The General Audience on the journey of mercy

From the heart to the hands

With Polish Bishops in Krakow before World Youth Day

Close to God’s people

On the first day of his visit to Poland, Wednesday, 27 July, Pope Francis met privately with 117 of the nation’s bishops in the Basilica dedicated to Sts Stanislaus and Wenceslaus in Krakow. During their extensive conversation, the Holy Father touched upon many pressing concerns for the Church, including: the danger of imbuing children with gender theory; the crisis of wars fuelled by financial interests; the importance of the parish as the basis of ecclesial life; and the need to treasure the elderly.

The Bard and Mercy

The many homilies of Shakespeare

At the Domus Sanctae Marthae with 21 Syrian refugees arrived from Lesbos

Lunch with Francis

On Thursday, 11 August, Pope Francis had lunch at the Domus Sanctae Marthae with the 21 Syrian refugees whom he had welcomed in Rome. The refugees described the encounter as “a moment of celebration” a message of peace and hope “so great that we cannot even find the words to express it”. Suhila Ayyad conveyed these thoughts to Pope Francis on behalf of the group. Before the meal, the Pope prayed “for these families”, that the Lord “give us peace in our land”. Afterwards he listened to their dramatic stories.

Francis has welcomed five families, along with three others, also Syrian, who hope to be soon reunited with their loved ones. The entire group, which includes nine minors, came from the refuge camp of Lesbos. Nineteen are Muslims and two are Christians – one Syro-Orthodox and one Catholic. The first group (three families, comprised of 12 people) came on the airplane with Francis on 16 April. The second group (two families plus the three) arrived on 16 June.

The menu was simple: pasta and tomato sauce, then fish, and French fries for the little ones, served on a U-shaped table. The exchange of gifts was festive: Francis was given an album of illustrations from the children. The drawings depict “the beauty of having a home” without forgetting “the horrors of war”.

The words “I have been saved” left the Pope visibly moved, as did the illustrations of Syria devastated by violence. Eight-year-old Masa drew a butterfly to represent the Pope. Because, Masa told him, “you brought us to safety, to peace, on your wings”.

Francis had also prepared a gift for each child which he gave to them one by one, thanking them for having confidence in him and in his colleagues. “You came here”, he

Understanding Amoris Laetitia

Creative fidelity

Prime numbers and infinity

Fatal attraction

Parolin on the Pope in the Caucasus

A peacemaker

For the Feast of St Cajetan

Bread and work
**The Holy Father’s grief for victims of the tropical storm in Mexico**

Pope Francis expressed “his affection to the dear people of Mexico” hit by Typhoon Earl, which claimed at least 45 victims, particularly in the Mexican states of Puebla and Veracruz. On Wednesday, 9 August, in a telegram addressed to Archbishop Franco Coppola, Apostolic Nuncio in Mexico, and signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, the Pontiff assured his “prayers in suffrage for those who lost their lives” as well as his “closeness to their families and to the people stricken” by the typhoon. At the same time Francis asked “that the Lord sustain the spirit of the authorities and of the people of Mexico, and awaken solidarity in everyone”.

**Lunch with Francis**

Continued from page 1

said, “without knowing where you were going”. He also shared that he had been struck by the atmosphere of joy that these families are living in, expressed by the impressive energy of the little ones: especially Ahmad, born on 1 January 2017, and Riad, just over two years old, who got more than a chuckle out of Francis. After thanking the group for their visit, the Pope also asked them to pray for him.

The event began at 12:25 and lasted for about an hour and 40 minutes. Archbishop Angelo Becchi, Substitute of the Secretariat of State, and Domenico Giani, Commandant of the Vatican Gendarmerie Corps, also attended, along with Lucia Cintia and Stefano De Santis, the two agents directly involved with the practical considerations of the refugees. Also on hand were representatives of the community of Sant’Egidio, which made the welcome possible: its founder, Andrea Riccardi was accompanied by Daniela Pompei and Cecilia Panu, who provide services to migrants, and by Moustafa Chaib and Youssef Atias, who play a role as mediators for the refugees.

**The Pope’s horror at the brutal acts of violence in Quetta**

On Saturday, 30 July, at 11 a.m., Bishop Vincent Huang Shoucheng of Xiapu (Funing), in the Fujian Province, died at the age of 93. On 15 May he was taken to hospital as his health had worsened. However, since his health improved slightly he wanted to spend his last moments at home, where he passed away.

Bishop Huang was born on 23 July 1923 in Kangle near Fu’an, Fujian, into a traditional Catholic family. He attended the Minor Seminary of Luojiang and completed his studies in philosophy and theology at the Major Seminary in Fuzhou. On 6 June 1949 he was ordained a priest by Bishop Tommaso Niu Huiqing, Apostolic Administrator of Funing. Following his ordination he taught at Futing Minor Seminary. He then served in parish ministry in Xiapu and in other parishes where he proclaimed the Gospel with apostolic zeal.

Of his over 60 years in the priesthood, Bishop Huang spent 35 in prison, in forced labour and under house arrest, during which he gave heroic witness to the faith, with unconditional loyalty to the Successor of Peter and in profound communion with the universal Church.

On 9 January 1985 he received episcopal ordination from Bishop Salvador Quizon Quizon, titular Bishop of Feradi minus, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Lipa, the Philippines, at age 91 (8 Aug.). Bishop Ercole Lupinacci, Bishop emeritus of the Eparchy of Lungro for Italo-Albanians of the Byzantine Rite, at age 81 (6 Aug.).

**Bishop Edward Kevin Daly, Bishop emeritus of Derry, Ireland, at age 81 (8 Aug.)**
At the General Audience the Pope speaks about the journey of mercy

From the heart to the hands

Mercy is a journey which starts in the heart and ends in the hands. To the many faithful gathered in the Paul VI Hall for the General Audience on Wednesday, 10 August, Francis commented on the narrative from the Gospel of Luke (7:11-17), on the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain. The following is a translation of the Pope’s Catechesis which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

The passage from the Gospel of Luke that we have listened to (7:11-17) presents us with a truly great miracle of Jesus: the resurrection of a young man. However, the heart of this narrative is not the miracle, but Jesus’ tenderness toward the mother of this young man. Here, mercy takes the form of great compassion for a woman who had lost her husband and now is accompanying her only son to the cemetery. This deep sorrow of a mother moves Jesus and causes him to perform the miracle of resurrection.

