

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH*Unicuique suum Non praevalent*

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Vatican City

Friday, 11 March 2016

At the Penitential Celebration in St Peter's Basilica

We are all beggars

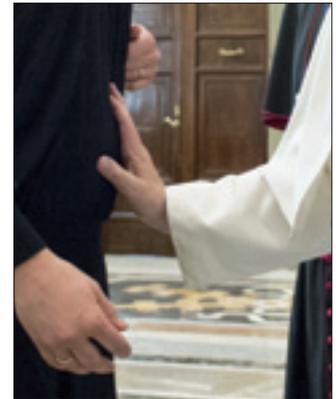


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To the Pontifical Academy for Life

Virtues of humanity

"Contemporary culture still maintains the premises that affirm man, regardless of his condition of life, as a value to be protected"; however, it often falls victim to moral uncertainty, which does not enable it defend life effectively". On Thursday morning, 3 March, in the Clementine Hall, Pope Francis received participants attending the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. "Virtue," the Pope continued, must inform "the way man thinks and acts" and it must "be cultivated through a continuous discernment and be rooted in God".



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The Apostolic Penitentiary's course on the internal forum

The feast of forgiveness

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Peace for beloved Ukraine

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Venerable Benedetta Bianchi Porro

A flower in winter

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Don't call it Ostpolitik



Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State from 1979 to 1990, was a key figure in the history of Vatican diplomacy.

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The Holy Father's grief over the murder four Missionaries of Charity in Yemen

Charity under attack

At the Angelus Pope Francis prays for the victims and their families

Pope Francis "prays that this pointless slaughter will awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart, and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue". The Holy Father expressed this wish in a telegram the day after four Missionaries of Charity were mercilessly killed in Aden, Yemen. On Friday, 4 March, a group of armed men entered the home for the elderly run by the sisters and murdered 16 people, including the four nuns. The Superior, Sr Sally, was able to hide, narrowly escaping; she has since left the country and is safe. During the attack, Salesian priest Fr Tom Uzhunnalil was abducted and is still missing.

Signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin on behalf of the Holy Father, the telegram urges all parties in the present conflict "to renounce violence, and to renew their commitment to the people of Yemen, particularly those most in need, whom the Sisters and their helpers sought to serve".

At Sunday's Angelus the Holy Father also expressed his closeness to the entire congregation, founded by Mother Teresa, and assured all the victims and their family members his prayers. "These are the martyrs of today!", he exclaimed. They may not make major headlines, but "they gave their blood for the Church". They are victims "of indifference, of this globalization of indifference, which doesn't care". "May Mother Teresa, accompany her martyr daughters of charity in Heaven, and intercede for peace and sac-



Zaher Bizri, "Martyr" (2015)

red respect for human life", he concluded.

Fabrizio Contessa of *L'Osservatore Romano* spoke with the Provincial of the Missionaries of Charity in Italy, who expressed shock at the murder of the four innocent nuns who were killed in the attack. Sr Cyrene, who knew Sr Marguerite, one of the victims, recalled a lesson her congregation has learned from Mother Teresa. "We do not leave the poor", she said, "That's unthinkable", recalling the work her community has done in Syria, Liberia and Lebanon.

Meanwhile the rest of the world mourns the victims. The Latin Patri-

arch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, for example will celebrate a Mass of suffrage for the sister-martyrs in the St Saviour's Church, near the New Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem.

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In St Peter's Square

Martyrs don't not make headlines

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 3 March

H.E. Mr Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, with his wife and entourage

Archbishop Marek Solczyński, titular Archbishop of Caesarea in Mauretania, Apostolic Nuncio in Georgia, in Armenia and in Azerbaijani

Cardinal Josip Bozanić, Archbishop of Zagreb, Croatia, Vice President of the Episcopal Conference of Croatia, with Archbishop Zelimir Puljić of Zadar, President; Archbishop Đuro Hranić of Đakovo-Osijek, Member; Bishop Dražen Kutleša of Poreč i Pula, Member

Bishop Carlos Humberto Malfa of Chascomús, Argentina

Bro. Alois, Prior of Taizé, France

Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of San Cristóbal de La Habana

Friday, 4 March

Rev. Gottfried Locher, President of the Council of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches

Cardinal Agostino Vallini, Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome

Archbishop Andrés Carrascosa Coso, titular Archbishop of Elo, Nuncio Apostolic in Panama

Saturday, 5 March

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

H.E. Mr Nagasaki Teruaki, Ambassador of Japan, on a farewell visit

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, OFM cap., of Bokungu-Ikela, Democratic Republic of Congo, as Apostolic Administrator *sede plena et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of the Archdiocese of Mbandaka-Bikoro (5 Mar.).

Bishop Besungu, 56, was born in Boto, Democratic Republic of Congo. He was ordained a priest for the Capuchins on 14 August 1988. He was ordained a bishop on 6 March 2005, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Bokungu-Ikela.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Antonius Lambertus Maria Hurkmans of 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (5 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Gerard Johannes Nicolaas de Korte as Bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands. Until now he has been Bishop of Groningen-Leeuwarden, the Netherlands (5 Mar.).

Bishop de Korte, 60, was born in Vianen, the Netherlands. He was ordained a priest on 5 September 1987. He was ordained a bishop on 2 June

2001, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary of Utrecht.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Paul Gregory Bootkoski of Metuchen, USA. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (8 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr James Francis Checchio from the

clergy of the Diocese of Camden, as Bishop of Metuchen. Until now he has been Rector of the Pontifical North American College, Rome (8 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Checchio, 49, was born in Camden, USA. He holds a licence and a doctorate in canon law as well as a Master's in business administration. He was ordained a priest on 20 June 1992. He has served in parish ministry and as: defender of the bond at the Tribunal of Camden; director of the diocesan office for communications and public relations; private secretary to the Ordinary of Camden; vice chancellor; moderator of the Curia; episcopal vicar for the administration of the Diocese of Camden.



From the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Promulgation of Decrees

On Friday afternoon, 3 March, the Holy Father received in private audience Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. During the course of the audience, the Pope authorized the promulgation of the following decrees:

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Manuel González García, Bishop of Palencia, Founder of the Eucharistic Reparation Union and of the Congregation of the Eucharistic Missionaries of Nazareth; born on 25 February 1877 and died on 4 January 1940;

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Elisabeth of the Trinity (in the world: Elisabeth Catez), professed religious of the Order of Discalced Carmelites; born on 18 July 1880 and died on 9 November 1906;

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus (in the world: Henri Grialou), professed priest of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, Founder of the Secular Institute of Notre-Dame de Vie; born on 2 December 1894 and died on 27 March 1967;

— a miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God María Antonia of St Joseph (in the world: María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa), Founder of the *Beaterio* of the Spiritual Exercise of Buenos Aires, Argentina; born in 1730 and died on 7 March 1799;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Stephen Ferrando, professed priest of the Salesian Society of Don Bosco, titular Archbishop of Troina, Bishop of Shillong, India, Founder of the Congregation of Missionary Sis-

ters of Mary Help of Christians; born on 28 September 1895 and died on 20 June 1978;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Henri Baptist Stanislas Verjus, professed priest of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, titular Bishop of Limyra, Coadjutor of the Apostolic Vicariate of New Guinea; born on 26 May 1860 and died on 13 November 1892;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Giovanni Battista Quilici, diocesan priest, Founder of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Crucifix; born on 26 April 1791 and died on 10 June 1844;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Bernardo Mattio, diocesan priest; born on 2 January 1845 and died on 11 April 1914;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Quirico Pignalberi, professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual; born on 11 July 1891 and died on 18 July 1982;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Teodora Campostrini, Foundress of the Minim Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Sorrows; born on 26 October 1788 and died on 22 May 1860;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Bianca Piccolomini Clementini, Foundress of the Company of St Angela Merici of Siena; born on 7 April 1875 and died on 14 August 1959;

— the heroic virtues of the Servant of God María Nieves of the Holy Family (in the world: María Nieves Sánchez y Fernández), professed religious of the Daughters of Mary of the Pious Schools; born on 2 May 1900 and died on 1 May 1978.

RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Paolo Borgia, Counsellor at the Nunciature, as Assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State (4 Mar.).

LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 4 March, in the presence of the Holy Father, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, delivered the Third Lenten Sermon in the Vatican's Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

NECROLOGY

Archbishop Janusz Bolonek, titular Archbishop of Madaurus, at age 77 (2 Mar.).

Archbishop Vincenzo Franco, Archbishop emeritus of Otranto, Italy, at age 98 (4 Mar.).

Archbishop Joseph Kumuondala Mbimba of Mbandaka-Bikoro, Democratic Republic of Congo, at age 75 (5 Mar.).

Bishop Raymond Conway Benjamin, Bishop emeritus of Townsville, Australia, at age 91 (6 Mar.).

