

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH*Unicuique suum Non praevalent*

Forty-ninth year, number 12 (2439)

Vatican City

Friday, 25 March 2016

At the General Audience the Pope condemns the attacks in Belgium

## Blinded by fundamentalism

He asks that everyone unite in prayer for the victims and their families

*Pope Francis asked the faithful to join him in a 'Hail Mary' and in silent prayer "for the victims, for the injured, for the families and for all the people of Belgium", the day after the terrorist attacks of Tuesday, 22 March. At the General Audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday, 23 March, all the faithful present joined the Pontiff in showing solidarity with the Belgian people, especially the victims' relatives and all those who were wounded by the "cruel abominations that only cause death, dread or horror", as Francis defined such acts. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis which he gave in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning,

Our reflection on the mercy of God introduces us today to the Easter Triduum. We will live Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday as powerful moments that allow us to enter ever further into the great mystery of our faith: the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in these three days speaks of mercy, because it makes visible the extent of God's love. We will listen to the account of the final days of Jesus' life. John the Evangelist offers us the key to understanding its profound meaning: "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1). The love of God



Memorial at the Place de la Bourse in the centre of Brussels (AP)

has no bounds. As St Augustine often repeated, it is a love that goes "to the end without end". God truly offers all of himself for each of us and holds nothing back. The Mystery which we adore in this Holy Week is a great history of love which knows no obstacles. The Passion of Jesus lasts until the end of the world, because it is a story of sharing in the suffering of all humanity and a permanent presence in the events of the private life of each

of us. Indeed, the Easter Triduum is the commemoration of a drama of love which gives us the certainty that we will never be abandoned in life's trials.

On *Holy Thursday* Jesus institutes the Eucharist, anticipating in the Passover banquet his sacrifice on Golgotha. In order to make the Apostles understand the love which enlivens him he washes their feet,

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## Holy Thursday with refugees

RINO FISICHELLA

Pope Francis is spending Holy Thursday in Castelnuovo di Porto with young refugees at the reception centre for those seeking asylum, the *Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo*, or CARA. The simple but eloquent visit will include the celebration of the Rite of the Washing of Feet. The Pope will stoop to wash the feet of 12 refugees as a sign of service and attention to their situation.

During the Jubilee Audience held on Saturday, 12 March, in speaking about the act of the washing of feet, Pope Francis stated: "By washing the feet of the Apostles, Jesus wished to reveal God's mode of action in regard to us, and to give an example of his 'new commandment' (Jn 13:34) to love one another as He has loved us, that is, laying down his life for us". Delving deeper, he added that love "is the practical service that we offer to others. Love is not a word, it is a deed, a service; humble service, hidden and silent". Indeed, "it is expressed in the sharing of material goods, so that no one be left in need". It is, moreover, "the lifestyle that God suggests, even to non-Christians, as the authentic path of humanity."

In light of these considerations we can understand the symbolic value intended by Pope Francis' visit to the CARA and his bending down to wash the feet of refugees. His actions mean to tell us that it is important to pay due attention to the weakest in this historic moment; that we are all called to restore their dignity without resorting to subterfuge. We are urged to look forward to Easter with the eyes of those who make of their faith a life lived in service to those whose faces bear signs of suffering and violence.

Many of these young people are not Catholic. Therefore this gesture by Pope Francis takes on even more eloquence. It points to respect as the royal road to peace. Respect means being aware that there is another person beside me. A person who walks with me, suffers with me, rejoices with me. A person whom, one day, I may lean on for support. By washing the feet of refugees, Pope Francis implores respect for each one of them during this historic time.

Episcopal Ordination

## Behind every letter



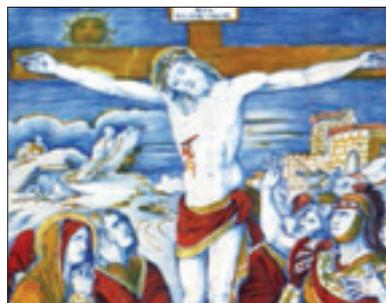
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The Stations of the Cross with Pope Francis

## God is Mercy

Every year on Good Friday, the Holy Father leads the *Via Crucis* at the Roman Colosseum – a place rich in meaning for early Christian martyrdom. This year, the meditations for Way of the Cross were written by Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, Archbishop of Perugia - Città della Pieve.

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*Holy See statement in Geneva*

The survival of minorities

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Breathe with the Church

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A love without end

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## VATICAN BULLETIN

### AUDIENCES

*Thursday, 17 March*

H.E. Mr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Republic of Portugal, with his entourage

Cardinal Giuseppe Versaldi, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education

Archbishop Nicola Girasoli, titular Archbishop of Egnazia Appula, Apostolic Nuncio in Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Jamaica, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname; Apostolic Delegate in Antilles; Plenipotentiary Representative of the Holy See to the Caribbean Community

H.E. Mr Félix Oudiane, Ambassador of Senegal, on a farewell visit

*Friday, 18 March*

Archbishop Diego Causero, titular Archbishop of Grado, Apostolic Nuncio

Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

*Monday, 21 March*

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

T.R.H. Grand Duke Henri and the Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, with their entourage

Archbishop Peter Bryan Wells, titular Archbishop of Marcanopolis, Apostolic Nuncio in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, with his relatives

Bishop Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, titular Bishop of Luperciana, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, with his relatives

Cardinal George Pell, Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy

H.E. Mr Antonius Agus Sriyono, Ambassador of Indonesia, for the presentation of his Letters of Credence

### CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Fr Luis Ángel de las Heras Berzal, CMF, as

Bishop of Mondoñedo-Ferrol, Spain. Until now he has been President of the Spanish Confederation of Religious (CONFER) (16 Mar.).

Bishop-elect de las Heras Berzal, 52, was born in Segovia, Spain. He made his perpetual profession for the Congregation of the Missionary Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 26 April 1986 and was ordained a priest on 29 October 1988. He holds a degree in ecclesiastical studies and in educational sciences. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the youth apostolate; assistant to the prefect for students at the Claretian Seminary of Colmejar Viejo, Madrid; formator for postulants; Superior and Master of Novices; provincial vicar and prefect of the major seminarians. In the Claretian Confederation of Aragón, Castilla and León, he has served as delegate of the superior for formation; prefect of spirituality and formation; provincial vicar; prefect of students and postulants; professor at the Theological Institute of Religious Life and the Regina Apostolorum School in Madrid.

The Holy Father appointed Fr José Albuquerque de Araújo as Auxiliary

Bishop of the Archdiocese of Manaus, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Altava (16 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Albuquerque de Araújo, 47, was born in Manaus, Brazil. He holds a licence in dogmatic theology with a specialization in liturgy, and a Master's in educational management. He was ordained a priest on 4 August 1996. He has served in parish ministry and as: coordinator of the Archdiocesan and Diocesan youth apostolate; formator of the philosophy community at São José Seminary; prefect of theological studies at the Institute of Pastoral Theology and Higher Education of Amazonia.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Luiz Carlos Dias from the clergy of São João da Boa Vista, as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Tunes. Until now he has been a member of the General Secretariat of the Episcopal Conference of Brazil (16 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Dias, 51, was born in Caconde, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 5 April 1991. He holds a licence in philosophy. He has served in parish ministry and as: rector of

the propaedeutic seminary; director of the Institute of Philosophy, rector of the Theology Seminary in Mogi Guaçu; coordinator of the missionary pastoral ministry and member of the presbyteral council.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Hippolyte Simon of Clermont, France. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law (17 Mar.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Giancarlo Vecerria of Fabriano-Matelica, Italy. It was presented in accord with can. 401 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law (18 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Stefano Russo from the clergy of the Diocese of Ascoli Piceno, Italy, as Bishop of Fabriano-Matelica. Until now he has been parish priest of Sts Peter and Paul Parish in the said Diocese (18 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Russo, 54, was born in Ascoli Piceno, Italy. He holds a diploma in telecommunications and degrees in architecture and theology. He was ordained a priest on 20 April 1991. He has served in parish ministry and as: president of the Commission for Religious Art and Cultural Heritage of the Diocese of Ascoli Piceno; member and regional head of the advisory council for the Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Episcopal Conference of The Marches region; head of the National Office for the Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Italian Episcopal Conference; member of the Commission for the cultural assets and events of The Marches region.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Oscar Hernán Blanco Martínez, OMD, as Bishop of San Juan Bautista de Calama, Chile. Until now he has been parish priest of Nuestra Señora del Carmen Parish in Rancagua (19 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Blanco Martínez, 51, was born in Puerto Domínguez, Chile. He made his religious profession for the Order of the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God on 17 March 1996 and was ordained a priest on 13 April 1997. He has served in parish ministry and as: chaplain to the Clínica Familia in Santiago; Master of Novices.