In introducing this episode the Evangelist dwells on many details. At the gate of the small town of Nain — a village — two large groups meet. They come from opposite directions and have nothing in common. Jesus, followed by the disciples and by a large crowd, is about to enter the residential area, while coming out of it is a procession accompanying a dead man, with his widow and mother and many people. In the gate the two groups brush by each other, each going its own way, but it is then that St Luke notes Jesus’ feelings: “when the Lord saw her [the woman], he had compassion on her and said to her: ‘Do not weep’. And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still” (v 13-14). Great compassion guides Jesus’ actions: he stops the procession, touches the bier and, moved by profound mercy for this mother, decides to confront the reality of death, so to speak, face to face. And he will confront it definitively, face to face, on the Cross.

During this Jubilee, it would be a good thing if, in passing through the Holy Door, the Door of Mercy, pilgrims were to remember this episode of the Gospel, which occurred at the gate of Nain. When Jesus sees this mother in tears, she enters his heart! Every one arrives at the Holy Door carrying their own life, with its joys and suffering, plans and failures, doubts and fears, in order to present it to the Lord’s mercy. We are certain that, at the Holy Door, the Lord comes near to meet each one of us, to bring and offer his powerful consoling words: “Do not weep!” (v 13). This is the Door of the encounter between the pain of humanity and the compassion of God. Crossing the threshold we fulfill our pilgrimage into the mercy of God who, as to the deceased young man, repeats to all: “I say to you, ‘Arise!’” (v 14). To each of us he says: “Arise!”. God wants us to stand upright. He created us to be on our feet: for this reason, Jesus’ compassion leads to that gesture of healing, to heal us, of which the key phrase is: “Arise! Stand up, as God created you!” (Standing up. “But Father, we fall so often” — “Onward, arise!”. This is Jesus’ word, always. In passing through the Holy Door, let us try to feel this word in our heart: “Arise!”.

The powerful word of Jesus can make us rise again and can bring about in us too the passage from death to life. His word revives us, gives us hope, refreshes weary hearts, opens us to a vision of the world and of life which transcends suffering and death. The inexhaustible treasure of God’s mercy is inscribed for each one on the Holy Door!

Touched by the word of Jesus, “the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And gave him his mother” (v 15). This phrase is so beautiful it shows Jesus’ tenderness: “he gave him to his mother”. The mother recovers her son. Receiving him from Jesus’ hands she becomes a mother for the second time, but the son who is now restored to her is not the one who received life from her. Mother and son thus receive their respective identities thanks to the powerful word of Jesus and to his loving gesture. Therefore, especially in the Jubilee, Mother Church receives her children, recognizing in them the life given by the grace of God. It is due to this grace, the grace of Baptism, that the Church becomes mother and that each one of us becomes her child.

Before the young man, revived and restored to his mother, “fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited his people!’” (v 16). What Jesus does is thus not only a saving action intended for the widow and her son, or a gesture of goodness limited to that town. In Jesus’ merciful care, God meets his people, in Him all of God’s grace appears and will continue to appear to mankind.

Celebrating this Jubilee, which I wish to be lived in all the particular Churches, that is in all the churches of the world, and not only in Rome, it is as if all the Church spread throughout the world were joined in one hymn of praise to the Lord. Today too the Church recognizes that she is visited by God. For this reason, by setting out for the Door of Mercy, each one is able to set out for the door of the merciful heart of Jesus: He indeed is the true Door that leads to salvation and restores us to new life. Mercy, both in Jesus and in ourselves, is a journey which starts in the heart in order to reach the hands. What does this mean? Jesus looks at you, he heals you with his mercy, he says to you: “Arise!” and your heart is new. What does it mean to make a journey from the heart to the hands? It means that with a new heart, with the heart healed by Jesus I can perform works of mercy through the hands, seeking to help, to heal the many who are in need. Mercy is a journey that starts in the heart and ends in the hands, namely in the works of mercy.

I have said that mercy is a journey that goes from the heart to the hands. In the heart, we receive the mercy of Jesus who forgives us everything, because God forgives everything and lifts us up, gives us new life and infuses us with his compassion. From that forgiven heart and with the compassion of Jesus, the journey to the hands begins, namely through the works of mercy. A bishop, the other day, told me

The Holy Father makes a private visit to Carsoli and Borgo San Pietro

In the footsteps of Saint Francis

On Tuesday morning, 9 August, Pope Francis made a surprise visit to the Convent of St Francis in Carsoli in the province of L’Aquila. He then went to the Convent of St Philippa Mareri in Borgo San Pietro, located in Petrella Salto, Rieti. On this spiritual journey in the footsteps of St Francis, the Pope was welcomed and accompanied by Bishop Domenico Pompili of Rieti.

The Convent that the Holy Father visited in Carsoli dates back to the time of St Francis. He met with the Benedictine Sisters of Reparation of the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ, where he celebrated Mass. Later that afternoon, Francis went to pray at the Shrine of Borgo San Pietro, where the body of St Philippa Mareri is enshrined. Here the Pope met with the community of Franciscan Sisters, with whom he shared a reflection on the beauty and importance of the mission of consecrated women in the Church.

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Cardinal Franciszek Macharski dies

Polish Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Archbishop emeritus of Krakow, died on Tuesday, 2 August. Five days earlier, the 89-year-old prelate received a visit from Pope Francis at the university hospital in Krakow, where the Cardinal was in critical condition. The Pope gave him a rosary as a gift. The previous day, meeting with Polish bishops, the Pope had asked them to pray for the ailing Cardinal. Upon learning of the Cardinal’s death, the Pontiff sent a telegram to Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, Archbishop of Krakow. The following is a translation of the Pope’s telegram along with the late Cardinal’s biography.

Franciszek Macharski was born on 20 May 1927 in Krakow, where he also spent his childhood. During the Second World War, under the German occupation, he worked as a laborer, like Karol Wojtyła. In 1945, immediately after the liberation, he entered the Major Seminary of Krakow, enrolling in the faculty of theology at the Jagiellonian University. After completing his studies in philosophy and theology he was ordained a priest on 2 April 1950 by Cardinal Adam Sapieha, Archbishop of Krakow.

Two years later he served as Vicar in the parish of Kozy, in the area of Bielsko-Biała. Then in 1956, he transferred to the Catholic University of Fribourg, Switzerland, to complete his theological studies, earning a degree in pastoral theology in 1960.