Archbishop Paul Giglio, titular Archbishop of Tyndaris, at age 89 (7 Mar.).

Erratum

In recent days, in Lviv, Fr Vasyl Sapelak of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church went to the house of the Father. He was the brother of Bishop Andrés, Bishop emeritus of Santa María del Patrocinio in Buenos Aires. Unfortunately on 4 March we instead published the death of Bishop Andrés.

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Four sisters of Mother Teresa's congregation killed in Aden, Yemen

Charity under attack

Four sisters of the Missionaries of Charity – the congregation founded by Mother Teresa of Calcutta – were murdered on Friday morning, 4 March, in the city of Aden, Yemen. A group of heavily armed men attacked a home for the elderly run by the sisters. Citing local sources, Chinese news agency *Xinhua* reported that a total of 16 people were killed. Yemeni sources cited by the Chinese news agency attribute the attack to a group affiliated with the so-called Islamic State, however no one has claimed responsibility yet. After killing the security guards, the terrorists entered the house located in the Sheikh Osman district of the city. In addition to Sr Anselm from India, Sr Marguerite from Rwanda, Sr Judit from Kenya and Sr Regnette also from Rwanda, a driver and at least two Ethiopians volunteers were killed. The superior, however, survived. According to the Associated Press, the terrorists set the sisters apart from everyone else after handcuffing the elderly and the sick. They then opened fire.

On behalf of Pope Francis, Cardinal Pietro Parolin sent a telegram to the ecclesiastical authorities in Yemen and to the Superior General Sr Mary Prema Pierick.



The four Missionaries of Charity who were killed last Friday

The Holy Father “prays that this pointless slaughter will awaken consciences, lead to a change of heart, and inspire all parties to lay down their arms and take up the path of dialogue”, reads the telegram, sent on Saturday, 5 March. “Pope Francis was shocked and profoundly saddened to learn” of the attack, assuring “his prayers for the dead and his spiritual closeness to their families and to all affected from this act of senseless and diabolical violence”.

“In the name of God”, Pope Francis calls “upon all parties in the present conflict to renounce violence, and to renew their commitment to the people of Yemen, particularly those most in need, whom the Sisters and their helpers sought to serve. Upon everyone suffering from this violence, the Holy Father invokes God’s blessing, and in a special way he extends to the Missionaries of Charity his prayerful sympathy and solidarity”.



Security forces outside the home after the attack (AFP)

Apostolic Vicar of Southern Arabia, Bishop Paul Hinder, expressed great concern for the situation in Yemen. In a statement to AsiaNews Bishop Hinder referred to the attacks as “religiously motivated”. The nuns, according to the Bishop, “were running a certain risk”. We knew, he said, “that the situation was difficult”. In fact, he continued, “the nuns had been attacked in the past. However, “they decided to stay no matter what because this was part of their spirituality”.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, also weighed in. The attack, he said, “has plunged the Church of India and Asia into deep sadness”. The Cardinal underlined how the missionaries – following the example of Mother Teresa – “quench the thirst of Jesus in Aden, through love, kindness, compassion, and selflessly served without any consideration of their own safety, the most disadvantaged victims, through their work on humanitarian activities in hospitals, centers for the aged and the infirm and homes for poor and disadvantaged youth, they sought to risk their lives for the local people”.

Honour for the Missionaries

FABRIZIO CONTESSA

“We are praying together for the sister who survived and for the Salesian priest of whom we have no news”, Sr Cyrene, Provincial for Italy of the Missionaries of Charity, declared. Ten years ago, Sr Cyrene met Sr Marguerite, one of the four sisters who – together with 12 others – were murdered on 4 March in the home for the elderly and disabled in Aden, Yemen.

Still in shock, Sr Cyrene explained in a brief interview with *L'Osservatore Romano* the meaning of the mission they inherited from Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She also described how in every corner of the globe the missionaries in the blue and white sari seek to remain faithful in the face of difficulty and fear, and amidst suggestions to abandon or flee. “We do not leave the poor”, she stated, “That’s unthinkable”. Throughout the conversation, Sr Cyrene constantly recalled the lessons she has learned from the Foundress. “Mother taught us that if we are alone and we don’t have anyone to look after and we face danger, then we move, we go somewhere else. But if we have the poor, the sick, the lame, what do we do? This is what Mother always did: I still remember her with the children in the bombings of Beirut. We did the same years ago in Liberia. And that is what we are doing in Syria. And we are still in Yemen where, let us not forget, we have other houses”. “What really hurts”, the religious added, is the “indifference in the hearts of so many people for the fate and conditions of the poor and the lowly”.

Sr Cyrene then turned her thoughts to the future and how to adequately meet the needs of the poor who – just like in the Arab country of Yemen – can be found on the streets of Rome every day. Sr Cyrene asked for prayers for the Salesian, Fr Tom Uzhunnalil, who is still in the hands of the attackers, and for Sr Sally, the Superior of the home who managed to survive. “Please let us continue to pray together”, she urged.

Bishop Paul Hinder, Apostolic Vicar for Southern Arabia told Fides News Agency that the locals “loved the sisters of Mother Teresa; they admired the way they served without distinguishing according to religious affiliation, their only preference being for those in the most need. This elicited sympathy and affection among the people. And perhaps it was fastidious”.

Nearly one year ago conflict erupted between the government and the rebels. Bishop Hinder recalled that he had deliberated with the sisters on whether it was wise for them to remain in such a dangerous situation. “They said to me that there was nothing to discuss”, the Bishop said. “We knew that the situation was serious and that the sisters were running a great risk.” Bishop Hinder continued. In fact, the nuns had already been attacked in the past. Nevertheless, “they chose to stay no matter what because this was part of their spirituality”.

The Pope and the Roman Curia in Ariccia for the Spiritual Exercises

Be not afraid

Pope Francis and members of the Roman Curia arrived on Sunday afternoon, 6 March, at 4:45 pm at the “Casa del Divin Maestro”, a retreat centre in Ariccia, in the Alban Hills just outside Rome. They took part in the five day Curial Spiritual Exercises. Usually these exercises are held during the first week of Lent but they were postponed this year due to the Papal Journey to Mexico.

On Sunday evening, which began with Eucharistic adoration and Vespers, the opening Gospel meditation was a question: “Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ (Jn 1:38).

Monday morning, some 70 people gathered for Lauds at 7:30 am. Then at 9:30 am they were led in the first meditation by Fr Ermes Ronchi, a servant of Mary, who focused his first reflection on fear as the root of all erroneous images of God. Following the question of the mediation – “Why are you afraid Have you no faith?” (Mk 4:40) – Fr Ronchi explained that fear entered the world with original sin. Fear is not overcome by courage but by faith. Along those lines, they prayed especially for the Missionaries of Charity who were martyred in Yemen last Friday.

Throughout the week, meditations focused on the following questions from the Gospel: “You are the salt



of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Mt 5:13), “But who do you say that I am?” (Lk 9:20), “Then turning to the woman he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman?’” (Lk 7:44), “Jesus said to his disciples: ‘How many loaves have you?’” (Mk 6:38; Mt 15:34), “Jesus looked up and said to her: ‘Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you?’” (Jn 8:10), “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?” (Jn 20:15), “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (Jn 21:16), “Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be?’” (Lk 1:34).

The Holy Father and his fellow curial officials arrived back to the Vatican on Friday, 11 March, after the final mediation and Holy Mass.

Exchange of the instruments of ratification of the Accord between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

On Thursday, 3 March, in the Apostolic Palace, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, and H.E. Mr Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, proceeded to exchange the instruments of ratification of the Accord signed in Dili on 14 August 2015, between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. The Accord permanently establishes the legal framework for relations between the Holy See and the Democratic Re-

public of Timor-Leste, namely, between the Catholic Church and the State of Timor-Leste.

Present at the solemn ceremony on behalf of the Holy See were: Msgr Antoine Camilleri, Undersecretary for Relations with States; Msgr Francesco Cao Minh Dung; Msgr Robert Murphy and Msgr Massimiliano Boiardi, FSCB, Officials of the Section for Relations with States.

Present at the solemn ceremony on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste were: H.E. Mr Aderito Hugo da Costa, Vice President

of the National Parliament; H.E. Mr Roberto Sarmento de Oliveira Soares, Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation; H.E. Mr Égas da Costa Freitas, Ambassador to the Holy See; H.E. Mr Armindo Pedro Simões, Director for Europe, Africa and the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

With the exchange of the instruments of ratification, the Accord – which consists of a Preamble and 26 articles – enters into force, according to article 26.



The Secretary of State's greeting

During the ceremony Cardinal Pietro Parolin greeted those present. The following is a translation of his greeting delivered in Italian.

Mr Prime Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for your kind expression of esteem which you manifested a moment ago. I would also like to express my gratitude for your welcome, Mr Prime Minister, together with the government and ecclesiastical authorities of the country, extended to me during my visit to Dili last August, as the Special Envoy of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of the Island.

