy See".

The season of Lent is "a favourable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God's word and by practising the works of mercy". In his message for Lent Pope Francis invites Christians to prepare for Easter of this Jubilee Year. It is a season to "be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy". The following is the English text of the Pope's message.



Lent is a time for conversion and solidarity

A season for the works of mercy

"I desire mercy, and not sacrifice"
(Mt 9:13).

The works of mercy
on the road of the Jubilee

1. Mary, the image of a Church which evangelizes because she is evangelized

In the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I asked that "the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God's mercy" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 17). By calling for an attentive listening to the word of God and encouraging the initiative "24 Hours for the Lord", I sought to stress the primacy of prayerful listening to God's word, especially his prophetic word. The mercy of God is a proclamation made to the world, a proclamation which each Christian is called to experience first hand. For this reason, during the season of Lent I will send out Missionaries of Mercy as a concrete sign to everyone of God's closeness and forgiveness.

After receiving the Good News told to her by the Archangel Gabriel, Mary, in her *Magnificat*, prophetically sings of the mercy whereby God chose her. The Virgin of Nazareth, betrothed to Joseph, thus becomes the perfect icon of the Church which evangelizes, for she was, and continues to be, evangelized by the Holy Spirit, who made her virginal womb fruitful. In the prophetic tradition, mercy is strictly related – even on the etymological level – to the maternal womb (*rahamim*) and to a generous, faithful and compassionate goodness (*hesed*) shown within marriage and family relationships.

2. God's covenant with humanity: a history of mercy

The mystery of divine mercy is revealed in the history of the covenant between God and his people, Israel. God shows himself ever rich in mercy, ever ready to treat his people with deep tenderness and compassion, especially at those tragic moments when infidelity ruptures the bond of the covenant, which then needs to be ratified more firmly in justice and truth. Here is a true love

story, in which God plays the role of the betrayed father and husband, while Israel plays the unfaithful child and bride. These domestic images – as in the case of Hosea (cf. Hos 1-2) – show to what extent God wishes to bind himself to his people.

This love story culminates in the incarnation of God's Son. In Christ, the Father pours forth his boundless mercy even to making him "mercy incarnate" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 8). As a man, Jesus of Nazareth is a true son of Israel; he embodies that perfect hearing required of every Jew by the *Shema*, which today too is the heart of God's covenant with Israel: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:4-5). As the Son of God, he is the Bridegroom who does everything to win over the love of his bride, to whom he is bound by an unconditional love which becomes visible in the eternal wedding feast.

This is the very heart of the apostolic *kerygma*, in which divine mercy holds a central and fundamental place. It is "the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 36), that first proclamation which "we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment" (*ibid.*, 164). Mercy "expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 21), thus restoring his relationship with him. In Jesus crucified, God shows his desire to draw near to sinners, however far they may have strayed from him. In this way he hopes to soften the hardened heart of his Bride.

3. The works of mercy

God's mercy transforms human hearts; it enables us, through the experience of a faithful love, to be-

come merciful in turn. In an ever new miracle, divine mercy shines forth in our lives, inspiring each of us to love our neighbour and to devote ourselves to what the Church's tradition calls the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. These works remind us that faith finds expression in concrete everyday actions meant to help our neighbours in body and spirit: by feeding, visiting, comforting and instructing them. On such things will we be judged. For this reason, I expressed my hope that "the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; this will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty, and to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy" (*ibid.*, 15). For in the poor, the flesh of Christ "becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us" (*ibid.*). It is the unprecedented and scandalous mystery of the extension in time of the suffering of the Innocent Lamb, the burning bush of gratuitous love. Before this love, we can, like Moses, take off our sandals (cf. Ex 3:5), especially when the poor are our brothers or sisters in Christ who are suffering for their faith.

In the light of this love, which is strong as death (cf. Song 8:6), the real poor are revealed as those who refuse to see themselves as such. They consider themselves rich, but they are actually the poorest of the poor. This is because they are slaves to sin, which leads them to use wealth and power not for the service of God and others, but to stifle within their hearts the profound sense that they too are only poor beggars. The greater their power and wealth, the more this blindness and deception can grow. It can even reach the point of being blind to Lazarus begging at their doorstep (cf. Lk 16:20-21). Lazarus, the poor man, is a figure of Christ, who through the poor pleads for our

conversion. As such, he represents the possibility of conversion which God offers us and which we may well fail to see. Such blindness is often accompanied by the proud illusion of our own omnipotence, which reflects in a sinister way the diabolical "you will be like God" (Gen 3:5) which is the root of all sin. This illusion can likewise take social and political forms, as shown by the totalitarian systems of the 20th century, and, in our own day, by the ideologies of monopolizing thought and technoscience, which would make God irrelevant and reduce man to raw material to be exploited. This illusion can also be seen in the sinful structures linked to a model of false development based on the idolatry of money, which leads to a lack of concern for the fate of the poor on the part of wealthier individuals and societies; they close their doors, refusing even to see the poor.

For all of us, then, the season of Lent in this Jubilee Year is a favourable time to overcome our existential alienation by listening to God's word and by practising the works of mercy. In the corporal works of mercy we touch the flesh of Christ in our brothers and sisters who need to be fed, clothed, sheltered, visited; in the spiritual works of mercy – counsel, instruction, forgiveness, admonishment and prayer – we touch more directly our own sinfulness. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy must never be separated. By touching the flesh of the crucified Jesus in the suffering, sinners can receive the gift of realizing that they too are poor and in need. By taking this path, the "proud", the "powerful" and the "wealthy" spoken of in the *Magnificat* can also be embraced and undeservedly loved by the crucified Lord who died and rose for them. This love alone is the answer to that yearning for infinite happiness and love that we think we can satisfy with the idols of knowledge, power and riches. Yet the danger always remains that by a constant refusal to open the doors of their hearts to Christ who knocks on them in the poor, the proud, rich and powerful will end up condemning themselves and plunging into the eternal abyss of solitude which is Hell. The pointed words of Abraham apply to them and to all of us: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Lk 16:29). Such attentive listening will best prepare us to celebrate the final victory over sin and death of the Bridegroom, now risen, who desires to purify his Betrothed in expectation of his coming.

Let us not waste this season of Lent, so favourable a time for conversion! We ask this through the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, who, encountering the greatness of God's mercy freely bestowed upon her, was the first to acknowledge her lowliness (cf. Lk 1:48) and to call herself the Lord's humble servant (cf. Lk 1:38).

From the Vatican, 4 October 2015
Feast of St Francis of Assisi

Franciscans

In St Peter's Basilica on Tuesday, 5 February, Pope Francis closed the Year of Consecrated Life by explaining how it has been a time "lived out with so much enthusiasm". In his homily, the Holy Father said this year "is now flowing like a river into the sea of mercy, in this immense mystery of love that we are experiencing with the Extraordinary Jubilee". The following is a translation of the Pope's homily which was given in Italian.

Before our eyes is a simple, humble and great fact: Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the temple of Jerusalem. He is a child like so many, like all, but he is unique: he is the Only Begotten who came for all. This Child has brought us the mercy and tenderness of God: Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy. This is the icon that the Gospel offers us at the end of the Year of Consecrated Life, a year lived out with so much enthusiasm. Like a river, it is now flowing into the sea of mercy, in this immense mystery of love that we are experiencing with the Extraordinary Jubilee.

Today's celebration, especially in the East, is called the *feast of the encounter*. Essentially, in the Gospel that has been proclaimed, we see various encounters (cf. Lk 9:22-40). In the temple *Jesus comes to meet us and we go to meet him*. We contemplate the encounter with the elderly Simeon, who represents Israel's faithful anticipation and the heartfelt jubilation for the fulfillment of the ancient promises. We also admire the encounter with the elderly prophetess Anna who, in seeing the Child, exults in joy and praises God. Simeon and Anna are the *anticipation and the prophesy*; Jesus is the novelty and the fulfillment: he is presented to us as the perennial surprise of God; concentrated in this Child born for all is the *past*, made of memory and of promise, and the *future*, full of hope.

We can see in this the beginning of consecrated life. *Consecrated men and women are called first and foremost to be men and women of encounter*. Indeed, the vocation does not originate from a plan we have designed "on the drawing board", but from a grace of the Lord which touches us, through a life-



Francis closes the Year of Consecrated Life on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Flowing like a river into the sea of mercy

changing encounter. Those who truly encounter Jesus cannot remain the same as before. He is the novelty that makes all things new. Those who experience this encounter become witnesses and make the encounter possible for others; they also promote the culture of encounter, avoiding the self-ferentiality that makes us stay closed off within ourselves.

The passage of the Letter to the Hebrews which we heard reminds us that in order to encounter us, Jesus did not hesitate to share our human condition: "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature" (2:14). Jesus did not save us "from the outside", he did not remain outside of our drama, but wanted to share our life. Consecrated men and women are called to be a tangible and prophetic sign of this *closeness of God*, of this sharing in the condition of frailty, of sin and of the wounds of today's mankind.

