

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH

*Unicuique suum Non praevalerunt*

Forty-ninth year, number 8 (2435)

Vatican City

Friday, 26 February 2016

At the General Audience Pope Francis cautions against arrogance and oppression

## Power is for service

There are still those who exploit authority to feed corruption, slave labour, human trafficking

*When the dimension of service is lost, "power transforms into arrogance and becomes domination and oppression", and feeds the "underhanded dealings of human beings". Pope Francis reminded the faithful of this risk at the General Audience on Wednesday, 24 February, in St Peter's Square. The following is a translation of his catechesis, which was delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning,

We continue with our catecheses on mercy in Sacred Scripture. Various passages speak of the powerful, of kings, of men "in high places", and also of their arrogance and their abuse of power. Wealth and power are situations that can be good and beneficial to the common good, if placed at the service of the poor and of all, with justice and charity. But when, as too often occurs, they are experienced as a privilege, with selfishness and high-handedness, they are transformed into instruments of corruption and death. This is what happened in the episode of Naboth's vineyard, described in the First Book of Kings, Chapter 21, which we shall pause to consider today.

In this text it is recounted that Ahab, the King of Israel, wanted to buy the vineyard of a man called Naboth, because this vineyard borders the royal palace. The offer appears legitimate, even generous, but



land holdings in Israel were considered as practically inalienable. In fact the Book of Leviticus states: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me (Lev 25:23). The land is sacred, be-

cause it is a gift of the Lord, which as such, must be safeguarded and preserved, as a sign of the divine blessing that passes from generation to generation and guarantees dignity for all. Thus one can understand Naboth's negative reply to the king:

"The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers" (1 Kings 21:3).

King Ahab reacts to this refusal with bitterness and disdain. He feels offended – he is the king, the powerful man – his sovereign authority vitiated, and his desire for ownership frustrated. Seeing him so dejected, his wife Jezebel, a pagan queen who had promoted idolatrous worship and who had had the Lord's prophets killed (cf. 1 Kings 18:4), – she was not bad, she was evil! – decided to intervene. The words she addressed to the king are quite significant. Listen to the wickedness that was behind this woman: "Do you now govern Israel?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

On the Holy Father's return flight from Mexico

## Surprising wealth

On the return flight to Rome on 17 February, at the close of his Apostolic Journey to Mexico, which had begun on the 12th, the Holy Father spoke at length with journalists. Their questions spanned a variety of topics: from clerical abuse of minors, marriage tribunal reforms and John Paul II's relationship with women, the European union and global politics. We have published a translation of the Pope's answers.

PAGES 8-13



Jubilee for the Roman Curia

## Community of service



PAGE 4

*Einstein's gravitational waves*

Triumph in physics

GUY CONSOLMAGNO ON PAGE 6

*The story of Blessed Laura Vicuña*

A merciful daughter

PAGE 15

*The Sunday Angelus*

An experience of transfiguration

PAGE 5

*Gregorian crozier in Canterbury*

A once and future hope

DAVID MOXON ON PAGE 7

*'Remembering God's Mercy'*

Beyond the web of regret

DAWN EDEN ON PAGE 11

# VATICAN BULLETIN

## AUDIENCES

Friday, 19 February

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue with Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, titular Bishop of Luperciana, Secretary

Monday, 22 February

H.E. Mr Egas da Costa Freitas, Ambassador of East Timor, for the presentation of his Letters of Credence

H.E. Mr Rogelio Francisco Emilio Pfrirter, Ambassador of Argentina,

for the presentation of his Letters of Credence

Tuesday, 23 February

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Federal Republic of Germany, Coordinator of the Council for the Economy

## CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Charles Michael Jarrell of Lafayette, USA. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop John Douglas Deshotel as Bishop of Lafayette. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Cova and Auxiliary of Dallas, USA (17 Feb.).

Bishop Deshotel, 64, was born in Basile, USA. He was ordained a priest on 13 May 1978. He was ordained a bishop on 27 April 2010, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Cova and Auxiliary of Dallas.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop José Mário Stroehner of Rio Grande, Brazil. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ricardo Hoepers from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Curitiba, as Bishop of Rio Grande. Until now he has been parish priest of Santo Agostinho Parish in Curitiba (17 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Hoepers, 45, was born in Curitiba, Brazil. He holds a doctorate in moral theology, a specialization in bioethics and a licence in education. He was ordained a priest on 31 January 1999. He has served in parish ministry and as: director of the faculty of philosophy and vice-rector of "Bom Pastor" Philosophy Seminary; diocesan coordinator for the clergy; member of the presbyteral council and of the College of Consultors; assessor for the apostolate to the disabled; professor of moral theology and of bioethics; member of the ethical committee of the Federal University of Paraná and of the Brazilian Society of Moral Theology.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Paul Bemile of Wa, Ghana. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Richard Kuua Baawobr, M. Afr, as Bishop of Wa, Ghana. Until now he has been Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) (17 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Kuua Baawobr, 56, was born in Tom-Zendagangn, Ghana. He holds a licence in Sacred Scripture and a doctorate in biblical theology. He made his religious vows for the Missionaries of Africa on 5 December 1986 and was ordained a priest on 18 July 1987. He has served in parish ministry and as: formator of the missionaries of Africa in Kahangala, Tanzania; head of the Formation House in Toulouse, France; first assistant general of the Missionaries of Africa in Kahangala and the first African superior general; deputy grand chancellor of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Carlos Alberto Breis Pereira, OFM, as Coadjutor Bishop of Juazeiro, Brazil. Until now he has been Provincial Minister of Santo Antonio Province in Recife (17 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Breis Pereira, 50, was born in São Francisco do Sul, Brazil. He made his religious profession on 10 January 1987 for the Order of Friars Minor and was ordained a priest on 20 August 1994. He holds a licence in spiritual theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: master for the profession of temporary vows; provincial secretary for formation and studies; provincial custodian and definitor; moderator for permanent formation; coordinator for formation of the OFM Conference in Brazil.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation Bishop Dieter Bernd Scholz, SJ, of Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Robert Christopher Ndlovu of Harare, Zimbabwe, as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe (17 Feb.).

Archbishop Ndlovu, 60, was born in Tshongokwe, Zimbabwe. He was ordained a priest on 28 August 1983. He was ordained a bishop on 9 May 1999, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Hwange, Zimbabwe. On 10 June 2004 he was raised to dignity of Archbishop of Harare.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Andrea Mugione of Benevento, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Felice Accrocca from the clergy of Latina-Terracina-Sezze-Priverno, Italy, as Archbishop of Benevento. He has served as: parish priest and administrator of Sacred Heart Parish; episcopal vicar for the diocesan pastoral ministry; professor of the medieval Church history at the Pontifical Gregorian University (18 Feb.).

Archbishop-elect Accrocca, 56, was born in Corti, Italy. He holds a degree in literature and a doctorate in Church history. He was ordained a priest on 12 July 1986. He has served in parish ministry and as: moderator of the Curia; diocesan chaplain for Catholic Action; secretary of the diocesan synod; coordinator of the Diocesan Council for the inclusion of the Laity.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Ricardo Langan Baccay as Bishop of

## Presentation of Credentials

### The Ambassador of East Timor



On Monday morning, 22 February, Pope Francis received Mr Egas da Costa Freitas, Ambassador of East Timor, for presentation of Letters by which he is accredited to the Holy See.

H.E. Mr Egas da Costa Freitas, 47, was born in Baucau, East Timor. He holds a degree in philosophy and theology. He has served as an administrator in the liberation movement of East Timor, head of the National Resistance movement for activities of unrest and political propaganda in occupied areas in Indonesia, representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a course on the future heads of missions of the Republic of East Timor in Malaysia (2013). He currently teaches at High School 298 in Vemase and is vice secretary of the Council for Pastoral Care and an active member of the commission for catechesis in the Diocese of Baucau.

### The Ambassador of Argentina

H.E. Rogelio Francisco Emilio Pfrirter, 67, was born in Santa Fe, Argentina. He holds a law degree. He began his diplomatic career in 1974 and has served as: diplomat at the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations in New York; director for nuclear affairs and security at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; undersecretary for foreign policy (1992-1994, 2002); president of the General Assembly of the International Maritime Organization (1995-1997); ambassador in London (1995-2000); permanent representative to the Administrative Council of the Rio de la Plata (2000-2002); director general of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (2002-2010). He is a member of the Argentine Council for International Relations and is professor of international criminal law at Kennedy University and of public policy at the Universidad Austral.



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CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

# Power is for service

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be cheerful. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (1 Kings 21:7). She emphasizes the king's prestige and power, which, in her way of looking at it, are called into question by Naboth's rejection. Instead, it is a power that she considers absolute, and through which the powerful king's every desire becomes an order. The great St Ambrose wrote a little book about this episode. It's called "Naboth". It will be good for us to read it in this Season of Lent. It is really beautiful, very practical.

Jesus, recalling these things, tells us: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave" (Mt 20:25-27). Should a person lose this dimension of service, power can transform into arrogance and become domination and oppression. This is exactly what happened in the episode of Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel, the queen, in an unscrupulous manner, decides to eliminate Naboth and puts her plan into action. She uses false pretences of a perverse legal system: in the king's name, she sends letters to the elders and nobles of the city, ordering that false witnesses publicly accuse Naboth of having cursed God and the king, a crime punishable by death. Thus, with Naboth dead, the king was able to take possession of the vineyard. This is not a story of former times, it is also a story of today, of the powerful who, in order to have more money, exploit the poor, exploit people. It is the story of the trafficking of people, of slave labour, of poor people who work "under the table" and for a minimal wage, thus enriching the powerful. It is the story of corrupt politicians who want more and more! This is why I said that it would be good for us to read St Ambrose's book about Naboth, because this text is relevant to modern day.

That is where the exercise of authority without respect for life, without justice, without mercy leads. And that is where the thirst for power leads: it becomes greed that wants to own everything. A text of the Prophet Isaiah is especially en-



lightening in this regard. In it, the Lord cautions against the avidity of wealthy landowners who want to own more and more houses and lands. The Prophet Isaiah says:

"Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land" (Is 5:8).

The Prophet Isaiah was not a communist! God, however, is greater than the wickedness and of the underhanded dealings of human beings. In his mercy he sends the Prophet Elijah to help Ahab to convert. Now let us turn the page over, and how does the story continue? God sees this crime and also knocks at the heart of Ahab, and the king, his sins placed before him, understands, humbles himself and asks for forgiveness. How beautiful it would be if today's powerful exploiters did the same! The Lord accepts his repentance; however, an innocent man has been killed, and the evil perpetuated leaves painful scars. Indeed, the evil committed leaves its painful vestiges, and the history of mankind bears the wounds. Mercy shows, in this case too, the royal road that must be followed. Mercy can heal wounds and can change history. Open your heart to mercy! Divine mercy is stronger than the sins of men. It is stronger, this is the example of Ahab! We know its power, when we recall the coming of the Innocent Son of God who became man to destroy evil with his forgiveness. Jesus Christ is the true King, but his power is completely

different. His throne is the Cross. He is not a king who kills, but on the contrary, who gives life. His going toward everyone, especially the weakest, vanquishes loneliness and the deadly fate to which sin leads. Jesus Christ, with his closeness and tenderness, leads sinners into the place of grace and pardon. This is the mercy of God.



## Two kisses for two popes

"I want to give you two kisses, one for you and one for Pope Benedict". Ana, a Spanish girl, thus embraced Pope Francis with all the spontaneous affection of the smallest of children, during the Audience on Wednesday, 24 February. The Pontiff accepted the two kisses with great joy. Among the numerous groups present in St Peter's Square were 150 workers from Videocoin, a company in Anagni, Italy which closed, leaving 1,500 people jobless. "We asked him for a strong word of comfort and hope", explained one of the workers, "that could motivate those in power to resolve our complicated situation" and to give them the dignity and opportunity to put bread on the table for their families. During the audience, Francis was also given a symbolic "cheese of forgiveness", a reproduction of an ancient metal *testimonium* from the archives of the Vatican's Apostolic Library. The elderly athlete recounted that he had walked around the world five times "and I know the value of walking together, side by side", something the Pope calls for also in spiritual terms.