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## The Ambassador of Indonesia presents his Letters of Credence

H.E. Mr Antonius Agus Sriyono was born on 17 May 1957. He holds a degree in international relations and graduated in diplomacy. He has served as: third secretary at the Embassy to The Hague, the Netherlands (1988-1991); first secretary at Indonesia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York (1994-1998); deputy director of the Directorate of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000); minister counsellor at the Embassy in Lisbon, Portugal (2000-2004); office head of the Bureau of Planning and Organization (2004-2008); deputy head of mission in Moscow, Russia (2008-2010); ambassador of Wellington, New Zealand (2010-2013); deputy minister for foreign affairs at the Coordinating Ministry for Political and Legal and Security Affairs (2013-2016).



On Monday morning, 21 March, Pope Francis received H.E. Mr Antonius Agus Sriyono, Ambassador of Indonesia, for the presentation of Letters by which he is accredited to the Holy See.

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WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH  
Unicuique suum  Non praevalent

Vatican City  
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www.osservatoreromano.va

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Subscription rates: Italy - Vatican: € 58,000; Europe: € 100,00 - US\$ 148,00; Latin America, Africa, Asia: € 100,00 - US\$ 160,00 - £ 88,00; Oceania, North America: € 160,00 - US\$ 240,00 - £ 130,00.  
Management Office: phone +390669899480; fax +3906698985164; e-mail subscriptions@ossrom.va.  
For India: The weekly English Edition of L'Osservatore Romano is published and distributed in India by Camel International Publishing House, Cotton Hill, Tiruvandur - 605 014, Kerala-India; phone: +91477572723; fax: +91477528891; e-mail: ciph@india.ossrom.net.in; kottocoin@camelpublishers.com.  
For North America: L'Osservatore Romano (USPS 066-490) is published fifty times per year (weekly, except third week in August and last week in December) by Our Sunday Visitor, L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46730. Periodicals Postage Pending at Huntington, IN, and additional mailing offices, USA - phone: 800-348-2440 ext. 7; fax: 866-891-7300 - e-mail: osssales@ossrom.com.  
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Our Sunday Visitor, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46730

# At the General Audience

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offering once again in the first person the example of how they must act. The Eucharist is the love that becomes service. It is the sublime presence of Christ who wishes to relieve from hunger every man and woman, especially the weakest, to enable them to undertake a journey of witnessing amid the difficulties of the world. Moreover, in giving himself to us as food, Jesus attests that we must learn to share this nourishment with others so that it may become a true communion of life with those who are in need. He gives himself to us and asks us to dwell in him in order to do likewise.

*Good Friday* is the culminating moment of love. The death of Jesus, who on the Cross surrenders himself to the Father in order to offer salvation to the entire world, expresses love given to the end, a love without end. A love that seeks to embrace everyone, that excludes no one. A love that extends over time and space: an inexhaustible source of salvation to which each of us, sinners, can draw. If God has shown us his supreme love in the death of Jesus, then we too, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, can and must love one another.

Lastly, *Holy Saturday* is the day of God's silence. It must be a day of silence, and we must do everything possible so that for us it may truly be a day of silence, as it was in that time: the day of the silence of God. Jesus laid in the sepulchre shares with all of humanity in the tragedy



of death. It is a silence which speaks and expresses love as solidarity with those who have always been neglected, whom the Son of God reaches, filling the emptiness that only the infinite mercy of God the Father can fill.

God is silent, but out of love. On this day, love – that silent love – becomes the expectation of life in the resurrection. Let us think about Holy Saturday: it will do us good to consider the silence of Our Lady, “the Believer”, who awaited the Resurrection in silence. Our Lady will be, for us, the icon of Holy Sat-

urday. Think hard about how Our Lady lived that Holy Saturday; in expectation. It is love that has no doubt, but which hopes in the word of the Lord, that it may be made manifest and resplendent on the day of Easter.

It is all a great mystery of love and mercy. Our words are poor and insufficient to express it fully. We may find helpful the experience of a young woman, not very well known, who wrote sublime pages about the love of Christ. Her name was Julian of Norwich. She was illiterate, this girl who had visions of the passion of Jesus and who then, after becoming a recluse, described, with simple but deep and intense language, the meaning of merciful love. She said: “Then our good Lord asked me: ‘Are you glad that I suffered for you?’. I answered him: ‘Yes, good Lord, and I am most grateful to you; yes, good Lord, may You be blessed’. Then Jesus, our good Lord, said: ‘If you are glad, so too am I. Having suffered the passion for you is for me joy, happiness, eternal bliss; and if I could suffer more I would’”. This is our Jesus, who says to each of us: “If I could suffer more for you, I would”.

How beautiful these words are! They allow us to truly understand the immense and boundless love

that the Lord has for each one of us. Let us allow ourselves to be wrapped in this mercy which comes to meet us; and in these days, as we keep our gaze fixed on the passion and death of the Lord, let us receive in our heart his boundless love and, like Our Lady on Saturday, in silence, await the Resurrection.

*After the Angelus, the Holy Father said:*

With a heavy heart I have followed the appalling news of the terrorist attacks that happened yesterday in Brussels, which caused many deaths and injuries. I assure my prayers and my closeness to the dear Belgian people, to all the families of the victims and to all the injured. I renew the appeal to all people of good will to join in the unanimous condemnation of these cruel abominations that only cause death, dread or horror. I ask everyone to persevere in prayer and in asking the Lord, in this Holy Week, to comfort suffering hearts and to convert the hearts of these people blinded by cruel fundamentalism, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary. Let us pray: “*Hail Mary, ...*”. Now in silence, let us pray for the victims, for the injured, for the families and for all the people of Belgium.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including those from Ireland, Australia, Indonesia, Japan and the United States. With cordial good wishes for a blessed Easter, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

May the visit to the Eternal City on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy make everyone rediscover the joy of giving, through the works of mercy, which fills the heart more than receiving.

I address a special thought to *young people, the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow begins the Easter Triduum, the heart of the liturgical year. Dear *young people*, may Easter enable you to reflect on God's love for us demonstrated by dying on the Cross; dear *sick people*, may Good Friday teach you patience in the dark moments of the cross; and may you, dear *newlyweds*, fill your new family with the joy of the Resurrection.

## Pope Francis condemns the attacks in Belgium

### An act of war

Brussels, a symbol of the European Union, was struck by several terrorist attacks on Tuesday morning, 22 March, which claimed the lives of at least 31 people and injured perhaps as many as 300. Between 7 and 8 am two serious explosions took out a section of Brussel's airport in Zaventem. Within an hour, there was a third explosion at the Maalbeek metro station in the city's centre which killed 20 and wounded many. The so-called Islamic State has claimed responsibility and threatens more to come. Security has been stepped up around the world and all of Europe is on high alert.

Upon learning of the attack, Pope Francis expressed his grief and his solidarity with families of the victims in a telegram signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and addressed to Archbishop Josef De Kesel of Mechelen-Brussels. The Pope “again condemns the blind violence which causes so much suffering and, asking God for the gift of peace, he entrusts the bereaved families and the Belgian people with the goodness of divine blessings”.

Again, at Mass on Thursday evening the Holy Father spoke out

against the attacks, linking them to Gospel events. “An act. Three days ago, an act of war, of destruction in a European city, by people who do not want to live in peace. But behind that act, as behind Judas, were others. Behind Judas were those who paid money for Jesus to be delivered. Behind ‘that’ act [in Brussels] are weapons producers and traffickers who want blood, not peace; who want war, not brotherhood”.



Citizens gather to grieve at a makeshift memorial in central Brussels (AFP)



With great sorrow the Secretariat of State announces the death of

**MSGR MIGUEL  
HUGUET AMELLER**

formerly Office Head of the Section for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State

Superiors and colleagues mourn together with family members, assuring them of their prayers and spiritual closeness.

Francis confers episcopal ordination on Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot and Peter Bryan Wells

## Behind every letter is a person

*Pope Francis conferred episcopal ordination on Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot and Peter Bryan Wells. During the Rite held in St Peter's Basilica on Saturday morning, 19 March, the Pontiff pronounced in substance the ritual homily provided in the Italian edition of the Roman Pontifical for the ordination of bishops, to which he added several personal thoughts. The following is a translation of the homily, which was delivered in Italian.*

Beloved Brothers and Sons,

It will do us good to carefully consider the great ecclesial responsibility to which these brothers of ours have been called.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by the Father to redeem the human race, in turn sent the Twelve Apostles into the world so that, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, they might preach the Gospel to all people and unite them under one Shepherd, and that they might sanctify them and guide them to salvation.

In order to perpetuate this apostolic ministry from one generation to the next, the Twelve chose other men to share in their work. Through the laying on of hands, they passed on to them the gift of the Spirit which they themselves had received from Christ, thereby conferring the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders. Thus, through an uninterrupted succession of bishops this earliest ministry has been preserved in the living Tradition of the Church, and the work of the Saviour

continues and develops to our own day.

In the bishop surrounded by his priests, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal High Priest, is present in your midst. For it is Christ who, through the ministry of the bishop, continues to preach the Gospel of salvation and to sanctify believers by means of the sacraments of faith. It is Christ who, through the paternal role of the bishop, draws new members to his body which is the Church. It is Christ who, in the wisdom and prudence of the bishop, guides the People of God along their pilgrimage here on earth until at last they reach eternal bliss. Christ who preaches, Christ who creates the Church, Christ who nourishes the Church, Christ who guides: this is the bishop.