All forms of consecrated life, each according to its characteristics, are called to be in a permanent state of mission, sharing "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1). The Gospel also tells us that "his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him" (Lk 2:33). Joseph and Mary safeguarded the astonishment over this encounter full of light and hope for all peoples. We too, as Christians and as consecrated people, are *guardians of astonishment*. An astonishment which requires ongoing renewal; woe to routine in spiritual life; woe to the crystallization of our charisms in an abstract document: the founders' charisms – as I have said at other times – are not to be sealed in a bottle, they are not museum pieces. Our founders were moved by the Spirit and were not afraid to soil their hands with everyday life, with the problems of the people, courageously moving along the geographical and existential peripheries. They did not halt in the face of obstacles and the misunderstandings of others, because they kept in their heart the astonishment over the encounter with Christ. They did not take the grace of the Gospel; they always had in their heart a healthy apprehension for the Lord, a heartend-

ing desire to bring him to others, as Mary and Joseph did in the temple. We too are called today to make prophetic and courageous choices.

Lastly, through the encounter with Jesus and through the gift of the vocation to consecrated life we learn from today's celebration to experience *gratitude*. Thanking, giving thanks: *the Eucharist*. How beautiful it is when we encounter the happy faces of consecrated people, perhaps already advanced in years like Simeon or Anna, content and full of gratitude for their own vocation. This is a word that can summarize all that we have experienced in this Year of Consecrated Life: gratitude for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who always enlivens the Church through various charisms.

The Gospel concludes with this expression: "the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him" (v. 40). May the Lord Jesus, through the maternal intercession of Mary, grow in us, and increase in each person the desire for encounter, the safekeeping of the astonishment and the joy of gratitude. Then others will be attracted by their light, and they will be able to encounter the Father's mercy.

At the end of Mass, the Pope went to St Peter's Square to greet the faithful gathered outside.

Dear Consecrated Brothers and Sisters, Thank you so much! You partook in the Eucharist while a bit chilly, but the heart is aflame!

Thank you for ending this Year of Consecrated Life in this way, everyone together. Go forth! Each of us has a role, has a job in the Church. Please, do not forget the first vocation, the first call. Remember! And with the love with which you were called, today the Lord continues to call you. Do not downplay, never downplay the beauty, the wonder of the first call. And then keep working. It's beautiful! Continue. There is always something to do. The main thing is to pray. The "marrow" of consecrated life is prayer: pray! And grow old, but age like fine wine!

I'll tell you something. I so enjoy when I come across those elderly women and men religious with eyes that

shine, because they have the flame of spiritual life alight. It hasn't gone out, that flame has not gone out! Go forth today, each day, and keep working and look to tomorrow with hope, always ask the Lord to send us new vocations, so our work of consecration can go forward. Memory: do not forget the first call! Daily work and then the hope of going forward and sowing well, so that the others who come after us can receive the legacy that we shall leave them.

Now let us pray to Our Lady...

[Blessing]

Have a good evening and pray for me!

NICOLA GORI

The Year of Consecrated Life, which began on 30 November 2014, ended with prayer and gratitude. On Tuesday afternoon, 2 February, the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Pope Francis presided at the Eucharistic celebration in St Peter's Basilica, joined by thousands of consecrated men and women celebrating their World Day. In an interview with *L'Osservatore Romano*, João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, looked back over the Year and pointed to the future. The following is a translation of excerpts of the interview, which was given in Italian.

Have the objectives proposed for the Year of Consecrated Life been reached?

I have a deep sense of gratitude to God and to Pope Francis for this Year. It has been like a touch of grace for us and has revitalized hope. It

has led us to look at consecrated life in a positive way and also at the problems that are there: this means current problems, such as aging [members] or the lack of vocations on certain continents. We have rediscovered that essentially it is a special vocation which is an integral part of the Church. It is not an appendage, it's not something temporary that is about to end, but it is a gift of God to the community. It has been like this from the very beginning; and we are

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I prepared a speech for this occasion on topics regarding consecrated life and on the three pillars; there are others, but three [words] are important to consecrated life. The first is prophecy, another is proximity and the third is hope. Prophecy, proximity hope. I have given the text to the Cardinal Prefect, because reading it is a little dull, and I prefer to speak to you from my heart. Okay?

Men and women religious, that is men and women consecrated to the Lord's service, who in the Church pursue this path of arduous poverty, of a chaste love that leads to a spiritual fatherhood and motherhood for all the Church, of obedience.... There is always something lacking in our obedience, because perfect obedience is that of the Son of God, who emptied himself, who became man out of obedience, unto death on the Cross. There are men and women among you who live out an intense form of obedience, an obedience – not military, no, not that; that is discipline, another thing – an obedience of giving of the heart. This is prophecy. "Don't you wish to do something, something else?..." –

Three key words entrusted by the Pope to consecrated people

Prophecy, proximity and hope

"Yes, but according to the rules I must do this, this and this. And according to regulations this, this and this. And if I don't see something clearly, I speak with the superior and, after the dialogue, I obey". This is prophecy, as opposed to the seed of anarchy, which the devil sows. "What do you do?" – "I do whatever I please". The anarchy of will is the daughter of the demon, it is not the daughter of God. The Son of God

was not an anarchist, he did not call his [disciples] to mount a force of resistance against his enemies; he said to Pilate: "Were I a king of this world I would have called my soldiers to protect me". Instead, he was obedient to the Father. He said only: "Father, please, no, not this chalice.... But Thy will be done". When out of obedience you accept something which perhaps often you do not like... [he makes a swallowing gesture]... that obedience must be swallowed, and it is done. Thus, prophecy. Prophecy is telling people that there is a path to happiness and grandeur, a path that fills you with joy, which is precisely the path to Jesus. It is the path to be close to Jesus. Prophecy is a gift, it is a charisma and it must be asked of the Holy Spirit: that I may know that word, in the right moment, that I may do that thing in the right moment; that my entire life may be a prophecy. Men and women prophets. This is very important. "Let's do what everyone else does...". No. Prophecy is saying that there is something truer, more beautiful, greater, of greater good to which we are all called.

Then another word is proximity. Men and women consecrated, but not



so as to distance themselves from people and have all the comforts, no, [but rather] to draw close and understand the life of Christians and of non-Christians – the suffering, the problems, the many things that are understood only if a consecrated man and woman is close: in proximity. "But Father, I am a cloistered nun, what should I do?". Think about St Thérèse of the Child Jesus, patron saint of the missions, who with her ardent heart was close, and the letters she received from missionaries made her closer to

the people. Proximity. Becoming consecrated does not mean climbing one, two, three steps in society. It is true, so often we hear parents say: "You know, Father, my daughter is a nun, my son is a brother!". And they say it with pride. And it's true! There is satisfaction for parents to have consecrated children, this is true. But for consecrated people it is not a life status that makes me look at others like this [with detachment]. Consecrated life should lead me to closeness with people; physical, spiritual proximity, to know the people. "Ah yes Father, in my community the superior gave us permission to go out, to go into the poor neighbourhoods with the people..." – "And in your community, are there elderly sisters?" – "Yes, yes... there is a nurse, on the third floor" – "And how often during the day do you go to visit your sisters, the elderly ones, who could be your mother or your grandmother?" – "But you know, Father, I am very busy with work and I can't go...". Closeness! Who is the first neighbour of a consecrated man or woman? The brother or sister of the community. This is your first neighbour. A kind, good, loving closeness, too. I know that in your communities there is never gossip, never, ever... A way of distancing oneself [is] to gossip. Listen carefully: no gossip, the terrorism of gossip. Because those who gossip are terrorists. They are terrorists in their own community, because like a bomb they drop a word against this one or that one, and then they go calmly. Those who do this destroy, like a bomb, and they distance themselves. This, the Apostle Santiago said, was perhaps the most difficult virtue, the most difficult human and spiritual virtue to have, that of bridling the tongue. If it comes to you to say something against a brother or sister, to drop a bomb of gossip, bite your tongue! Hard! No terrorism in the community! "But Father, what if there is something, a defect, something to correct?". You say it to the person: you have an attitude that bothers me, or that isn't good. If this isn't appropriate – because sometimes it isn't prudent –

Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life reviews the Year

Committed on the journey of communion

committed that God will continue to call, even in many new forms. This profound sense of gratitude and hope is extremely important.

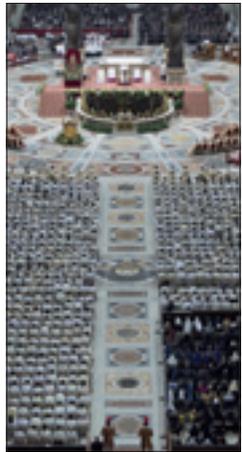
How is the Jubilee challenging consecrated people?

In places where I have been I've seen that the Year of Mercy is being experienced as an appeal to bring our relationship with God back into balance. He is the judge, but he is merciful. This definition expresses the profound identity of God. And we must transform it into consciousness for the individual and the community. The fact that God employs mercy with us means that we too are called to be merciful toward others. In this sense, our relationships with others change a great deal.