### SPECIAL GREETINGS:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's Audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Gabon, Mozambique and the United States of America. With fervid wishes that the present Jubilee Year of Mercy may be for you and your families a time of grace and spiritual renewal, I invoke upon all of you the joy and peace of the Lord Jesus. May God bless you!

I also hope that everyone, in this Holy Year of Mercy, may exercise all forms of power as service for God and for brothers and sisters, with the criteria of love of justice and of service to the common good.

Lastly I greet *young people, the sick and newlyweds*. Lent is a favourable time to intensify spiritual life: may the practise of fasting be of help to you, dear *young people*, in order to acquire greater mastery of yourselves; may prayer be for you, dear *sick people*, the means to entrust your suffering to God and to feel him always nearby; may the works of mercy, lastly, help you, dear *newlyweds*, to live your married life open to the needs of brothers and sisters.



*The Roman Curia, the Governorate and the institutions connected with the Holy See constitute a "community of service" in which "faithfulness and mercy" are combined and where no one should ever feel "overlooked or mistreated". Pope Francis spoke of this to Vatican employees during the Mass celebrated in St Peter's Basilica on Monday morning, 22 February, the Feast of the Chair of the Apostle Peter. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's homily, which he delivered in Italian.*

The liturgical feast of the Chair of St Peter finds us gathered to celebrate the Jubilee of Mercy as the community of service of the Roman Curia, the Governorate and the institutions connected with the Holy See. We have passed through the Holy Door and we have come to the Tomb of the Apostle Peter in order to make our profession of faith. Today the Word of God illuminates our gestures in a special way.

At this moment, the Lord repeats his question to each of us: "who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16:15). A clear and direct question, which one cannot avoid or remain neutral to, nor can one remand it or delegate the response to someone else. In this question there is nothing inquisitorial, but rather, it is full of love! The love of our One Master, who today calls us to renew our faith in him, recognizing him as the Son of God and Lord of our life. The first one called to renew his profession of faith is the Successor of Peter, who carries the responsibility to strengthen his brothers (cf. Lk 22:32).

Let us allow grace to shape our hearts anew in order to believe, and to open our mouths in order to profess the faith and obtain salvation (cf. Rom 10:10). Thus, let us make our own the words of Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16). May our thought and our gaze be fixed on Jesus Christ, the beginning and the end of all actions of the Church. He is the foundation and no one may lay a different one (cf. 1 Cor 3:11). He is the "rock" upon which we must build. St Augustine recalls this with expressive words, when he writes



The Pope celebrates the Jubilee with the Roman Curia

## A community of service

that even if shaken and upset over historical events, the Church "will not fall, because she is founded on the rock, from which Peter's name derives. It is not the rock that draws its name from Peter, but Peter who draws it from the rock; just as it is not the name Christ which derives from Christian, but the name Christian which derives from Christ.... The rock is Christ, upon which foundation Peter too was edified" (In Joh 124, 5; PL 35, 1972).

From this profession of faith derives for each of us the task of corresponding to the call of God. Pastors, first of all, are asked to have as a model God himself, who takes care of his flock. The prophet Ezekiel described God's way of acting: He goes in search of the lost sheep, guides the stray back to the fold and cares for the sick (cf. 34:16). This behaviour is a sign of a love that knows no bounds. It is a

faithful, constant, unconditional devotion, so that his mercy may reach all of the weakest. However, we must not forget that Ezekiel's prophecy originates from the fact that Israel lacked shepherds. Thus it is good for us too, called to be Pastors in the Church, to allow the face of God the Good Shepherd to enlighten us, purify us, transform us and restore us fully renewed to our mission. That even in our work environments, we may feel, cultivate and practice a strong pastoral sense, especially toward the people we meet every day. May no one feel overlooked or mistreated, but may everyone experience, here first of all, the nurturing care of the Good Shepherd.

We are called to be God's coworkers in an undertaking so basic and unique as that of witnessing by our existence to the strength of transforming grace and the renewing

power of the Holy Spirit. Let us allow the Lord to free us from all temptation that separates us from what is essential in our mission, and let us rediscover the beauty of professing faith in the Lord Jesus. Faithfulness to the ministry combines well with the mercy that we want to make felt. In Sacred Scripture, after all, faithfulness and mercy are an inseparable binomial. Where there is one, there the other is also found, and it is precisely in their reciprocity and complementarity that the very presence of the Good Shepherd can be seen. The faithfulness that is asked of us is that of acting according to the heart of Christ. As we heard from the words of the Apostle Peter, we must tend to the flock with a "willing spirit" and become an "example" for all. In this way, "when the chief Shepherd is manifested" you may receive "the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4).

Radio and television entities to join together

## Vatican media reform continues

On Monday, 22 February, it was announced that – beginning on 1 March – Giacomo Ghisani will temporarily serve as legal representative and administrative head of Vatican Radio. The statement, released by the Secretariat for Communications, specifies that Ghisani was appointed by Prefect Msgr Dario Edoardo Viganò, at the recommendation of the Secretariat of State.

Ghisani, the current vice director general of the Secretariat for Communications, is charged with the administration of Vatican Radio beginning on 29 February, the day marking the end of the service of Director General, Jesuit Fr Federico Lombardi, and Administrative Director Alberto Gasbarri.

The statement recalls that Pope Francis established the Secretariat for Communications with a *motu proprio* on 27 June 2015, in order that "all of the realities which, in various ways up to the present have dealt with communications, should be incorporated into a new Dicastery of the Roman Curia". The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the Holy See Press Office, the Vatican Internet Service, Vatican Radio, the Vatican Television Centre, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican Printing Press, the Photo Service,

and the Vatican Publishing House will be part of the consolidation process which is already moving ahead smoothly and resolutely.

The Council of Cardinals, – the note continues – was presented a feasibility study and a timetable indicating the gradual process of unification of these existing realities. However, it was stated that "from the date of publication of the present Motu Proprio, their respective activities shall continue observing however, the indications provided by the Secretariat for Communications".

On 1 January, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and the Press Office merged with regard to both administration and management. Meanwhile, "nothing concerning the competency of the Secretariat of State regarding institutional communication will be modified". According to the approved timeline, the consolidation of Vatican Radio and the Vatican Television Centre, regarding various services and the improvement of human resources has already begun in part. For example, production and distribution of the audio and video of papal ceremonies and other important Vatican events has already been consolidated.



At the Angelus the Holy Father speaks about his visit in Mexico

# An experience of transfiguration

And he asks government officials to suspend capital punishment during the Jubilee

*"The apostolic visit I made to Mexico some days ago was an experience of transfiguration". On Sunday, 21 February, speaking to the many faithful gathered in St Peter's Square for the Angelus prayer, the Holy Father connected the readings of the Sunday Gospel with his recent experience in the Latin American cities. The following is a translation of the Pope's words, which were given in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

The second Sunday of Lent presents us the Gospel of Jesus' Transfiguration.

The apostolic visit that I made to Mexico some days ago was an experience of transfiguration for all of us. How so? Because the Lord has shown us the light of his glory through the body of the Church, of his holy people that live in this land. It is a body so often wounded, a people so often oppressed, scorned, violated in its dignity. Therefore the various encounters we experienced in Mexico were truly full of light: the light of a faith that transfigures faces and illumines our path.

The spiritual "centre of gravity" of my pilgrimage was the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. To remain in silence before the image of the Mother was my principal aim. I thank God that he gave me this opportunity. I contemplated and I allowed myself to be gazed upon by she who carries imprinted in her eyes the gaze of all her children,

to care for the richness of diversity, and at the same time, to manifest the harmony of a common faith, a sincere and robust faith, accompanied by a great force of vitality and humanity. Like my predecessors, I also went to confirm the Mexican people in their faith, and at the same time to be confirmed. My hands are full of this gift so that it goes out as a benefit to the universal Church.

A luminous example of what I am saying was given by families: the Mexican families received me with joy as a messenger of Christ, pastor of the whole Church. At the same time, they presented to me strong and clear testimonies, testimonies of a living faith, a faith that transfigures life, and this to edify all of the Christian families of the world. The same can be said about the youth, the consecrated, the priests, the workers, the imprisoned.

Thus I give thanks to the Lord and to the Virgin of Guadalupe for the gift of this pilgrimage. I also thank the President of Mexico and the other civil authorities for their warm welcome. I deeply thank my brothers in the episcopate and all of the people who collaborated in various ways.

We raise up special praise to the Most Holy Trinity for having wanted on this occasion to bring about in Cuba the encounter between the Pope and the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, our dear brother Kirill. It was an encounter also much desired by my prede-

Without the Death Penalty," sponsored by the Sant'Egidio Community. I hope that this conference might give new strength to efforts to abolish the death penalty. A spreading opposition to the death penalty, even as an instrument of legitimate social defence, has developed in public opinion, and this is a sign of hope. In fact, modern societies have the ability to effectively control crime without definitively taking away a criminal's chance to redeem himself. The issue lies in the context of a perspective on a criminal justice system that is ever more conformed to the dignity of man and God's design for man and for society. And also a criminal justice system open to the hope of reintegration in society. The commandment "thou shall not kill" has absolute value and pertains to the innocent as well as the guilty.

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy is a propitious occasion to promote in the world a growing maturity for ways to respect life and the dignity of each person. Because even a criminal has the inviolable right to life, a gift of God. I appeal to the consciences of leaders, that they come to an international consensus aimed at abolishing the death penalty. And to those among them who are Catholic, may they carry out an act of courage, giving an example that the death penalty not be applied in this Holy Year of Mercy.

All Christians and men and women of good will are called today to work towards abolishing the death penalty, as well as improving prison conditions, in respect of human dig-

nity and of those people deprived of freedom.

Lent is an opportune time to travel a path of conversion that has mercy at its centre. Because of this, I've decided to give to those who are here in the square some "spiritual medicine" called "Misericordia". We did this once before, but this one is better, it is "Misericordia-Plus": a little box that has a rosary ring and a little image of the Merciful Jesus. Volunteers, including the poor, the homeless, refugees and also religious, will now distribute them. Receive this gift as a spiritual aid to spread pardon and fraternity, especially in this Year of Mercy.

I wish all of you a good Sunday, and please don't forget to pray for me. Have a good lunch, and *arrivederci!*



gathering up the sorrows caused by violence, kidnapping, assassinations, the violence against so many poor people, against so many women. Guadalupe is the most visited Marian shrine in the world. From all over the Americas, people go to pray where *la Virgen Morenita* appeared to the Indian, St Juan Diego, which set in motion the evangelization of the continent and its new civilization, a fruit of the encounter between diverse cultures.

This is precisely the inheritance that the Lord has entrusted to Mex-

cessors. This event is also a prophetic light of resurrection, which the world today needs more than ever. May the Holy Mother of God continue to guide us on the path of friendship and unity. Let us pray to the Virgin of Kazan, of whom Patriarch Kirill gave me an icon.

*After praying the Marian prayer with the faithful, Pope Francis said:*

Dear brothers and sisters, tomorrow in Rome begins an international conference entitled "For a World

In a video message to the country's Jesuits

## Dignity for Mexico

"Mexico suffers but Mexico is great; it has very beautiful things, it has an impressive richness, an original story almost unique to Latin America", Pope Francis said in a video message to the Jesuits of the Latin American country. The video was recorded on Sunday, 14 February, at a meeting the Pope had with six Jesuits at the Apostolic Nunciature during the apostolic visit. That evening after the Holy Father returned from the pediatric hospital in Mexico City, he found his confreres who asked him to film the message for members of the Society of Jesus working in the country. Published on Friday, 19 February, on the YouTube channel *Vocaciones Jesuitas México*, Francis addressed a brotherly greeting in Spanish, calling them to continue "to work for dignity, Jesus' dignity which is in every man and woman in Mexico". The Pope also underlined that the country "has a youthful face", therefore dedication is necessary so that this dignity is never "negotiated" on the Cross, in order for "those who crucify to live better". Lastly Francis assured them of his prayers and asked them to carry forward the cause of the blessed martyr Miguel Agustín Pro, whose relics the Holy Father received as a gift. The Jesuit of Guadalupe was killed in 1927 in Mexico City during the anti-Catholic persecution. Executed because of his pastoral work, Pro was beatified by John Paul II on 25 September 1988.