Therefore, welcome with gratitude and joy these brothers of ours whom we bishops are about to receive into the episcopal college by the laying on of hands. Render to them the honour that is owed to the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God, to whom the testimony of the Gospel and the ministry of the Spirit for sanctification have been entrusted. Remember Jesus' words to the Apostles: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16).

As for you, dearest brothers, chosen by the Lord, consider that you have been chosen from among men and for men; you have been appointed to the things pertaining to God. Indeed, "episcopacy" is the



name of a service, not of an honour, therefore a bishop must strive to serve rather than to rule, according to the Master's commandment: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all". Be servants. Of all: of the greatest and of the least. Of all. But always be servants, serving.

Proclaim the Word at every opportune and inopportune occasion. Admonish, reproach, exhort with all magnanimity and doctrine. And, through preaching and offerings of Sacrifice for your people, draw from the fullness of the sanctity of Christ the manifold richness of divine grace. Do not forget that the bishop's first task is prayer. Peter said this on the day of the election of the seven deacons. The second task is proclaiming the Word. Then come the others, but the first is prayer. If a bishop does not pray, he will be able to do nothing.

In the Church entrusted to you, be faithful custodians and dispensers of the mysteries of Christ. As the Father has placed you at the head of his family, always follow the example of the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep: behind every document, there is a person. Behind every letter that you receive, there is a person. May those people be known by you and may you be capable of knowing them.

Love with a fatherly and brotherly love all those whom God entrusts to you. First the presbyters and deacons. It makes one cry how often one hears that a priest has asked to speak with his bishop and the secretary has told him: "He has so many things to do, he will not be able to receive you for three months". The bishop's first neighbour is his presbyter, his priest, his first neighbour. If you do not love the first neighbour, you will not be capable of loving all. Close to the presbyters, to the deacons, to your collaborators in the ministry, close to the poor, the defenceless and those in need of acceptance and help. Look the faithful in the eye! Not crosswise, but in the eye, in order to see the heart. May your faithful, whether presbyter, deacon or lay person, be able to see your heart. Always look them in the eye.

Pay careful attention to those who do not belong to the one fold of Christ, because they too have been entrusted to you in the Lord. Remember that in the Catholic Church, made one by the bond of charity, you are united to the College of Bishops and you must carry within you the solicitude of all Churches, caring generously for those who are most in need of help.

Watch lovingly over the whole flock, among whom the Holy Spirit places you in order to support the Church of God. Do this in the name of the Father, whose image you make present; in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, by whom you were constituted teachers, priests and shepherds; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and whose power sustains us in our weakness.

May the Lord accompany you, may he be near you on this path which you begin today.

Already more than 1.5 million followers on Instagram

### @Franciscus and the path of tenderness

"I am beginning a new journey on Instagram, walking with you down the path of God's mercy and tenderness". With these few words Pope Francis introduced himself to

Instagram users late Saturday morning, 19 March. As was widely covered in the media, the Holy Father joined Instagram on the liturgical feast of St Joseph, which coincided with the third anniversary of his pontificate. And in just a few hours, @Franciscus had more than 1.5 million followers on the popular social network.

After the episcopal ordinations in the Vatican Basilica, Francis removed his liturgical vestments and went to the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where he met with Msgr Lucio Adrian Ruiz, Secretary of the Secretariat for Communications, and Kevin Systrom, cofounder and CEO of Instagram.

Smiling, the Pontiff read the prepared Italian text and then with one click on a black tablet posted a video. Almost

simultaneously the first images from *L'Osservatore Romano* Photo Service appeared. A photo of the Pope in prayer circled the globe and his account began to receive "likes" in every language.

Like other Instagram accounts, @Franciscus will include individual photographs, photo albums and 15-second videos. The photos will sometimes have brief captions of up to 150 characters.

The photographs have been chosen to "highlight aspects of the closeness and inclusion that the Pope lives every day", explained Msgr Dario Edoardo Viganò, Prefect of the Secretariat for Communications. The editorial staff of the dicastery will manage the account. Msgr Viganò also noted that the Instagram account was launched during the Year of Mercy in order to demonstrate the tenderness of Pope Francis. "Thus the Jubilee", the Prefect continued, "has entered social media in a practical and natural way".



The Via Crucis on Good Friday with the Holy Father

# God is Mercy

*The Meditations for the 14 Stations of the Cross – which Pope Francis will lead at the Colosseum during the evening of Good Friday, 25 March – were written by Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, Archbishop of Perugia-Città della Pieve. The Cardinal entitled his reflection “God is Mercy”. The text will also be published by the Vatican Publishing House [LEV]. The images – taken from the booklet prepared by the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff – reproduce several of the illustrations of the Via Crucis depicted on ceramic tiles in 1930 by Alfredo Santarelli (1874-1957) for the chapel of the archdiocesan seminary in Perugia. The following is the English text.*

## Introduction

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation (2 Cor 1:3).

In this extraordinary Jubilee Year, we are drawn to the Way of the Cross of Good Friday by a particular power, the mercy of our Heavenly Father, who wishes to fill us with his Spirit of grace and consolation.

Mercy is the channel of grace which God bestows upon all the people of today: men and women too often lost and confused, materialistic and idolatrous, poor and alone, who belong to a society that seems to have abandoned the notion of sin and truth.

“They will look on him whom they have pierced” (Zech 12:10). This evening, may the prophetic words of Zechariah be fulfilled in us! May our gaze rise from our abject poverty to look upon him, Christ our Lord, who is Merciful Love. Then we will be able to see his face and hear him say: “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jer 31:3). By his forgiveness, he wipes away our sins and opens to us the way of holiness, on which we will embrace our cross, together with him, out of love for our brothers and sisters. The font which has washed away our sins will become in us “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14).

Let us pray.

Eternal Father,  
through the Passion of your beloved Son,  
you wished to reveal to us your heart  
and bestow upon us your mercy.  
In union with Mary, his Mother and ours,  
may we know how to always  
welcome and protect the gift of love.  
May she, the Mother of Mercy,  
present you with the prayers  
we raise for ourselves and for all  
humanity,  
so that the grace of this Way of the Cross  
may reach every human heart  
and fill them with new hope,  
that unending hope  
which radiates from the cross of  
Jesus,  
who lives and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

From the Gospel according to Mark (15:14-15). *Pilate said to them, “What evil has he done?”. But they*

*shouted all the more, “Crucify him!”. So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

Jesus is alone before the powers of this world. He subjects himself completely to human justice. Pilate finds himself before a mystery which he cannot understand. He asks questions and demands explanations. He is searching for a solution and he almost makes it to the threshold of truth. But he decides not to cross it. Between life and truth, he chooses his own life. Between the present and eternity, he chooses the present.

The crowd chooses Barabbas and abandons Jesus. The crowd wants earthly justice and the one who they think can bring it about; they abandon the man who could free them from oppression and from the yoke of slavery. But Jesus' justice is not brought about through a revolution; it comes by way of the scandal of the cross. Jesus casts aside every plan for liberation because he takes upon himself the evil of the world, and he does not respond to evil with evil. The people do not understand that from the defeat of man can come the justice of God.

Today each of us is an integral part of that crowd which cries out “Crucify him!”. None of us are ex-



empted. The crowd and Pilate, in fact, are driven by a sentiment that unites all people: fear. Fear of losing their security, their possessions, their life. But Jesus shows us another way.



Lord Jesus,  
how similar we are to these people.  
How much fear there is in our life!  
We are afraid of those different from us, foreigners, migrants.  
We are afraid of the future,  
of the unexpected, of misery.  
How much fear there is in our families, our workplaces, our cities....  
And perhaps we are also afraid of God:  
the fear of divine justice  
born of little faith,  
poor self-knowledge,  
and doubtfulness of his mercy.  
Lord Jesus, condemned by men and women full of fear,  
free us from fear of your judgment.  
Do not allow our anguished cries to prevent us  
from hearing your gentle invitation:  
“Be not afraid!”.

## SECOND STATION

Jesus takes up his Cross.

From the Gospel according to Mark (15:20). *When they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak, and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.*

Fear has passed judgment, but is not able to reveal itself and so hides behind worldly conduct: mocking, humiliation, violence and derision. Jesus is now robed in his garments, in his humanity alone, sorrowful and bloody, without any royal colours or other sign of his divinity. And this is how Pilate presents him: “Behold the man!” (Jn 19:5).

This is the condition of all who follow Christ. A Christian does not seek the world's approval or the consensus of public opinion. A Christian does not flatter or lie to gain power. A Christian accepts the mockery and derision which come from love of truth.

“What is truth?” (Jn 18:38), Pilate asked Jesus. This is a question for every age, including our own. Behold truth: the truth of the Son of Man foretold by the Prophets (cf: Is 52:13-53:12), a disfigured human face which reveals God's faithfulness.