Upon his return to Krakow, he was appointed spiritual father of the seminary and taught pastoral theology at the Pontifical theological faculty. In 1970, the new Cardinal Archbishop Wojtyła appointed him rector of the seminary. In 1971 he served as an auditor in the Second Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: “Ministerial priesthood and justice in the world”. In 1978 he was appointed by Wojtyła as canon of the metropolitan Chapter of the Cathedral of Wawel.非常に大きな悲しみを深く感受し、私がこの日を経て全身の血脈を浄化し、新たな生命を得ることを願っています。

-cardinal
day's Audience, particularly those grims and visitors taking part in the Jubilee of Mercy in Krakow for the occasion. “Jesus, I have sinned! — Jesus. I trust in you!” — this episcopal motto guided his life and his ministry. Today, in the Jubilee Year of Mercy, it has become even more appropriate, as this was the fulfillment of the work that the Lord had already entrusted to him at Baptism, introducing him into the ranks of those sealed with His Redemptive Blood, and later together with the gift of priesthood, when He sent him forth with the task of sanctifying the People with the word and with the grace of the sacraments. He carried out this mission zealously as pastor, professor, rector of the Seminary, until the day in which the Lord called him to assume the task of the legacy of St Stanislaw and of his immediate predecessor Karol Wojtyła, today St John Paul II, in the Episcopal See of Krakow. With trust in Divine Mercy he carried out this work as father to the priests and to the faithful entrusted to his care. He guided the Church in Krakow in the difficult period of political and social transformation, with wisdom, with a healthy detachment from reality, promoting respect for each person, for the good of the community of the Church, and above all keeping faith alive in the hearts of mankind.

I am grateful to Providence, that I was able to visit him during my recent journey to Krakow, in the last phase of life he was greatly tried by suffering which he accepted with peace of mind. Even in this trial he remained a faithful witness to the hands. Make this journey!

To my Venerable Brother Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz

Metropolitan Archbishop of Krakow

I was sad to learn of the death of Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Archbishop emeritus of Krakow. In his gospels and visitations taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Malta, Indonesia, and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that the present Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that every one may live this Extraordinary Holy Year by fostering the culture of encounter, recognizing the presence of the Lord’s flesh particularly in the poor and in the needy.

Lastly I address a greeting to young people, to the sick and to newlyweds. Last Monday we recalled the figure of St Dominic de Guzman, whose Order of Preachers is celebrating the eight centenary of its foundation. May the enlightened word of this Great Saint inspire you, dear young people, to trust in the goodness and the mercy of God. He will thus remain in my memory and prayers. May the Lord welcome him into his glory!

To you, Venerable Brother, to the Cardinals and Bishops of Poland, to the relatives of the Deceased, and to all the faithful of Poland I impart my heartfelt blessing: in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

From the Vatican, 2 August 2016

FRANCIS

From the heart to the hands

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

that in his cathedral and in other churches he had made entry and exit doors of mercy. “Why do you do this?” — Because one door is to enter by, to ask forgiveness, and to receive Jesus’ mercy; the other is to leave through the exit door. It is with this “Go!” — on foot — let us leave the church through the door of mercy, and enter by, to ask forgiveness, and to receive Jesus’ mercy; the other is to enter by, to ask mercy to others, with your hands.

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After the Audience the Pope said:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Malta, Indonesia, and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that the present Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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At the Angelus the Holy Father recalls that life should be a diligent vigil of expectation

A call for vigilance

"Jesus reminds us today that the expectation of the eternal beatitude does not relieve us of the duty to render the world more just and more liveable." The text quoted by the Holy Father in his Angelus on Sunday, 7 August, addressing the faithful present in St Peter's Square, spoke about the expectation of the final encounter with him. The following is a translation of the address that Pope Francis gave in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

In the context of today’s Gospel (Lk 12:32-48), Jesus speaks to his disciples about the attitude to assume in view of the final encounter with him, and explains that the expectation of this encounter should impel us to live a life full of good works. Among other things he says: “Sell your possessions, and give alms, provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys” (v. 33). It is a call to give importance to almsgiving as a work of mercy, not to place trust in ephemeral goods, to use things without attachment and selfishness, but according to God’s logic, the logic of attention to others, the logic of love. We can be so attached to money, and have many things, but in the end we cannot take them with us. Remember that “the shroud has no pockets”.

Jesus’ lesson continues with three short parables on the theme of vigilance. This is important: vigilance, being alert, being vigilant in life. The first is the parable of the servants waiting for their master to return at night. “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes” (v. 37): it is the beatitude of being ready, with an attitude of service. He presents himself each day, knocks at the door of our heart. Those who open it will be blessed, because they will have a great reward: indeed, the Lord will make himself a servant to his servants – it is a beautiful reward – in the great banquet of his Kingdom He himself will serve them. With this parable, set at night, Jesus proposes life as a vigil of diligent expectation, which heralds the bright day of eternity. To be able to enter one must be ready, awake and committed to serving others, from the comforting perspective that, “beyond”, it will no longer be we who serve God, but He himself who will welcome us to his table. If you think about it, this already happens today each time we meet the Lord in prayer, or in serving the poor, and above all in the Eucharist, where he prepares a banquet to nourish us of his Word and of his Body.

The second parable describes the unexpected arrival of the thief. This fact requires vigilance; indeed, Jesus exclaims: “You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (v. 40).

The disciple is one who awaits the Lord and his Kingdom. The Gospel clarifies this perspective with the third parable: the steward of a house after the master’s departure. In the first scene, the steward faithfully carries out his tasks and receives compensation. In the second scene, the steward abuses his authority, and beats the servants, for which, upon the master’s unexpected return, he will be punished. This scene describes a situation that is also frequent in our time: so much daily injustice, violence and cruelty are born from the idea of behaving as masters of the lives of others. We have only one master who likes to be called not “master” but “Father”. We are all servants, sinners and children: He is the one Father.

Jesus reminds us today that the expectation of the eternal beatitude does not relieve us of the duty to render the world more just and more liveable. On the contrary, this very hope of ours of possessing the eternal Kingdom impels us to work to improve the conditions of earthly life, especially of our weakest brothers and sisters. May the Virgin Mary help us not to be people and communities dulled by the present, or worse, nostalgic for the past, but striving toward the future of God, toward the encounter with him, our life and our hope.