Einstein's gravitational waves confirmed

## A triumph in physics

GUY CONSOLMAGNO\*

On Thursday morning, 11 February, scientists at the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) announced the first observation of gravitational waves. This discovery was a significant confirmation of a prediction first made by Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, which itself was published just over 100 years ago, in November 1915.

Newton's physics had invoked the concept of gravity as a force to explain the motions of the planets around the sun, or of an apple falling on Earth. However, Newton only described how gravity behaved; he never attempted to understand what gravity actually was. When challenged to explain this mysterious force, he famously replied, "I feign no hypotheses".

More than 200 years later, however, Einstein did propose an explanation for gravity in his Theory of General Relativity. Space and time, he suggested, were merely different dimensions of a reality to be called space-time; and gravity, he proposed, was the warping of space-time.

It's hard for us to picture how ordinary three-dimensional space can be "warped". But if you imagine that space were just a flat two-dimensional plane, the presence of a massive object would bend that space just like a heavy weight placed on a sheet of rubber would pull the sheet into a distorted shape. An ant walking across the distorted sheet would wind up walking around and around the weight, as the bend in the rubber would turn its path. In the same way, Einstein proposed, planets orbit a star because the star's mass has bent the space nearby, turning straight-ahead motion into a path around the star.

But if space-time can be warped, is it possible for that warp to act like a ripple traveling away from the source of the distortion? Einstein himself was not sure at first; after proposing just such an effect when

he first described General Relativity, he changed his mind several times, before finally concluding mathematically that such waves were inevitable.

Such waves could occur if something occurred to change the position of a massive object; as it moved, it would cause the space-time around it to also move. In order for such waves to be noticed across the enormous distances of space, however, the moving mass would have to be very massive indeed.

In 1974, a pulsar (a massive star which emits pulses of radio waves at precise intervals) was found in orbit around a massive neutron star; over time, its orbit was seen to decay at a rate that matched calculations for a system emitting energy in the form of gravitational waves. However, the waves themselves were not directly detected.

To see such waves themselves, which would be very small, a pair of identical detectors were constructed at opposite ends of the United States, in Louisiana and Washington. (A similar detector called VIRGO is being developed near Pisa.) They



*The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory*

both have lasers shining down 4-kilometer tunnels and reflecting off high-precision mirrors. The lasers and mirrors are so delicately balanced and insulated from other forms of vibration that any fluctuation in local space-time could be detected as changes in the distance down the tube, a distance that the lasers could measure with extreme precision – as little as one thousandth the diameter of a proton. Each detector has two such tunnels set at right angles to detect such waves coming from any direction.

The first version of the LIGO experiment was set up 10 years ago, but it was only with a recent upgrade that scientists felt they had any hope of actually detecting a

wave. In fact, the detection reported on Thursday was an event that occurred while the new system was still being tested last September. That same event was seen, identically, in both Washington and Louisiana; and the nature of the fluctuations matched exactly what had been predicted for the collision of two black holes, each 30 times more massive than our sun, which converted roughly half their combined mass into a massive burst of energy.

The detection is a triumph of both theoretical and experimental physics. The theorists were able to calculate just what sorts of signals this detector could find, and what would be needed to detect them; the experimentalists were able to devise just the sort of high precision instrument needed to find them.

More than just confirming Einstein's theory, the experiment is also already living up to its designation as an "observatory". By this detection, the LIGO team have not only proved that gravitational waves exist; they have also learned something new about black holes, objects that could never be seen directly because their mass and density prevent light or radio waves from escaping their gravity.

*\*Director of the Vatican Observatory*

Holy See statement

## More research into the Zika virus

"Containing and combatting the spread of the Zika virus and the resulting health emergency is not only a major challenge to governments in Latin America, but also for the entire international community, which stands in solidarity with the affected". Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Bernardito Auza, gave an address at an interactive discussion following the briefing on the Zika virus, convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council on Tuesday, 16 February. The crux of the issue is developing research. "The suggested link between Zika and birth defects", Archbishop Auza stated, "represents an exceedingly grave concern, which merits concerted action by the international community. More research is needed to determine a connection between the virus and microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome".

## Former UN Secretary General dies

Former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Boutros Boutros-Ghali died in Cairo on Tuesday, 16 February. He was 93 years old. The news was announced by the UN Security Council President, Rafael Dario Ramirez Carreño.

A telegram, signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, was sent on behalf of Pope Francis to the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. In the message, the Pope recalled the Egyptian diplomat's generous service to his country and to the international community.

Boutros-Ghali was the 7th Secretary General of the United Na-

tions. During his mandate, from January 1992 to December 1996, he confronted numerous international crises: including the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the massacres in Somalia, and the genocide of more than one million people in Rwanda. The Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova, officially nominated by the Bulgarian government to succeed Ban Ki-moon, called Boutros-Ghali – the first African and first Arab to serve as UN secretary general – "an artisan of peace".

## Seosomun Shrine in Seoul dedicated to the first Christian martyrs

On Tuesday, 16 February, Seoul's Jung district announced a project to re-develop the Seosomun Martyrs' Shrine into a "culture park". Costs for the project are estimated at \$38 million USD. According to AsiaNews, the Shrine – site of the 1985 canonization of the Martyr Saints of South Korea – is part of a park dedicated to the Joseon Dynasty, which ruled the country for nearly eight centuries. Although this guaranteed continuity for the country, it also set fierce Christian persecution into motion.

Seosomun was a theatre for hundreds of capital executions. In the 19th century alone, an estimated 10,000 Catholics were killed when

the Korean state engaged in repression as it faced internal power struggles, attempts of foreign penetration and ideological conflict caused by converts who, as Christians, refused the country's rigid Confucian social structure.

A large number of these victims died in Seosomun. Peter Yi Seung-hun, the first Korean to be baptized, also died here. He is considered to be the founder of the Catholic Church in Korea.

On 16 August 2014, during his visit to South Korea, Pope Francis prayed in front of the Seosomun Shrine before celebrating the beatification mass for Paul Yun Ji-chung and his 123 companions (25 of



whom were beheaded near the shrine).

Ground was broken for the project in a ceremony held on Wednesday, 17 February, in the presence of Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung, Archbishop of Seoul.

Celebrating the first religious congregation for women in Kerala

## That furnace of love for God

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the first religious congregation for women in Kerala. On 13 February 1866 Mother Eliswa Vakayil established the Congregation of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites, which split according to the rites in 1890. Now there are two congregations: the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites of Latin Rite and the Congregation of the Mother of Carmel of Syrian Rite.

Back in the 19th century, women in Kerala did not have the option to enter a religious congregation. Marriage was their only option. As wives, they were relegated to domestic work and confined to the four walls of their home. Eliswa knew the plight of these women as she herself married at a young age. After being widowed, she began praying contemplatively, living in detachment and solitude. She abandoned the comfort of her home and began leading a life of asceticism.

Both her daughter Anna and her sister Thesia took note of her special charisma and they eventually formed a religious community. After an evaluation by and with the permission of the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, the three women received permission from the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites to lay the foundation for the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites.

With the establishment of the first religious congregation for women, Mother Eliswa opened schools, orphanages and boarding houses in for girls in the convent. She often repeated the importance of meditation and said: "To become perfect it is not enough that a sister make only her daily meditation in the community. Many more meditations have to be made individually because meditation is that furnace which burns the fire of God's love and keeps it burning in the soul". She advised her daughters: "Meditate daily for two hours, or if not possible at least one hour".

In commenting on the life of Mother Eliswa, the current Superior General of the Congregation of Teresian Carmelites, Sr Liza, writes: "It was through prayer and penance, the foundress climbed the mountain peaks of Carmel. She pitched her tent on the valley of suffering and climbed up to the height of Calvary. Her life became a clear spring of God's love, which originated out of the strong current of Trinitarian love. Mother Eliswa presents a glorious model of consecrated life to this consumeristic and wounded world, which goes after pomp, luxuries and superficial pleasures. Her life and teachings are remedies to the problems of the modern religious".

Mother Eliswa consecrated her life in prayer for priests and theologians, as well as the People of God. Today all her sisters pray daily for church officials. She was a true follower of St Teresa of Avila. Although her life and spirituality were rooted in Carmel, her compassion and mercy prompted her to serve the church according to the needs of time and place. Like St Thérèse of



Lisieux, she was "proud to be a daughter of the church".

On 18 July 1913, Mother Eliswa died at the age of 82. Buried in Smriti Mandir, Varapuzha, Mother Eliswa's cause for canonization is currently underway. Her congregation has spread to 58 dioceses, including in Germany, Italy, Sudan, Rwanda and the United States. The sisters dedicate themselves to prayer, Christian education, running orphanages and retirement homes, missionary activities, women's empowerment programmes, family apostolate, social work, parish ministries and prison ministry.

Calling Mother Eliswa a "pioneer for all women religious in Kerala" and "the mother of all consecrated women in Kerala", Sr Liza recalls that "the very memory of the Servant of God invites all consecrated women to thank God unceasingly in this Jubilee Year of Mercy and Year for Consecrated Life".

Gregorian crozier head at Anglican meeting

## A once and future hope

DAVID MOXON\*

The ancient Camaldolese Benedictine monastery of San Gregorio al Celio in Rome is the place where St Augustine of Canterbury served as Prior, before being sent to Kent in England to convert the Anglo-Saxons there in 595 AD. St Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 597. The monastery of San Gregorio is also the home of the crozier head venerated as that of St Gregory the Great, the Pope who sent St Augustine on his mission. Thanks to the initiative of Fr Robert McCulloch, Procurator General of the Society of St Columban, with the support of Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi of the Pontifical Council for Culture, I, along with Fr Robert, my associate Fr Marcus Walker, and Mr Steven Townsend of the British Embassy to the Holy See, recently approached Prior George Nelly-anil of San Gregorio with a request that he loan the crozier head to the Archbishop of Canterbury for the global Anglican Primates' meeting at Canterbury this past January.

The monastery has also seen Popes and Anglican Archbishops of Canterbury pray together in recent years and graciously agreed to the loan from its archives, to be generously cared for by the dean of Canterbury Cathedral, the Very Rev'd Dr Robert Willis.

The loan of the crozier head was a sign of the prayerful interest in and sense of solidarity that many members of the Catholic community have for the work of the Anglican Primates' meeting, which was held to deepen the mutual understanding and unity was sought within the Anglican Communion.

We came knowing that the 2016 Primates' meeting would concern the differences among us in regard to our teaching on matters of human sexuality. The unanimous decision of the Primates was to walk together, however painful this is, and despite our differences, as a deep expression of our unity in the body of Christ. We looked at what that meant in practical terms, and addressed what consequences follow for The Episcopal Church in relation to the Anglican Commu-



*The Gregorian crozier head*

nion following its recent change of marriage doctrine (by removing gender specific language).

The recommendations made at the meeting included: the "unanimous desire to walk together". However given the seriousness of these matters the Primates formally acknowledged this distance "by requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies, should not be appointed or elected to an internal standing committee and that while participating in the internal bodies of the Anglican Communion, they will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity".

The Primates also asked that the Archbishop of Canterbury "appoint a Task Group to maintain conversation among ourselves with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognising the extent of our commonality and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ".

All recommendations were adopted by the majority of the Primates present. In fact at the meeting we pledged to develop this process so that it can also be applied when

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

From the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

## An invitation for Sunni Muslims of Al-Azhar University



The Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Bishop-elect Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, along with Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt, Archbishop Bruno Musarò, went to Al-Azhar University, a prestigious Sunnite institution, in Cairo, Egypt on Tuesday, 16 February. The Catholic delegation was received by Dr Abbas Shuman, deputy of Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyib. The cordial meeting discussed the need to resume dialogue between the two institutions, as hoped for by Pope Francis and various people of good will. In the end they agreed on the importance of continuing and intensifying the dialogue for the good of humanity. Bishop-elect Ayuso Guixot delivered a letter from Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran in which the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue expresses his willingness to receive the Grand Imam and to accompany him at an official audience with the Pontiff.

# A surprising wealth

During the return flight to Rome, the Pope speaks to journalists about his trip to Mexico

Pope Francis met with journalists on Wednesday evening, 17 February, during the flight from Ciudad Juárez to Rome at the end of his Apostolic Journey to Mexico. The interview was moderated by Fr Federico Lombardi, SJ, Director of the Holy See Press Office. The following is a translation of the Pope's answers to 12 questions, the first two of which were given in Spanish and the rest in Italian.