Too often, however, we go off in search of a cheap truth, which may offer comfort to our lives, and may respond to our insecurities and even satisfy our basest curiosities. And so, we content ourselves with partial and apparent truths, fooled by “the prophets of doom who always proclaim the worst” (St John XXIII) or skilled pipers who lull our hearts with alluring music that draws us away from the love of Christ.

The Word of God became man, and came to share with us the truth in its entirety, about God and about man.

It is God who takes up the cross (cf. Jn 19:17)  
and sets out on the path of merciful self-giving.

And the man fulfilled in truth is the one who follows this same path.

Lord Jesus,  
may we contemplate you in the theophany of the cross,  
the height of your revelation,  
and may we recognize ourselves in the mysterious splendour of your face.

## THIRD STATION

Jesus falls for the first time

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (53:4, 7). *And yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours were the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God and brought low. Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, never opening his mouth.*

Jesus is the lamb, foretold by the prophet, who bears the burden of all humanity's sin. He takes upon himself the weakness of those whom he loves, their sorrows and offences, their iniquities and misfortunes. We have come to the extreme limits of the incarnation of the Word. But there is yet a lower point: Jesus falls under the weight of this cross. A God who falls!

In this fall, Jesus gives meaning to humanity's suffering. Suffering can at times seem to us an absurdity, incomprehensible to the mind, an omen of death. There are moments of suffering which seem to deny God's love. Where is God in death camps? Where is he in mines and factories where children work like slaves? Where is God in the boats sinking in the Mediterranean?

Jesus falls under the weight of the cross, but he is not crushed by it. Behold, Christ is there; an outcast among outcasts, a failure among so many other failures, a fallen victim among so many shipwrecked souls.

God takes all of this upon himself; a God who out of love does not show his omnipotence. But in that way, precisely in that way, having fallen on the ground like a grain of wheat, God is faithful to himself: faithful in love.

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We pray to you, Lord, for all those moments of suffering which seem to make no sense, for Jews who died in the death camps, for Christians killed out of hatred towards the faith, for victims of every persecution, for children enslaved through work, for the innocent who die in war. Help us understand, Lord, how great is the freedom and interior strength in this unprecedented revelation of your divinity, so human as to fall under the cross of humanity's sins, so divinely merciful as to defeat the evil which was oppressing us.

**FOURTH STATION**  
Jesus meets his Mother

From the Gospel according to Luke (23:34-35, 51). *Simon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed".... And his mother kept all these things in her heart.* God wanted life to come into the world through the pangs of childbirth: by means of the suffering of a mother who brings life into the world. All of us need a Mother, even God. "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14), in the



womb of a Virgin. Mary received him, brought him to the light of day in Bethlehem, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, protected him and raised him with the warmth of her love; and she accompanied him to his "hour". Now, at the foot of Calvary, the prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled: a sword pierces her heart. Mary sees her Son once again, disfigured and exhausted under the weight of the cross. Her eyes filled with a mother's sorrow, Mary shares to the very end in her Son's suffering; and yet her eyes are also full of hope. From the day of her "yes" to the Angel's message (cf. Lk 1:26-38), her eyes have never stopped reflecting the divine light which shines forth even on this day of suffering.

Mary is Joseph's spouse, and Jesus' mother. Then, as now, the family is the

beating heart of society; the inalienable cell of everyday life; the irreplaceable lintel of human relations; unending love that will save the world.

Mary is woman and mother. Feminine sensitivity and tenderness. Wisdom and charity. As the mother of all, Mary "is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. She is the missionary who draws near to us and accompanies us throughout life, opening our hearts to faith by her maternal love. As a true mother, she walks at our side, she shares our struggles and she constantly surrounds us with God's love" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 286).

O Mary, Mother of the Lord, you were the first reflection of the Father's mercy for your divine Son, the mercy which you asked of him at Cana. As your Son reveals his Father's countenance to us even to the supreme consequences of love, you place yourself silently on his path, the first disciple of the cross. O Mary, faithful Virgin, look after all the orphans of our world, protect all women subjected to exploitation and violence. Bring forth courageous women for the good of the Church. Inspire every mother to teach her own children the tenderness of God's love, and, in the hour of trial, to accompany them on their way with the silent strength of her faith.

**FIFTH STATION**  
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the cross

From the Gospel according to Mark (15:21-22). *They compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufius, to carry Jesus' cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of the skull).*

In the history of salvation an unknown man appears. Simon of Cyrene, a worker who was returning from the fields, is forced to carry the cross. It is in him that the grace of the love of Christ, which passes through the Cross, first begins to act. And Simon, forced to carry this weight against his own will, becomes a disciple of the Lord.

Suffering, when it knocks at our door, is never expected. It always appears as a limitation, sometimes even an injustice. And it can find us dramatically unprepared. An illness could ruin our life's plans. A disabled child could disturb the dreams of motherhood so long desired. That unwelcome ordeal, however, knocks forcefully on the hearts of men and women. How do we behave when confronted with the suffering of someone we love? How attentive are we to the cry of someone suffering who lives far from us?

The Cyrenean helps us to enter into the fragility of the human soul and reveals another aspect of Jesus' humanity. For even the "Son of God" needed someone to help him carry the cross. Who then is the Cyrenean? He is God's mercy made present in the history of mankind. God gets his hands dirty with us, with our sins and our frailty. He is not ashamed of this. And he does not abandon us.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for this gift which surpasses our every hope and which reveals your mercy to us.



Not only have you loved us by granting us salvation, but also by making us instruments of salvation. While your cross gives meaning to every cross, to us is given the supreme grace in life: to participate actively in the mystery of redemption, to be instruments of salvation for our brothers and sisters.

**SIXTH STATION**  
Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (53:2-3). *He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Amidst the confusion of the crowd following Jesus to Calvary, Veronica appears, a woman whose face and life is unknown. And yet she is a courageous woman, ready to listen to the Spirit and to follow his inspirations. She is able to recognize the glory of the Son of God in the marred face of Jesus, and to perceive his invitation to her: "All you who pass by, look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow" (Lam 1:12).

Love, which this woman incarnates, leaves us speechless. Love renders her strong enough to challenge the guards, to overcome the crowd, to draw close to the Lord and perform an act of compassion and faith: stopping the blood from his wounds, drying his tears of pain, contemplating his disfigured face, behind which hides the face of God.



"Your face, O Lord, do I seek" (Ps 27:8). Help me to see your face in my brothers and sisters who walk the way of pain and humiliation.

Teach me to dry the tears and blood of those trodden down in every age, of all those ruthlessly cast aside by a rich and unscrupulous society. Help me to glimpse your face of infinite beauty behind every human face, even the most abandoned.

**SEVENTH STATION**  
Jesus falls for the second time

From the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (53:5). *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.*

Jesus falls again. Crushed but not killed by the weight of the cross. Once again he bares his humanity. It is an experience of the limits of powerlessness,

# God is Mercy

## The Stations of the Cross with Pope Francis at the Colosseum on Good Friday

ness, of shame in front of those mocking him, of humiliation before those who had hoped in him. No one ever wants to fall and experience failure, especially in front of other people. People often rebel against the idea of having no power, of being unable to move ahead in life. Jesus, instead, embodies the "power of the powerless". He experiences the torment of the cross and the salvific power of faith. Only God can save us. Only he can transform a sign of death into a glorious cross.

If Jesus has fallen to the ground a second time by the weight of our sin, then we must also accept our falls, that we have fallen in the past, and that we are capable of falling again by our sins. Let us recognize our inability to save ourselves by our own strength.

Lord Jesus, who accepted the humiliation of falling again as everyone looked on, we would like not only to contemplate you lying in the dust, but to do so from where we ourselves have fallen due to weaknesses. Make us aware of our sins, and give us the will, born of pain, to get up again. Bestow upon your whole Church the awareness of suffering. Offer especially to your ministers of Reconciliation the gift of tears for their own sins. How can they beseech your mercy for themselves and others if they do not first know how to mourn their own faults?

**EIGHTH STATION**  
Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

From the Gospel according to Luke (23:27-28). *And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."* Jesus, overcome with pain and seeking consolation from the Father, still feels compassion for the people following him. He turns to the women accompanying him on the way to Calvary: his is a powerful call to conversion.

Do not weep for me, says the Nazarene, because I am doing my Father's will. Rather weep for yourselves and all those occasions that you fail to do God's will. It is the Lamb of God who speaks and who in carrying the sin of the world purifies the gaze of these daughters, which is already turned towards him, though still imperfectly. To the Innocent One, their grief seems to cry out: "What must we do?" This is the same question which the crowds had put to the Baptist (cf. Lk 3:10), and



which was repeated by Peter's contrite listeners after Pentecost: "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37). The response is clear and simple: "Repent". A conversion that is personal and communal. "Pray for one another, that you may be healed" (Jas 5:16). There is no conversion without charity. And charity is the way of the Church.

Lord Jesus, may your grace sustain our journey of conversion so that we can turn to you, in communion with our brothers and sisters, on whom we ask you to bestow your infinite mercy, and, with a love as deep as a mother's, enable us to be tender and compassionate towards one another, even to giving our very selves for the salvation of our neighbour.