The solemn Act we are performing today, through the exchange of instruments of ratification, seals the entry into force of the *Accord between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste*, which was signed in the context of the above-mentioned national celebrations.

The Accord, which takes into account the historical and current role the Catholic Church plays in the life of the nation and the deep roots of Catholicism in Timorese society, establishes in a stable legal framework for relations, between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, namely between the Catholic Church and the State of Timor-Leste. It is the result of years of negotiations, undertaken in a common spirit of dialogue, cooperation and the constant search for the most appropriate legal instruments to sanction the State's recognition of the service that the Catholic Church offers in favour of the Timorese. This commitment includes the spheres of spirituality, education, solidarity, assistance to the most vulnerable and many other works that contribute to the positive, integral growth of your beloved people.

Thanks to the juridical instruments of the Accord, the Catholic community will endeavour to promote the good of all. In this framework, it should be noted, the Church does not seek special privileges but wishes to offer a free and creative contribution to the building up of a more harmonious society, motivated by justice and peace. Naturally, the Church's mission will be even more fruitful and effective if the principles con-

tained in this Agreement meets with the full acceptance and application of relations both parties.

Mr Prime Minister, with these sentiments, I wish to thank all those who have worked for the successful outcome of the negotiations and to entrust the dear people of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the maternal protection of Mary Immaculate, your heavenly Patroness. Thank you.

Pope Francis receives Mr Rui Maria de Araújo



On Thursday, 3 March, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis received in audience the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, H.E. Mr Rui Maria de Araújo, who subsequently met with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, accompanied by Undersecretary for Relations with States, Msgr Antoine Camilleri.

During the cordial discussions, the good relations between the Holy See and Timor-Leste were evoked, as well as the historical contribution of the Church to building up the nation and collaboration with the civil Authorities in various social areas, such

as education, health and the fight against poverty.

At the end of the meeting with the Secretary of State, in the Hall of Treaties in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, there took place the exchange of the instruments of ratification of the Accord between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, signed in Dili on 14 August 2015. The Accord, composed of a Preamble and 26 articles, decrees the recognition of the legal personality of the Church and her institutions, and guarantees to the Church the freedom to carry out her mission in favour of the Timorese people.

Address by the Prime Minister

The following is the address delivered by H.E. Mr Rui Maria de Araújo, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Your Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Vatican, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to express on behalf of the People, the State, the Parliament and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste our profound gratitude to Your Eminence for visiting Timor-Leste as His Holiness Pope Francis' Legate for the celebration of 500 years of evangelization in Dili.

During the audience earlier today, on behalf of all Timorese, I thanked His Holiness Pope Francis in person for honoring us with the presence of his Legate during the highlight of the celebration of the 500th anniversary of our people's evangelization and Christianization.

It was with a truly great sense of satisfaction, and with comforted souls, that we celebrated the Holy Eucharist presided by Your Eminence on the day when the Catholic Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven.

It was also an historic moment for us Timorese to see the Agreement between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste signed. Moreover, it was indeed a truly historical event, a highpoint for Timor-Leste; and one for which many Timorese had been waiting such a long time, and it came to fruition the Accord in 2015.

The signing of this agreement established the legal framework for relations between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Holy See.

Our national parliament, undertaking its duties further proceeded to ratify the Agreement which was then adopted unanimously and was then promulgated by the President of the Republic. We Timorese value the agreement which is based on the principle of mutual respect, solidarity and cooperation.

Today, on behalf of the People, and the State, and in the presence of His Excellency second Vice President of the National Parliament and the delegation, I am honored to deposit and formally exchange the Accord with Your Eminence to celebrate the centuries of evangelization, and seal the eternal relations between the Holy See and Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much!

At the Angelus the Pontiff prays for the four sisters killed in Yemen

Martyrs don't make headlines

At the end of the Angelus on Sunday, 6 March, the Pope expressed his "closeness to the Missionaries of Charity for the grave loss they suffered two days ago with the killing of four Sisters in Aden, Yemen, where they were assisting the elderly". "I pray for them", he assured everyone, "and for the other people killed in the attack, and for their family members". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's words which were given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

In Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel, we find three parables of mercy: that of the sheep found (vv. 4-7), that of the coin found (vv. 8-10), and the great parable of the prodigal son, or rather, of the merciful father (vv. 11-32). Today, it would be nice for each of us to open Chapter 15 of the Gospel according to Luke, and read these three parables. During the Lenten itinerary, the Gospel presents to us this very parable of the merciful Father, featuring a father with his two sons. The story highlights some features of this father who is a man always ready to forgive and to hope against hope. Especially striking is the father's tolerance before the younger son's decision to leave home: he could have opposed it, knowing that he was still immature, a youth, or sought a lawyer not to give him his inheritance, as the father was still living. Instead, he allows the son to leave, although foreseeing the possible risks. God works with us like this: He allows us to be free, even to making mistakes, because in creating us, He has given us the great gift of freedom. It is for us to put it to good use. This gift of freedom that God gives us always amazes me!

But the separation from his son is only physical; for the father always carries him in his heart; trustingly, he awaits his return; the father watches the road in the hope of seeing him. And one day he sees him appear in the distance (cf. v. 20). But this means that this father, every day, would climb up to the terrace



to see if his son was coming back! Thus the father is moved to see him, he runs toward him, embraces him, kisses him. So much tenderness! And this son got into trouble! But the father still welcomes him so.

The father treated the eldest son the same way, but as he had always stayed at home, he is now indignant and complains because he does not understand and does not share all that kindness toward his brother that had wronged. The father also goes to meet this son and reminds him that they were always together, they share everything (v. 31), one must welcome with joy the brother who has finally returned home. And this makes me think of something: When one feels one is a sinner, one feels worthless, or as I've heard some – many – say: 'Father, I am like dirt', so then, this is the moment to go to the Father. Instead, when one feels righteous – 'I always did the right thing ...' –, equally, the Father comes to seek us, because this attitude of feeling 'right', is the wrong attitude: it is pride! It comes from the devil. The Father waits for those who recognize they are sinners and goes in search of the ones who feel 'righteous'. This is our Father!

In this parable, you can also glimpse a third son. A third son? Where? He's hidden! And it is the one, 'who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality

with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phil 2:6-7). This Servant-Son is Jesus!

He is 'the extension of the arms and heart of the Father: he welcomed the prodigal Son and washed his dirty feet; he prepared the banquet for the feast of forgiveness. He, Jesus, teaches us to be "merciful as the Father is merciful".

The figure of the Father in the parable reveals the heart of God. He is the Merciful Father who, in Jesus, loves us beyond measure, always awaits our conversion every time we make mistakes; he awaits our return when we turn away from him thinking, we can do without him; he is always ready to open his arms no matter what happened. As the father of the Gospel, God also continues to consider us his children, even when we get lost, and comes to us with tenderness when we return to him. He addresses us so kindly when we believe we are right. The errors we commit, even if bad, do not wear out the fidelity of his love. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can always start out anew: He welcomes us, gives us the dignity of being his children and tells us: "Go ahead! Be at peace! Rise, go ahead!"

In this time of Lent that still separates us from Easter, we are called to intensify the inner journey of con-

version. May the loving gaze of our Father touch us. Let us return and return to him with all our heart, rejecting any compromise with sin. May the Virgin Mary accompany us until the regenerating embrace with Divine Mercy.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I express my closeness to the Missionaries of Charity for the grave loss they suffered two days ago with the killing of four Sisters in Aden, Yemen, where they were assisting the elderly. I pray for them and for the other people killed in the attack, and for their family members. These are the martyrs of today! They may not be on the cover of a magazine ... [they] may not even make the news, but they gave their blood for the Church. These people are victims of the attack of those who killed them and of indifference too, of this globalization of indifference, which does not care... May Mother Teresa accompany her martyr daughters of charity in Heaven, and intercede for peace and the sacred respect for human life.

As a concrete sign of commitment to peace and life, I want to mention and express admiration for humanitarian corridors in favour of refugees, launched recently in Italy. This pilot project, which combines solidarity and security, allows one to help people fleeing war and violence, as the hundred refugees who have already been transferred to Italy, including sick children, disabled people, war widows with children, and the elderly. I also welcome this initiative because it is an ecumenical one, supported by the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Italian Federation of Evangelical Churches, and the Waldensian and Methodist churches.

I ask, please, for your prayers for me and my collaborators, who from this evening until Friday, will be on retreat.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Have a nice lunch and *arrivederci!*

Plenary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America



On Friday morning, 4 March, Pope Francis received in audience members of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, at the close of their plenary assembly which began on 1 March and was dedicated to the "indispensable commitment of the laity in public life".