*Maria Eugenia Jiménez Calz from the Mexican newspaper 'Milenio' recalled the 'desaparecidos' in her country, in particular, 43 students from Ayotzinapa who are missing. She asked the Holy Father why he had not met with their families and if he would like to send them a message.*

In fact, if you read my messages, there are continual references to those who have been assassinated, to the dead, to the lives taken by all those gangs involved in drug and human trafficking. That is, I spoke about these

problems as a plague of Mexico. There was an attempt to receive some money – and there were many groups, among them even some opposed to one another, infighting. That is why I preferred to see them all at Mass in Juárez or at another, if they preferred, but I was open to this possibility. It was practically impossible to receive all the groups, which, on the other hand, were fighting among themselves. It's a hard situation to understand, especially for me because I am a foreigner. But I believe that Mexico as a society is a victim of all this: of crimes, of missing persons, of people being thrown away. I spoke about it in every address I could, and you can check that. It's a terrible sorrow that I carry, because this nation does not deserve such tragedy.

*Javier Solórzano from Canal 11 in Mexico broached the subject of pedophilia, which is a very sensitive topic in the country. The case of Fr Maciel left terrible marks, most of all for the victims, some of whom continue to feel left unprotected by the Church, while others also persevere in their faith, and some have even gone on to become priests. The journalist asked the Pope if he considered meeting with the victims and then about his thoughts on the practice of simply moving abuser-priests from one parish to another.*

Very well, I will begin with the second. A bishop who moves a priest, who has been proven to be a pedophile, to a new parish is reckless, and the best thing he can do is present his resignation. Is that clear?

Second, going back to Maciel's case. And here allow me to honour a man who fought even when he did not have the power to step in, yet he did: Ratzinger. Cardinal Ratzinger deserves applause. Yes, a round of applause for him. He had all the documentation. When he was prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he took everything in his hands, he conducted investigations and he pushed forward, forward, forward... but he couldn't go any further in the execution. If you remember, 10 days before John Paul II died, Ratzinger told the whole Church, at the *Via Crucis* on Good Friday, that she needed to be purified of "filth". And at the *Missa pro eligendo Pontifice* – he is no fool, he knew he was going to be a candidate – he didn't care to hide his position, he said exactly the same thing. What I mean to say is that he was a brave man who helped so many open this door. Thus, I want to remind you of him, because sometimes we forget all this hidden work that laid the foundation for "taking the lid off the pot".

Third, we are doing quite a lot of work. Speaking with the Cardinal Secretary of State, also with the group of nine Cardinal advisors, after listening to them, I chose to appoint a third adjunct secretary to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who is concerned solely with these cases, because the Congregation cannot manage with everything it has to do, and therefore one who knows how to deal with this. Furthermore, the Court of Appeals was established, presided by Archbishop

Scicluna, which deals with cases of second instance, when there is recourse; cases of the first instance are handled by the "feria quarta" [the fourth day] – as we call it, because it convenes on Wednesdays – of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. When there is recourse, the case goes back to the first instance, and that is not fair. Thus, the second recourse, already having a legal profile, a defense attorney. However it needs to be evaluated – because we are rather behind in handling cases – so that cases can be presented. Another reality that is functioning very well is the Commission for the Protection of Minors. It is not strictly reserved to cases of pedophilia, but to the protection of minors. In that context I met for an entire morning with six of them – two German, two Irish and two English people – men and women, victims of abuse. And I also met with victims in Philadelphia. There too, I spent one morning meeting with victims. In other words, work is being done. But I thank God that the lid is off of this pot, and we must continue to keep it uncovered, and be attentive.

Lastly, I would like to say that this is a monstrosity. A priest is consecrated so as to lead a child to God; were he to "devour" that child in a diabolical sacrifice, he would destroy the child. Then, with regard to Maciel, returning to the institute [Legion of Christ], it was all presented in an intervention, and today the institute, the administration of the institute is a semi-commisariat. That is, the general superior is elected by a council, by the general chapter, however the Pope chooses the vicar. Two general counselors are elected by the general chapter and another two are chosen by the Pope, in such a way that we are helping them to come to terms with the past. Whoever did not understand, ask a Spanish-speaker to explain what I said.

*Philp Pullella from Reuters referred to statements made by Donald Trump, who is campaigning to be the Republican candidate for President of the United States. In an interview, Trump called the Pope a political pawn. He also said that, if elected, he would build a wall 2,500 kilometres long between the United States and Mexico and deport 11 million illegal immigrants. The journalists asked what Pope Francis thought about such statements and whether a Catholic in the U.S. could vote for this kind of person.*

Well, thank God he said that I am a political person, because Aristotle defined the human being as a "political animal"; at least, I am human! And that I am a pawn... well, perhaps, I don't know... I'll leave that to your judgement and that of the people... Then, a person who thinks only of building walls, wherever it may be, and not of building bridges, is not Christian. This is not in the Gospel. What you were asking me, who to vote for or not: I won't interfere. I only say: if a man says these things, he is not Christian. We have to see if he said these things, and thus I will give him the benefit of the doubt.

*Jean-Louis de la Vaisière of 'France Presse' spoke about the Pope's meeting with Russian Patriarch Kirill, about the Joint Declaration and the fact that Greek Catholics in Ukraine feel betrayed. The journalist then asked the Pope whether the Patriarch had invited him to go to Moscow or if he might consider going to Crete for the Pan-Orthodox Council.*

I'll start with the last. I will be present in spirit and through a message. I would like to go to greet them in the Pan-Orthodox Council: they are brothers, but I must be respectful. I know that they would like to invite Catholic observers, and this is a beautiful bridge. I will be there, behind the Catholic observers, praying with my deepest hopes that the Orthodox may go forward, forward, because they are brothers and their bishops are bishops like us. Then, Kirill. My brother. We kissed and embraced each other, and then had an hour-long discussion...

*Fr Lombardi interrupted: "two hours!"...*

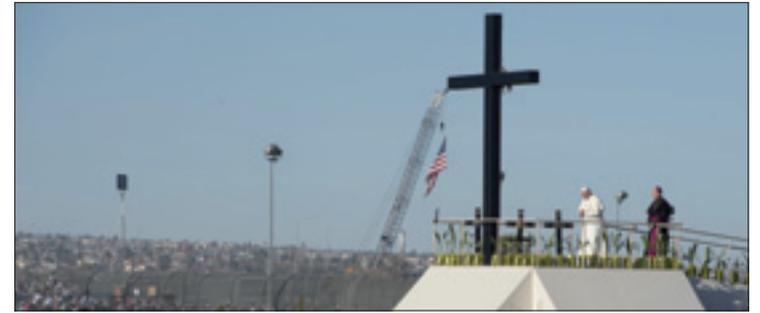
Two hours! For two hours we spoke like brothers, sincerely, and no one knows what we talked about, only what we said at the end, publicly, regarding what we experienced in the discussion. Third: that article, those statements in Ukraine. When I read this, I was a bit concerned, because it was Svyatoslav Shevchuk who said that the Ukrainian people, or some of a few Ukrainians,



or many, feel deeply disappointed and betrayed. First of all, I know Svyatoslav well. In Buenos Aires, we worked together for four years. When he was elected Major Archbishop – at 42, a good man! – he returned to Buenos Aires to collect his things. He came to me and gave me a small icon of Our Lady of Tenderness, and he told me: "This has accompanied me all my life. I want to leave it with you, who have accompanied me these years". It is one of the few things that I brought from Buenos Aires and I keep it on my desk. I respect this man and we are familiar – we speak on a first name basis, so it seemed a bit odd to me. I remember something that I said to you before: in order to understand a story, a statement, you need to find the hermeneutics of the whole. When was this said?

It was in a statement on 14 February, a Sunday, last Sunday. An interview, given by Fr... I don't remember [his name], a Ukrainian priest; [the interview] was given and published in Ukraine. That story – the interview is a little more than two pages, more or less – that account is in the third to last paragraph, so small. I read the interview, and I will say this: Shevchuk is on the side of dogma, he calls himself a son of the Church, in communion with the Bishop of Rome, with the Pope; he speaks of the Pope, of his faith and the faith of the Orthodox people. There is no difficulty on the dogmatic side, it is orthodoxy in the best sense of the word, that is, Catholic doctrine. Then, as in every interview – this one, for example – a person has the right to voice his piece, and this he did not do with regard to the meeting, because regarding the meeting he says: "It is a good thing and we have to move forward". In this second chapter, the personal ideas that a person has...

For example, what I said about bishops who relocate pedophile priests, that they would do better to resign, that is one thing... not a matter of dogma, but it is what I think. Thus, he has his personal ideas that are up for discussion, and he has a right to have them. Everything he says is about the Document: that is the problem. With regard to the fact of the meeting he says:



are deeply disappointed and feel betrayed by Rome". It is understandable that people in that situation feel this way. The Document is debatable on the issue of Ukraine, but it does say to stop the conflict and to move toward agreements; I too, personally, hoped that the Minsk Agreements would move forward, and that the "elbow would not erase what hands had written". The Church of Rome, the Pope, has always said: "Seek peace". I have received both Presidents. And for this reason, when he says that he has heard this from his people, I understand him, I understand him. But it is not "the" story. The story is the whole thing. If you read the whole interview, you see that there are serious dogmatic matters, which remain, and there is a desire for ecumenical unity, to move forward – he is an ecumenical man. There are several opinions. He wrote to me, when he learned of the journey, of the meeting, but as a brother, offering his fraternal opinions. I am not displeased with the Document, as it is; not displeased in the sense that we must respect the things that each one has the freedom to think, in such a difficult situation. And from Rome... Now the Nuncio on the border where they are fighting, helping the soldiers, the wounded; the Church of Rome has sent a lot of help there, a lot of aid there. But again the quest for peace, agreement, that the Minsk Agreement be respected. This is the big picture. But we shouldn't be frightened by that phrase: this is a lesson, that a story has to be interpreted with the hermeneutics of the whole, not of the part.

*The French journalist then asked again if there had been an invitation to Moscow from Patriarch Kirill.*

Patriarch Kirill... I would rather... if I say one thing about it I will have to say another and another and another. What we talked about alone... I would prefer to limit myself to what we said in public. This is a given. Were I to say one thing, I would say another... no! What I said in public, what he said in public, this is what can be said about a private meeting. Otherwise it would not be private. But I can say this about it: I left happy. And so did he.

*Carlo Marroni of 'Sole 24 Ore' referred to discussion in the Italian Parliament of legalizing civil unions, which also regards adoption and children's rights.*

First of all, I do not know what's happening in the Italian Parliament. The Pope does not interfere with Italian politics. In the first meeting that I

had with [Italian] Bishops in May 2013, one of the three things I said: "With the Italian government: sort it out for yourselves". Because the Pope is for everyone, and he cannot engage in the practical, domestic politics of one country. This is not the Pope's role. What I think is what the Church thinks and I have said this on many occasions. This is not the first country to have this experience: there are many. I think what the Church has always said.

*Spanish journalist Paloma García Ovejero of COPE expressed concern over the Zika virus, which seems to be particularly dangerous for the unborn, such that some authorities have suggested abortion. She asked the Pontiff if the Church would consider it as a "lesser evil".*

Abortion is not a "lesser evil". It is a crime. It is wiping out one to save another. That is what the mafia does. It is a crime, it is absolutely evil. Regarding a "lesser evil": preventing pregnancy is one thing – we are speaking in terms of the conflict between the 5th and 6th Commandments. The great Paul VI, in a difficult situation in Africa, allowed nuns to use a form of artificial contraception amid the violence. It is important not to confuse the evil of preventing pregnancy, in itself, with abortion. Abortion is not a theological issue: it is a human issue, it is a medical issue. One person is killed in order to save another – in the best case scenario – or in order to live comfortably. It is against the Hippocratic Oath that physicians take. It is an evil in and of itself. It is not a "religious" evil, to start with, no, it is a human evil. Evidently, as it is a human evil – like all killing – it is condemned. On the other hand, preventing pregnancy is not an absolute evil, and in certain cases, such as the one I mentioned of Bl. Paul VI, it was clear. Moreover, I would exhort the doctors to do everything possible to find vaccines against this disease which is carried by two mosquitos: this has to be elaborated. Thank you.