How far along is the revision of the document "Mutuae Relationis" on relationships between bishops and religious?

We have consulted and we are working together

with the [men's] Union of Superiors General and the [women's] International Union of Superiors General. It is a very fruitful collaboration. The Pope has defined two central principles to work on: the spirituality of communion and the co-essentiality of the hierarchical and charismatic dimensions. I think we have to look at the relationship between hierarchy and charisms in the sense of communion. In the spirituality of communion, indeed, the relationships complete each other and become true, positive. And this is how relational difficulties are overcome. The second principle is that of bringing back to light the co-essentiality of the hierarchical and charismatic dimensions, because these two dimensions come from the beginnings of the Church. The Holy Spirit who speaks in both dimensions does not contradict himself. This has some practical consequences, such as the need to restore true relationships in truth, in mercy, and in freedom. We must find this maturity for the good of the Church. This means that we need to be much more committed on the journey of communion among all the institutes, and between the institutes and the local Churches.



Prophecy, proximity and hope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

you say it to the person who can remedy, who can resolve the problem and to no one else. Understood? There is no use for gossip. "But in the chapter house?" There, yes! In public, what you feel you have to say; because there is temptation not to say things in the chapter house, and then outside: "Did you see the prioress? Did you see the abbess? Did you see the mother superior?..." Why didn't you say it there in the chapter house?... Is this clear? These are virtues of proximity. The Saints, the consecrated Saints had this. St Thérèse of the Child Jesus never, ever complained about work, about the bother it was to bring that sister to the dining room every evening: from the choir to the dining room. Never! Because that poor nun was very old, almost paralyzed, she had difficulty walking, she was in pain – I understand her too! – she was even a bit neurotic.... Never, ever did she go to another sister to say: "How she bothers me!". What did she do? She helped her sit down, brought her a napkin, broke the bread and did so with a smile. This is called proximity. Closeness! If you drop the bomb of gossip in your community, this is not closeness: this is waging war! This is distancing yourself, this is creating distance, creating anarchy in the community. In this Year of Mercy, if each one of you could manage to never be a gossiping terrorist, it would be a success for the Church, a success of great holiness! Take courage! Proximity

And now hope. I admit that it pains me a great deal when I see the drop in vocations, when I receive bishops and ask them: "How many seminarians do you have?" – "Four, five...". When, in your religious communities – men's and women's – you have a novice or two... and the community ages, it ages.... When there are monasteries, great monasteries, and Cardinal Amigo Vallejo [turning to him] can tell us how many there are in Spain, that are carried on by four or five elderly nuns, until the end.... This leads me to the temptation to lose hope: "Lord, what is happening? Why is the womb of consecrated life becoming so barren?". Several congregations are experimenting with "artificial insemination". What are they doing? They accept.... "Yes, come, come, come...". And then there are internal problems.... No. One must accept with seriousness! One must carefully discern whether this is a true vocation and help it to grow. I believe that in order to fight the temptation to lose hope, which gives us this barrenness, we have to pray more. And pray tirelessly. It does me a lot of good to read the passage of Scripture in which Hannah, Samuel's mother, prayed and asked for a son. She prayed and moved her lips, and prayed.... And the elderly priest, who was a little blind and who didn't see well, thought she was a drunken woman. But that woman's heart [she said to God]: "I want a son!". I ask you: does your heart, facing this drop in vocations, pray with this intensity? "Our congregation needs sons, our congrega-

tion needs daughters...". The Lord, who has been so generous, will not fail in his promise. But we have to ask him for it. We have to knock at the door of his heart. Because there is a danger – this is terrible, but I have to say it – when a religious congregation sees that it has no children and grandchildren and begins to be smaller and smaller, it grows attached to money. And you know that money is the devil's dung. When they cannot receive the grace of having vocations and children, they think that money will save its life; and they think of old age: that this not be lacking, that that is not lacking.... Thus, there is no hope! Hope is only in the Lord! Money will never give it to you. On the contrary: it will bring you down! Understood?

I wanted to tell you this, instead of reading the pages that the Cardinal Prefect will give you later....

I thank you so much for what you do, consecrated people, each with your own charism. And I want to point out the consecrated women, the sisters. What would the Church be without nuns? I have said this before: when you go to hospitals, colleges, parishes, neighbourhoods, missions, men and women who have given their lives.... In my last journey to Africa – I believe I recounted this in an audience – I met an 83-year-old Italian nun. She told me: "I've been here since I was – I don't remember if she told me 23 or 26. I am a hospital nurse". Let's think: from age 26 to 83! "And I wrote to my family in Italy that I would never return". When you go to a cemetery and see that there are so many religious missionaries and so many nuns dead at age 40 because they caught diseases, the fevers of those countries, their lives burnt out.... You say: these are saints. These are seeds! We must tell the Lord to come down to some of these cemeteries and see what our ancestors have done and give us more vocations, because we need them!

I thank you very much for this visit. I thank the Cardinal Prefect, the Monsignor Secretary, the Undersecretaries, for what they have done in this Year of Consecrated Life. But please, do not forget prophecy, obedience, proximity, the most important neighbour, the closest neighbours are the brothers and sisters of the community, and then hope. May the Lord bring forth more sons and daughters in your congregations. And pray for me. Thank you!

The following is a translation of the written address consigned by the Pope.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am glad to meet with you at the end of this Year dedicated to consecrated life.

One day, Jesus, in his infinite mercy, turned to each of us and asked us, personally: "Come, follow me!" (Mk 10:21).

If we are here it is because we responded "yes" to him. At times it is treated as a bond filled with enthusiasm and joy, at times more difficult, perhaps uncertain. However, we have followed him with generosity,

allowing ourselves to be led on paths we would have never even imagined. We have shared intimate moments with him: "Come away by yourselves [...] and rest a while" (Mk 6:31); moments of service and mission: "You give them something to eat" (Lk 9:13); even his cross: "If any man would come after me, let him [...] take up his cross" (Lk 9:23). He has introduced us into his very relationship with the Father, he has given us his spirit, he has expanded our hearts by the measure of his own, teaching us to love the poor and the sinners. We have followed him together, learning from him service, acceptance, forgiveness, fraternal love. Our consecrated life has meaning because dwelling with him and carrying him along the streets of the world, conforms us to him, makes us be the Church, a gift for humanity.

The Year that we are concluding has helped to make the beauty and holiness of consecrated life shine more in the Church, strengthening in consecrated people gratitude for the call and the joy of responding. All consecrated men and women have had the opportunity to have a clearer perception of their own identity, and thus project themselves in to the future with renewed apostolic zeal in order to write new pages of good, in the wake of the Founders' charism. We are grateful to the Lord for what he has given us in order to live in this Year so rich of initiatives. I thank the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, which prepared and brought about the great events here in Rome and in the world.

The Year has ended, but our commitment to be faithful to the call received and to grow in love, in giving, and in creativity continues. For this reason I offer you three words.

The first is *prophecy*. It is a characteristic of yours. What prophecy does the Church and the world expect from you? You are called, first of all, to proclaim, with your life even before than with words, the reality of God: to speak God. If at times he is rejected or marginalized or ignored, we must ask ourselves whether perhaps we have not been transparent enough to his Face, showing our own instead. The Face of God is that of a Father "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 103[102]:8). In order to make him known it is important to have a personal relationship with him; and for this it takes the capacity to adore him, to cultivate friendship with him day after day, through a heart to heart conversation in prayer, especially in silent adoration.

The second word I consign to you is *proximity*. God, through Jesus, made himself close to every man and every woman. He shared the joy of the spouses at Cana in Galilee and the anguish of the widow of Nain; he entered the house of Jairus, touched by death, and in the house



of Bethany perfumed with nard; he took sickness and suffering upon himself, until giving his life as a ransom for all. Following Christ means going there where he has gone; taking upon oneself, as a Good Samaritan, the wounded whom we meet on the street; going in search of the lost sheep. Being, like Jesus, close to the people, sharing with them their joys and their sorrows; showing, with our love, the paternal face of God and the maternal caress of the Church. May no one ever feel distant, detached, closed and therefore barren. Each of you is called to serve our brothers and sisters, following your own charism: some by praying, some through catechesis, some through teaching, some by caring for the sick or the poor, some by announcing the Gospel, some by performing various works of mercy. The important thing is not living for oneself, as Jesus did not live for himself, but for the Father and for us.

Thus we come to the third word: *hope*. In bearing witness to God and his merciful love, with the grace of Christ you can instill hope in this humanity of ours marked by various reasons for anguish and fear and at times tempted to be discouraged. You can make felt the renewing power of the Beatitudes, of honesty, of compassion; the value of goodness, of the simple, essential, meaningful life. You can also nourish hope in the Church. I think, for example, of ecumenical dialogue. The meeting a year ago among consecrated people of various Christian confessions was a beautiful innovation, which deserves to be carried on. The charismatic and prophetic witness of the life of consecrated people, in its various forms, can help to recognize all of us more united and foster full communion.