Audience for Waldensians and Methodists

On Saturday morning, 5 March, in the Private Library of the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis received a delegation from the Waldensian Board and from the Synod of the Waldensian and Methodist churches.



Every absolution is "a jubilee of the heart" and a "feast" of forgiveness. Pope Francis said this in his address to participants in a course sponsored by the Apostolic Penitentiary, whom he received in audience on Friday morning, 4 March, in the Sala Regia. The following is a translation of the Pope's address which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers,
Good morning!

I am pleased to meet with you on the occasion of the annual course on the internal forum during this Lenten Season of the Jubilee Year of Mercy. I cordially greet Cardinal Piacenza, Major Penitentiary, and I thank him for his kind words. I greet the Regent – who has a very kind face, he must be a good confessor! – the prelates, officials and personnel of the Penitentiary, the Colleges of Ordinary and Extraordinary Confessors of the Papal Basilicas – whose presence has been extended for the Jubilee – and all of you participating in the course, which is intended to aid new priests and seminarians approaching ordination in their formation for administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The celebration of this Sacrament requires an adequate and updated preparation, so that those who partake in it may "touch the grandeur of God's mercy with their own hands. For every penitent, it will be a source of true interior peace" (Bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 17).

This word, mercy, "might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him" (*ibid.*, n. 1). In this sense, mercy is, more than an attitude or a human virtue, God's definitive choice in favour of every human being for his or her eternal salvation; a choice sealed with the blood of the Son of God.

Divine mercy can freely reach anyone who invokes it. Indeed, the possibility of forgiveness is truly open to all, it is



Francis speaks about reconciliation and remembers that every absolution is a jubilee of the heart

The feast of forgiveness

as wide open as the greatest of "holy doors", because it coincides with the very heart of the Father who loves and waits for all his children, especially for those who have erred the most and who are distant. The mercy of the Father can reach every person in many ways: through the opening of a sincere conscience; through the reading of the Word of God, which converts the heart; through an encounter with a merciful sister or brother; in the life experiences that speak to us of wounds, of sin, of forgiveness and of mercy.

There is, however, a "sure path" of mercy, through which one passes from possibility to reality, from hope to certainty. This path is Jesus, who "has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Lk 5:24), and has handed this mission down to the Church (cf. Jn 20:21-23). The Sacrament of Reconciliation is therefore the privileged place to experience the mercy of God and to celebrate the feast of encounter with the Father. We all too easily forget this last aspect: I go, I ask forgiveness, I feel the embrace of forgiveness and I forget to celebrate. This is not theological doctrine, but I would say, with a little bit of a stretch, that celebration is part of the sacrament: it is as if the penitence were part of the feast which I must celebrate with the Father who has forgiven me.

When, as confessors, we enter the confessional to welcome our brothers and sisters, we must always remember that we are instruments of God's mercy for them; thus, we are careful not to set up obstacles to this gift of salvation! The confessor is himself a sinner, a man ever in need of forgiveness; he is the first who cannot do without the mercy of God, who "chose" and "appointed" (cf. Jn 15:16) him for this great task. Therefore, you must always be ready with an attitude of humble and generous faith and the sole desire that every believer experience the love of the Father. In this we have no shortage of holy brother priests to look to: let us think of Leopold Mandić and Pio of Pietrelcina, whose mortal remains we venerated in the Vatican a month ago. And also –

I will allow myself to add – one of my own family: Fr Cappello.

Every penitent faithful, after the priest's absolution, has the certainty, through faith, that his sins are no more. They no longer exist! God is omnipotent. I like to think he has one weakness: a bad memory. Once He has forgiven you, He forgets. And this is great! The sins are no more, they have been wiped away by divine mercy. Every absolution is, in a certain way, a jubilee of the heart, which brings joy not only to the faithful and the Church but first of all to God himself. Jesus said so: "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7). It is important, therefore, that the confessor also be a "channel of joy" and that the faithful, after being pardoned, no longer feel the oppression of guilt, but that he or she can relish God's work, who has freed them, to live in thanksgiving, ready to repair the evil committed and to go meet their brothers and sisters with a good and willing heart.

Dear brothers, in this time of ours marked by individualism, by so many wounds and by the temptation to become closed, it is a true and proper gift to see and to accompany people who draw near to divine mercy. This demands from us all, too, a still greater duty to evangelical coherence and fatherly benevolence; we are guardians, not masters, both of the sheep and of grace.

Let us put the focus back on the Sacrament of Reconciliation – and not just for this Jubilee Year; it is the true space of the Spirit in which we all, confessors and penitents, are able to experience the unique, definitive and faithful love that God has for every one of his children, a love that never disappoints. St Leopold Mandić used to say that "the mercy of God exceeds our every expectation". He also used to say to someone suffering: "We have in Heaven the heart of a mother. The Virgin, our Mother, who at the foot of the Cross endured the most a human being can suffer, she understands our troubles and she consoles us". May Mary, Refuge of Sinners and Mother of Mercy, ever guide and sustain the fundamental mystery of Reconciliation.

And what do I do if I run into trouble and can't give absolution? What must be done? First of all, try to see if there is a way; there frequently is. Second, don't just bind yourselves by spoken language, but also to body language. There are people who can't speak but by their gestures they show their repentance, their sorrow. And third, if you can't give absolution, speak to them like a father: "Listen, because of this I cannot [absolve you], but I can assure you that God loves you, God is waiting for you! Let us pray together to Our Lady, that she protect you; and come, come back. I will wait for you just as God is waiting for you". And give them a blessing. That way, this person leaves the confessional and thinks: "I found a father and he didn't hit me". How many times have you heard someone say: "I never go to confession, because this one time I went and he yelled at me"? Even in the extreme case in which I cannot give absolution, let him or her feel the warmth of a father! Let them be blessed and be called back. And also may you pray a little for him or for her. This is always the point: there's a father there. And this too is a celebration, and God knows how to forgive things better than we do. But let us be an image of the Father.

I thank the Apostolic Penitentiary for its precious service, and with all my heart I bless you all and the ministry that you carry out as channels of mercy, especially in this time of Jubilee. Remember, please, also to pray for me.

And today I will go with you penitentiaries to confess in St Peter's.



At the Penitential Celebration in St Peter's Basilica

We are all beggars

"May we realize that we are all begging for God's love, and not allow ourselves to miss the Lord, as he passes by." On Friday, 4 March, at the Penitential Celebration in St Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis called the faithful to experience God's merciful love. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily.

"I want to see again" (Mk 10:51). This is what we ask of the Lord today. To see again, because our sins have made us lose sight of all that is good, and have robbed us of the beauty of our calling, leading us instead far away from our journey's end.

This Gospel passage has great symbolic value, because we all find ourselves in the same situation as Bartimaeus. His blindness led him to poverty and to living on the outskirts of the city, dependent on others for everything he needed. Sin also has this effect: it impoverishes and isolates us. It is a blindness of the spirit, which prevents us from seeing what is most important, from fixing our gaze on the love that gives us life. This blindness leads us little by little to dwell on what is superficial, until we are indifferent to others and to what is good. How many temptations have the power to cloud the heart's vision and to make it myopic! How easy and misguided it is to believe that life depends on what we have, on our successes and on the approval we receive; to believe that the economy is only for profit and consumption; that personal desires are more important than social responsibility! When we only look to ourselves, we become blind, lifeless and self-

centred, devoid of joy and freedom. What an awful thing!

But Jesus is passing by; he is passing by, and he halts: the Gospel tells us that "he stopped" (v. 49). Our hearts race, because we realize that the Light is gazing upon us, that kindly Light which invites us to come out of our dark blindness. Jesus' closeness to us makes us see that when we are far from him there is something important missing from our lives. His presence makes us feel in need of salvation, and this begins the healing of our heart. Then, when our desire to be healed becomes more courageous, it leads to prayer, to crying out fervently and persistently for help, as did Bartimaeus: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (v. 47).