*The question of German reporter Ludwig Ring-Eisfeld of 'Katholische-Nachrichten-Agentur' (KNA) was motivated by the fact that in a few weeks Francis, like John Paul II before him, will receive the Charlemagne Prize, one of the European community's most prestigious awards. This is a time when European unity seems to be breaking into pieces, first with the crisis of the euro and now with that of refugees.*

First, regarding the Charlemagne Prize. It is my practice not to accept honours or degrees; I have always done

this, not out of humility but because I don't enjoy these things. A little variation from the norm is good sometimes, but I don't enjoy it. In this case, I was – I won't say "forced" but – "convinced" by the holy and theological persistence of Cardinal Kasper, who was chosen by Aachen to convince me! I said: "Yes, but in the Vatican". I said this; and I offer it up for Europe: that it may be a shared commendation, an award so that Europe can do what I wished for in Strasbourg: that it be not "Grandmother Europe" but "Mother Europe". Second, the other day, reading the news about these crises, I read little, I only glance through one newspaper (I won't say the name so as not to incite jealousy, but you know), I skim for about 15 minutes, and then I have the Secretariat of State inform me – one word that I liked, I liked it – I don't know who approves of it and who doesn't – is "the reestablishment of the European Union". I thought of the great Fathers. But today, where is there a Schuman, an Adenauer? These were great men who after the war founded the European Union. And I like this notion of reestablishment: if only it could be done! I wouldn't call it the only one, but Europe has a strength, a culture, a history that must not be wasted, and we have to do everything possible so that the European Union may have the strength and also the inspiration to make us move forward. I don't know. This is what I think.

*Anne Thompson of NBC News asked how a Church that claims to be "merciful" can sooner forgive a murderer than those who divorce and remarry.*

I like this question! Two Synod Assemblies spoke about the family and the Pope spoke about it all year in the Wednesday catechesis. It is a real question, I like it, you formed it well. In the Post-Synodal Document that will be coming out – perhaps before Easter – one of the chapters – because there are many – will summarize all that the Synod said about conflicted or wounded families, and the pastoral care of wounded families. This is one of the concerns. Another is marriage preparation. Consider that in order to become a priest there are eight years of study, of preparation, and then, after a certain amount of time, if you cannot do it, you ask for a dispensation and you leave, and that's okay. Yet, for a Sacrament that lasts your entire life, just three or four meetings... Preparation for marriage is very, very important; I

## A surprising wealth

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

think it is something that the Church, in regular pastoral care – at least in my country, in South America – doesn't appreciate enough. For example – not so much now, but several years ago – in my country there was the tendency to ... it was called a "shotgun wedding": getting married hastily because a baby was on the way, in order to protect the family's honour in society. There, they were not free to decide, and very often these marriages were null. As Bishop, I forbade priests from doing this in these cases. Should a baby come, they ought to continue in their relationship and when they feel ready to make it lifelong, then they should go ahead. But there is a flaw [in the preparation] for marriage. Then, another very interesting point: the upbringing of children. It is the children who are the victims of problems in the family. But these family problems, of which they are the victims, neither the husband nor wife want: for example, the need to work. When dad does not have free time to speak with his kids, when mom does not have free time to speak with her kids. When I hear the confession of a couple, spouses who have children, I ask: "How many children do you have?". Some get scared, they say: "The priest is going to ask me why I don't have more...". And I say: "I'll ask you a second question: do you play with your children?"; and most – almost all – say: "Father, I don't have time: I work all day". The children are victims of a problem in society that wounds the family. It is a problem. I like your question.

A third interesting thing, in the meeting with families in Tuxtla, there was a remarried couple, in their second union, who were integrated in the pastoral care of the Church; and the key word that the Synod used – and I will refer back to it – is to "integrate" wounded families, families with remarried spouses, and all this, into the life of the Church. But do not forget the children at the centre! They are the primary victims, both of the wounds and of the conditions of poverty, of work, of all this.

*Ms Thompson then followed up, asking whether this means that they will be allowed to receive communion.*

This is something... this is where it hits home. Being integrated into the Church does not mean "taking communion". I know remarried Catholics who go to Church once or twice a year: "I want to receive communion!", as if communion were a commendation. It is a matter of integration... the doors are all open. But one cannot just say: from now on "they can take communion". This would also wound the spouses, the couple, because it won't help them on the path to integration. These two were happy! They used a really lovely expression: "We do not take eucharistic communion, but we do find communion by visiting people in the hospital, in this or that service...". Their integration is there. If there is something more, the Lord

will tell them, but ... it is a journey, it is a path....

*Antoine-Marie Izoard of iMedia brought up the interest sparked by the correspondence between John Paul II and American philosopher Anna Tymieniecka. He asked whether a Pope could have such a close relationship with a woman.*

I heard about this, this friendship between St John Paul II and this philosopher, when I was in Buenos Aires: it was a known fact, her books, too, were known, and John Paul II was a restless man. Then, I would say that a man who doesn't know how to have a good friendship with a woman – I am not talking about misogynists, they are sick – is a man who is missing something. I, too, in my personal experience, when I seek advice, I ask a colleague, a friend, a man, but I also like to hear a woman's opinion. They give you such wealth! They look at things in another way. I like



*At the end of the press conference, the Holy Father honoured Alberto Gasbarri, long time organizer of Papal flights, who is retiring as Administrative Director of Vatican Radio*

to say that a woman is one who builds life in the womb, and has – this is a comparison I make – the charism of giving you things that help you build. Friendship with a woman is not a sin, friendship. An amorous relationship with a woman who is not your wife is a sin. The Pope is a man, the Pope also needs to hear the thoughts of women. The Pope, too, has a heart that can have a healthy, holy friendship with a woman. There have been many holy friendships: Francis and Clare, Teresa and John of the Cross.... But women are still rather ... not well thought of, not completely... We have not understood the good that a woman can do in the life of a priest and of the Church, in the sense of advice, of help, of healthy friendship. Thank you.

*Franca Giansoldati of 'Il Messaggero' returned to the political debate in Italy regarding civil unions, mentioning the 2003 document of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, which expressly states that Catholics in Parliament cannot vote for these laws. She asked if this document still applies. She then spoke about another detente visible*

*on the horizon after that with Moscow: namely, the meeting that the Pontiff would like to have with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and thus with Sunni Islam.*

In this regard, Bishop Ayuso went to Cairo last week to meet the Deputy of the Grand Imam, and also to greet the Grand Imam. Bishop Ayuso is the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, presided by Cardinal Tauran. I would like to meet the Imam. I know he would like that too, and we are trying to find a way, again through Cardinal Tauran, because that is the way. We will work it out. Regarding the first topic: I don't remember very well the 2003 document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. But a Catholic in Parliament must vote according to his or her well-formed conscience: this, I would say only this. I think that is enough. I say "well-formed" because the conscience is not "whatever I think". I

They are a people of great faith, having also suffered religious persecution, there are martyrs. Now two or three will be canonized. They are such a people... it cannot be explained. It cannot be explained simply because the word "people" is not a logical category, it is a mystical category. One cannot explain the Mexican people, this wealth, this history, this joy, this capacity to celebrate, and these tragedies that you asked about. I cannot say anything other than that there is a kind of unity, and that this people has not failed, has not ceased despite many wars, and the things that are happening now.... There, in Ciudad Juárez, there was a pact: 12 hours of peace during my visit. Afterwards the fighting would continue, the trafficking.... A people like this whose vitality persists can only be explained by Guadalupe. I invite you to seriously study the event of Guadalupe. Our Lady is there. I find no other explanation. It would be beautiful if you, as journalists.... There are already a few good books that explain, explain the painting as well, what it is like, what it means.... This way one can somewhat understand this people, so great, so beautiful.

*Caroline Pigozzi of 'Paris Match' asked the Pope what he asked of the Virgin of Guadalupe and, on a side note, whether he dreams in Italian or Spanish.*

Yes, I'll say that I dream in Esperanto. I don't know how to answer this, really. Sometimes, yes, I remember some dreams in another language, but dreaming in languages, no, with figures, yes. My psychology is like this. I rarely dream in words. And the first question was?

*Ms Pigozzi answered: about the Madonna.*

I asked for the world, for peace. Many things. The poor thing ended up with [a lot on her mind] her head like this [he extends his arms above his head]. I asked forgiveness, I asked that the Church grow in health, I prayed on behalf of the Mexican people. And another thing I also asked wholeheartedly for was that priests be true priests, and nuns be true nuns, and bishops be true bishops: the way the Lord wants us to be. I asked this wholeheartedly. But other than that, the things a son says to his mother are somewhat secret. Thank you, Caroline.

*At the end, Fr Lombardi wanted to honour Alberto Gasbarri on his last journey. The presentation of gifts was interrupted by a joke from the Pope.*

Just one word: I also repeat what I said at the beginning: thank you very much! You have given me good advice. You have only one flaw: you aren't good at calculating kilometres!

*After the cake, the Pope concluded.*

Have a good trip. Thank you very much for your work, and pray for me. You know that I remain at your disposal. Play with your children!

remember when same-sex marriage was voted on in Buenos Aires, there was a vote, and at the end one said to the other: "Do you see it clearly?" – "No" – "Me neither" – "Let's leave" – "If we go we won't reach a quorum". And the other said: "But if we reach a quorum, we'll give the vote to Kirchner!", and the other: "I would rather give the vote to Kirchner than to Bergoglio!", and so forth. This is not a well-formed conscience! And regarding people of the same sex, I repeat what I said on the return trip from Rio de Janeiro, and what is in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*Javier Martínez Brocal of Rome Reports asked if the Pope will return to Argentina when he returns to Latin America, or if he will go to China.*

China... I would so like to go there! I want to say something, something fair, about the Mexican people. They are a people of wealth, of such a great wealth, they are a people of surprises. They have a culture, a thousand-year-old culture. Do you know that today, in Mexico, including the indigenous, there are 65 languages spoken? Sixty-five!

In bookstores 'Remembering God's Mercy'

## Beyond the web of regret

DAWN EDEN

I wrote this book to share the good news that Jesus Christ heals our memories. There has been a growing recognition in recent years that those of us who suffer the effects of painful memories need more than just psychological help. Therapy can help us cope, but if we are truly to break free from the grip of past pain, we need spiritual help. Only the love of God can untangle the web of regrets and resentments that prevent us from moving forward. Only the Divine Physician can heal our heart.

And heal it he does. The good news of Jesus' power to renew us resonates throughout Sacred Scripture and Christian tradition – if only we know where to look.

Scripture tells us, "God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him" (Jn 4:9) – that we might live in Christ's light, and not in the shadows of past pain. *The Catechism* tells us, "The Word became flesh so that thus we might know God's love" (CCC 458). And Church Fathers such as Gregory of Nazianzus tell us that the Word assumed a human mind so that he might heal every human mind: "That which was not assumed

Why did he refuse? Bl. John Henry Newman offers an intriguing answer. Jesus, Newman says, did not wish to limit his sufferings to the pain of the present moment. In other words, Jesus made a conscious choice to experience the pain of memory.

To explain this point, Newman first observes that, in our own human experience, we can tolerate almost any amount of pain if it lasts but a brief moment and is gone. The pain becomes intolerable only when it continues. That is why patients who are undergoing a medical procedure find themselves wishing they could stop the doctor's hand: they feel "they have borne as much as they can bear; as if the continuance and not the intensity was what made it too much for them".

And so it is, Newman says, that "the memory of the foregoing moments of pain acts upon and (as it were) edges the pain that succeeds". If the third or fourth or 20th moment of pain could be taken by itself, if the succession of the moments that preceded it could be forgotten, it would be no more than the first moment, as bearable as the first (taking away the shock which accompanies the first); but what makes it unbearable is, that it is the 20th; that the first, the second, the third, on to the 19th moment of pain, are all concentrated in the 20th; so that every additional moment of pain has all the force, the ever-increasing force, of all that has preceded it.

Jesus, therefore, refused the drugged wine because, knowing that his sufferings would save us, he was "beat on bearing the pain in all its bitterness".

What I like about Newman's insight is that it does more than help us understand who Jesus was. It helps us understand who he is. We already know from the witness of the Gospel that Jesus, having risen, retains the physical wounds he suffered upon the Cross (Jn 20:20 and 20:27). Newman follows this to its logical implication: Jesus must then also retain his invisible wounds – the memories of each moment of his sufferings.