After the Angelus Prayer the Holy Father said:

Dear brothers and sisters, unfortunately news of civilian victims of war continues to arrive from Syria, from Aleppo in particular. It is unacceptable that so many defenceless people – even many children – must pay the price of the conflict, the price of closing the heart and of the lack of will of the powerful for peace. Let us be close in prayer and solidarity with our Syrian brothers and sisters, and let us entrust them to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary. Let us all pray a bit in silence and then recite a Hail Mary.

I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from various countries! Quite a lot of flags are visible! Today various groups of young men and women are present. I greet you with great affection!

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. Arrivederci!

Bernardo Lopez, “Keep watch”

Message of Justice and Peace for the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima

No to war and terrorism

"Never again one against the other, never, never again!... Never again war!" Paul VI’s call for peace before the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4 October 1965 echoed in the Cathedral of Hiroshima on Saturday, 6 August, at the end of the Mass celebrated for the 71st anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb.

The words of Pope Montini – who died 38 years ago on 6 August – were at the heart of the message with which the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace wished to emphasize the importance of the commemorative ceremonies, joining in the “prayer of solidarity and of hope” raised by the Church of Japan.

On behalf of the President, Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, and all the members of Justice and Peace, the message was read by Diacesity Official Fr Michael Czerny, sj, who had travelled to Japan in order to join in a series of initiatives in memory of the tragic bombing of 1945, which claimed an estimated 140,000 lives. In particular, Fr Czerny attended a two-day conference dedicated to disarmament and safety of nuclear weapons organized by the United Nations University and by Religions for Peace, the world conference established in 1970 in order to foster the contribution of various religions to the peace building process. He also took part in the interreligious meeting hosted by the Tendai Buddhist Community and in the programme of celebrations organized by the Diocese of Hiroshima, which concluded with the Mass on 6 August in the Cathedral.

The message of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace underscored the coinciding anniversary of the Transfiguration of the Lord, which “reveals the glory of Christ and demands a response of listening to Jesus Christ and following him”. The text quoted the words of Pope Francis, emphasizing that the Lord’s “full adherence to the will of the Father makes his humanity transparent to the glory of God, who is Love and mercy.”

In this perspective the anniversary of the nuclear catastrophe offers “a unique and special occasion for our prayer and penitence”. The message continued, encouraging prayer and action “in solidarity with the victims of the atom bombs and of all wars and all terrorism around the world”, and highlighting in particular the context of the Jubilee Year of Mercy induced by Pope Francis. “This Jubilee,” it explains, “gives each and every one of us the opportunity to revisit the sinful and sorrowful moments of our lives, not in order to be crushed and to despair, but in order to allow God’s loving grace to enter” the heart of each person “with forgiveness and healing”.

Coloured lanterns in Hiroshima in memory of the victims of the atomic bomb (Asia)
On Wednesday afternoon, 27 July, the Pope's first day in Poland, the Holy Father met with Polish Bishops in Wawel Cathedral. Inspired by several questions posed to him, the Holy Father decided to hold a dialogue with Polish bishops, priests, the elderly and parish life. The following is the English text of the dialogue which was held in Italian.

POPE FRANCIS:

Before beginning our dialogue, with the questions that you prepared, I would like to perform a work of mercy with all of you and to suggest another. I know that these days, with World Youth Day, many of you have been busy and so you couldn’t go to the funeral of Archbishop Zimowski. It is a work of charity to bury the dead, so I would like us all together to say a prayer for Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski as a genuine sign of fraternal charity, that of burying a dead brother. Our Father… Hail Mary… Glory be. Requiem aeternam.

Then, the other work of mercy I would like to suggest to you is that you are concerned about this: our dear Cardinal Macharski is very sick. At least stop by and touch the walls, as if to say: “Brother, I am close to you.” Visiting the sick is another work of mercy. I myself plan to go. Thank you.

Now, someone has prepared questions or at least sent them to me. I am ready.

MARKUS JEDRASZEWSKI, Archbishop of Łódź

Holy Father, it seems that the faithful of the Catholic Church, and more generally all Christians in Western Europe, increasingly find themselves a minority in the midst of a modern, godless, liberal culture. In Poland, we are witnessing a profound change, an enormous struggle, between faith in God on the one hand, and the other a way of thinking and acting as if God did not exist. In your opinion, Holy Father, what kind of pastoral activity should the Catholic Church in our country undertake, so that the Polish people can remain faithful to its own teaching – closeness. Today we, the Lord’s servants – bishops, priests, consecrated persons and committed lay people – need to be close to God’s people. Without closeness there are only disembodied words. Let us think – I like to reflect on this – of the two pillars of the Gospel. What are the two pillars of the Gospel? The Beatitudes and Matthew 25, the “criteria” on which all of us will be judged. Concreteness, closeness, touching, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. But you are saying this because it is fashionable to speak about mercy this year! No! This is the Gospel! The Gospel, the works of mercy. It shows us the Samaritan heretic who is moved, does what he has to do, and even risks his money! To touch. Then there is Jesus, who was always with people, with the disciples, or alone with the Father in prayer. Closeness. Touching. This is Jesus’ life… And when he was moved, at the gates of the city of Nain (cf. Lk 7:11-17), he went over to touch the bier saying: “Do not weep…” Closeness. It is closeness to touch the suffering flesh of Christ. The Church, the glory of the Church, is of course the martyrs, but God also moved others like her – a little girl, who left everything to spend their lives in hospitals and schools, with children, with the sick…

I remember in Central Africa, an elderly Sister with a little girl came to greet me. “I’m not from here, but from the other part of the river, from Congo, but once a week I come here to shop because it is cheaper.” She told me that she was 83 or 84 years old. “I’ve been here for 23 years, I’m an obstetric nurse and I have delivered two or three thousand babies...” – “And you take care alone?” – “Yes, we take the canoes...” At 85 years of age! With the canoes, it took her about an hour to get there. This woman – and many others like her – left home (she was an Italian, from Brescia) to touch the flesh of Christ. If we go to the mission countries in the Amazon region and Latin America, in the cemeteries we see the tombs of so many men and women religious who died young because they lacked an atmosphere of closeness. It shows us the Samaritan heretic who is moved, does what he has to do, and even risks his money! To touch. Then there is Jesus, who was always with people, with the disciples, or alone with the Father in prayer. Closeness. Touching. This is Jesus’ life… And when he was moved, at the gates of the city of Nain (cf. Lk 7:11-17), he went over to touch the bier saying: “Do not weep…” Closeness. It is closeness to touch the suffering flesh of Christ. The Church, the glory of the Church, is of course the martyrs, but God also moved others like her – a little girl, who left everything to spend their lives in hospitals and schools, with children, with the sick…