Unfortunately, like the "many" in the Gospel, there is always someone who does not want to stop, who does not

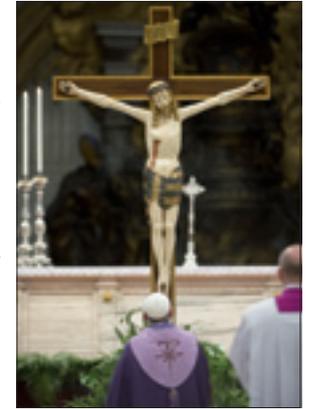


In the Vatican Basilica

Less than one year ago – on 13 March 2015 – Pope Francis announced the Holy Year of Mercy during the Penitential Celebration in St Peter's Basilica. This rite was held again this year on Friday evening, 4 March, during the extraordinary Jubilee. And this year, again, Pope Francis went to the confessional and confessed his sins. He then confessed 20 of the faithful. The image of the Pope kneeling in front of the confessor along the nave of the basilica circled the globe. His homily, which he held from the wooden pulpit located in front of the pylon of St Andrew, was followed by a long and silent examination of conscience. Then the Holy Father went to the monument of Clement XIII and after receiving absolution, he went to the confessional to administer the sacrament. Among those receiving the faithful for confession were 70 priests, including the confessors of the four papal basilicas – St Peter's, St John Lateran, St Mary Major, St Paul Outside-

the-Walls – and Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Major Penitentiary; Msgr Krzysztof Józef Nykiel, Regent, other officials of the Apostolic Penitentiary; Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Archpriest of St Peter's; Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization; Archbishop José Octavio Ruiz Arenas, Secretary of the Council, Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, Papal Almoner. Among those present were Cardinal Ouellet, Cardinal Monteiro de Castro, Cardinal Monterisi, Cardinal Rodé, Archbishop George Ganswein, Prefect of the Papal Household, Msgr Leonard Sapienza, Regent of the Prefecture, and numerous prelates of the Roman Curia.

The rite served as the concluding moment for the 27th course of the internal forum which was organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary on 29 February to 3 March. With the celebration in St Peter's, "Twenty-four hours for the Lord" was underway. The initiative, promoted by the Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, was centred on the theme "Merciful like the Father" and focused on the importance of prayer, Eucharistic adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Dioceses from around the world spiritually joined the Pope in the initiative in the Basilica. At 9 pm in Rome, the faithful were able to go to confession and adoration in the Church of Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore in Piazza Navona, the Church of Santa Maria in Trastevere and the Church of Sacre Stimmate di San Francesco in Largo Argentina. Then on Saturday, 5 March, the Church of Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore stayed open until 4 pm to welcome those who wanted to go to confession. The third edition of "Twenty-four hours for the Lord" was concluded by Archbishop Fisichella, in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassa, the shrine dedicated to Divine Mercy.



want to be bothered by someone else crying out in pain, preferring instead to silence and rebuke the person in need who is only a nuisance (cf. v. 48). There is the temptation to move on as if it were nothing, but then we would remain far from the Lord and we would also keep others away from Jesus. May we realize that we are all begging for God's love, and not allow ourselves to miss the Lord as he passes by. "I fear the Lord passing by" said St Augustine. Fear that he will pass by and that I will let him pass by. Let us voice our truest desire: "[Jesus], let me receive my sight!" (v. 51). This Jubilee of Mercy is the favourable time to welcome God's presence, to experience his love and to return to him with all our heart. Like Bartimaeus, let us cast off our cloak and rise to our feet (cf. v. 50); that is, let us cast aside all that prevents us from racing towards him, unafraid of leaving behind those things which make us feel safe and to which we are attached. Let us not remain sedentary, but let us get up and find our spiritual worth again, our dignity as loved sons and daughters who stand before the Lord so that we can be seen by him, forgiven and recreated. The word that perhaps touches our hearts today is the same word used to create man: "Rise up!" God has created us to stand up: "Rise up".

Today more than ever, we Pastors are especially called to hear the cry, per-

haps hidden, of all those who wish to encounter the Lord. We need to re-examine those behaviours of ours which at times do not help others to draw close to Jesus; the schedules and programmes which do not meet the real needs of those who may approach the confessional; human regulations, if they are more important than the desire for forgiveness; our own inflexibility which may keep others away from God's tenderness. We must certainly not water down the demands of the Gospel, but we cannot risk frustrating the desire of the sinner to be reconciled with the Father. For what the Father awaits more than anything is for his sons and daughters to return home (cf. Lk 15:20-32).

May our words be those of the disciples who, echoing Jesus, said to Bartimaeus: "Take heart; rise, he is calling you" (Mk 10:49). We have been sent to inspire courage, to support and to lead others to Jesus. Our ministry is one of accompaniment, so that the encounter with the Lord may be personal and intimate, and the heart may open itself to the Saviour in honesty and without fear. May we not forget: it is God alone who is at work in every person. In the Gospel it is he who stops and speaks to the blind man; it is he who orders the man to be brought to him, and who listens to him and heals him. We have been chosen, as Pastors, to awaken the desire for conversion, to be instruments that facilitate this encounter, to stretch out our hand and to absolve, thus making his mercy visible and effective. May every man and woman who comes to confession find a father; a father who is waiting, a Father who forgives.

The conclusion of the Gospel story is significant: Bartimaeus "immediately received his sight and followed him on the way" (v. 52). When we draw near to Jesus, we too see once more the light which enables us to look to the future with confidence. We find anew the strength and the courage to set out on the way. "Those who believe, see" (*Lumen Fidei*, 1) and they go forth in hope, because they know that the Lord is present, that he is sustaining and guiding them. Let us follow him, as faithful disciples, so that we can lead all those we encounter to experience the joy of his love. And after the Father's embrace, the Father's forgiveness, let us celebrate in our hearts! For the Lord himself celebrates!



Message to the Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

Peace for beloved Ukraine

The following is a translation of the Pope's message to H.B. Sviatoslav Shevchuk, Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč, head of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, delivered the text to Archbishop Shevchuk on Saturday, 5 March.

ideological and political context, as well as ideas opposed to the very existence of your Church, led to the organization of a pseudo-Synod at Lviv, causing decades of suffering for the pastors and faithful.

In recalling these events, we bow our head with profound gratitude before those that, in the course of time and at the price of tribulations

and even of martyrdom, witnessed to the faith, lived with dedication in their Church and in indefectible union with the Successor of Peter. At the same time, with eyes illumined by the same faith, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, placing in Him, and not in human justice, our every hope. He is the true source of our confidence for the present and for the future; we are certain of being called to proclaim the Gospel also in the midst of any suffering or difficulty.

"Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?"

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed ... but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defence to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence..." (1 Pet 3:13-15).

Making the Apostle Peter's words my own, I express my profound gratitude for your fidelity and I encourage you to be tireless witnesses of this hope, which makes more luminous our existence and that of all brothers and sisters around us. I also renew my solidarity to the pastors and faithful for what they do in this difficult time, marked by the tribulations of the war, to alleviate the suffering of the population and to seek ways of peace for the dear land of Ukraine.

Our courage and our joy are in the Lord. It is to Him that I turn, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the martyrs of your Church, so that divine consolation may illumine the faces of your communities in Ukraine and in other parts of the world. At the same time, I wholeheartedly impart to you, to the Bishops, to the priests, to the consecrated and to the faithful of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church a special Apostolic Blessing, as a sign of my constant affection and remembrance.

Franciscus

To His Beatitude

SVIATOSLAV SHEVCHUK

Major Archbishop of Kyiv-Halyč

"How precious is thy steadfast love, O God! The children of men take refuge in the shadow of thy wings" (Ps 36[35]:7).

As believers we take refuge under the protective "wings" of the Lord, because, yes, we are bearers of divine grace, but we are like earthen vessels (cf. 2 Cor 4:7). In some circumstances, our human condition is rendered more fragile because of difficult historical circumstances, which mark the life of the People of God, of the community that our Lord Jesus Christ acquired with his Blood.

In these days, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church is commemorating the sorrowful events of March 1946. Seventy years ago, the

With the permanent Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church



On Saturday morning, 5 March, the Pope met with members of the permanent Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in the Private Library of the Apostolic Palace.

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

A history of failed faithfulness

Acknowledging that we are sinners and asking for forgiveness is the first step in a decisive response to the question that Jesus asks each of us directly: "are you with me or against me?". Thus, during Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, 3 March, the Pope invited us to open ourselves to God's unconditional mercy.

At the beginning of the first reading, Francis noted, the prophet Jeremiah (7:23-28), "reminds us of

God's pact with his people: 'Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper'. It is "a pact of faith". Both readings, he continued, "tell us another story: this pact failed and today the Church makes us reflect on it; we can call it a history of failed faithfulness". In reality, "God always remains faithful, because he

cannot deny himself". However the people amass infidelities, "one after another: they become unfaithful, they are unfaithful!".

In the Book of Jeremiah, the people do not hold true to the pact. Scripture also tells us, Francis explained, of the "many things that God did in order to attract the hearts of his people: 'From the day that your fathers left the land of Egypt even to this day, I have sent you untiringly all my servants the prophets. Yet they have not obeyed me nor paid heed; they have stiffened their necks and done worse than their fathers'". This passage of Jeremiah ends on a strong note: "Faithfulness has disappeared", it is "cut off from their lips".

The "unfaithfulness of the People of God", like our own unfaithfulness, "hardens the heart: it closes the heart!", and it keeps out "the voice of the Lord who, as loving father, asks us to always open ourselves to his mercy and his love". In Psalm 95[94] "we prayed together: hear today the voice of the Lord: harden not your hearts!". It's true, the Pontiff stated, "the Lord always speaks to us this way", and "with

fatherly tenderness he tells us: return to me with all your heart, for I am merciful and compassionate".