But how, you may ask, can Jesus retain his memories of pain, given that there are no tears in heaven (Rev 21:4)?

The answer, I believe, is that, just as in the Resurrection Jesus' visible wounds are now transfigured, radiating Grace (see Jn 1:14), so too, his invisible wounds are now glorified. All Jesus' sufferings remain etched in his memory, but his memories of them no longer bring him feelings of pain. In his risen state, when he remembers his passion, he remem-



Manuscript of St Ignatius of Loyola (16th century)

bers only his passion – the over-powering love he bore that led him to shed every last drop of his precious blood for our salvation.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to "have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16)? To be able to look back at your entire life, both the joys and the sufferings, and to see only the love of God? That was my thought when I wrote *My Peace I Give You: Healing Sexual Wounds with the Help of the Saints*. In that book, I sought to help my fellow victims of childhood sexual abuse heal their memories through the lives of saints who, having suffered trauma, found healing in Christ.

The response to *My Peace I Give You* was unlike anything I have experienced as a writer. Every author wants her book to be appreciated by its intended audience, and mine certainly was; readers who were survivors of abuse told me it helped them where other books had not. What was unusual was that, again and again, even as readers thanked me for *My Peace I Give You*, they asked me to give them something more. They wanted me to write a new book – one that would present the same healing spirituality, but in a way that they could share it with loved ones who had not suffered abuse.

It touched me that my readers wanted me to make the message of *My Peace I Give You* accessible to a wider audience, and I hoped to fulfill their desire. There was just one problem: inspiration. If I was to revisit the topic of healing of memories, I would need a fresh angle, a new source of wisdom from which to draw.

I found that source of wisdom in Pope Francis. On March 30, 2013, just 17 days after his election, the Holy Father gave an Easter Vigil homily in which he spoke of how the risen Christ leads us to heal our memories. In an interview later that year, when asked about his manner of prayer, Francis spoke of how the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola which were part of his training as a Jesuit – had helped him develop "a prayer full of memory".

Francis' comments about the *Spiritual Exercises* especially intrigued

me, because he referred to an exercise that I used as the basis of the spirituality of *My Peace I Give You*: the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, which includes St Ignatius' best-known prayer, the *Suscipe*. His observations on that Exercise confirmed my previous intuition regarding the value of Ignatius' teachings for healing of memories, but they also did something more. Together with other insights of Francis concerning healing, they pointed the way to a fresh understanding of what it means to be renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph 4:23).

In the same interview where he discussed the *Spiritual Exercises* Francis spoke about why he admired the early Jesuit Peter Faber, whom he would soon declare a saint. Since you can tell a lot about a man by his friends, including his friends in heaven – I began to read Faber's spiritual diary, the *Memoriale*, to see what it might tell me about Francis' spirituality. That too was a revelation.

I found in Faber a man who had many of the same vulnerabilities as me. He battled anxiety, depression, and temptations to sin. Learning how he conquered those weaknesses helped me to better fight my own spiritual battles.

As I continued to research the wisdom of Pope Francis on the healing of memories, and the Jesuit roots from which it sprang, something happened to me that was completely unexpected. I was expecting inspiration. I was not expecting grace.

But grace is what I experienced. This book that you are now reading, although it began as an effort to answer my readers' desire, ended up answering my own desire for greater intimacy with Christ. Pope Francis and the Jesuits who inspired him took me on a journey that has brought me to a deeper understanding of the mercy of God – the mercy that both forgives and heals.

My hope and prayer is that, as you read this book, you too will find that healing grace – the grace that, as Francis says, enables us "to enter into dialogue with God, to be embraced by his mercy and then to bring that mercy to others."

## The Preface

We are publishing the preface to Dawn Eden's recent book *Remembering God's Mercy* (Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 2016, 141 pages, \$14.95). She was born into a Jewish family in New York in 1968 and eventually converted to Catholicism. She has worked as a social journalist and is the author of several books, including: *My Peace I Give You: Healing Sexual Wounds with the Help of the Saints* (2012) and *The Thrill of the Chaste: Finding Fulfillment While Keeping Your Clothes On* (2015). In her new book, Dawn Eden intends to help her readers on the path to spiritual healing through memories, learning how to share them with others. While searching for inspiration on this issue, the writer was struck by Pope Francis' comments on the *Spiritual Exercises*. She then re-read the teachings of St Ignatius and the spiritual diary of Peter Faber, thus delving more profoundly into the theme of the merciful God who forgives and heals. Printed with the permission of Ave Maria Press, Inc.

is not healed; but that which is united to God is saved".

When Jesus was suffering on the Cross, he was given the opportunity to deaden his consciousness. Mark's Gospel tells us that the soldiers offered him wine drugged with myrrh. "But he did not take it" (Mk 15:23).

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae on 23 February

## Not talk but action

It is of no use calling ourselves Christians, because "God is practical". What is important is not talk but action. The Pope proposed a return to the basics of Christian life, and invited an examination of conscience on the Beatitudes and, in particular, on one's witness in the family. This was the subject of his homily on Tuesday, 23 February, during morning Mass at Santa Marta.

"The Liturgy of the Word today introduces us to the Gospel dialectic between doing and talking", Francis began, referring to the day's reading from the Prophet Isaiah (1:10, 16-20). "The Lord calls his people to act: 'Come now, let us reason together'. Let us reason and 'cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow'. In other words, 'act, do things', he said, because 'God is practical'."

After all, Jesus himself said: "those who call me 'Lord, Lord' will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven", but rather, those "who have done the will of the Father". Thus the Pope recalled that "the Lord teaches us the path of action". And, he added, "how often we find people – ourselves included – so often in the Church" who proclaim: "I am a real



Catholic!". They should be asked, "what do you do?". For example, Francis noted, "how many parents say they are Catholic, but never take the time to speak to their children, to play with their children, to listen to their children?". Perhaps, he continued, "they have their parents in a rest home, but they are always busy and cannot go to visit them, leaving them abandoned there". Yet they repeat: "I am a real Catholic. I belong to that association..."

This attitude, the Pope stated, is typical of this "religion of talk: I say that I am like this, but I do worldly things. Like those clerics that Jesus spoke about". They "liked being

seen, they preferred their vanity, not justice; they liked being called 'master'; they liked to talk, not to do".

This situation is also recalled in the day's Gospel passage, taken from Matthew, Chapter 25 (1-12). "Let's think about those 10 maidens who were happy", the Pope said, "because that evening they were supposed to go and meet the bridegroom. They were happy! But five did what they were supposed to do in order to meet the bridegroom; the other five had their heads in the clouds". Thus, he continued, when "the bridegroom arrived they had no oil: they were foolish".

"To talk and not do is deceit", the Pontiff warned. And "it is deceit that really leads to hypocrisy". It is exactly "as Jesus says to these clerics". But "the Lord goes even further: what does the Lord say to those who draw near to him by doing?". His words are: "Come now, let us reason together! Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool".

Thus, Francis explained, "the Lord's mercy is in doing". Such that to "those who knock at the door and say: 'But Lord, remember that I said...'". he responds: "I do not know you!". Instead, to those "who do", he says: your sins are "like scar-

let, you shall be white as snow". This is how "the Lord's mercy goes to meet those who have the courage to face him, but to face him on the truth, on the things that I do and those I do not do, in order to correct me". And "this is the great love of the Lord, in this dialectic between talk and action".

Therefore, the Pope continued, "being Christian means acting: doing the will of God". And on "the last day – because we will all have one – what will the Lord ask us? Will he ask us: 'What have you said about me?'. No! He will ask about the things we have done". He will ask us about "practical things: 'I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me'". Because "this is Christian life". On the other hand, "talk by itself leads us to vanity, to the pretence of being Christian. No, one is not Christian like this!".

As Easter approaches, "on this Lenten path of conversion", Francis proposed an examination of conscience, suggesting several questions to ask ourselves: "Am I one of those who talk a lot but do nothing, or do I do things? Do I try to do more?". The goal, he said, is "to do the Lord's will so as to do good for my brothers, for those who are close to me".

In conclusion, before returning to the Eucharistic celebration, the Pope prayed that "the Lord grant us this wisdom to properly understand the difference between talk and action, and teach us the path of doing and help us to take that path, because the path of talking leads to the place where these doctors of the law were, the clerics who liked to dress and live as if they were kings". But "this is not the reality of the Gospel!". Thus he prayed that "the Lord teach us this path".

## VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Alaminos, the Philippines. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Gabala and Auxiliary of Tuguegarao, the Philippines (20 Feb.).

Bishop Baccay, 54, was born in Tuguegarao, the Philippines. He was ordained a priest on 10 April 1987. He was ordained a bishop on 10 April 2007, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Gabala and Auxiliary of Tuguegarao.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ángel Antonio Recinos Lemus from the clergy of the Diocese of Jalapa, as Bishop of Zacapa y Santo Cristo de Esquipulas, Guatemala. Until now he has been parish priest of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes Parish in Jutiapa (20 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Recinos Lemus, 52, was born in Azulco, Guatemala. He was ordained a priest on 3 December 1994. He holds a licence in Biblical theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the Minor Seminary of the Diocese of Jalapa; diocesan representative for the apostolate to indigenous people at the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala; member of the Commission for the organization of diocesan assemblies; national representative for the Latin American meetings of *Red de Informatica de la Iglesia en América Latina*; formator and lecturer of Sacred Scripture at the National Major

Seminary of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción; director of the Institute of Theology at the Major Seminary in Guatemala; subcoordinator of the pastoral commission for safeguarding nature.

### START OF MISSION

On 5 February, Archbishop Luciano Suriani, titular Archbishop of Amiterno, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Serbia with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia.

### LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 19 February, in the presence of the Holy Father, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, delivered the first Lenten Sermon in the Vatican's Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

### NECROLOGY

Archbishop Carlos Quintero Arce, Archbishop emeritus of Hermosillo, Mexico, at age 96 (15 Feb.).

Bishop Gregorio Garavito Jiménez, SMM, Bishop emeritus of Villavieja, Colombia, at age 96 (16 Feb.).

Bishop Michael Atul D'Rozario, CSC, Bishop emeritus of Khulna, Bangladesh, at age 90 (24 Feb.).

Mass at the Basilica of St Lawrence Outside-the-Walls

## In memory of Blessed Pius IX

A man of God and of prayer, who loved to be with the people and who dedicated himself to the renewal of religious life. Pius IX was remembered for his role in Church history and in theology at a Mass celebrated on 7 February at the Basilica of St Lawrence Outside-the-Walls, Rome, on the occasion of his liturgical feast. Concelebrating at Mass were Archbishop Giovanni Tonucci, Prelate of Loreto; Archbishop Carlo Liberati, former Prelate of Pompeii and Postulator for the cause of canonization of Mastai Ferretti; Bishop Francesco Manenti of Senigallia; and Fr Ettore Capra, Chaplain of the Institute of Historical Studies of Blessed Pius IX. Also in attendance was a representative of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Archmandrite Symeon Katsinas.



Message to the Brotherhood Campaign in Brazil

## We are all responsible for our common home

*Pope Francis called for "public policies and responsible attitudes that guarantee the integrity and the future of our Common Home" in the customary message for the Brotherhood Campaign in Brazil. The annual Lenten message to Brazil's faithful was published on 11 February. The following is a translation of the message, which was written in Portuguese.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Brazil!

In his great mercy, God never tires of offering us his blessing and his grace, and of inviting us to convert and grow in the faith. In Brazil, since 1963, the Brotherhood Campaign has taken place during Lent. Each year it sets a theme to encourage the community to convert and change its lifestyle. This year, the 2016 Brotherhood Campaign concerns basic sanitary services. Its theme is: "Common home, our responsibility". Its biblical motto is taken from the Prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (cf. Am 5:24).

It is the fourth time that the Brotherhood Campaign is being held in conjunction with Churches that are members of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC). This time it crosses borders: it has combined with *Misereor*, an initiative of German Catholics that has held the Lenten Campaign since 1958. This year's primary goal is to help ensure everyone of the fundamental right to basic sanitary services. It therefore appeals to all people, inviting them to participate in public policies and assume responsible attitudes that guarantee

the integrity and the future of our "Common Home".