There is one last thing I would emphasize, because I believe that the Lord asks it of me: grandparent, the elderly. You suffered under…
Pope Francis: Thank you. I would like to stress one thing: the parish remains valid! The parish must remain. It is a structure that we must not discard, it is the home of God's People. The problem is how the parish is organized! There are parishes with ungodly parish secretaries who scare people off. Parishes with closed doors. But there also parishes with open doors, parishes where when someone comes to ask a question, they are told: "Come in, make yourself at home, what can we do for you?" And someone listens to them patiently, because the people of God requires patience; it takes effort! A fine university professor, a Jesuit college in Buenos Aires, asked the provincial when he retired to be assigned as a parish priest in a city neighborhood, in order to teach and experience. One week a week he would come back to the university — he was a member of the faculty. And one day he told me: "Tell your professor of ecclesiology that there are two things missing: 'What?' and 'What?'. First, the holy people of...
God essentially wear you out. And second, the holy people of God naturally do what they think best. And this wears you out! Today being a parish priest is exhausting: managing a parish takes effort nowadays, with so many problems. The Lord has asked us to get a little tired but not to rest.

A parish is exhausting if it is well organized. The renewal of the parish has to be a constant concern of bishops. How is this parish doing? What is it doing? What is its religious education programme like? How well is catechesis being presented? Is the church open? So many things… I think of one parish in Buenos Aires. Whenever an engaged couple arrived to get married, the secretary would immediately say: “Here are the prices”. This is wrong, parishes like this are wrong. How do you think people, how attentive are we to them? Is someone always in the conference? Is someone always in the church, in the highways — if there is a church with a light on, people always come. Always! A welcoming parish. These are the questions we bishops should be asking our priests. How is your parish doing? Do you go out? Do you visit the imprisoned; the sick, the elderly? What about the oratory? The oratory is one of the great parish institutions, at least in Italy. There kids play and learn a little catechesis. They come home tired, happy, and a good seed has been sown. In the parish important! There are those who say that the parish is no longer relevant because this is the hour of the movements. That is not true! The movements help, but the movements must not be an alternative to the parish. They must help in the parish, contribute to the parish, like confraternities, Catholic Action and so many other groups. To want to innovate is dangerous: “Here are the prices”.

I'm not a brilliant pastoral theologian... I don't know if this is a simplistic answer, but I don't have any other answer. I'm not a brilliant pastoral theologian, I just say whatever comes to mind.

POPE FRANCIS:
Thank you! The problem of refugees… It wasn't always like this. Let's speak of migrants and refugees, considering the two together. My father was a migrant. I told the President of Poland that in the future where my father worked, there were many Polish immigrants, in the period after the war. I was 12 and I knew many of them. My country is a country of immigrants, everybody… And there were no problems. Other times, really…

Why is there so much migration today? I am not talking about emigration from one's own country to another. This is due to lack of work; it is clear that people leave to seek employment abroad. This is a domestic problem, which you yourselves have experienced to some extent… Here I am speaking of those who come to us, fleeing from wars, from hunger. The problem is back there. Why is the problem there? Because in those countries people are exploited, the earth is being exploited, there is ideological colonization for the sake of making more money. In talking with world economists who see this problem, they say: “We need to invest in these countries. Investments will lead to employment and then there will be no need to emigrate”. But there is war! There is tribal warfare, ideological wars or other artificial wars created by arms traffickers who make a living from this. They give weapons to you, who are against them, and to them, who are against you. That is how they make a living!

Corruption is really at the origin of migration. What can be done? I believe that every country has to look at times and means. Not all countries are alike; not all countries have the same possibilities. But they do have the possibility of being genuine - Generous as Christians. We cannot invest there, but for those who come here…

And many and how? There is no one answer that fits every case. For acceptance depends on the situation of each country and culture. But certainly many things can be done. For example, weekly prayer to the Blessed Sacrament for those who knock at Europe's door and are unable to enter. Some do, but others don't… Then we should immediately take a path that generates fear. We have countries that for years have done a good job of integrating migrants. They have integrated them well. In others, unfortunately, certain ghettos have formed. A whole system has to take place, on a worldwide level, with regard to this commitment and acceptance. But that is something relative: what is absolute is a welcoming heart. That is absolute! With prayer and intercession, by doing what I can. What is relative is the way I am able to do it. Not everyone can do it the same way. The problem is worldwide! The exploitation of creation, and the exploitation of persons. What all of us is enacting a moment of the annihilation of man as the image of God. I would like to conclude with this aspect, since behind all this there are ideologies. In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are various ideologies, forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these – I will call it clearly by its name – is the ideology of “gender”. Today children – children! – are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the international organizations that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this is terrible!

In a conversation with Pope Benedict, who is in good health and very perceptive, he said to me: “Holiness, this is the age of sin against God the Creator”. He is very perceptive! He is a woman; God created the world in a certain way… and we are doing the exact opposite. God gave us things in a “raw” state, so that we could shape a culture; and then with this culture, we are saying that it brings us back to the “raw” state! Pope Benedict’s observation should make us think: “The age of sin against God the Creator”. That will help us.

But, Christopher, you will say to me: “What does this have to do with migrants”? It has to do with the overall situation, no? As for migrants, I would say: the problem is there in their native lands… But how do we welcome them? Everyone has to determine what and how we can do. And all of us can have an open heart and think of spending an hour in the parishes, an hour a week of adoration and prayer for migrants. Prayer moves mountains!

These are the four questions. Anyway… Pardon me, I know you have a lot of work, but my Italian blood betrays me.

Thank you very much for your welcome, and let us hope these days will fill us with great joy. Let us now pray: Our Lady, who is our Mother, and who always takes us by the hand.

Salve Regina…

And don’t forget the elderly, who are the memory of a people.
A “good preacher” must be a “contemplative of the Word” and “of the people”, the Pope said. On Thursday morning, 4 August, he received in audience participants in the General Chapter of the Dominicans in the Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the address which he delivered in Spanish.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we could describe this day as “A Jesuit among Friars”: the morning with you and the evening in Assisi with the Franciscans: among Friars.