However, "when your heart is hard you cannot understand this", Francis explained. In fact, "God's mercy is understood only if you are able to open your heart, so it can enter". And this continues, it "goes on: the heart hardens, and we see the same story" in the day's passage from the Gospel of Luke (11:14-23). "There were people, the doctors of the law, who had studied the Scriptures, who knew theology, but were very, very closed-minded. The crowd was amazed, astonished! Because the crowd was following Jesus. Someone might say: 'But they followed him in order to be healed, this is why they were following him'".

The reality, Francis pointed out, was that the people "trusted Jesus! Their hearts were open: imperfect, sinful, but their hearts were open". On the other hand, "the theologians had a closed-minded attitude" and "were always looking for an explanation so as not to understand Jesus' message". Thus, in this specific

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



"The Israelites Adore the Golden Calf" (14th century)

This story's origins go back to Benedict XV. In 1918 he sent a priest librarian to Poland. His name was Achille Ratti.



Casaroli with Ronald Reagan in 1982

Agostino Casaroli and the Communist block

Don't call it Ostpolitik

An important theme in 20th-century Christian history, the so-called Ostpolitik of the Vatican, posed numerous problems, beginning with the name. While simple and suggestive, it is not the most precise term to define the Vatican's "eastern policy", since the adjective referred to Central and Eastern European countries under Real Socialist regimes. That definition actually became widespread due to the influence the term had with reference to Germany's policy of openness to Communist countries. The Holy See's policy, however, was actually much older. The expression the "Vatican's Ostpolitik" is thus more or less anachronistic, because it seems to pigeonhole an event, that

the Ambrosian and Vatican libraries, where he would later become prefect, like Angelo Mai long before him – to Poland, on the edge of the Bolshevik crater then in eruption. Achille Ratti thus became the protagonist of a mission in the nunciature of Warsaw, rendered more difficult by the context of an ardent Polish nationalism. Archbishop Ratti's mission in Warsaw preceded by several years of the shorter and less significant mission of another future Pope, the young Giovanni Battista Montini, whose experience in Warsaw in 1923 lasted only several months, probably due to his poor health.

Upon his return from the difficult mission in Poland, Ratti, who passed through Milan *raptim* [swiftly] – true to his episcopal motto, which was taken from the Book of Job (6:15) according to the Vulgate, and also alluding to his surname – was elected Pope in the longest Conclave of the century. Cardinal Ratti – Pius XI – had sought to negotiate directly with the Soviets as well as through Nuncio Pacelli and other channels. Thereafter it was Pacelli, recalled from Berlin and appointed Secretary of State, then chosen by the subsequent conclave, which ended within hours, when Italy was on the verge of war. Pope Pacelli [Pius XII], the anti-Communist Pope par excellence – who had previously faced off with Spartacists in Munich and had negotiated with the Soviets on behalf of Pius XI – confronted the threat of Nazism with the utmost pragmatism. He likewise worked with U.S. bishops to convince American Catholics not to oppose their country's alliance with the Soviet Union. He also sought help from the IOR [Insti-

tute for Works of Religion], through daring operations, to provide many millions of dollars to support the American arms industry against Hitler and the Third Reich.

However, starting from as early as 1944, Pius XII was accused, as was the Russian Orthodox Church, of being silent – indeed complicit – in the face of Nazi atrocities. This was the Westpolitik of the Soviet Union, a bona fide offensive leading to a sort of white paper published in the early 1950s in the Soviet Union. In Germany it was translated in 1955 and later used by Rolf Hochhuth in his play, *Der Stellvertreter*, and by Costa-Gavras in the film, *Amen*. More recently, it has been recalled that Agostino Casaroli was in total disagreement with this unfounded and unjust polemic regarding Pius XII, also because he saw reflected in it criticisms and polemics unleashed against the policies of the Popes that he had served. Indeed, the prelate from Emilia-Romagna was well able to experience and interpret this line of thought as well as those of religion and politics. He considered the silence of Pius XII to be a painful and dramatic choice, indeed without any better alternative, just as those of his Successors in relation to the Communist countries.

After two decades of Pope Pacelli – hastily labelled anti-Communist but in reality much more comprehensive – in the final weeks of the Pontificate of John XXIII, with Casaroli's first mission the Holy See's so-called eastern policy began, some years earlier than Germany's Ostpolitik, which would later change its name. Roncalli, a man of insight, a man who sowed seeds, was in fact responsible for the dawning of this policy toward Communist countries.

Without the decision of John XXIII, whose intuition led to the Second Vatican Council, Pope Montini [Paul VI] – in my own view

– would not have convoked it; he would instead have introduced into the Church the then urgent renewal and reform through the exercise of papal authority and responsibility. He had indeed glimpsed the complexity of the conciliar mechanism, yet immediately after his election in the Conclave he reconvened the assembly that had been interrupted by Roncalli's death. Paul VI then led the Council to its conclusion, as the true heir of his Predecessor, even though this obvious and indisputable fact has been overlooked by persistent historiographic interpretations when comparing the two Popes. Similarly, without the mission desired by John XXIII, perhaps Paul VI might not have resolved to send Casaroli so seemingly unprepared into the fray. He had indeed understood the extremely grave situation of the countries behind the Iron Curtain from the privileged vantage point of the Secretariat of State, and would probably have preferred to address this critical situation in other ways.



Casaroli with Gorbachev in 1989

Roncalli's insight and the eastern policy which Montini then decided to follow up – might appear to be providential to the believers – must still be studied and verified on the historical level. However, it can already be deemed positive, because the facts reveal an almost desperate attempt – not so much a *modus vivendi* with the Communist regimes as a *modus non moriendi* – to ensure at least a minimum of air to the Christian communities, not only Catholics, that were on the verge of suffocation. In Casaroli's memoirs it is striking to see how Real Socialism – which appeared invincible even to his eyes – came to be considered.

From the very first months of his Pontificate Paul VI assumed the eastern policy set in motion by his Predecessor, without shrinking from the situation: "Relations regarding the Fathers behind the Iron Curtain, what sorrow! She is not the Church

The book

Cardinal Agostino Casaroli was the Holy See's Secretary of State from 1979 to 1990. His signing of treaties with Hungary in 1964 and Yugoslavia in 1966 was the first time the Holy See entered relations with Communist regimes. His remarkable skill as a diplomat is already well-known, but it wasn't until the publication of recent memoirs that his personal feelings of hostility toward communism were revealed. Published here is our Editor-in-Chief's contribution (entitled: *Note su Casaroli e l'azione della Santa Sede nei Paesi comunisti*) to the book *Agostino Casaroli: lo sguardo lungo della Chiesa* (ed. by Antonio Chizzoniti, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2015, 24 euros). The volume commemorates the centenary of the birth of the man whom Bergoglio called the "paradigm of cardinal-mediator" in a homily in Buenos Aires on 6 September 2008.

had still to be written for the most part, into a sequential framework without clarifying its historical understanding. Therefore it is better to refer to the Holy See's activity in Communist countries.

The story's origins date back to the pontificate of Benedict XV, when in 1918 the Pontiff sent a high-ranking member of the clergy – not from the diplomatic corps but from

The 17th centenary of the birth of St Martin A double-jubilee in Hungary

In 2016, Hungary is celebrating a double-jubilee: the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, established by Pope Francis, and the celebration of the 17th centenary of the birth of St Martin. Indeed, in the year 316, the territory of present-day Hungary was the birthplace of Martin, perhaps one of the world's most well-known saints, thanks to the event in which he took the cloak off his back and shared it with a beggar.

Martin is considered the saint par excellence of charity and of the works of mercy, some of which are eminently linked to his birthplace, Pannonia.

Thus, he is excellent representative saint for the Jubilee called for by Pope Francis.

One of the most eloquent symbols of the happy coincidence of these two jubilees is represented by the Cathedral of Szombathely's new bronze doors, created for the anniversary and immediately inaugurated as the diocese's Holy Door of the Jubilee. The six panels that adorn it, work of the artist Gábor Veres, present the most important episodes of Martin's life.



Archbishop Paul Gallagher, Holy See Secretary for Relations with States, made an official visit to the United Kingdom from 1-4 March. He addressed a range of issues from migration and modern slavery to climate change and international co-operation with British government ministers.

He met with both David Lidington MP, the Minister for Europe, and Baroness Anelay, Foreign Office Minister in the House of Lords. They discussed a variety of issues, including the situation facing Christian communities in the Middle East, Ukraine, Kosovo and Cyprus. With Baroness Anelay he discussed shared priorities and the importance of Holy See's influence in international affairs.