Dear brothers and sisters, in your daily apostolate, do not let yourselves be conditioned by age or by number. What counts most is the capacity to repeat the initial "yes" to the call of Jesus who continues to make himself heard, in an ever new way, in every season of life. His call and our response keep our hope alive. *Prophecy, proximity, hope*. By living this way, you will have joy in your heart, the distinctive sign of the followers of Jesus and more so of consecrated people. Your life will be more attractive to so many men and women, by the glory of God and through the beauty of the Bride of Christ, the Church.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank the Lord for what you are and do in the Church and in the world. I bless you and I entrust you to Our Mother. Please, do not forget to pray for me.

To mark the occasion of the upcoming Chinese New Year, the Holy Father spoke with journalist Francesco Sisci in an extensive interview for the online daily, *Asia Times* (Hong Kong, see atimes.com). The Pope took the opportunity to express his best wishes to President Xi Jinping, and his high esteem for the Chinese people and their culture, in the hope that the Chinese contribution to dialogue between peoples may contribute to peace and the integral development of the human family.

What is China to you? As a young man, what did you imagine China to be like? What does Matteo Ricci mean to you?

For me, China has always been a reference point of greatness. A great country. But more than a country, a great culture, with an inexhaustible wisdom. For me, as a boy, whenever I read anything about China, it had the capacity to inspire my admiration. I have admiration for China. Later I looked into Matteo Ricci's life and I saw how this man felt the same thing in the exact way I did, admiration, and how he was able to enter into dialogue with this great culture, with this age-old wisdom. He was able to "encounter" it.

When I was young, and China was spoken of, we thought of the Great Wall. The rest was not known in my homeland. But as I looked more and more into the matter, I had an experience of encounter which was very different, in time and manner, to that experienced by Ricci. Yet I came across something I had not expected. Ricci's experience teaches us that it is necessary to enter into dialogue with China, because it has an accumulation of wisdom and history. It is a land blessed with many things. And the Catholic Church, one of whose duties is to respect all civilizations, before this civilization, I would say, has the duty to respect it with a capital "R". The Church has great potential to receive culture.



Matteo Ricci with Xu Guangqi

The other day I had the opportunity to see the paintings of another great Jesuit, Giuseppe Castiglione – who also had the Jesuit virus (*laughs*). Castiglione knew how to express beauty, the experience of openness in dialogue: receiving from others and giving of oneself on a wavelength that is "civilized" of civilizations. When I say "civilized", I do not mean only "educated" civil-



Pope Francis in the daily *Asia Times*

Encounter through dialogue

izations, but also civilizations that encounter one another. Also, I don't know whether it is true but they say that Marco Polo was the one who brought pasta noodles to Italy (*laughs*). So it was the Chinese who invented them. I don't know if this is true. But I say this in passing.

This is the impression I have, great respect. And more than this, when I flew over China for the first time, I was told in the aircraft: "within ten minutes we will enter Chinese airspace, and send your greeting". I confess that I felt very emotional, something that does not usually happen to me. I was moved to be flying over this great richness of culture and wisdom.

China, for the first time in its history, is emerging as a real global player, creating challenges for itself and for the world. You have spoken of a third world war furtively approaching: what challenges does this present in the quest for peace?

Being afraid is never a good counselor. Fear is not a good counselor. If a father and a mother are fearful when they have an adolescent son, they will not know how to deal with him well. In other words, we must not fear challenges of any kind, since everyone, male and female, has within them the capacity to find ways of co-existing, of respect and mutual admiration. And it is obvious that so much culture and so much wisdom, and in addition, so much technical knowledge – we have only to think of age-old medicinal techniques – cannot remain enclosed within a country; they tend to expand, to spread, to communicate. Man tends to communicate, a civilization tends to communicate. It is evident that when communication happens in an aggressive tone to defend oneself, then wars result. But I would not be fearful. It is a great challenge to keep the balance of peace. Here we have

Grandmother Europe, as I said in Strasbourg. It appears that she is no longer Mother Europe. I hope she will be able to reclaim that role again. And she receives from this age-old country an increasingly rich contribution. And so it is necessary to accept the challenge and to run the risk of balancing this exchange for peace. The Western world, the Eastern world and China all have

the capacity to maintain the balance of peace and the strength to do so. We must find the way, always through dialogue; there is no other way. (*He opens his arms as if extending an embrace.*)

Encounter is achieved through dialogue. The true balance of peace is realized through dialogue. Dialogue does not mean that we end up with a compromise, half the pie for you and the other half for me. This is what happened in Yalta and we saw the results. No, dialogue means: look, we have got to this point, I may or may not agree, but let us walk together; this is what it means to build. And the pie stays whole, walking together. The pie belongs to everyone, it is humanity, culture. Carving up the pie, as in Yalta, means dividing humanity and culture into small pieces. And culture and humanity cannot be carved into small pieces. When I speak about this large pie I mean it in a positive sense. Everyone has an influence to bear on the common good of all. (*The Pope smiles and asks: "I don't know if the example of the pie is clear for the Chinese?", I nod: "I think so."*)

Over the last few decades, China has experienced unbelievable tragedy. Since 1980 the Chinese have had to sacrifice that which has always been most dear to them: their children. For the Chinese these are very serious wounds. In this Year of Mercy what message can you offer the Chinese people?

The aging of a population and of humanity is happening in many places. Here in Italy the birth rate is almost below zero, and in Spain too, more or less. The situation in France, with its policy of providing aid to families, is improving. And it is obvious that populations age. They age and they do not have children. In Africa, for example, it was a pleasure to see children in the streets. Here in Rome, if you walk around, you will see very few children. Perhaps behind this there is the fear you are alluding to, the mistaken perception, not that we will simply fall behind, but that we will fall into misery, so therefore, let's not have children.

There are other societies that have opted for the contrary. For example, during my trip to Albania, I was astonished to discover that the average age of the population is approximately 40 years. There exist young

For me, China has always been a reference point of greatness. But more than a country, a great culture, with an inexhaustible wisdom.

countries; I think Bosnia and Herzegovina is the same. Countries that have suffered and opt for youth. Then there is the problem of work. Something that China does not have, because it has the capacity to offer work both in the countryside and in the city. And it is true, the problem for China of not having children must be very painful; because the pyramid is then inverted and a child has to bear the burden of his father, mother, grandfather and grandmother. And this is exhausting, demanding, disorientating. It is not the natural way. I understand that China has opened up possibilities on this front.

How should these challenges be faced by families in China, given that they find themselves in a process of profound change and no longer correspond to the traditional Chinese model of the family?

Taking up the theme, in the Year of Mercy, what message can I give to the Chinese people? The history of a people is always a path. A people at times walks more quickly, at times more slowly, at times it pauses, at times it makes a mistake and goes backwards a little, or takes the wrong path and has to retrace its steps to follow the right path. But when a people moves forward, this does not concern me because it means they are making history. And I believe that the Chinese people are moving forward and this is their greatness. It walks, like all populations, through light and shadow.

Looking at this past – and perhaps the fact of not having children creates a complex – it is healthy to take responsibility for one's own path. Well, we have taken this route, something here did not work at all, so now other possibilities have opened up. Other issues come into play: the selfishness of some of the wealthy sectors who prefer not to have children, and so forth. They have to take responsibility for their own path. And I would go further: do not be bitter, but be at peace with your own path, even if you have made mistakes. I cannot say that my history was bad, that I hate my history. (*The Pope gives me a penetrating look.*)

No, every people must be reconciled with its history as its own path,

To the Italian National Committee for Bioethics the Pope calls for care for the most vulnerable

Civil maturity in ethical questions

Pope Francis addressed members of Italy's National Committee for Bioethics, which was established by the Office of the Prime Minister in 1990. In an audience held in the Consistory Hall on Thursday, 28 January, he invited them to combat the "many expressions" of the throw-away culture, which include "treating human embryos as disposable material, as well as the sick and elderly who are nearing death". The following is a translation of the address, which the Pope delivered in Italian.



Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer my most cordial welcome to each of you, and I thank the Vice President, Prof. Lorenzo D'Avack, for his courteous words of introduction to our meeting.

I am pleased to be able to express the Church's appreciation of the fact that, more than 25 years ago, the National Committee for Bioethics was instituted by the Office of the Prime Minister. Everyone is aware of how sensitive the Church is to ethical issues, but perhaps not everyone knows that the Church lays no claim to any privileged space in this field, but rather, she is pleased when civil consciousness, on various levels, is

able to reflect, discern, and act on the basis of free and open rationality and of the values fundamental to the person and to society. Indeed, precisely this responsible civil maturity is a sign that the sowing of the Gospel – revealed and entrusted to the Church – has borne fruit, being able to promote the search for what is true, good and beautiful in complex human and ethical questions.

Basically, it is about serving man, all of humanity, all men and women, with particular attention and care – as it was recalled – for the weakest and most disadvantaged, who struggle to make their voices heard, or who still cannot, or can no longer

make themselves heard. On this ground the ecclesial and the civil communities meet and are called to cooperate according to their respective distinct competencies.