We are all responsible for our Common Home, and this includes the leaders and society as a whole. Through this Brotherhood Campaign, people and communities are invited to mobilize, starting with the places where they live. They are called to participate in the initiatives in which Churches and various religious expressions and all people of good will join to promote justice and the right to basic sanitary services. Access to potable water and linkage to the sewer system are necessary in order to overcome social injustice and to eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce the high infant mortality rates and preventable diseases, and for environmental sustainability.

In the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* I recalled that "access to safe drinking water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights" (n. 30) and that the heavy social debt to the poor is paid partly when programmes are implemented to provide clean water and sanitation to the poorest populations (cf. *ibid.*). From the standpoint of integral ecology, I sought to highlight the nexus between environmental degradation and human and social degradation, by cautioning that "the deterioration of the environment and of society particularly affects the most vulnerable people on the planet" (n. 48).

Let us deepen this ecological culture. This must not be limited to partial responses, as if the problems were isolated. "There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an edu-

cational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm" (*Laudato Si'*, n. 111).

Dear brothers and sisters, I continue to say that the rich heritage of Christian spirituality can make an extraordinary contribution to the effort to renew humanity. I invite you, above all during this Lenten Season, promoted by the Ecumenical Brotherhood Campaign, to rediscover how our spirituality is deepened when we overcome the temptation "to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord's wounds at arm's length" and we discover that Jesus wants us to "touch the suffering flesh of others" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 270), dedicating ourselves with "generous care, full of tenderness" (cf. *Laudato Si'*, n. 220) to our brothers and sisters and the whole of creation.

I join with all Christians in Brazil and with those in Germany who are engaged in this Ecumenical Brotherhood Campaign, asking that God may: "Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace" (*Laudato Si'*, n. 246). I take this opportunity to convey my cordial greetings to you all, wishing you every good in Jesus Christ, the One Saviour of mankind and asking you, please, to keep praying for me!

Vatican, 22 January 2016

FRANCISCUS PP.



Kirill in Antarctica

### For peace and creation

"When I blessed the water, I thought about all the land that is below us, and I prayed for God's creation. I prayed for all those who work here and for their country, for their people and for the entire world". These are the final words of Kirill's address which came at the end of his surprise visit at the Russian Bellingshausen Station in Antarctica, where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Trinity, a small wooden church built on the island of Waterloo. It was there that on Wednesday, 17 February, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia presided at the blessing of water and prayed in suffrage for polar explorers.

This is the first time an Orthodox primate has visited Antarctica, and was an unscheduled stop on the Patriarch's visit to Latin America. In addition to meeting Pope Francis in Cuba, Patriarch Kirill also visited Paraguay, Chile and Brazil.

Message to KeepLent

### Don't sound the trumpet

*On 10 February, Ash Wednesday, Francis inaugurated "KeepLent". The initiative was organized by the pastoral care for the youth of the Prelature of Pompeii in order to proclaim the Gospel of Lent on social networks. The following is a translation of the audio message which the Holy Father delivered in Italian.*

Dear Boys and Girls,

Jesus said to his disciples, "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them ... Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you ... Your Father who sees in secret will reward you".

The Word of God guides us in living the Lenten season properly.

When we do something good, at times we are tempted to be appreciated and to seek compensation: human glory. But it is a false compensation because it projects us toward what others think of us.

Jesus asks us to do Good for the sake of the Good. He asks us to be aware that we are always under the gaze of the Heavenly Father and to live in relation to him, not in relation to the judgement of others.

Living in the presence of the Father is a far more profound joy than worldly glory.

Our attitude this Lent must therefore be that of living in secret where the Father sees us, loves us and awaits us. Certainly, even external things are important, but we must always choose and experience them in the presence of God.

Let us do so in prayer, in mortification, and in the fraternal charity that we are humbly able to give before God. We will thus be worthy of the compensation of God the Father.

I wish you a good Lent. May Our Lady of Pompeii accompany you, and please, pray for me.

Metropolitan Hilarion announces a pilgrimage exchange

### Sister Churches



Before the end of the year, Russian Orthodox shrines will open to Catholic pilgrims. Metropolitan Hilarion, President of the Department for External Church Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow, made this announcement in an interview with Interfax-Religion on 19 February. Drawing on the example of Bari, Apulia where a large number of Orthodox pilgrims go to venerate the relic of St Nicholas, Hilarion expressed his interest in intensifying this pilgrimage exchange, which would also be a sign of the furthering of fraternal relations with the Catholic Church. "We can intensify these two flows," he said, "as it is very important for people to meet each other, to have access to shrines of the other Church".

## The annual Collection for the Holy Land

# Wings for the future

*The following is the letter that Cardinal Leonardo Sandri and Archbishop Cyril Vasil', respectively Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, sent out on 10 February to bishops around the world for the annual Collection for the Holy Land. The following is the English text.*

Your Excellency,

Good Friday is the day when evil seemed to triumph, as the Innocent One suffered death on the Cross. It is a day that never seems to end in the Holy Land, where apparently interminable violence must be endured. Broadening our gaze to the whole world, it is no less difficult to give wings to hope for a serene future.

The human heart, restless and troubled, seeks light, life and hope; it wants to walk in brotherhood, together with fellow human beings. Desiring to set out anew, it looks beyond its present condition, longing for a reality that is greater and truer: a salvation already won, yet ever to be striven for.

The Good Friday Collection rekindles in us this sure hope along with a clearer perception of the evil that surrounds us. It turns our gaze to the Holy Land, to the East whence comes our Redemption. There lie our roots; there lies our heart. We are indebted to those who set out from there, carrying the light of

faith to the world. Likewise, we are indebted to those who remained to give witness to that faith, in spite of the conflicts that have always tortured that Land.

Nonetheless, the Christians in the Holy Land care for the places marked by the passage of Jesus himself, allowing us to touch, as it were, the truth of our faith. This Land challenges our charity, as it always has, yet today with a growing urgency. Indeed, every person who lives and works there deserves our prayers and our concrete assistance, so necessary for the continuation of the work of healing wounds and confidently fostering justice and peace.

In this Jubilee year, we are urged more than ever to demonstrate our mercy and solicitude for our brothers in the Middle East. Refugees, displaced persons, the elderly, children, and the sick are all in need of

*"The Holy Land is a place of dialogue, whose inhabitants never cease dreaming of constructing bridges, and in which the Christian community lives to proclaim the Gospel of Peace"*

our help. In this land of the East, people are dying, being kidnapped and even killed. Many live in agony for their loved ones, or suffer when the family is divided on account of forced migration and exodus. They know the darkness and fear of neg-



*A refugee camp in Jordan*

lect, of loneliness, of misunderstanding. It is a time of trials and challenges, even of martyrdom. All this necessarily augments our obligation to help, to respond to emergencies, to reconstruct and to invent new ways of meeting the whole gamut of needs. Such acts of mercy, all necessary and urgent, allow us each day to experience that "if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labour".

We live clinging to the Cross of Good Friday, but sustained by the light of the Resurrection. The Holy Land is a place of dialogue, whose inhabitants never cease dreaming of constructing bridges, and in which the Christian community lives to proclaim the Gospel of Peace. It is a Land of the "ecumenism of blood" and at the same time a place of extraordinary normality.

"We cannot remain indifferent: God is not indifferent! God cares about mankind, God does not abandon us" (Pope Francis). This care is

expressed by our open hands, contributing generously. It can also be shown by making pilgrimages without fear to the places of our salvation, visiting also the schools and centres of assistance, where one can draw near to the local Christians and listen to their stories.

The Collection for the Holy Land reminds us of an "ancient" duty, which the history of recent years has made more urgent, but no less a source of the joy that comes from helping our brothers.

In conclusion, I assure you of the deepest gratitude of the Holy Father Francis and that of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which seeks to accompany our brothers and sisters of the East with attentive care. Kindly extend this heartfelt thanks to all the Christian faithful of your particular Church.

With most cordial and fraternal greetings in our Lord.

## Gregorian crozier head sent to global Anglican Primates' meeting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

any unilateral decisions on matters of doctrine and polity are taken that threaten our unity.

The Primates condemned homophobic prejudice and violence and resolved to work together to offer pastoral care and loving service irrespective of sexual orientation. This conviction arises out of our discipleship of Jesus Christ. They reaffirmed their rejection of criminal sanctions against same-sex attracted people. They also recognised that the Christian church and within it the Anglican Communion have often acted in a way towards people on the basis of their sexual orientation that has caused deep hurt. Where this has happened they express their profound sorrow and affirm again that God's love for every human being is the same, regardless of their sexuality, and that the church should never by its actions give any other impression.

In the wake of the climate change conference in Paris, the meeting heard about a petition of almost two million signatures co-ordinated by the Anglican Environment Network. Reports were made about moves to divest from fossil fuels, the expansion of the African Deserts and the struggle for survival of the peoples

of the Pacific, as island life is threatened in many places by the rise of sea levels.

The meeting discussed the reality of religiously motivated violence and its impact on people and communities throughout the world. The Anglican Primates repudiated any religiously motivated violence and expressed solidarity with all who suffer from this evil in the world today.



*The St Augustine Gospels and the Crozier head*

The Primates also joyfully committed "themselves and the Anglican Church, to proclaim throughout the world the person and work of Jesus Christ, unceasingly and authentically, inviting all to embrace the beauty and joy of the Gospel". They discussed tribalism, ethnicity, nationalism and patronage networks, and the deep evil of corruption. They reflected that these issues become inextricably connected to war and violence, and derive from poverty.

At the meeting a debt of gratitude was expressed to the Community of St Gregory for the loan of the crozier head to sit alongside the St Augustine Gospels.

The ancient link between Rome and Canterbury continues to exist albeit in a very different form. We all pray and long for the day when our shared mission is consolidated and empowered by the unity in ministry that Pope St Gregory and St Augustine enjoyed in the sixth century, which through the Archbishopric of Canterbury, contributed so creatively to the evangelisation of Britain.

Thinking of Popes, Archbishops of Canterbury and crozier heads, at the final liturgy for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, in the Papal Basilica of St Paul's Outside-the-Walls, Archbishop Genadios Zervos, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch and myself the representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, were invited by His Holiness Pope Francis to walk side by side in the procession, and to share in the giving of the Pontifical Blessing. Walking together, talking together, blessing together, we move forward.

*\*The Archbishop of Canterbury's Representative to the Holy See*

The story of Blessed Laura Vicuña

## A merciful daughter

There is a singular type of mercy that can be exercised toward adults only by "the little saints": mercy toward their own parents! Little Laura Vicuña (1891-1904), a saint only 12 years of age, is a special example.

Laura was originally from Santiago, Chile; however, due to political persecution, her family was forced to flee to an area near the border with Argentina. When her father died prematurely, her mother, Mercedes, found herself in a hostile land with no means of supporting herself or her family.

There she met a wealthy landowner named Don Manuel Mora. Known for his violent and quarrelsome temper, he was also a gambler and proud of his horses and women, which he flaunted in front of his friends. They called him *el gaucho malo* ("the bad cowboy"), as he treated his herdsmen and women alike as slaves. Before driving off his last mistress, he first branded her with a red-hot iron used on farm animals as he shouted, "So everyone

will know you are mine!" And now he had his eye on Doña Mercedes who was still young and certainly more elegant than the women he was used to keeping around.

He offered her hospitality in his *estancia* ("residence"), and the poor woman accepted. In part, she wanted to ensure housing and an education for her girls; in part, she was smitten by the adventurer's perverse charm. It was understood that Don Manuel would put the two girls, still very young, in a nearby boarding school run by Salesian sisters, for which he gladly agreed to make the annual payment of 30 pesos. The amount was not a problem for him at all, since he often left that much on gambling tables, plus he wanted to keep the woman.

In school, Laura was good and studious, and she demonstrated that she had "a strong and sweet character." She knew how to be quiet when necessary, to willfully obey, to be accessible and generous to her companions, and to be quick to forgive.

However, as she grew interiorly, she was pained when she came to understand her poor mother's situation. When the nuns spoke to the children about the beauty of Christian marriage, Laura's mind and heart were opened as she realized how her mother had fallen into ruin and lost herself in an attempt to guarantee worldly comforts for her daughters. She suddenly understood where all the material goods came from: the money that supported her education; the many gifts her mother brought her, including the perfumes and bath items Laura enjoyed giving to her friends; and the elegant silk mantillas her mother flaunted when she arrived at the school. The pain was so great that Laura actually fainted in class.