The Secretary for Relations with States also met a number of other British Ministers. With the Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, he discussed migration and combating modern slavery. The Global Development Goals and the possibilities for international development cooperation across shared priorities were the main topics of conversation with Justine Greening MP, the Secretary of State for International Development. The Archbishop also discussed the situation in Northern Ireland with the Secretary of

State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers MP, and exchanged views on climate change and other environmental issues with Lord Borne of Aberystwyth, the Climate Change Minister.

Archbishop Gallagher dined with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace. He also discussed potential co-operation with the Commonwealth Secretary-General elect, Baroness Scotland of Asthal. Archbishop Gallagher was also the Guest of Honour at a reception and dinner in the Houses of Parliament. Finally the Secretary for Relations with States gave a talk to an invited audience from the Royal United Services Institute and St Mary's University, Twickenham, on "The Foreign Policy of the Holy See under Pope Francis".



Don't call it Ostpolitik

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of Silence but the Church of Pain, of Humiliation, and often the Church of Blood! A tragic and moving martyrology is being produced these years in the world!", he wrote in his notes. The same lucid perception is reflected in the opening Address of the second period of the Council and then in the programmatic Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, where there is an oft-forgotten part regarding Communist countries to which Cardinal Silvestrini refers in his introduction to Casaroli's memoirs. The introduction is somewhat reticent in regard to the attempt on John Paul II's life on 13 May 1981, even though Casaroli was convinced that the attempt originated in the secret services in the East Europe.

In light of Montini's striking awareness, opposition to the Vatican's Ostpolitik should be considered, evaluated and rejected on the historical level. This opposition is almost always Catholic in origin, but often with the strong political features of the right, such as the accusations with regard to the silence of Popes – particularly Pius XII but also of his Successors – and that of the Church. However, there are two interpretive difficulties in evaluating the policy conducted by the Holy See from 1963 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a line which in substance is still found to this day in relations with states where Communism or rather its current variants are in power; in search of a *modus non moriendi* for Catholic communities.

The first difficulty in evaluating this policy derives from a lack of awareness. In years now long past, between many of us Catholics – and I deliberately express this in the first

person plural – we did not understand what was happening and as a result we were unable to recognize those who were being persecuted, whom we considered too far to the right and therefore unrepresentable. This lack of awareness still today impedes a more balanced evaluation.

The other difficulty is due to the Holy See's archives being closed while many others are open: many papers remain to be read and this obviously makes a comprehensive and reliable evaluation difficult. One example, attested by the best biography of John Paul II, is the question of Karol Wojtyła's creation as Cardinal, a circumstance absent from Casaroli's memoirs and addressed in biographical reconstructions on the basis of Polish sources which seem to consider it as being due to the Ostpolitik. One result of the policy pursued by the Holy See with regard to Europe's Communist countries was the election of the Archbishop of Krakow in the second Conclave of 1978.

Everything changed with John Paul II, and an episode at the start of his pontificate is emblematic of this. On 5 November 1978 the Pope was leaving Assisi after a visit when a voice was raised in the crowd asking him not to forget the Church of Silence. Wojtyła, struck by this, turned toward the one who had spoken and instinctively responded: now the Church of Silence speaks through my voice – a phrase which perfectly expressed the change that

had taken place.

This change was so incisive as to lead to the attempt on his life on 13 May 1981, the anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady of Fatima. The Polish Pope alluded to this fact in a theological and mystical vision in parts of the Testament that he had written during that period: "In some Countries (as, for example, those I

*The fall of the Berlin wall
was the end of an era.*

*It was the fruit of the patient work
led by the Holy See over the course
of seven decades*



Casaroli with General Jaruzelski

read about during the spiritual exercises), the Church is in a period of persecution no less severe than the persecutions of the early centuries, indeed worse, due to the degree of ruthlessness and hatred. *Sanguis Martyrum – semen Christianorum* ["The blood of martyrs is the seed

of Christians' (Tertullian)]. And in addition to this, so many innocent people disappear, even in this Country in which we live...". Wojtyła wrote this in 1980, over a year before he was wounded. Two years later, on 5 March 1982, he added: "The attack on my life on 13 May 1981 in some way confirmed the exactness of the words I wrote during the spiritual exercises in 1980 (24 February-1 March)".

As far as the attempt in 1981 goes, although not completely clarified, the most likely motivation was the pointed criticism John Paul II leveled at Communism, particularly in the first part of his Pontificate. This was decisively confirmed by Wojtyła him-

self, who had previously touched on it in his Testament and thereafter never omitted. In a book published several weeks before the Pope's death, he explicitly linked the attempt on his life, once again to Fatima, as "one of the final convulsions of the arrogant ideologies unleashed during the twentieth century", explaining that "both Fascism and Nazism eliminated people, as did Communism", "here in Italy" by "the Red Brigade". The book [*Memory and Identity: Personal Reflections*] was based on conversations that Wojtyła had engaged in with two Polish philosophers in 1993, Józef Tischner and Krzysztof Michalski. When the volume was released, the Berlin Wall had fallen about 15 years before. Its fall had symbolically closed an era, and it too was the fruit of the patient work carried out by the Holy See in Communist countries over the course of seven decades. (G.M.V.)

women church world women church world women church world

Venerable Benedetta Bianchi Porro

A flower in winter

LUCINDA M. VARDEY

In the Church of St Anne at Sirmione, Lake Garda, Italy, stands a photograph of a young, elegant woman, wearing the fashionable loop earrings of the 1960s and she's smiling. Her dark eyes are focussed away from the camera, as if set on something far beyond rational understanding, the joys of love experienced from walking the Via Dolorosa under the weight of a very heavy cross.

Her complicated birth was to signal a future of suffering. Concerned for her life her mother promised the Lord that if she survived she would offer her for his service alone. When Benedetta was only three months old she contracted polio which left her with a permanent limp, the first of many physical afflictions. Having to wear an uncomfortable metal corset to help her posture, she struggled against self pity, writing in her diary that all she wanted was to

be "normal" like everybody else. In what could be perceived as prophetic, she added "I'd like to become someone significant" and then noted her tears and inner melancholy.

As a young woman, still determined to overcome her growing physical difficulties, she enrolled at the University of Milan to study physics but later changed to her first love, medicine, in order to fulfil her dream of becoming a doctor. Even with the advancing loss of her hearing, she passed all her exams but failed the last. Benedetta's body was clearly not able to keep up with her determination, and slowly began to close down.

Although suspected to be psychosomatic, her growing paralysis and deafness she rightly self-diagnosed as Von Recklinghausen's disease, an incurable advancing genetic disorder that attacks the nervous system. Despite multiple surgeries she was left bound to a wheelchair and even-

tually to the confines of her bedroom.

Benedetta kept in touch with friends through letters until she could no longer hold a pen, yet by that time, the impact of her personality and the greatness of her faith was already becoming contagious. Friends and strangers began to crowd her room experiencing the healing peace and serenity of her spirit. She welcomed all with loving warmth, honesty and friendship. Influenced by the example and teachings of St Thérèse of Lisieux, and the simplicity and poverty of St Francis, she also turned to the epistles of St Paul to encourage her in accepting strength from weakness.

She began to express gratitude beyond anyone's comprehension, writing "What a marvellous thing life is: how my soul is full of gratitude and love towards God for all this." Without her suffering, she explained to a friend, she would be unable to recognize the sufferings of others, citing how unfair it would be to spend her time consoling only herself.

Through the losses of eventually all her senses, the last two being taste and sight, Benedetta continued to selflessly serve and heal others. Cared for by her mother at home, she communicated through sign language (with one hand) and gave the world the messages she wanted to impart. Her spiritual life became so developed that, although blind, she was able to see into the souls of those who visited her, knowing what it was they needed before they did.

She discovered that silence provided the means by which God speaks to the soul, and in that complete silence of her senses, she grew in intimacy with Jesus, her Beloved



Benedetta Bianchi Porro (1936-1964)

Lucinda M. Vardey is the author of many books, including *Traveling with the Saints in Italy*, *Mother Teresa's A Simple Path*, *John XXIII: A Saint for the Modern World* and most recently as editor co-translator of *The Twelve Degrees of Silence* by Marie-Aimée de Jésus OCD. She is guardian of a newly-formed lay association in Toronto, Canada, called *The Contemplative Women of St Anne*, which engages in prayer and the study of women saints and mystics of the Church.

Morning Mass

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case, as Luke writes, they said: "No, this man casts out demons in the name of the prince of demons". They were always seeking other pretexts, the Gospel continues, "to put him to the test: they asked him for a sign from heaven". The underlying problem, the Pope remarked, was that they were "always closed". Therefore, "it was Jesus who had to justify what he did".