On many occasions this Committee has raised the question concerning respect for the integrity of the human being and protection of health from conception to natural death, taking the person in his or her uniqueness, always as an end and never simply as a means. This ethical principle is also fundamental with regard to the application of biotechnology in the medical field, which must never be used in a way that is detrimental to human dignity, nor must such technology be guided solely for industrial and commercial ends.

Bioethics came about in order to compare, through a critical study, to the reasons and conditions that the dignity of the human person requires, to developments in the sciences and in biological and medical technologies, which, due to their speed, tend to overlook every reference other than utility and profit.

How arduous it is at times to identify these reasons and in how many different ways one seeks to frame them is evidenced by the very

opinions formulated by the National Committee for Bioethics. Therefore the response to the challenges of seeking the ethical truth can be attributed to all those engaged in it, especially in a context marked by relativism and with little confidence in the capacity of human reason. You are aware that this research on complex bioethical issues is not easy and does not always reach a harmonious conclusion quickly; that it always requires humility and realism, and is not afraid of comparison with the different positions; because in the end the testimony given to the truth contributes to the maturation of the civil conscience.

In particular, I would like to encourage your work in several areas, which I shall briefly mention:

1. An interdisciplinary analysis of the causes of environmental degradation. I hope that the Committee may formulate guidelines in the fields of biological sciences in order to encourage projects of conservation, preservation and care of the environment. In this area it is fitting to make a comparison between biocentric and anthropocentric theories, in search of ways that recognize the correct centrality of man with respect to other living beings and to the environment as a whole, and also to help identify the conditions that are fundamental for the protection of future generations. When I once mentioned the protection of future generations, a somewhat embittered and skeptical scientist replied, saying: "Tell me, Father, will there be any?"

2. The issue of disability and of the marginalization of the most vulnerable people in a society that tends toward competition and the acceleration of progress. The challenge is to oppose the throw-away culture, which is expressed in so many ways today, among which is treating human embryos as disposable material, along with the sick and the elderly who are nearing death.

3. An ever greater effort to promote an international consensus in view of a possible and desirable, albeit complex, harmonization of the standards and rules of biological and medical activities, rules that are able to uphold fundamental rights and values.

Lastly, I wish to express my appreciation to your Committee because it has sought to identify ways to increase public awareness, beginning with schools, regarding bioethical issues, such as explaining biotechnological progress.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for coming and for this moment of reflection and encounter. May the Lord bless each of you and your valuable work. I assure you of my affinity and remembrance in prayer, and I trust that you will also do the same for me. Thank you.

Interview with Asia Times

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

with its successes and its mistakes. And this reconciliation with one's own history brings much maturity, much growth. Here I would use the word mentioned in the question: mercy. It is healthy for a person to have mercy towards himself, not to be sadistic or masochistic. That is wrong. And I would say the same for a people: it is healthy for a population to be merciful towards itself. And this nobility of soul ... I don't know whether or not to use the word forgiveness, I don't know. But to accept that this was my path, to smile, and to keep going. If one gets tired and stops, one can become bitter and corrupt. And so, when one takes responsibility for one's own path, accepting it for what it has been, this allows one's historical and cultural richness to emerge, even in difficult moments.

And how can it be allowed to emerge? Here we return to the first question: in dialogue with today's world. To dialogue does not mean that I surrender, because at times there is the danger, in the dialogue between different countries, of hidden agendas, namely, cultural colonizations. It is necessary to recognize the greatness of the Chinese people, who have always maintained their culture.

And their culture – I am not speaking about ideologies that there may have been in the past – their culture was not imposed.

The country's economy has been grow-

ing at an overwhelming pace but so has human and environmental disasters, which Beijing is trying to resolve. At the same time, sometimes children and parents are separated due to work demands. What message can you give them?

I feel rather like a "mother-in-law" giving advice on what should be done (*laughs*). I would suggest a healthy realism; reality must be accepted from wherever it comes. This is our reality; as in football, the goalkeeper must catch the ball from wherever it comes. Reality must be accepted for what it is. Be realistic. This is our reality. First, I must reconcile with reality. I don't like it, I am against it, it makes me suffer, but if I don't come to terms with it, I won't be able to do anything. The second step is to work to improve reality and to change its direction.

Now, you see that these are simple suggestions, somewhat commonplace. But to be like an ostrich that hides its head in the sand so as not to see reality, nor accept it, is no solution. Well then, let us discuss, let us keep searching, let us continue walking, always on the path, on the move. River water is pure because it flows; still water becomes stagnant. It is necessary to accept reality as it is, without disguising it, without refining it, and to find ways of improving it. Well, here is something that is very important. If this happens to a company which has worked for twenty years and there is a business crisis,

then there are few avenues of creativity to improve it. On the contrary, when it happens in an age-old country, with its age-old history, its age-old wisdom, its age-old creativity, then tension is created between the present problem and this past of ancient richness. And this tension brings fruitfulness as it looks to the future. I believe that the great richness of China today lies in looking to the future from a present that is sustained by the memory of its cultural past. Living in tension, not in anguish. And the tension is between its very rich past and the challenge of the present which has to be carried forth into the future; that is, the story doesn't end here.

On the occasion of the Chinese New Year, would you like to send a greeting to the Chinese people, to the Authorities and to President Xi Jinping?

On the eve of the New Year, I wish to convey my best wishes and greetings to President Xi Jinping and to all the Chinese people. And I wish to express my hope that they never lose their historical awareness of being a great people, with a great history of wisdom, and that they have much to offer to the world. The world looks to this great wisdom of yours. In this New Year, with this awareness, may you continue to go forward in order to help and cooperate with everyone in caring for our common home and our common peoples.

Thank you!

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Thursday, 28 January

Without measure

Witness, as a fundamental element of Christian life, was the focus of Pope Francis' reflection during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday morning. What are the features of witness? The Pontiff drew the answer to this question directly from the day's passage of the Gospel according to Mark (4:21-25), which immediately follows the "parable of the seed". After speaking "of the seed that manages to bear fruit" and of those seeds that after falling "on poor soil cannot bear fruit", Jesus "tells us of the lamp", which is not to be placed under a bushel but in a candlestick. This, the Pope explained, "is light, and the Gospel of John tells us that the mystery of God is light and that the light came into the world, but the darkness did not welcome it". It is a light, he added, that should not be hidden, but that serves "to illuminate".

Here then, is "one of the features of a Christian, who has received the light in Baptism and must give it". A Christian, the Pope said, "is a witness". Indeed, a Christian can't but show the light he bears within. If a Christian "prefers his own darkness to God's light", then "something is missing". Darkness "enters his heart, because he is afraid of the light". A Christian "is a witness", a witness "to Jesus Christ, the light of God. And he must place that light in the candlestick of his life".

The Gospel passage proposed for the day's liturgy also speaks of "measure". It reads: "the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you". This, Francis said, is "the other particularity, the other approach" typical of a Christian. It refers to magnanimity: "another Christian trait is magnanimity, because he is the child of a magnanimous father, with a great spirit".

So too when he says, "give and you shall be given", the measure that Jesus speaks of, the Pope explained, is "full, good, overflowing". Similarly, "the Christian heart is magnanimous. It is open, always". It is not, therefore, "a heart that withdraws into its own selfishness". Nor is it a heart that sets limits, that "counts: up to here, up to there". Francis explained further: "When you enter into this light of Jesus, when you enter into Jesus' friendship, when you let the Holy Spirit guide you, your heart becomes open, magnanimous". At that point a particular dynamic is triggered. A Christian "doesn't gain: he loses". But in reality, the Pontiff concluded, "he loses in order to gain something else, and with this 'defeat' of interests, he gains Jesus". A Christian's gain is in "becoming a witness to Jesus".

Applying his reflection to the here and now, Francis addressed a group of priests who were celebrating the golden jubilee of their ordination: "50 years on the path of light and witness", and "trying to be better, trying to carry the light on the candlestick". As everyone experiences, that light "sometimes falls", but it is

always good to try and put it back in its place, "generously, that is, with a magnanimous heart". The Pope thanked the priests for all they have done "in the Church, for the Church and for Jesus", and he wished them the "great joy of having sown seeds well, of having illuminated well and of having opened their arms to welcome everyone with magnanimity". Lastly he said to them: "Only God and your memory know how many people you have welcomed with magnanimity, with fatherly and brotherly goodness" and "to how many people whose hearts were somewhat dark, you have given light, Jesus' light". Because, Pope Francis concluded, "in people's memory" what always remains is "the seed, the light of witness, and the magnanimity of a welcoming love".

Friday, 29 January

From sin into corruption

May the Church never fall from sin into corruption. Pope Francis prayed for this during Mass on Friday morning in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta.