I welcome you and I thank Fr Bruno Cadoré, Master of the Order, for the welcome that he addressed to me on his own behalf and that of all those present, while the General Chapter taking place in Bologna, is concluding, during which you have desired to remember the roots at the tomb of your holy Founder.

This year has a special meaning for your religious family as eight centuries have passed since Pope Honorius III approved the Order of Preachers. On the occasion of this Jubilee anniversary that you are celebrating, I join you in giving thanks for the abundant gifts you have received over the course of this time. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Order for the significant contribution it has made to the Church and for its collaboration with the Apostolic See, since the very beginning, it has maintained with a spirit of loyal service up to now.

This eighth centenary leads us to commemorate the men and women of faith, scholars, contemplatives, missionaries, martyrs and apostles of charity, who brought the kind gesture and the tenderness of God everywhere, enriching the Church and demonstrating new ways to incarnate the Gospel through preaching, witness and charity: the three pillars that guarantee the future of the Order and maintain the freshness of the founding charism.

God moved St Dominic to found an “Order of Preachers”, which has the mission of preaching that Jesus entrusted to the Apostles. It is the Word of God that burns within you and impels you to go forth to proclaim Jesus Christ to all peoples (cf. Mt 28:19-20). The Founding Father said: “First contemplate, then teach”. Evangelized by God, in order to evangelize. Without a strong union with Him, preaching might seem completely perfect, quite reasonable and even admirable, but it will not touch the heart, which is what has to change. The serious and assiduous study of theological matters is also essential, because it allows you to grow closer to reality and to listen to God’s people. The preacher contemplates the Word and also contemplates the people, who are waiting to be understood (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 154).

Effectively transmitting the Word of God requires testimony: faithful teachers of the truth and courageous witnesses of the Gospel. Witnesses embody the teaching, they make it tangible, attractive, and leave no one indifferent; they unite the joy of the Gospel to the truth, the joy of knowing we are loved by God and are objects of his infinite mercy (cf. ibid., 142).

St Dominic told his followers: “Walk barefoot, let us go to preach”. He reminds us of the passage of the burning bush, when God said to Moses: “Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground” (Ex 3:5). A good preacher is aware that he is moving on holy ground, because the Word he brings is holy, as are the people who are to receive it. The faithful not only need to receive the Word in its integrity, but they also need to experience the life witness of the preacher (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 171). The Saints brought forth abundant fruit because, by their life and their mission, they spoke with the language of the heart, which knows no barriers and can be understood by everyone.

Lastly, those who preach and bear witness to God and for the Church, I encourage you to joyfully follow the charism inspired by St Dominic, which has been lived in various ways by many saints of the Dominican family. His example inspires us to face the future with hope, knowing that God always renews everything... and takes nothing away. May Our Mother, the Virgin of the Rosary, intercede for you and protect you, that you may be preachers and courageous witnesses of God’s love. Thank you! The Pontiff asks Dominicans to be contemplative of the Word and of the people

A good preacher

A Jesuit among Friars

This day would be spent as a “Jesuit among the Friars”, Pope Francis said, as he began a very full schedule on Thursday, 4 August. At the Vatican in the morning, he received Friars gathered for the General Chapter of Dominicans and in the afternoon he went to Assisi to pray with Franciscans at the Basilica of St Mary of the Sepulchre of their Founder.

That afternoon after arriving at Assisi with the Franciscans: among Friars of Assisi.

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The world needs forgiveness

To offer mercy to those who are caught up in resentment and harbour hatred

At the Portiuncula the Pope indicates the path of renewal for the Church and society

The following is the English text of the meditations issued by the Holy Father to all friars, brothers, and sisters of the Order of Friars Minor and the Order of the Poor Sisters. In the year 2016, the year of Franciscan Jubilee (from October 4, 2016, to November 20, 2016), the Jubilee of Mercy was celebrated.

...Dear brothers and sisters, through St. Francis of Assisi we ask for, if not a place, in the presence of all the towns...
The relevance of certain reflections by Karol Wojtyła for understanding Amoris Laetitia

Creative fidelity

A n important debate took place in Kraków on 16 and 17 December 1970. Archbishop Karol Wojtyła had just finished a dense book that, among other things, sought to explain the underlying anthropology of Gaudium et Spes, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The book was entitled The Acting Person (1979), and a large gathering of philosophers had been convened to discuss the intense speculative force of this book.

It is interesting to review the interventions published subsequent to the conference in a collection edited by Andzej Szostek. On the one hand, there was considerable support for the book. Those, in fact, who had studied phenomenology and personalism understood that Wojtyła was going in a new direction by claiming that the objective recognition of subjectivity does not necessarily imply subjectivism. Rather, human action is a privileged moment for apprehending the truth of the human person. This intuition allowed the Polish archbishop to advance a hypothesis about how to overcome the one-sidedness of the Thomistic bent unaccustomed to returning to things in themselves. Some had fallen into the habit of merely repeating an accepted canon of orthodox philosophy. Rather than affirming truth as the adequatio of the mind to reality, they seemed implicitly to maintain that truth is the adequatio of the mind to St Thomas Aquinas. They found everything Wojtyła was up to un- satisfactory: the method, the terminolo- gy, and the proposals.

I wish to recall this episode to show that resistance is not infrequent when Christian thought takes a new step forward. This resistance generally arises from a suspicion of infidelity to an inherited patrimony of thought: the use of a new lexicon considered ambiguous and the many risks involved by apparently going off in a different direction based on some new point of view.

Rather than using Karol Wojtyła's The Acting Person, we might turn to other examples. Above all, we can recall the controversy surrounding the notion of religious liberty, where the apparent opposition between the encyclical Libertas of Leo XIII and the Declaration Dignitatis Humanae of Vatican II led some to label the entire Council heretical. Or we can consider the introduction of the unitive and procreative meaning of the sexual act in Humanae Vitae, which prevailed over the Thomistic theory of primary and secondary ends. Similarly, there was not by recognizing that the human being is created in the image and likeness of God based on the "rational uni-duality" of man and woman as elaborated by John Paul II, who completed and expanded the traditional understanding of the image and likeness of God as based on higher human faculties such as intelligence, free will, and so on.

The list of examples would run the gamut of Christian doctrine. Natural reality and the deposit of faith undoubtedly have a definitive and objective structure. However, the comprehension of these truths allows for organic developments that need to be recognized in different histor- ical periods. Hence an attentive reading of the signs of the times is not extraneous to the intellectual ef- fort that needs to take place. Whether we face a new philosophical, theological, or pastoral reflection.