"This is the story, the history of failed faithfulness", Francis said, "the history of closed hearts, of hearts that would not let God's mercy enter, which had forgotten the word 'forgiveness' - 'Forgive me, Lord!' - simply because they did not feel they were sinners: they felt they were the judges of others". And this history goes on for centuries. "Jesus explains this failed faithfulness with two clear words in order to end the discussion with these hypocrites: 'Whoever is not with me is against me'. In the language Jesus used, the Pope said, it is clear: 'either you are faithful, with your heart open to God who is faithful to you, or you are against him: 'Whoever is not with me is against me'. Someone may think that there is perhaps 'a middle ground for negotiations', to escape the clarity of Jesus' words, 'either you are faithful or you are opposed'. In essence, Francis replied, 'there is a way out: confess, sinner!' Because 'if you say, 'I am a sinner', your heart opens, God's mercy enters, and you begin to be faithful".

Before continuing the celebration, the Pontiff advised that we

ask "the Lord for the grace of faithfulness", knowing that "the first step" on the "path of faithfulness is feeling we are sinners". Indeed, "if you do not feel you are a sinner, you have started off wrong". Therefore, Francis concluded, "let us ask for the grace that our hearts not harden, that they be open to God's mercy", and ask for "the grace of faithfulness". Let us also ask for the "grace to ask forgiveness" when we find we are unfaithful.

An initiative in India promotes cornea donation

Eyes for those who have never seen the world

A precious and practical gesture, one that is extremely symbolic: 60 Indian nuns belonging to various congregations have pledged to donate their eyes upon their death. They made this decision during a meeting organized by the Claretian Fathers of the Indian Institute of Spirituality of Bangalore. "Project Vision" aims at raising awareness for vision problems. Because India is home to a third of the world's blind people, the religious are committed not only to donating their corneas, but also to being "ambassadors of vision" in the places where they live and work.

"The program", organizer Fr George Kannanthan told AsiaNews, aims at making "citizens aware of the problem and motivat(ing) the sisters to work for this cause". In the Bible, Jesus "showed a special love for the blind, as evidenced by the six miracles of healing the blind present in the Gospels".



Lord. "You must give God to other people," she wrote once in her diary, "without charity nothing counts." After losing her sight, she whispered "How difficult it is, my God, to give with joy. I'm in the garden of the Mount of Olives."

At the end of a pilgrimage to Lourdes, she said "I don't need a cure. I've got faith and that's enough. I've come for other people." And this statement fed her intention to be small and to give extraordinary love in the ordinary everyday things of her day. "Anyone who draws closer to Jesus in pain will grow gentler," she advised a young visitor, "anybody who goes away becomes crueler without being aware of it."

Patience, Benedetta said, was "the weapon with which Christ conquered the shadows." She explained to a visiting priest, "Living we have to let him and him only know the sense of our life which he may at times let us glimpse." Quoting the Magnificat she acknowledged that "God had done in me great things, my soul glorifies the Lord."

After dreaming of a white rose lying in her family's tomb, Benedetta predicted her approaching death. On 23 January morning she passed away, her mother noticed a fresh white rose had opened in the garden. Her father noted that her long suffering distorted and exhausted face, turned as beautiful as when she was young.

Recognized as venerable by Pope St John Paul II, Benedetta Bianchi Porro's remains lie in a sarcophagus in the Abbey of San Andrea in her family's town of Dovadola near Forlì. The cause for her beatification continues.

To the Pontifical Academy for Life, Francis speaks about what is at stake when people are not protected by science

Virtues of humanity

The highest expression of human freedom and the best that the human heart has to offer

“Contemporary culture still maintains premises that affirm man, regardless of his condition of life, as a value to be protected”. Nevertheless, “it often falls victim to moral uncertainty, which does not enable it defend life effectively”. On Thursday morning, 3 March, in the Clementine Hall, Pope Francis received participants attending the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. The following is a translation of the Pope’s address with was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I offer my welcome to all of you, gathered for the General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life. I am especially pleased to meet Cardinal Sgreccia, always on his feet, thank you! These days will be dedicated to studying the practice of virtue in the ethics of life, a theme of academic interest, which addresses an important message to contemporary culture: the good that mankind accomplishes is not the result of calculations or policies, nor is it the result of hereditary genetics or of social status. Rather, it is the fruit of a willing heart, of free choice which seeks true goodness. Science and technology are not enough: doing good requires wisdom of heart.

In various ways, Sacred Scripture tells us that good or evil intentions do not enter the person from without, but come from within one’s ‘heart’. “From within”, Jesus said, “out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts” (Mk 7:21). In the Bible, the heart is the organ not only of feelings but of spiritual faculties, reason and will; it is the seat of decisions, and of the manner of thinking and acting. The wisdom of choice, open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, also concerns the heart. From here are born good works but also mistakes when the truth and the prompting of the Spirit are rejected. The heart, in other words, is the synthesis of humanity formed by the very hands of God (cf. Gen 2:7) and beheld by its Creator with singular satisfaction (cf.

Gen 1:31). God pours his own wisdom into the heart of man.

In our time, certain cultural orientations no longer recognize the imprint of divine wisdom in created things, not even in the person. Human nature is thus reduced to mere matter, pliable to any design. Our humanity, however, is unique and very precious in the eyes of God! For this reason, the first nature to safeguard, so that it may bear fruit, is our very humanity. We must give it the clean air of freedom and the life-giving water of truth. We must protect it from the poison of selfishness and falsehood. Then a great variety of virtues will be able to blossom in the soil of our humanity.

Virtue is the most authentic expression of good that man, with God’s help, is capable of achieving. “It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1803). Practising virtue is not a simple habit; it is the habit that is constantly renewed to choose to do good. Virtue is not an emotion, nor is it an ability acquired in a training course, much less a biochemical mechanism. It is the highest expression of human freedom. Virtue is the best that the human heart has to offer. When the heart moves away from goodness and from the truth contained in the Word of God, it is exposed to a multitude of dangers. It is deprived of direction and risks calling good evil, and evil good; virtue is lost, more easily replaced by sin, and then vice. Those who step onto this slippery slope fall into moral error and are burdened with an increasing sense of existential anguish.

Sacred Scripture shows us the dynamic of a hardened heart: the more the heart leans toward selfishness and evil, the harder it is to change. Jesus says: “every one who commits sin is a slave to sin” (Jn 8:34). When the heart is corrupted, the consequences in social life are grave, as the Prophet Jeremiah reminds us. I quote: “you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for



shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence” (22:17). This situation cannot be changed by theories or by social or political reform. Only if we cooperate can the work of the Holy Spirit reform our hearts. God himself, indeed, has assured his efficacious grace to those who seek him and to those who convert “with all their heart” (cf. Jl 2:12 ff.).

Today there are many institutions committed to the service of life, whether in research or assistance; they promote not only good actions, but also a passion for the good. But there are also many structures that are more concerned with economic interests than with the common good. To talk about virtue means to affirm that choosing the good involves and engages the whole person; it is not a question of “cosmetics”, an exterior adornment, which could not bear fruit. It is the uprooting of dishonest desires and the sincere quest for the good.

Also in the sphere of the ethics of life, the necessary norms, which support respect of the person, are not enough on their own to fully ensure man’s good. The virtue of one who works for the promotion of life is the ultimate guarantee that the good will really be respected. Today scientific knowledge and technical instruments are not lacking, its able to offer support to human life in weakest aspects. But humanity is so often lacking. Good actions are not the correct application of ethical wisdom, what is needed is a real interest in the frail person. The doctors and all health workers must always combine science, technology and humanity.

Therefore, I encourage universities to consider all this in their programmes of formation, so that the students can improve those dispositions of the heart and mind, which are indispensable to receive and take care of human life, according to the dignity that belongs to it in any circumstance. I also invite the directors

of health structures and of research to ask their employees to consider human treatment an integral part of their qualified service. In every case, may those who dedicate themselves to the defense and promotion of life be able to show first of all its beauty. In fact, as “it is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction’” (*Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 15), so human life is safeguarded and promoted effectively only when it is known and its beauty is shown. By experiencing genuine compassion and practising the other virtues, you will be privileged witnesses of the mercy of the Father of life.

While contemporary culture still keeps the premises that affirm man, regardless of his condition of life, as a value to be protected, it often falls victim to moral uncertainty, which does not enable it defend life effectively. Not infrequently then, it can happen that “splendid vices” parade themselves under the guise of virtue. Hence, it is necessary not only that virtue inform man’s thought and action in a real way, but that the virtues be cultivated continuously in discernment and that they be rooted in God, the source of all virtue. I would like to repeat here something I have said many times: we must beware of the new ideological colonization that invades human and Christian thought, under the pretense of virtue, modernity and new attitudes. It is actually colonization, that is, it takes away freedom. And it is an ideology, afraid of reality as God has created it. Let us ask the Holy Spirit for help, so that he will draw us out of egoism and ignorance. Renewed by him, we can think and act according to God’s heart and show his mercy to those who suffer in body and spirit.

My wish for you is that your work in these days may bear fruit and accompany you and all those you meet in your service on a path of virtuous growth. I thank you and I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