**NINTH STATION**  
Jesus falls for the third time

From the Letter to the Philippians (2:6-7). *Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not count equality with God something to be grasped, but rather emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

Jesus falls for the third time. The son of God experiences the depths of the human condition. With this fall he enters even more fully into the history of humanity. He accompanies suffering humanity in every moment: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20).

How often men and women fall! How often men, women and children suffer because of a broken family! How often men and women believe they

have no dignity because they have no work. How often young people are forced to live in uncertainty, leading them to lose hope for the future!

The person who falls, and who contemplates the God who has fallen, is the man or woman who finally can admit their own weakness and powerlessness without fear or despair, precisely because God has experienced the same through his Son. It is out of mercy that God abases himself to this extent, to the point of lying prostrate in the dust of the street. Dust dampened by the sweat of Adam and the blood of Jesus and all the martyrs of history; the dust blessed by the tears of so many of our brothers and sisters who have fallen victim to violence and exploitation. It is for this dust – blessed, violated, desecrated and despoiled by human selfishness – that the Lord saved his last embrace.

Lord Jesus, prostrated on this parched earth, you are near to all who suffer; you place in their hearts the strength to rise again.

I pray, God of mercy, for all who have fallen for whatever reason: personal sin, marriages which have broken down, loneliness, loss of work, family difficulties, worry for the future. Help them to know that you are not far from them, because those closest to you, who are Mercy incarnate, are those most aware of their need for forgiveness and who continue to hope against all hope!

**TENTH STATION**

Jesus is stripped of his garments

From the Gospel according to Mark (15:24). *And they crucified him, and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take.*

At the foot of the cross, beneath the Crucified One and the suffering criminals, there are the soldiers arguing over Jesus' garments. This is the banality of evil.

The expression on the soldiers' faces is so distant and far removed from the suffering and events unfolding around them. It is as if it does not affect them. While the Son of God is undergoing the torments of the cross, they continue undeterred to live a life ruled exclusively by their passions. This is the great paradox of the freedom that God has granted to his own children. Faced with Jesus' death, every man and woman is able to choose: to contemplate Christ or to "cast lots".

The distance between the Crucified One and his executioners is vast. The pitiless game played for the garments does not allow them to grasp the meaning of that defenceless and despised body, mocked and martyred, in which the divine will is accomplished for the salvation of all humanity.

The body which the Father "prepared" for his Son (cf. Ps 40:7; Heb 10:5) now reveals the love of the Son for his Father and the total gift of Jesus to humanity. That body stripped of everything except love, contains in itself the immense suffering of humanity and reveals all its wounds; above all, the most painful ones: the wounds of children who have been violated.

That silent and bloodied body, scourged and humiliated, shows the path of justice; the justice of God which transforms the most atrocious suffering by the light of the resurrection.

Lord Jesus, I want to bring you all of suffering humanity. The bodies of men and women, of children and the elderly, of the sick and disabled whose dignity is not respected. So much violence through history has struck what is most intimate in humanity, what is sacred and blessed because it comes from God. We pray, Lord, for those who have been violated to the depths of their being. For those unable to appreciate the mystery of their own body, for those unable to accept beauty or who disfigure it, for those who do not respect the vulnerability and sanctity of the body that ages and dies. And that, one day, will rise again!

**Eleventh Station**  
Jesus is crucified

From the Gospel according to Luke (23:39-43). *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*



Jesus is on the cross, the "lovely and refulgent tree", "nuptial bed, throne and altar" (Liturgical Hymn *Behold the Banner of the Cross*). From the heights of this throne, the focal point of the entire universe (cf. Jn 12:32), Jesus forgives his persecutors "because they know not what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). On Christ's cross, "the instrument of our redemption" (*Behold the Banner of the Cross*), shines forth an

# Via Crucis at the Colosseum

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omnipotence which reveals itself, a wisdom which humbles itself to the point of folly, a love which offers itself in sacrifice.

On either side of Jesus are two criminals, probably murderers. These two criminals speak to the heart of every person because they show two different ways of being on the cross: the first one curses God; the second recognizes God on the cross. The first criminal proposes a solution which is more comfortable for everyone. He proposes a human salvation and he only looks downwards. Salvation for him is escaping from the cross and eliminating suffering. It is the mentality of a throwaway culture. He asks God to eliminate everything that is not useful and unworthy of being experienced.

The second criminal, however, does not bargain. He proposes a divine salvation, keeping his gaze turned entirely towards heaven. For him, salvation means accepting the will of God even in the worst conditions. It is the triumph of a culture of love and forgiveness. It is the folly of the cross against which all human wisdom can only fade away and fall silent.

O Crucified One,  
nailed to the cross out of love,  
grant me your forgiveness which  
forgets,  
and your mercy which creates anew.  
May I experience,  
in every confession,  
the grace that created me in your  
image and likeness  
and that renews me every time I  
entrust my life,  
with all of its sufferings,  
to the merciful hands of the Father.  
May your forgiveness resound for me  
as the assurance of a love that saves  
me,  
that makes me new and allows me to  
remain with you for ever.  
Then I shall be truly a wrongdoer  
who is graced,  
and each time you pardon me will  
be like a foretaste of Heaven,  
from this day onwards.

## TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the cross

From the Gospel according to Mark (15:33-39). *And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?", which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah". And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down". And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!".*

Darkness at midday: something absolutely unheard of and unexpect-

ted is happening, which is not only of this world. Man is killing God! The Son of God was crucified as a criminal.

Jesus turns towards the Father, crying out the first words of Psalm 22. It is a cry of suffering and desolation, but also of complete "trust in the divine victory" and of "the certainty of glory" (Benedict XVI, *Catechesis*, 14 September 2011).

The cry of Jesus is that of every crucified person through the ages, everyone who has been abandoned or humiliated, the cry of the martyr and the prophet, of those vilified and unjustly condemned, of those in exile or in prison. It is the cry of human desperation that leads, however, to the victory of faith which transforms death into eternal life. "I will tell of your name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you" (Ps 22:22).

Jesus dies on the cross. Is it the death of God? No, it is the most solemn celebration of the witness of faith.

The 20th century has been defined as the century of martyrs. Examples such as Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein express an immense light. Today too, the Body of Christ is crucified in many parts of the world. The martyrs of the 21st century are true apostles of the modern world.

In this great darkness the faith is kindled: "Truly, this man was the Son of God!", because he who dies in this way, turning the desperation of death into hope for life, cannot be a mere man.



The Crucified One is a total offering.

He has held back nothing, not a shred of his clothing, not a drop of his blood, not even his own Mother.

He has given everything: "Consummatum est".

When one no longer has anything left to give because he has given everything, then he is able to offer true gifts.

Stripped, naked, overcome by the wounds, by the thirst of abandonment, by insults:

He is no longer the image of a man. To give everything: this is charity. Where what is mine ends, paradise begins.

(Don Primo Mazzolari)

## THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the Cross

From the Gospel according to Mark (15: 42-43, 46a). *When evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.... And he bought a linen shroud, and took him down.*

Joseph of Arimathea welcomes Jesus even before he saw his glory. He welcomes him in defeat. As a criminal. As one rejected. He asks Pilate for Jesus' body so that it will not be thrown into a common grave. Joseph risks his reputation and, perhaps, like Tobit, his life (cf. Tob 1:15-20). But Joseph's courage is not that of a hero in battle. His courage is the power of faith. A faith that finds expression in openness, selflessness and love. In a word: charity.

In silence, the simplicity and sobriety with which Joseph approaches the body of Jesus contrasts with the ostentation, banality and splendour of the funerals of the powerful of this world. Joseph's testimony recalls, however, all those Christians who even today put their lives at risk to bury a loved one.

Who would be able to receive the lifeless body of Jesus if not the one who had given him life? We can imagine Mary's emotions as she received him in her arms, she who believed the words of the Angel and who pondered all these things in her heart.

Mary, as she embraces her lifeless son, repeats once more her fiat. It is the tragedy and the trial of faith. No creature has suffered like Mary, the mother of all of us whom she engendered in faith at the foot of the Cross.

He was repeating the prayer of the world:

"Father, Abba, if it be possible...".

A sprig of olive rustled silently above his head....

Yet not even a single piercing thorn did you remove from his crown.

Pierced too were his thoughts, They too bled on the height of the cross!

Not even one hand did you pull from the wood: so that he could wipe from his eyes the blood

at least to see his Mother, there alone....

Even the powerful and the masters of torture and the people, upon seeing him covered their faces.

He drifted within a cloud: the cloud of divine abandonment.

And later, only later,

did you restore life to him,

and to us. (Fr Davide Turoldo)



## FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

From the Gospel according to Matthew (27:59-60). *Joseph took the body [of Jesus] and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed.*

As Joseph is closing the tomb, Jesus is descending into hell to throw open its gates.

What the Church in the West calls "the descent into hell", the Oriental Churches celebrate as Anastasis, that is, "Resurrection". The sister Churches in this way express the full truth of this one mystery: "Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.... And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live" (Ezek 37:12,14).

Your Church, Lord, sings each morning, "Through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk 1:78-79).