I have the impression that this partially explains what is happening when the Pontiff offers the world an Exhortation like Amoris Laetitia. Pope Francis is not chang- ing the Church's funda- mental teaching. He would not dare do so be- cause he knows that the deposit of faith is not an arbitrary invention that can be changed accord- ing to chance discoveries.

The deposit of faith is a precious gift that needs to be guarded. But guarding it does not mean placing it in a freezer and letting it hibernate to suspend its metabolism. To the contrary, it is the soul of a living God who enters into and takes part in our history in order to redeem it. This can be seen every day in the pastoral activity of the Church and especially in the ministry of the Successor of Peter. The Roman Pontiff would be- tray his vocation and his service to the People of God if he suffocated the presence of God in history, in the very places where it is found most readily: in the Scriptures, the popes, and in particular in those who suffer isolation and pain.

For this reason, some of the criticisms recently directed against the Pope seem to me unjust and unfounded. Amoris Laetitia is an authentic act of the papal magisterium. It is very impressive, be- sides theoretically inaccurate, to suggest that this Apostolic Exhorta- tion is a sort of personal, al- most private, opinion. The Pope exercises his munus docendi in a variety of ways: in his messages, speeches, homilies, and, without doubt, in his encyc- licals and post-synodal exhortations. The lat- ter of these is born from a broad exercise of synodality, a fact of no little importance.

Furthermore, Amoris Laetitia neither breaks from, nor is in discontinuity with, the Gospel, the natural law, or previous papal teaching. In particular, the much discussed eighth chapter of the Exhortation is a good example of what Benedict XVI taught in a general way during his speech to the Roman Curia on 22 December 2005. Mutatis mutandis, we could say that the teaching on the sacrament of marriage, the Euchar- ist, and the conditions for ascertaining the nullity of a marriage, are of the recent magisterial teaching. But this true and immutable teaching, to which the Pope is more deeply, needs to be deepened and handed down with due consideration for the changing times we are living in.

To read it in a hermeneutic of rupture, as some critics of Pope Francis do, is, in my opinion, erro- neous. Here are a few reasons why.

First of all, this reading is an in- consistent interpretation of St Thomas Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor knew how to understand and to love with unparalleled passion. All of the uni- versal categories he uses, including the Thomistic bent, does not necessarily imply subjectivism.

The misunderstanding of the Pope is evident in some of his critics' reading, which regards the Church's pastoral concern is direc- tionless. The Church's pastoral teaching. But this was deepened and handed down with recent magisterial teaching. But this can be seen every day in the pastoral activity of the Church and especially in the ministry of the Successor of Peter. The Roman Pontiff would betray his vocation and his service to the People of God if he suffocated the presence of God in history, in the very places where it is found most readily: in the Scriptures, the popes, and in particular in those who suffer isolation and pain.

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To read it in a hermeneutic of rupture, as some critics of Pope Francis do, is, in my opinion, erroneous. Here are a few reasons why.

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The misunderstanding of this point on the part of some Thomists reveals itself in an attempt to point out just one: the fairly common tendency to interpret rea- son as the enemy of the universal, overlooking important contributions Aquinas made to re- thinking categories he uses, including the Thomistic bent, does not necessarily imply subjectivism.

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person’s ethical life by unilaterally accentuating certain moral absolutes; much less does it water down the universal dimension of norms into a purely factual, concrete, and contextual ethics. From this point of view, the Pope has written a profoundly Thomistic Exhortation that recuperates in a healthy way the notions of participation and analogy that pave the way to a response, aside from theories, to the drama of the real person acting in real situations.

Second of all, the critiques against Pope Francis also lack an accurate understanding of John Paul II. Pope Wojtyła, first as philosopher and then as Roman Pontiff, opened an important door in the quest to reestablish a solid basis for anthropology and ethics. A purely objectivist view of the human person is insufficient for appreciating that which is irreducible in him. It is necessary to look carefully at fundamental human experience to find the broad and rich world of subjectivity and consciousness that lies within.

Within this world, according to John Paul II, the natural law does not appear in a deductive way from a few inclinations. Rather, its normative foundation consists in practical reason understood as the capacity to recognize, step by step, the truth of the good. It is precisely in this that we find pastoral gradualness, or the patience with which we need to listen to and understand a person who has not fully understood a given moral value and its practical ramifications.

The pastoral gradualness elaborated in Familiaris Consortio acquires even more substance when we consider Amoris Laetitia in its entirety. Of course, interpreting this gradualness correctly requires not only that we not confuse it with a sort of doctrinal gradualness, but also that we take on the mindset that discernment is necessary in every concrete case. Any purely formal repetition of John Paul II’s teaching that fails to give space to the need to accompany the person, to help in his discernment, and to effect his eventual integration betrays the pastoral dimension of every magisterial act.

Finally, the critics of Pope Francis lack an adequate understanding of Benedict XVI. A lot can be said about this, but I would simply say that it is simplistic to point to Benedict XVI as a sort of pontifical justification of rigorism. There are those who would like to paint the Pope emeritus as a passionate defender of unchangeable truth, in contrast with the current Pope. But this is not the case. The reality is much more complex. Pope Francis is in continuity with Benedict XVI. One of the most moving examples I have found to demonstrate this is a passage in which Joseph Ratzinger clearly recognizes that even in the case of those who do not fully follow Jesus Christ it is possible to discover and cultivate the journey of the Christian life.

“A person continues to be a Christian,” Ratzinger wrote in Fide et futuro (Faith and Future), “as long as he makes the effort to give the central assent, as long as he tries to utter the fundamental Yes of trust, even if he doesn’t know how to situate or resolve many particular aspects. There will be moments in life when, among the many moments of faith’s darkness, we have to concentrate on the simple Yes: I believe in you, Jesus of Nazareth, I trust that in you the divine meaning has been revealed, for which I may live my life in confidence and peace, with patience and courage. If this centre is still present, the human being still has faith, even if many of the concrete particulars of the confessions of faith are obscure to him and perhaps not practicable. This is because at its core, faith — I will say it once again — is not a system of knowledge, but a trust. The Christian faith means to find a You that sustains me and, notwithstanding the imperfection and intrinsically incomplete characteristic of every human encounter, gives me the promise of an indescribable love that not only aspires to eternity, but imparts it.”