For her first summer vacation, which began in Argentina on 1 January, Laura had to return to the farm. She became even more distressed at the situation as she realized just how foreign that large and wealthy mansion was. Honestly, it frightened her. She realized that prayer was not welcome there when her mother urged the girls not to let Mora see them pray. Don Manuel himself shouted that he "did not want little saints" in his house! She also understood why her mother would no longer pray with her children: she was ashamed at being the mistress of an adventurer.

When Laura was finally able to go back to her poor boarding school — her "paradise" — the nun realized she was suffering from an inner pain that nothing and no one could heal. But she also had a goal that she focused on with all her innocent hope: the Eucharist. And her hope was so intense that the sisters allowed her to move up the day of her first Communion even though she was only 10 years old. They later recounted: "When the little girl received the news that she had so desired, a darkness came over her face and she wept. 'Are you crying, Laura?' the headmistress affectionately asked her... 'Are you not happy?' 'Oh, yes, I am happy,' stammered the little

girl as she wiped away the tears that streamed down her cheeks, 'but I am thinking of my mother. My poor mother!'"

Laura noticed that Doña Mercedes had not been receiving the sacraments for some time. She foresaw the further pain that would occur on that great day when her mother could not receive Communion with her! And when the little girl met Jesus for the first time in the Eucharist, her mother stood apart suffering, with her head held low and a strange intensity in her eyes and heart. From that day on, as a simple, good, and docile student, Laura sought only holiness. She seemed to understand that she would encounter more decisive trials in the future.

At the end of 1901, it was again time for vacation, which, according to custom, had to be spent with the family. For young Laura, this was "the terrible holiday." Doña Mercedes' situation had now become even more difficult: Don Manuel not only had no intention of marrying her, he often mistreated her to remind her that she was just a servant. Yet there were also rumors that he was paying for her daughters' tuition simply to groom a new and younger lover for himself: Laura was growing up and was now beautiful. Even though she was not quite 11 years old, the master did things in a hurry and was impatient. He began to look for any excuse to be alone with the girl.

The time came for the great feast of the shearing of the flocks and the branding of the new animals. Don Manuel expected a dance with Laura, and he counted on her naivety and his skills as a seducer. However, she refused him. And when she did so again several more times throughout the evening, Mora became irritated and demanded that Doña Mercedes oblige her daughter to acquiesce. When he still did not get what he wanted, he ordered Laura's mother to be tied to a post — where he usually attached his mare — and whipped her. Laura's heart was crushed as she saw the extent to which her mother was enslaved.

Then little Laura felt herself violently snatched up and thrown out in the freezing cold of the Andean night. She was forced to spend the night in the dog shelter while her soul was filled with horror. She soon returned to her boarding school impoverished, since the master now refused to pay for her schooling.

At this point, with that compelling mindset that sometimes only children possess and inasmuch as, only God understands, Laura made the decision to literally "give" her life. It took place 1902, a few months after the terrible night just recounted.

Laura listened carefully as the priest read the words of Jesus in the parable of the Good Shepherd at church: "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). Certainly, she did not believe she was the merciful Shepherd, or that her mother belonged to her as her lost sheep. Yet she arrived at the



logical conclusion all the same: she would give her life for her mother.

She ran to her confessor and asked permission to offer her life to the Sacred Heart for her mother. When she received permission, she fell before the tabernacle and made her offering. She lived peacefully heedful of offering Jesus and Mary all the tenderness she had: loving attention to the other children she assisted in order to support herself and humble obedience to the teachers.

It was clear that the little girl had an authentic interior mystical life. During the canonical process, the headmistress of the school recalled Laura's "innocent expressions": "I think God himself will preserve within me the memory of his Divine Presence, because no matter what I do and wherever I am, I feel that he follows me like a Father helping me and comforting me." Neither does the following expression, as reported by her confessor, seem like something a 10-year-old girl would say: "Whether praying or working, for me it is the same thing. It is the same thing to work or play, pray or sleep. By doing what they command me to do, I do what God wants me to do, and this is what I want to do. This is my best prayer."

On 24 May 1903 — the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians — the children were involved in the recreation of a beautiful living painting. Laura read a poem that touched all those present and was then placed very close to the statue of the Madonna. Her mother attended the sacred performance. As Laura descended from the stage, she confided to her teacher: "While my head was resting on the hand of my heavenly Mother, I renewed the offering of my life in an even more fervent way. I did so while watching my poor mother who was in front of me. I will be heard, you will see; my heart tells me so."

On 16 July 1903, during a particularly cold and rainy winter, a terrible flood devastated the entire school, and the girls had to be brought to safety on a makeshift boat. Laura's health had already been declining for a long time, but she came out of that wretched ordeal worse, with chest pain that grew ever stronger. Her condition deteriorated rapidly, but she astonished everyone with her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



### The Saints in Mercy

Our *Sunday Visitor* has published a series of eight books for the Jubilee of Mercy. Promulgated by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the volumes are the official catechetical resources for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which began on 8 December 2015 and runs until 20 November 2016. Pope Francis will be speaking on these themes in his weekly catechesis throughout the year. The themes of the books — which all centre on mercy and are subtitled: "Pastoral Resources for Living the Jubilee Year" — cover the Psalms, the saints, the parables, the Fathers of the Church, the teachings of the Popes, the Sacrament of Confession and the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Published here is the story of the life of Blessed Laura Vicuña which was taken from the book *The Saints in Mercy*. Biographical information was taken from the book: *Miela Fagiolo. Laurita delle Ande* (Milan: Paoline Editoriale Libri, 2004).

The link between commitment and mercy at the centre of the second Jubilee Audience

## Bring God's love to others

*Christians are called to show God's tenderness "to forsaken people, to those who have severe disabilities, to those most seriously ill, to the dying, to those who are unable to express gratitude". This was emphasized by Pope Francis at the second Jubilee Audience in St Peter's Square on Saturday, 20 February, speaking about the link between commitment and mercy. The following is a translation of his catechesis, which was delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

The Jubilee of Mercy is a true opportunity to enter deeply into the mystery of the goodness and love of God. In this Season of Lent, the Church invites us to learn to know the Lord Jesus ever better, and to live the faith in a consistent way with a lifestyle that expresses the mercy of the Father. It is a commitment that we are called to take on in order to offer to those we meet the concrete sign of God's closeness. My life, my attitude, the way of going through life, must really be a concrete sign of the fact that God is close to us. Small gestures of love, of tenderness, of care, that make

people feel that the Lord is with us, is close to us. This is how the door of mercy opens.

Today I would like to pause briefly to reflect with you on the theme of this expression I used: the theme of commitment. What is a commitment? What does it mean to be committed? When I commit myself, it means that I assume a responsibility, a task, for someone; it also means the way, the attitude of faithfulness and dedication, the particular care with which I carry out this task. Each day we are asked to put our heart and soul into what we do: prayer, work, study, but also in sport and recreation.... Committing ourselves, in other words, means making every effort to do our best in order to improve life.

God too has committed himself to us. His first commitment was that of creating the world, and despite our attempts to ruin it – and there are many – He is committed to keeping it alive. But his greatest commitment was that of giving us Jesus. This is God's great commitment! Yes, Jesus is really the supreme commitment that God has assumed for us. St Paul also recalled this when he wrote that God "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" (Rom 8:32). Accordingly, together with Jesus, the Father will give us everything that we need.

How is God's commitment to us made manifest? It is very easy to verify it in the Gospel. In Jesus, God completely committed himself in order to restore hope to the poor, to those who were deprived of dignity, to strangers, to the sick, to captives, and to sinners, whom he welcomed with kindness. In all this, Jesus was the living expression of the Father's mercy. I would like to touch upon this: Jesus welcomed sinners with kindness. If we think in a human way, a sinner would be an enemy of Jesus, an enemy of God, but he approached them with kindness, he loved them and changed their



hearts. We are all sinners: everyone! We all have some fault before God, but we must not harbour doubt. He approaches us in order to give us comfort, mercy, forgiveness. This is God's commitment and this is why he sent Jesus: to draw close to us, to all of us, and to open the door of his love, of his heart, of his mercy. This is really beautiful. Very beautiful!

Starting with the merciful love through which Jesus expressed God's commitment, we too can and must reciprocate his love with our commitment, and do so above all in serious situations of need, where there is a greater thirst for hope. I think, for example, of our commitment to forsaken people, to those who have severe disabilities, to the most seriously ill, to the dying, to those who are unable to express gratitude.... In all these situations we convey God's mercy through life-giving commitment, which witnesses to our faith in Christ. We must always bring God's tender caress – because God has caressed us with his mercy – bringing it to others, to those who are in need, to those who have anguish in their hearts or are sad: approach them with God's caress, which is the same that he gave to us.

May this Jubilee Year help our mind and our heart to experience God's commitment to each one of us and, thanks to this, to transform life into a commitment of mercy for all.

### SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's Audience, especially those from Scotland, Norway and Latvia. With fervent wishes that the current Jubilee of Mercy may be for you and for your families a time of grace and spiritual renewal. I invoke upon all of you the joy and peace of the Lord Jesus. May God bless you!

I address a special thought to *young people, to the sick and to newly-weds*. Monday, 22 February, will be the Feast of the Chair of the Apostle Peter, a special day of communion of believers with the Successor of St Peter and with the Holy See. This event, in this Holy Year, will be a Jubilee Day for the Roman Curia, which works daily at the service of the Christian people. I exhort you to continue to pray for my universal Ministry and I thank you for your commitment to the daily building up of the ecclesial community.



## The story of Blessed Laura Vicuña

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

serenity. When people asked her how she felt, she invariably replied, a little better, thank you!" But her favorite ejaculatory prayer was always the same: "Virgin of Carmel, take me to heaven." It seemed she was looking forward to the fulfillment of a promise.

Given the worrisome state of her health, she had to be brought back to the farm where Don Manuel Mora greeted her coldly and with sarcasm. After a few months, Laura's health worsened so much that Doña Mercedes decided to take her away from that wretched place. She rented a poor hut made of straw and mud consisting of just two rooms. However, it was only a short distance from her beloved school, so Laura could resume going to class, though sporadically, and finish the year and reconnect with her dear

friends. Mora initially allowed her to do so. But in January 1904, as the summer holidays began, a storm was brewing.

Don Manuel Mora was furious when he showed up at the miserable hovel to drag "his women" away with the pretense of spending the night there. Laura got up from her bed feverishly and shivering in her night camisole: "If he stays, I'm going back to the boarding school," she said intrepidly, and she began to walk off with difficulty. Then the "gentleman" exploded in contempt, as he pounced on the poor defenseless girl, dragged her by the hair and laid into her with insults and violent blows. Only the intervention of the local people managed to free her from his clutches. For Laura, this was the coup de grâce, and everyone sensed that the end was now just a matter of days.

On 22 January, she received extreme unction. Then she asked to speak secretly with her confessor for the last time. She needed to request one final special permission. And while she was in the presence of the priest, the little girl decided to reveal her painful secret to her mother: "Mother," she said, "I am dying. I personally asked Jesus for this.... For almost two years, I have offered my life for you, for your conversion, so that you might return to him. Will you not give me the joy of seeing you repent before I die?" Meanwhile, her mother was weeping as she knelt at her child's bedside. The revelation struck her at the core of her soul, even if she had already suspected Laura's secret for some time. She was only able to tell her daughter: "I swear to you that I will do what you ask of me.... I am repentant, and God is the witness of my promise." She kept her promise. In-

deed, she resisted all Mora's pressures and persecutions for years, and over time she was able to make a decent living for herself.

Laura knew she had fulfilled her mission. On the evening of 22 January 1904, at the sound of the Angelus, she died while kissing her crucifix over and over and saying: "Thank you Jesus, thank you Mary! Now I can die happy." Her companions and all the townspeople rushed to her. And they all said, "A little saint has died!" At the funeral, they saw that Laura's mother approached the sacraments, penitent and trembling. They understood. And those who knew all the tribulations the little girl had been through called upon "Laura, virgin and martyr," while her mother, recalling what her daughter had suffered, nodded through her tears: "Yes, virgin. And martyr for me."