Man, awed by lights which bring only darkness, urged on by the forces of evil, has rolled a large stone and enclosed you, Lord, in the tomb. But we know that you, O humble God, in the silence in which our freedom has placed you, are at work more than ever in order to bring new grace to humanity whom you love. Enter, therefore, into our tombs: rekindle the spark of your love in each man and woman, in the heart of each family, along the path of every people.

O Christ Jesus!

We are all journeying to our own death and our own tomb.

Grant that we may unite ourselves in spirit before your tomb.

May the power of Life,

manifested there,

pierce our hearts.

Let this Life become the light

of our earthly pilgrimage.

Amen.

(St John Paul II)

Holy See statement in Geneva

## The survival of minorities is the guarantee of a democratic State

*The following is the text of the intervention delivered on Tuesday, 15 March, by Msgr Richard Gyhra, Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See, at the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 29 February to 24 March.*

Mr President,

Recent developments coming from Syria seem to reinforce the feeling of helplessness in front of an endless human tragedy caused by the continuation of the conflict and its procession of refugees, disrespect of human rights and international humanitarian law. Crimes against humanity are frequent and unpunished; intentional attacks against the civilian population are daily. The findings of the International Commission are more than alarming. On the other hand, some bright spots, in particular the negotiations that started this week, should push all people of good will not to give up in the search to minimize this human, humanitarian and political tragedy, and, above all, to continue to work towards a peaceful and negotiated solution that takes into account the best interests of Syria and all components of the Syrian nation.

The Holy See, as it was stated by Pope Francis at the Sunday Angelus Prayer on 28 February, would like to give its support to regional and international efforts underway to consolidate the recently negotiated ceasefire accepted by the majority of parties involved in the conflict. Regional and international contributions are indispensable and they should be thoroughly devoted to the interests of the Syrian people. Any approach attempting to defend in the first place regional or international interests, using the different parties to the conflict without considering the future of the country and without taking into account the unbearable human suffering, are unethical. These would not meet the requirements for peace and stability in Syria and in the region. Any policy that ignores the true interests of Syria will be counterproductive, prolong the conflict with its miseries and will have serious consequences for the region and the world.

In the process of reconciliation and peace-building the inclusion of all parties is necessary. All parties involved in the conflict and the International community have a role to play. They are called to look at the long-term interests of the entire region and primarily the real interests of Syria. Obviously the war and the instability do not favour any player but impact negatively all countries involved, directly or indirectly, in this ongoing conflict. The United Nations, in the first place, has an encouraging and facilitating role. Any solution must be based on the rule of law, justice, freedom and respect for human rights. Donor countries also have an interest in investing in peace and reconstruction. Indeed, the continuation of the conflict is a blatant failure of all stake-

holders and will only bring grief and instability for all.

A crucial dimension for reaching a sustainable solution in the peace-building process is respect for a pluralistic society where ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities have their place as full members of society and the Syrian State. The survival and the well-being of the aforesaid minorities is the guarantee of a democratic State, respectful of differences. In fact, the recognition of their rights does not weaken in any way the State, on the contrary, it enriches and strengthens it. In this sense, the return of refugees and IDPs is an essential condition for reconciliation, reconstruction and sustainability of any solution of the conflict.

As the Holy See has previously stated it is urgent to begin immedi-

ately the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the population in need and to remove all obstacles so that humanitarian organizations can have access to all areas. Without the protection of civilians and their human rights there cannot be a just political solution. Special care should be given to the weakest groups of society.

Mr President,

In conclusion, I would like to recall what Pope Francis recently stated: "I have received with hope the news of the cessation of hostilities in Syria, and I invite everyone to pray that this break may bring relief to the suffering population and open the path to dialogue and to the peace that is so desired" (*Angelus*, 28 February 2016).

Thank you, Mr. President.

## Investigation into the plane crash in Rostov

Following an explosion on Saturday, 19 March, a FlyDubai flight crashed, killing 62 at the Rostov-on-Don Airport in southern Russia. Two black boxes were found in good condition, which should shed light on the tragedy. For now, Russian investigators believe the crash was due either to human error or to strong winds.

Deeply saddened by the crash, Pope Francis expressed his sincere condolences for the victims and their families in a telegram signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, addressed to Russian authorities. The Holy Father "commends the souls of the dead to the mercy of Almighty God and implores the divine gifts of consolation, strength and hope upon all who mourn their loss", reads the message which was released on Sunday, 20 March.

The plane, which departed from Dubai, circled the airport in Russia for more than two hours due to weather conditions. The crash occurred after the plane made an unsuccessful attempt to land.

Buddhists in Thailand

## Against the death penalty

With regard to the death penalty, Phra Paisal Visalo, leader of the Wat Pa Sukato Buddhist temple in northeastern Thailand, is on the same wavelength as Pope Francis. The death penalty "does not protect from crimes nor cause their reduction. Research conducted around the world instead shows that countries that have abolished capital punishment see a drastic reduction in the number of serious crimes", the Buddhist leader told Asia News on 26 February. For this reason he agrees with the appeal the Pope made to government authorities at the Angelus on 21 February. May "they come to an international consensus aimed at abolishing the death penalty", Francis said. The Holy Father also proposed that the Catholics among them "carry out an act of courage, giving an example that the death penalty not be applied in this Holy Year of Mercy". The Buddhist leader explained that

"killing or destroying a life is contrary to Buddhist doctrine. It is the first and most important precept. A Buddhist must not kill or harm a life, because he believes that there are better ways to resolve problems", he said. Reducing crime, Phra Paisal noted, "can be achieved by restrictive measures that take away the opportunity for offenders to commit further crimes. In addition, economic and social development is a way to encourage people to do something good, reducing the inclination to crime". In Thailand the death penalty is available in extreme cases, such as murder or drug trafficking. The Catholic Church uses "different measures that respect human life and give prisoners an opportunity to correct their mistakes and become a better person", stated Fr Peter Watchasilp Kricharoen, Director of the Pontifical Mission Works.

## Christians flee Pakistan

Thousands of Pakistani Christians continue to flee their homeland in search of refuge in Thailand. Despite the fact that the two countries are thousands of kilometres apart, many have chosen Thailand because of the low travel costs and the ease of obtaining tourist visas. They are escaping intimidation, retaliation, violence and because of the blasphemy law. Any alleged abuse of this law can result in the death penalty. The Fides News Agency reported on the deteriorating situation, recalling that Thailand is one of the first countries not to have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention or the subsequent Protocol of 1967. Therefore those who arrive in the country and start the bureaucratic path at the offices of the UNHCR are soon deprived of rights and protection. Tourist visas expire within a month and payment is needed if an extension is required. Procedures foreseen for asylum seekers may take 3 to 5 years. At this point a refugees become criminals with illegal status. They cannot legally hold a job and have no right to health care. In spite of violating the regulations, parishes and individuals are working in the field to help these refugees.

## Bishops in Paraguay approve Guaraní Bible

The Ñandejára Ñe'ê, the Bible in the Guaraní language, was approved during the Plenary Assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Paraguay, which concluded on Friday, 11 March, in the city of Ypacaraí. The Guaraní Bible is ready for liturgical use and is pending final authorization from the Holy See. In the meantime the Biblical Society of Paraguay is preparing the texts of the Missal for the celebration of various Sacraments. The bishops also discussed the establishment of the ecclesiastical faculty of theology and the current status of the national Major Seminary. An appeal was also made regarding the ongoing Curuguaty case. Curuguaty is a district where a clash occurred on 15 June 2012, leading to the deaths of 11 *campesinos* and six police officers. "A clarification of the facts", the prelates explained in a statement, "will foster social peace. Respect for the law and the application of civil and criminal legal procedures will give strength to the building of a just and safe society for all Paraguayans", while "a trial that is extended and postponed denotes an unfair situation and causes tension". Moreover, "impartial and effective justice" is necessary in this case, the statement affirmed, expressing the hope that "the guilty are not freed and the innocent are not condemned".

*Spes contra spem*, “in hope he believed against hope”. This is the Christian identity as described by St Paul who, following in the footsteps of Abraham, was certain that “the thread of hope”, even in the most difficult of times, “runs through the course of salvation history and, moreover, is a source of joy”. At Mass on Thursday morning, 17 March, Pope Francis called on Christians to preserve their hope.

“Today’s liturgy”, he began, “prepares us for the Easter celebrations with a reflection on the virtue of hope”, the humble virtue so often cast aside, he said. In the passage from the Gospel of John (8:51-59), “Jesus speaks about Abraham and says to the doctors of the law: ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day’; he saw it and was glad”.

Abraham, the Pope recalled, was “the man who left his land without knowing where he was going. He left in obedience, in faithfulness”. Abraham was also “the man who believed in the Word of God and was justified in that faith”; but he was also “the man who was tempted along this path of hope when, both he and his wife, smiled as God told them they would have a son. But he believed”.

Referring to the First Reading, taken from the Book of Genesis (17:3-9), the Pontiff spoke about the covenant: “you will be the father of nations”. Thus, “Abraham believed, and this thread of hope runs through the course of salvation history. Moreover, it is a source of joy”.