Referring to the first reading, taken from the Second Book of Samuel (11:1-4, 5-10, 13-17), Francis began saying: "We heard about David's sin, the grave sin of the holy King David. Because David is holy, but a sinner too, he was a sinner". In fact, "there is something that changes in this man's story". It so happens that "at the time of battle, David sent Joab and his servants with him to fight, while David remained in the palace". Normally, "he would be at the front of the army", but this time he did otherwise. The biblical account, the Pope explained, "shows us David somewhat comfortable, somewhat calm, but not in the good sense of the word". Then, "late one afternoon, after siesta, while he was walking upon the roof of the palace, he saw a woman and felt passion, the temptation of lust, and he fell into sin". The woman was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Thus, it amounted to "a sin". And, Francis observed, "God really loved David".

Thereafter, "things got complicated because, after some time, the woman told David that she was with child". Her husband, the Pope recalled, "was fighting for the people of Israel, for the glory of the People of God". Meanwhile, "David betrayed that soldier's loyalty to his country, he betrayed that woman's fidelity to her husband, and he hit bottom".

Then, "when he received the news that the woman was expecting, what did he do?", the Pope asked. "Did he go to pray, to ask forgiveness?" No, he stayed "calm" and said to himself: "I can do it". Thus, he summoned the woman's husband "and made him feel important". The passage reads that David "asked how Joab was doing, and how the people fared, and how the war prospered". In other words, it was "a brush stroke of vanity, to make him feel a little important". Then, to thank him, he gave him "a fine gift"

by telling him to go home to rest. This is how David "tried to cover up the adultery; that child would be the child of Bathsheba's husband".

This man, however, "was a person of noble spirit, he had great love and did not go home. He thought about his companions, he thought of the ark of God under the tent, because they were carrying the ark, and he spent the night with his companions, with his servants, and did not go immediately to his wife". Thus, "they advised David" – because everyone knew the story, gossip was going around – just imagine!

Therefore, "David invited him to eat and drink with him – and here the text is somewhat abridged – 'Why did you not go down to your house?', David asked. And the noble man answered: 'my companions are in tents, the ark of God is in a tent, battling the enemy'; so, he asked: 'how could I allow myself to go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? No! I cannot do this'. And thus, 'David had him come back, invited him once again to eat and drink, and made him drunk'. But again, 'Uriah did not go back to his house, he spent the second night with his companions'".

Troubled, David "wrote a letter, as we heard: 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die'". It was, the Pope said, "a death sentence: this loyal man – loyal to the law, loyal to his people, loyal to his king – was condemned to death".

Francis confided: "in reading this passage, I ask myself: where is David, that brave youth who confronted the Philistine with his sling and five stones and told him: 'The Lord is my strength'?" This, the Pope remarked, "is another David". Indeed, "where is that David who, knowing that Saul wanted to kill him and, twice having the opportunity to kill King Saul, said: 'No, I cannot touch the Lord's anointed one'?"

The reality is, Francis explained, that "this man changed, this man softened". And, he added, "it brings to mind a passage of the prophet Ezekiel (16:15) when God speaks to his people as a groom to his bride, saying: after I gave all of this to you, you besot with your beauty, took advantage with your renown, and played the harlot. You felt secure and you forgot me".

This is precisely "what happened with David at that moment", Francis said. "The great, noble David felt sure of himself, because the kingdom was strong, and thus he sinned: he sinned in lust, he committed adultery, and he also unjustly killed a noble man, in order to cover up his sin".

"This is a moment in the life of David", the Pontiff noted, "that we can apply to our own: it is the passing from sin into corruption". Here "David begins, he takes the first step toward corruption: he obtains power, strength". For this reason "corruption is an easier sin for all of us who have certain power, be it ecclesiastical, religious, economic or political power". And, Pope Francis

said, "the devil makes us feel secure: 'I can do it'". But "the Lord really loved David, so much" that the Lord "sent the prophet Nathan to reflect his soul", and David "repented and cried: 'I have sinned'".

"I would like to stress only this", Francis stated: "there is a moment when the tendency to sin or a moment when our situation is really secure and we seem to be blessed; we have a lot of power, money, I don't know, a lot of things". It can happen even "to us priests: sin stops being sin and becomes corruption. The Lord always forgives. But one of the worst things about corruption is that a corrupt person doesn't need to ask forgiveness, he doesn't feel the need".

The Pope then asked for prayer "for the Church, beginning with us, the Pope, bishops, priests, consecrated people, lay faithful: 'Lord, save us, save us from corruption. Sinners yes, Lord, we all are, but never corrupt! Let us ask the Lord for this grace'", Francis concluded.

Monday, 1 February

There is no humility without humiliation

There can be neither humility nor holiness without walking the path of humiliation. Francis spoke of this truth as he recalled the story of David during Mass at Santa Marta on Monday morning.

"In the First Reading, the story of King David continues", the Pope began, referring to the Second Book of Samuel (15:13-14, 30; 16:5-13). The story, he explained, "began when Samuel went to the house of [David's] father, and David was anointed king", even though he was still a boy. Then "he grew up, he had his problems, but he was always a man respectful of the king who did not like him". In fact the king "knew that he would be his successor". And "in the end David managed to unite the kingdom of Israel: everyone together with him". However, "he was feeling insecure and his zeal for the house of the Lord began to weaken".

"At that moment – we heard the other day – David was one step away from becoming corrupt", Francis continued. Thus "the holy King David, a sinner but a saint, became corrupt". But then "the Prophet Nathan, sent by God" helped him "understand what a bad thing he had done, an evil thing: because a corrupt person doesn't realize it. It takes a special grace to change the heart of a corrupt person". Thus, "David, who still had a noble heart", recognized his sin, "he recognized his fault". What did Nathan say to him? These were his words: "The Lord has forgiven your sin, but the corruption you have sown will grow. You killed an innocent man to hide adultery. The sword shall never depart from your house". Thus, the Pope explained, "God forgives sin, David converts but the wounds of corruption are difficult to heal. We see this in so many parts of the world".

The Holy Father cautions priests against the temptations of duplicity and worldliness

Be proclaimers of Christ

Not preachers of complex doctrine, but proclaimers of the Christ. This is the composite of true priests outlined by the Pope on Monday morning, 25 January, as he spoke to the community of the Pontifical Seminary of Lombardy in Rome. The audience took place in the Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the Pontiff's remarks, which were delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you affectionately and I thank Cardinal Scola for his kind words. I am pleased to meet with you on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of this institution. During the Holy Year of Mercy you are thus also celebrating a Jubilee of thanksgiving to God, the foundational rock of life, because "his faithfulness endures for ever" (cf. Ps 118[117]:2). Do not forget this: God is the Faithful One.

Bl. Paul VI blessed the Seminary of Lombardy on 11 November 1965, in order that this new house would be inhabited at the culmination of the Second Vatican Council, in which the Fathers strongly perceived that "the walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 4). Hence, in your "Roman years", which were not only characterized by study but by genuine priestly

formation, you too are preparing to follow that impulse of the Spirit, so as to be the "future of the Church" according to the heart of God; not according to each person's preferences or to passing fads, but as the proclamation of the Gospel requires. In order to be well prepared, in-depth work is necessary, but above all an inner conversion, which every day ingrains the minister in the first call of Jesus and rekindles him in the personal relationship with Him, as did the Apostle Paul, whose very conversion we recall today.

In this regard I would like to draw your attention toward a model whom you already know well: St Charles Borromeo. Fr De Certeau presented his life as a constant "movement of conversion", tending to reflect on the image of the Pastor: "He identified with this image, nourished it with his life, knowing that the subject becomes real at the cost of blood: *sanguinis ministri*, they were for him the true priests. He thus realized this image by losing himself. He set his entire 'passion' to reproducing it" (*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, XX, 1977, p. 263). Therefore, the great work of the theologians of the time, which culminated in the celebration of the Council of Trent, was implemented by holy Pastors like Borromeo. Dear friends, you are heirs and witnesses to a great history of holiness, which is rooted in your patrons, Bishops

Ambrose and Charles, and in more recent times has seen, even among the students, three Blessed and three Servants of God. This is the goal to aim for!

Often, however, there appears on the path a temptation to reject: that of the "normalcy", of a Pastor for whom a "normal" life is enough. This priest then begins to content himself with the attention he receives, he judges his ministry on the basis of successes and he settles on seeking out what he enjoys, becoming lukewarm and lacking true interest in others. "Normalcy" for us, however, is pastoral holiness, the gift of one's life. If a priest chooses to be merely a normal person, he will be a mediocre priest, or worse.

St Charles wanted pastors to be servants of God and fathers for the people, especially for the poor. But — it is always good for us to remember — only one who makes of his own life a constant dialogue with the Word of God, or better yet with God who speaks to us, can proclaim the word of life. In these years you have been entrusted with the mission to train in this dialogue of life: the knowledge of the various disciplines that you study is not an end in itself, but is *made concrete* in the col-



Carlo Saraceni, "St Charles Borromeo brings communion to a leper" (1618-1619)

loquy of prayer and in the real encounter with people. Formation "in stagnant compartments" is of no use; prayer, culture and pastoral care are the major cornerstones of an unparalleled edifice: they must always be firmly united in order to support one another, well cemented between them, so that today and tomorrow's priests may be *spiritual men* and *merciful pastors*, unified within by the love of the Lord and capable of spreading the joy of the Gospel in the simplicity of life. Today, evangelization seems again to be called to the duty to truly travel the path of simplicity.