Today, the Pope continued, “the Church speaks to us about the joy of hope”. Indeed, “in the first prayer of the Mass”, he recalled, “we asked God for the grace to preserve the hope of the Church, that it never fail”. St Paul too, “speaking of our father Abraham, tells us to ‘believe against all hope’”. Thus, Francis stated, “when there is no human hope, there is this virtue which leads



Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

## The thread of hope

you forward”. It is “humble and simple, but it gives you joy, sometimes great joy, sometimes simply peace”. However, we can always be certain that “hope does not disappoint”.

“Abraham’s joy grows in history”, said the Pontiff, who repeated the words of the Lord from the day’s Gospel Reading: “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day”. It’s true, the Pope acknowledged, that hope “is sometimes hidden, it is unseen”, and “sometimes it is openly manifest”. Thus, upon Mary’s arrival at her cousin’s house, Elizabeth says to her: “as soon as I heard your voice, the babe in my womb leaped for joy!”. In this meeting there is “the joy of the presence of God who walks with his people”, and “when there is joy, there is peace. This is the virtue of hope: from joy to peace, which never disappoints”.

This is the reason that, even “in times of slavery, at times in which they were sojourners, in a foreign land”, the People of God always had “that sense of certainty that the Prophets cultivated: ‘The Lord will

save you’”. That “thread of hope”, the Pope explained, “begins here with Abraham, God speaks with Abraham. And it ‘ends’ in this Gospel passage where the same God who spoke with Abraham says: ‘I am he who spoke; before Abraham was, I am; I am he who called Abraham; I am he who began this journey of salvation’”.

He is the God, Francis added, “who accompanies us. He is also the God who suffers, who suffers as his people have suffered. He suffers on the Cross, but he is true to his word”.

Precisely in this regard the Pope recommended an essential examination of conscience regarding faith, charity and hope, asking several direct questions: “Do you have faith? Yes father, I have faith: I believe in

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in the sacraments. Very well, do you believe in charity? Yes, sort of, I try not to quarrel, to help the needy, to do good in life”. Those are the easy answers, Francis noted. But, he added, “when you are asked if you have hope, if you have the joy of hope”, the answer is: “Father, I don’t understand, what do you mean?”.

Hope, the Pontiff remarked, is “the humble virtue, the virtue that courses beneath the water of life, that keeps us from drowning in the many difficulties and losing the desire to find God, to find that marvellous face that we will all see one day”. Today, Pope Francis said, “is a fine day to reflect on this: the same God who called Abraham and made him come down from his land without knowing where he should go, is the same God who goes to the Cross in order to fulfil the promise that he made”. He is, the Pope continued, “the same God who in the fullness of time will make that promise a reality for all of us”. What “joins that first instance to this last moment is the thread of hope”. Therefore, what “joins my Christian life to our Christian life, from one moment to another, in order to always go forward – sinners, but forward – is hope”. Yet, “what gives us peace in the dark moments, in life’s darkest moments”, is always “hope”.

Hope “does not disappoint: it is always there, silent, humble, but strong”, Francis concluded. Then he repeated once again “today’s prayer, at the beginning of Mass: ‘Our hope is in your hands, O Lord, preserve our hope’”.

## Audience for the Grand Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg



On Monday morning, 21 March, in the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis received T.R.H. the Grand Duke Henri and the Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, along with their entourage.

## Audience for the President of Portugal

On Thursday morning, 17 March, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace the Holy Father received in audience H.E. Mr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States.

During the audience, the President’s first visit abroad following the inauguration of his mandate, satisfaction was expressed regarding the good relations between the Holy See and Portugal, as well as the contribution of the Church to the life of the country, with special reference to the debate in society on the dignity of human life and the family.

In the cordial discussions that followed, there was an exchange of views on the situation in Europe and the Mediterranean basin, especially regarding the question of migration and other issues of international relevance.



## VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

### ROMAN ROTA

The Holy Father appointed as Auditors of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota: Fr Miroslav Konštanc Adam, OP, Rector *Magnificus* of the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas in Rome; Fr José Fernando Mejía Yáñez, MG, head of the chancellery of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura (22 Mar.).

### ADJUNCT AUDITORS

The Holy Father appointed Mr Ferruccio Panico and Mr Alessandro Cassinis Righini as Adjunct Auditors (16 Mar.).

### RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Michael W. Banach, titular Archbishop of Memphis, as Apostolic Nuncio in Senegal and Apostolic Delegate in Mauritania. Until now he has been Apostolic Nuncio in Papua New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands (19 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Francisco Escalante Molina, as Apostolic Nuncio in the Republic of Congo, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Gratiana. Until now he has been Nunciature Counsellor in Slovenia (19 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Paul Fitzpatrick Russell, as Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey and in Turkmenistan, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Novi (19 Mar.).

### LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 18 March, in the presence of the Holy Father, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, delivered the Fifth Lenten Sermon in the Vatican’s Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

### NECROLOGY

Archbishop Joseph Mercieca, Archbishop emeritus of Malta, at age 87 (21 Mar.).

Francis' address to members of the Neocatechumenal Way

# Breathe with the Church

*By living our charism as a grace of God so as to build communion, "we breathe in the Church and with the Church". The Pope so advised the thousands of members of the Neocatechumenal Way, who were received in Audience in the Paul VI Hall on Friday morning, 18 March. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address, which was delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

I am glad to meet with you and I thank you for coming in such numbers. A special greeting to those who are about to set off! You have accepted the call to evangelize: I am grateful to the Lord for this, for the gift of the Way and for the gift of each of you. I would like to highlight three words that the Gospel has just handed you, as a mandate for the mission: *unity, glory and world*.

*Unity.* Jesus prays to the Father so that his [followers] may "become perfectly one" (Jn 17:23): he wants them to be "one" (v. 22), as He and the Father are. It is his last request before the Passion, and his most heartfelt: that there be communion in the Church. Communion is essen-

was open, humble and obedient. It is always necessary to keep watch over the charism, purifying the eventual human excesses through the search for unity with all and through obedience to the Church. In this way we breathe in the Church and with the Church; this is how we remain docile children of the "Holy Mother Hierarchical Church" with a "soul which is prepared and ready" for the mission (cf. St Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, 353).

I emphasize this point: the Church is our Mother. Just as children bear, imprinted on their faces, resemblance to their mother, likewise, we all resemble our Mother, the Church. After Baptism we no longer live as isolated individuals, but we have become *men and women of communion*, and we are called to be *operators of communion* in the world. Because Jesus not only *founded the Church for us*, but he *founded us as Church*. The Church is not an instrument for us: we are the Church. From her we are reborn, from her we are nourished with the Bread of Life, from her we receive words of life, and we are forgiven and accompanied home. This is the fruitfulness of the Church, who is Mother: she is not an organization



tial. The enemy of God and man, the devil, cannot compete with the Gospel, with the humble power of prayer and of the Sacraments, but can do much harm to the Church by tempting our human weakness. The devil provokes arrogance, the judgement of others, closure and division. He himself is "the divider" and often starts off by making us believe that we are good, perhaps better than others: thus the ground is ready for the sowing of discord. It is the temptation of all communities and it can instill itself even in the most beautiful charisms of the Church.

You have received a great charism for the baptismal renewal of life; indeed, one enters the Church through Baptism. Every charism is a grace of God to deepen communion. But this charism can deteriorate if you become closed or boastful, when you want to distinguish yourselves from others. Therefore we have to protect it. Protect your charism! How? By following the royal road: of *humble and obedient unity*. If there is this, the Holy Spirit continues to operate, just as he did in Mary, who

that seeks followers, or a group that goes forth following the logic of its ideas, but a Mother who passes on the life received from Jesus.

This fruitfulness is expressed through the ministry and the guidance of Pastors. The institution is in fact also a charism, because it is rooted in the same wellspring, which is the Holy Spirit. He is the living

water, but the water can continue to give life only if the plant is well cared for and pruned. Quench your thirst from the fountain of love, the Spirit, and take care, with sensitivity and respect, of the whole ecclesial body, especially the most fragile parts, so that all may grow together, harmonious and fruitful.

The second word is *glory*. Before his Passion, Jesus foretells that He will be "glorified" on the Cross: there his glory will appear (cf. Jn 17:5). But it is a new glory: a worldly glory manifests itself when one is important, admired, when one has assets and success. But God's glory is revealed on the Cross: it is love, which shines and spreads brightly. It is a paradoxical glory without clamour, nor gain and nor applause. This glory alone makes the Gospel fruitful. In this way too Mother Church is fruitful when she imitates the merciful love of God, which is always offered but never imposed. It is humble, it acts like the rain on the earth, like the air we breathe, like a small seed that bears fruit in silence. Whosoever proclaims love can do so only with the same loving approach.