Genuine communion with the Lord and with brothers is enough for that simplicity of life which avoids all forms of duplicity and worldliness; simplicity of language: not preachers of complex doctrine, but proclaimers of the Christ who died and rose for us.

Another essential aspect that I would like to emphasize, in order to be a good priest, is the necessity of contact and *closeness with the Bishop*. The features of a diocesan priest is precisely the diocesan nature, and the cornerstone of the diocesan nature is set in frequently relating with the Bishop, in dialogue and discernment with him. A priest without an assiduous relationship with his Bishop slowly becomes isolated from the diocesan body and his fruitfulness diminishes, precisely because he does not engage in dialogue with the Father of the Diocese.

Lastly, I would like to tell you that I am pleased not only with your gainful commitment to your studies, but also for the global dimension of your community: you come from various regions of Italy, Africa, Latin America, Asia and other European countries. I hope that you cultivate the beauty of friendship and the art of establishing relationships, in order to create a priestly fraternity made stronger by its particular diversity. In this way you will make this house ever more welcoming and rich! From now on, when I come to the Basilica of St Mary Major, I will think of this meeting and I will remember you before the Virgin Mother. But I ask you too, please do the same for me! Thank you.

At the Domus Sanctae Marthae

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This is the point in David's story, Francis affirmed, that "we arrive at in today's passage: David's son battles against his father. He wants power: his son is already corrupt". But "what does David do? With the nobility that he had won back after his sin — and also the penance he had done to save the son who had died, the child of adultery — he rejoins his own: 'Let us flee the city lest Absalom — his son — should overtake us, then visit disaster upon us and put the city to the sword', as was customary in those times".

The Pontiff recalled that "God castigates David harshly: 'The sword shall never depart from your house'. But, Francis continued, "he defends the house and flees, he leaves". Is he perhaps "a coward? No, he is a father". And "he allows the ark to return", he does not "use God to defend himself". In other words, David "leaves in order to save his people: this is the path of holiness that David begins to follow, after the moment in which he became corrupt".

The passage, the Pope continued, presents David weeping as he climbs the steep Mount of Olives. "His head was covered", a sign of mourning, and he was walking barefoot. He was doing penance. "And all those who were with him also had their heads covered and they were weeping as they went:

weeping and penance". Scripture also tells us that "some, who did not like him, began to follow and curse him". Among them was Shimei, who called him "murderer", reminding him of "the crime he had committed against Uriah the Hittite in order to cover up his adultery". Abishai, one of the people closest to David, "wanted to defend him" and wanted to take off Shimei's head in order to silence him. But David goes "a step further: 'If he is cursing it is because the Lord has said to him, 'Curse David!'. He then "says to his servants: 'My own son, who came forth from my loins, is seeking my life". He is referring to his son Absalom. This is why he turns again to his servants saying: "Let this Benjaminites curse, for the Lord has told him to".

The question, Francis explained, is that "David can see the signs: it is the moment of his humiliation, it is the moment in which he is paying for his fault". Therefore, he says: "Perhaps the Lord will look upon my affliction and make it up to me with benefits for the curses he is uttering this day". Basically, "he entrusts himself to the Lord's hands: this is David's path, from the moment of corruption to this entrustment to the hands of the Lord. This is holiness. This is humility".

The Pope continued. "I think", he said, "that each one of us,

should someone say something bad about us", would react by saying "No, I didn't do it, this isn't true, no!". In fact, we "immediately try to say that it isn't true". Or else "we do as Shimei did: we say something even worse in response". But humility, Francis stated, "can reach a heart only through humiliation: there is no humility without humiliation". And, he said, "if you are not able to bear some humiliation in your life, you are not humble. That's how it is: I would say it's that mathematical, it's that simple!".

For this reason, the Pope continued, "the only path to humility is humiliation". Therefore, "David's goal, which is holiness, is reached through humiliation". Also, "the goal of holiness that God gives to his children, gives to the Church, comes through the humiliation of his Son who lets himself be cursed, who lets himself be borne on the Cross, unjustly". Francis clarified that "this Son of God who humbles himself, is the path of holiness: with his attitude, David prophesies the humiliation of Jesus".

Before ending his homily Francis asked of "the Lord, for each of us, for all the Church, the grace of humility, but also the grace of understanding that it is impossible to be humble without humiliation".

Foreign clergy welcomed by the French episcopate

A most welcome gift

GIOVANNI ZAVATTA

Today in France more than 10 percent of priests, approximately 1,700 out of almost 16,000, are from foreign countries. The most numerous are African, followed by Vietnamese and Polish. In certain dioceses they comprise more than 40 percent of active priests. Many of these *prêtres venus d'ailleurs*, foreign priests, are *fidei donum*, to whom the French Episcopal Conference has for some time dedicated a specific work group presided by Archbishop Dominique Lebrun of Rouen.

Last year's plenary assembly in Lourdes provided an occasion to highlight the situation, especially to hear from Bishop Bernard-Emmanuel Kasanda Mulenga of Mbujimayi who, from out of a total of 225 priests in the Democratic Re-

public of the Congo, sends about five dozen priests to Europe each year. Twelve from this group are currently in France. They are the missionary face of the Catholic, and therefore universal, Church. "In those who depart there is an enthusiasm of openness to the world, of moral and psychological enrichment", said Bishop Kasanda Mulenga, yet there are also "lacerations" and "disillusions" in finding themselves in a secular world. Bishop Lebrun defines it as "culture shock". There is much work to be done in welcoming priests to the communities in the first year of their sojourn, including courses on the reality they will find. The archbishop is preparing specific recommendations in this regard, in order that a Church poor in vocations, such as that in France (half of whose priests are over age

75), may best benefit from these gifts of faith from Africa.

"Sending priests for a pastoral reason", the Bishop of Mbujimayi stated, "is a normal missionary responsibility for the African Churches toward another Church which has a shortage of priests, like France, since a particular Church becomes barren if she gives nothing to her sister Churches. A Church that isolates herself dies. It would go against her very nature. The crisis of priestly vocations in France creates anxiety. Practicing Christians ask themselves how the People of God will be nourished in the decades to come". In this context, "the *fidei donum* priest is both a temporary and permanent a response to the anguish passing through a large part of the French faithful. Even if a Church that today is affected by a shortage of presbyters should one day have many, she will always have the need for this foreignness which reveals the catholicity of our Church". However, according to Bishop Kasanda Mulenga, in order for this "exchange" to be accomplished in the best way possible, certain conditions are necessary. First and foremost is the quality of the reception, on which the efficacy of the experience of faith and its complete realization depend, taking for granted the authentic missionary spirit of the chosen candidate. "The sending bishop expects that his priest will be well received, that the reception will then allow him to pursue his personal, human and intellectual development; in this way a priest who returns to his diocese will possess the great experience of having lived abroad". However successful integration depends on many factors: the attitude and feelings of those on the receiving end (there is always a certain risk of skepticism, of a superior-



ity complex, of the belief of belonging to a group more sociologically dominant), and also apprehension on the part of the emissary regarding the unknown and the unpredictable. In Lourdes the African bishop proposed that there be an initial period during which a priest of the receiving diocese accompanies the *fidei donum* priest as a guide and tutor, while at the same time, a team of religious periodically informs him on the social and pastoral life of the diocese and parish of destination. He also proposed a second phase in which a genuine formation course would be organized on all subjects related to the state, society, the Church in France, history, the Magisterium and the Liturgy. Before and after "the bishop should meet the priests entrusted to him and clearly define the mission". For some time, however, the national service for the Church's universal mission has dedicated one of its initiatives, Session Welcome, to presbyters and religious who come in pastoral service from abroad, precisely to familiarize them with the reality of France.

There are also those, such as Fr Frédéric Hounkponou, 33, from the Archdiocese of Cotonou, Benin, who chose to visit France last summer and to discover the local Church, particularly that of Dijon. A personal initiative supported by his bishop to come to know new pastoral opportunities. A "visitation" of one Church by another.

For their part the French prelates revealed, during the plenary assembly, both light and dark points. Bishop Michel Pansard of Chartres is delighted to see the foreign priests of his diocese meet every two months. "They have a real capacity to help each other when problems arise", he said. Bishop Michel Dubost of Evry-Corbeil-Essonnes, however, laments of cases of priests without social protection in their countries of origin. He indicated that "some arrive sick and do not report it". He also hopes to find a solution to the issue of the money which many try to send to their families or dioceses. Bishop Nicolas Souchu, Auxiliary of Rennes, admitted that "before the authority, when they are asked how things are going, they always answer 'well', even when we know this is not the case. I am always uneasy because I don't know what to do". There are also situations in which there is no communication with the *prêtre venu d'ailleurs* or with the bishop who sent him, and, in the current wave of migration, there are even cases of priests without papers. Archbishop Lebrun and his working group will provide responses and precise guidelines at the end of the term.

Twenty new priests in Seoul

South Korea a land of vocations

Bearing witness to the wealth of vocations which characterizes the Catholic Church in South Korea, on Friday, 5 February, Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, Archbishop of Seoul, will ordain 20 priests. Given the large number of pilgrims expected to attend, the ceremony is set to take place in a large hall at the capital city's Olympic Park. According to a Fides News Agency report on 27 January, the Archdiocese of Seoul celebrates an ordination mass for an average of 20 to 30 new priests every year. There were 21 in 2013, 36 in 2014, and 25 in 2015.

The rite of ordination will take its theme from Cardinal Yeom's re-

cently-published pastoral letter entitled "Teachings of the Church: the compass of the new evangelization", while the verse reference chosen is "How beautiful is your love".

The wealth of vocations in the local Church is also demonstrated by another event: the day before the priestly ordination, the Cardinal will ordain 30 deacons, including a student of the Missionary Society of St Columban, who will begin their service in the local community church.

Both events will be broadcast by the Pyeonghwa Broadcasting Corporation, the radio and television station owned by the archdiocese.

VATICAN BULLETIN

of Clergy and Religious in Kochuthura.

EASTERN CHURCHES

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Dimitrios Salachas, of the Apostolic Exarchate for Catholics of Byzantine Rite in Greece. It was presented in accord with can. 210 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (2 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Archimandrite Fr Manuel Nin, OSB, as Apostolic Exarch for Catholics of Byzantine Rite in Greece, at the same time, raising him to the dignity of bishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Carcacia. Until now he has been Rector of the Pontifical Greek College in Rome.

Bishop-elect Nin, 59, was born in Spain. He entered the Benedictine Monastery of Monserrat where he

made his solemn monastic profession on 18 October 1980 and was ordained a priest on 18 April 1998. He holds a doctorate in theology with a specialization in Patristics. He has taught at various universities and institutes of higher learning in Rome. In 1999 he was appointed Archimandrite of the Dioceses of Akko, Haifa Nazareth and All Galilee. He has served as: spiritual father and rector of the Pontifical Greek College; first assistant to the Abbot president of the Benedictine Congregation of Subiaco; consultor to the office for liturgical celebrations of the Holy Father; member of the liturgical commission of the Congregation for Eastern Churches.

NECROLOGY

Bishop Emile Destombes, MEP, titular Bishop of Altava, former Apostolic Vicar of the Vicariate of Phnom-Penh, Cambodia, at age 80 (28 Jan.).

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

the regional tribunal of Toronto; episcopal vicar and counselor for spiritual subjects.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Christudas Rajappan as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Trivandrum for Latins, India, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Avitta Bibba. Until now he has been Rector of St Vincent's Seminary in Menamkulam (2 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Rajappan, 44, was born in Adimalathura, India. He holds a doctorate in missiology. He was ordained a priest on 25 November 1998. He has served in parish ministry and as: secretary to the Bishop and chaplain of Jubilee Memorial Hospital and Catholic Hostel; director of the Kerala Catholic Youth Movement in Trivandrum; chaplain to the Catholic Hostel; spiritual director and professor at St Joseph's Pontifical seminary in Alwaye; head of the Board

Video message at the end of the International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu

A school of service

The typhoon brought devastation but also solidarity to the Philippines

With a Mass presided by the Papal envoy, Salesian Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, the 51st International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu, the Philippines, came to a close on Sunday, 31 January. The theme of the conference was "Christ in You, Our Hope of Glory". At the end of the celebration Pope Francis' video message was broadcast. The following is the English text of the Pope's message.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you gathered in Cebu for the 51st International Eucharistic Congress. I thank Cardinal Bo, who is my representative among you, and I offer a special greeting to Cardinal Vidal, Archbishop Palma and the bishops, priests and faithful in Cebu and all the Philippines. I also greet Cardinal Tagle and all the Catholics of the Philippines. I am particularly happy that this Congress has brought together so many people from the vast continent of Asia and from throughout the world.

Just one year ago, I visited the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Yolanda. I was able to witness firsthand the deep faith and resilience of its people. Under the protection of the Santo Niño, the Filipino people received the Gospel of Jesus Christ some 500 years ago. Ever since, they have given the world an example of fidelity and deep devotion to the Lord and his Church. They have also been a people of missionaries, spreading the light of the Gospel in Asia and to the ends of the earth.

The theme of the Eucharistic Congress – *Christ in You, Our Hope of Glory* – is very timely. It reminds us that the risen Jesus is always alive and present in his Church, above all in the Eucharist, the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Christ's presence among us is not only a consolation, but also a promise and a summons. It is a promise that everlasting joy and peace will one day be ours in the fullness of his Kingdom. But it is also a summons to go forth, as missionaries, to bring the message of the Father's tenderness, forgiveness and mercy to every man, woman and child.

How much our world needs this message! When we think of the conflicts, the injustices and the urgent humanitarian crises which mark our time, we realize how important it is for every Christian to be a true missionary disciple, bringing the good news of Christ's redemptive love to a world in such need of reconciliation, justice and peace.

So it is fitting that this Congress has been celebrated in the Year of Mercy, in which the whole Church is invited to concentrate on the heart of the Gospel. We are called to bring the balm of God's merciful love to the whole human family, binding up wounds, bringing hope where despair so often seems to have the upper hand.



Two Filipino nuns in front of a mural near Plaza Independencia in Cebu (ANSA)

As you now prepare to "go forth" at the end of this Eucharistic Congress, there are two gestures of Jesus at the Last Supper which I would ask you to reflect on. Both have to do with the missionary dimension of the Eucharist. They are table fellowship and the washing of feet.

We know how important it was for Jesus to share meals with his disciples, but also, and especially, with sinners and the outcast. Sitting at table, Jesus was able to listen to others, to hear their stories, to appreciate their hopes and aspirations, and to speak to them of the Father's love. At each Eucharist, the table of the Lord's Supper, we should be inspired to follow his example, by

reaching out to others, in a spirit of respect and openness, in order to share with them the gift we ourselves have received.

In Asia, where the Church is committed to respectful dialogue with the followers of other religions, this prophetic witness most often takes place, as we know, through the dialogue of life. Through the testimony of lives transformed by God's love, we best proclaim the Kingdom's promise of reconciliation, justice and unity for the human family. Our example can open hearts to the grace of the Holy Spirit, who leads them to Christ the Saviour.

The other image which the Lord offers us at the Last Supper is the

washing of feet. On the eve of his passion, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as a sign of humble service, of the unconditional love with which he gave his life on the Cross for the salvation of the world. The Eucharist is a school of humble service. It teaches us readiness to be there for others. This too is at the heart of missionary discipleship.

Here I think of the aftermath of the typhoon. It brought immense devastation to the Philippines, yet it also brought in its wake an immense outpouring of solidarity, generosity and goodness. People set about rebuilding not just homes, but lives. The Eucharist speaks to us of that power, which flows from the Cross and constantly brings new life. It changes hearts. It enables us to be caring, to protect the poor and the vulnerable, and to be sensitive to the cry of our brothers and sisters in need. It teaches us to act with integrity and to reject the injustice and corruption which poison the roots of society.

Dear friends, may this Eucharistic Congress strengthen you in your love of Christ present in the Eucharist. May it enable you, as missionary disciples, to bring this great experience of ecclesial communion and missionary outreach to your families, your parishes and communities, and your local Churches. May it be a leaven of reconciliation and peace for the entire world.

Now, at the end of the Congress, I am happy to announce that the next International Eucharistic Congress will take place in 2020 in Budapest, Hungary. I ask all of you to join me in praying for its spiritual fruitfulness and for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all engaged in its preparation. As you return to your homes renewed in faith, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and your families as a pledge of abiding joy and peace in the Lord.

Next congress set for 2020 in Budapest

After a long round of applause at the closing Mass of the International Eucharistic Congress (IEC) in Cebu, the faithful welcomed Pope Francis' announcement that the next congress will be held in Budapest in 2020. After the announcement, several Hungarian flags began to wave and Cardinal Erdő stood up to greet the crowd. As with the Philippines – which had previously hosted the *statio orbis* in 1937 in Manila – this will be the second time that Hungary hosts the event; the last congress was held there in 1938.

Presided by papal envoy Cardinal Bo – who imparted the blessing with the plenary indulgence – the concluding Mass saw the presence of thousands of faithful from the Philippines and other countries around Asia. In his homily, the Cardinal called the congress participants to be "apostles of the smile". Among

those concelebrating were Cardinal Vidal and Cardinal Tagle, Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu, as well as numerous bishops and priests. The day before, Saturday, 30 January, Archbishop Palma read the concluding declaration of the 51st IEC which compared the gathering to when the first disciples met the Risen Christ.

The declaration which is divided into four chapters – "Bread of life", "Bread of the poor", "Bread of dialogue" and "Bread of mission" – was read in French, Spanish, English and Chinese. Also on Saturday Cardinal Vidal presided at a ceremony at which 5,000 Filipino children received their First Communion. "I understand how they are feeling", the Cardinal said, "I was one of those children who received their First Communion at Luneta Park in Manila in 1937".