And the third word that we have heard is *world*. "God so loved the world" that he sent Jesus (cf. Jn 3:16). He who loves does not stay away, but comes to encounter. You will encounter many cities, many countries. God is not attracted by worldliness, in fact, he detests it; but he loves the world he has created, and he loves his children in the world just as they are, wherever they

live, even if they are "distant". Life will not be easy for you in distant countries in faraway cultures, it won't be easy for you. But it is your mission. And you do this out of love, out of love for Mother Church, for unity with this bountiful Mother; you do so in order that the Church may be Mother and may be fruitful. Show the children the tender gaze of the Father and consider the realities you will encounter as a gift; get to know the cultures, languages and local customs, respect them and recognize the seeds of grace which the Spirit has already scattered. Without yielding to the temptation to transplant acquired models, spread the *fundamental message*: "what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 35). It is the Good News that must always return, otherwise faith risks becoming a cold and lifeless doctrine. Evangelizing as families, then experiencing unity and simplicity, is already a proclamation of life, a beautiful witness, for which I thank you very much. And I thank you personally and on behalf of the entire Church for this act of going, going out to the unknown and also suffering. For there will be suffering, but there will also be the joy of God's glory, the glory that is the Cross. I accompany you and encourage you, and I ask you, please, do not forget to pray for me. I will stay here, but in my heart I will be going with you.

## The Holy Father's sorrow for the tragic bus accident in Spain

Thirteen people were killed and 44 injured in a bus accident in Catalonia on Sunday, 20 March. Travelling late at night, a group of exchange students from the University of Barcelona were on their way back from a festival in Valencia. The students came from 16 different countries including Britain, Ukraine, Switzerland, Sweden as well as Japan and New Zealand.

On learning of the accident the Holy Father sent his condolences to Bishop Enrique Benavent Vidal of Tortosa via a telegram, signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. In the message, the Holy Father

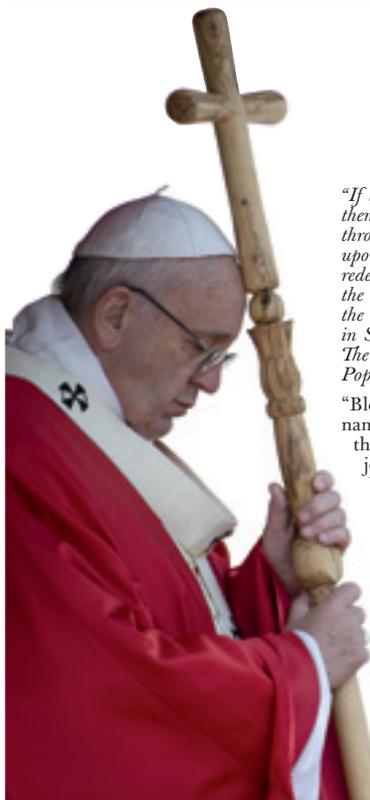
expressed his condolences to the families of the victims who are experiencing a terrible loss.

The bus was travelling the Ap7 highway along the east coast of Spain when it hit the right hand guard-rail. After this impact, the driver veered left and collided with an oncoming car. According to Spain's Minister for the Interior, Jorge Fernández Díaz, the accident was most likely caused by human error.

The bus driver – now under investigation for involuntary manslaughter – tested negative for drugs and alcohol. It does not appear that a mechanical failure was to blame.

On Palm Sunday the Pope speaks about Christ's Passion and the plight of refugees

## A love without end



*"If the mystery of evil is unfathomable, then the reality of Love poured out through [Jesus] is infinite ... He takes upon himself all our pain that he may redeem it". Pope Francis thus described the logic of the Cross in his homily at the Mass on Palm Sunday celebrated in St Peter's Square on 20 March. The following is the English text of the Pope's homily.*

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (cf. Lk 19:38), the crowd of Jerusalem exclaimed joyfully as they welcomed Jesus. We have made that enthusiasm our own: by waving our olive and palm branches we have expressed our praise and our joy, our desire to receive Jesus who comes to us. Just as he entered Jerusalem, so he desires to enter our cities and our lives. As he did in the Gospel, riding on a donkey, so too he comes to us in humility; he comes "in the name of the Lord". Through the power of his divine love he forgives our sins and reconciles us to the Father and with ourselves.

Jesus is pleased with the crowd's showing their affection for him. When the Pharisees ask him to silence the children and the others who are acclaiming him, he responds: "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Lk 19:40). Nothing could dampen their enthusiasm for Jesus' entry. May nothing prevent us from finding in him the source of our joy, true joy, which abides and brings peace; for it is Jesus alone who saves us from the snares of sin, death, fear and sadness.

Today's liturgy teaches us that the Lord has not saved us by his triumphal entry or by means of powerful miracles. The Apostle Paul, in the second reading, epitomizes in two verbs the path of redemption: Jesus "emptied" and "humbled" himself (Phil 2:7-8). These two verbs show the boundlessness of God's love for us. Jesus *emptied himself*: he did not cling to the glory that was his as the Son of God, but became the Son of man in order to be in solidarity with us sinners in all things; yet he was without sin. Even more, he lived among us in "the condition of a servant" (v. 7); not of a king or a prince, but of a servant. Therefore he humbled himself, and the abyss of his humiliation, as Holy Week shows us, seems to be bottomless.

The first sign of this love "without end" (Jn 13:1) is the washing of the feet. "The Lord and Master" (Jn 13:14) stoops to his disciples' feet, as only servants would have done. He shows us by example that we need to allow his love to reach us, a love which bends down to us; we cannot do any less, we cannot love without letting ourselves be loved by him first, without experiencing

his surprising tenderness and without accepting that true love consists in concrete service.

But this is only the beginning. The humiliation of Jesus reaches its utmost in the Passion: he is sold for 30 pieces of silver and betrayed by the kiss of a disciple whom he had chosen and called his friend. Nearly all the others flee and abandon him; Peter denies him three times in the courtyard of the Temple. Humiliated in his spirit by mockery, insults and spitting, he suffers in his body terrible brutality: the blows, the scourging and the crown of thorns make his face unrecognizable. He also experiences shame and disgraceful condemnation by religious and political authorities: he is *made into sin* and *considered to be unjust*. Pilate then sends him to Herod, who in turn sends him to the Roman governor. Even as every form of justice is denied to him, Jesus also experiences in his own flesh indifference, since no one wishes to take responsibility for his fate. And I think of the many people, so many outcasts, so many asylum seekers, so many refugees, all of those for whose fate no one wishes to take responsibility. The crowd, who just a little earlier had acclaimed him, now changes their praise into a cry of accusation, even to the point of preferring that a murderer be released in his place. And so the hour of death on the Cross arrives, that most painful form of shame reserved for traitors, slaves and the worst kind of criminals. But isolation, defamation and pain are not yet the full extent of his deprivation. To be totally in solidarity with us, he also experiences on the Cross the mysterious abandonment of the Father. In his abandonment, however, he prays and entrusts himself: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46). Hanging from the wood of the Cross, besides derision he now confronts the last temptation: to come down from the Cross, to conquer evil by might and

to show the face of a powerful and invincible God. Jesus, however, even here at the height of his annihilation, reveals the true Face of God, which is mercy. He forgives those who are crucifying him, he opens the gates of paradise to the repentant thief and he touches the heart of the centurion. If the mystery of evil is unfathomable, then the reality of Love poured out through him is infinite, reaching even to the tomb and to hell. He takes upon himself all our pain that he may redeem it, bringing light to darkness, life to death, love to hatred.

God's way of acting may seem so far removed from our own, that he was annihilated for our sake, while it seems difficult for us to forget ourselves even a little. He comes to save us; we are called to choose his way: the way of service, of giving, of forgetfulness of ourselves. Let us



walk this path, pausing in these days to gaze upon the Crucifix; it is the "royal seat of God". I invite you during this week to gaze often upon this "royal seat of God", to learn about the humble love which saves and gives life, so that we may give up all selfishness, and the seeking of power and fame. By humbling himself, Jesus invites us to walk on his path. Let us turn our faces to him, let us ask for the grace to understand at least something of the mystery of his obliteration for our sake; and then, in silence, let us contemplate the mystery of this Week.



At the Angelus

### Go forth with courage

*At the end of Mass, the Holy Father led the faithful in the recitation of the Angelus. Before the prayer, the Pope said in Italian:*

I greet all of you who have taken part in this celebration and those who have joined us by television, radio and other means of communication.

Today we are celebrating the 31st World Youth Day, which will culminate at the end of July with the great World Meeting in Krakow. The theme is "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7). My special greeting goes to all the young people present, and to all the young people of the world. I hope that you will be able to come in great numbers to Krakow, the homeland of St John Paul II, the author of the World Youth Days. Let us entrust to his intercession the remaining months of preparation for this pilgrimage which, within the context of the Holy Year of Mercy, will be the Jubilee of Young People at the universal level of the Church.

Many young volunteers from Krakow are here with us. On returning to Poland, they will take to their nation's leaders the olive branches gathered in Jerusalem, Assisi and Montecassino and blessed today in this Square, as an invitation to cultivate initiatives for peace, reconciliation and fraternity. Thank you for this beautiful initiative; go forth with courage! Now let us pray to the Virgin Mary, that she help us to live Holy Week with spiritual intensity.

*[Angelus Domini...]*