Therefore, in my opinion, there is no discontinuity in the teaching of the most recent Pontiffs. What we are witnessing is a creative fidelity that allows us, in practical terms, to see how important it is to give primacy to time and space, as Pope Francis teaches. Only in this way is it possible to live patiently with those who are afflicted and wounded, only in this way it is possible to accompany one other without scandalizing ourselves with our weaknesses, and at the same to discover that in the Church, the presence of Jesus Christ in history, there is a journey full of tendencies for rebuilding lives, for healing all wounds, even the deepest ones.

*Teacher and Researcher, Centro de Investigación Social Avanzada (Querétaro, Mexico)

Yeaming for Paradise

Continued from page 40

not remain a mere sentiment, but is actualized in sharing, solidarity and, ultimately, in love. Mercy is a passion that turns into compassion, into a shared life. To accept and to give: this is what the Poverello teaches us in this Year of Mercy. And love is either concrete, as Jesus shows by dying on the cross for us, or it is merely an ideology not worthy of the name “love”. Francis of Assisi “does mercy”, he manifests mercy precisely by forgiving. Once he has been forgiven, he desires to exclude no one from forgiveness. This shines clearly from a letter Francis wrote to a priest whose name is unknown to us, who was suffering due to certain friars in his community who were particularly sinful. We can refer to this letter, written between 1211 and 1223, as Francis’ Magna Charta of Mercy.

In it, we read, “that there be no more”. When faced with the sin of a brother, or with the sin of anyone for that matter, the price to pay for anyone who exercises authority, Francis imparts a golden rule to confessors: “… let them have absolutely no power of enjoining any other penance but this, go and sin no more”.

Francis was a man “mercied” by the Lord, who went on to become a prophet and an apostle of mercy, a man who lay in the bosom of the Father’s mercy, and who knew no other way of following Jesus than to be merciful with others.

Mercy transformed into compassion and love transformed into forgiveness are the basis of the great revolution we all desire and we all need. Mercy and forgiveness are attitudes that need to be instantiated into concrete necessary behaviours if we want to avoid self-destruction. The Year of Mercy asks us to be merciful just as the Father is merciful. And Francis of Assisi tells us, just as he told his brothers before he died: “I have done my task; may the Lord show you yours”.

*Secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
The silence prayer in Auschwitz and the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

A special ‘Mercy Friday’

We are in the Holy Year and therefore World Youth Day is included in all effects in this moment of grace that Pope Francis wanted to give to the entire Church. WYD is always managed very efficiently by the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

Pope Francis calls young people to get in the game

On the eve of his visit to Poland, the Pope invited the youth of the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas, to become leaders. The young people had gathered on Tuesday, 26 July, in the parish of St. Anne to join in spirit with those at World Youth Day in Krakow. The Pontiff sent a video message to Spanish-speaking youth.

Dear Young People of the Diocese of Brownsville, gathered on the Feast Day of St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus. I know that you have gathered in Texas, very close to Mexico, very close to Latin America. I know that you have gathered in order to spiritually join the World Youth Day in Krakow.

I wish to be close to you. I wish to tell you to always look forward, to always look to the horizon, do not allow life to put barriers in front of you, always look to the horizon. Always have the courage to want more, more, more... with courage but, at the same time, do not forget to look back, to the legacy that you have received from your forefathers, from your grandparents, from your parents; to the legacy of faith, the faith that you now have in your hands in order to look forward.

I know that some of you might ask me: "Father, yes, you tell us to look to the horizon and to remember things, but today, what am I to do?". Get in the game! Today accept life as it is and do good for others. In the world today a game is being played in which there is no room for second string, either play as a leader or you are out. Take the memory you have received, look to the horizon and, today, accept reality and carry it forward, make it bear fruit. Render it fruitful. God calls you to be fruitful! God calls you to pass this life on. God calls you to create hope. God calls you to receive mercy and to give mercy. God calls you to be happy. Do not fear! Do not be afraid! Get in the game! This is how life is!

I wish you a beautiful encounter as young people joining in World Youth Day. Joining the young people who are in Krakow. Have enthusiasm, move forward! May the Virgin protect you, may Jesus bless you, and please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

An interview with Archbishop Fisichella

Gianluca Biccini

The silent prayer in Auschwitz and WYD in Krakow.

For the Diocesany responsible for vitalizing the pastoral ministry and the organization of the Jubilee events, what did the Pope’s day in Poland on Fridays in July represent?

Looking at what Francis did, we can undoubtedly define it as one of the “Mercy Fridays” that he is bringing about each month of this extraordinary Holy Year. I would like to add that in this circumstance Francis experienced it in an even more meaningful way. I believe, in fact, that the silence of Auschwitz, his silent prayer, and his wish to share some time with the sick children, with Iraqi young people or the disadvantaged present at the Way of the Cross, are wholly in line with the works of mercy. Let us not forget that praying for the deceased is a spiritual work of mercy, and visiting the sick is a corporal work of mercy. Therefore I would say that, although on an organizational level we suspended Jubilee events during the summer period in order to give him a rest from the many efforts of these months, the Pope has amazed us yet again. And thus in July he fully held his “Mercy Friday”, in an even more surprising way, if you will.

Similarly, WYD in Krakow was considered the Jubilee for young people. What role did your Dicastery play in the days in Poland?
The Bard and Mercy

The many homilies of Shakespeare

Silvia Guidi

“There is order and there is chaos”, writes director Peter Brook in a beautiful book entitled *The Quality of Mercy: Reflections on Shakespeare*. “There is power and the abandoning of power. There is pride, and there is humility. And yet in all those oppositions something is unspoken, something is deeply lacking. What can encompass and bind them together? Out of the opposition, which in itself can go on forever (because an opposition is dynamic and cannot graduate beyond its own level), what is lacking so that this constant dynamic opposition, on which all life as we know it is based, can be transformed?”

We need something capable of unraveling every human conflict from within and break the chain of endless juxtaposition. And that something is expressed by a word that has no right to exist in any human lexicon — “mercy”, misericordia — concrete, capable of changing history, but also mysterious, divine and human because it is composed of two different natures. Pardon is human because it is composed of the divine providence, which also refers to Wisdom (35:25); to the words of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, which also refers to Wisdom (32:6, see also Isaiah 46); and to the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, which refer to God’s love (Mt 5:43). “It is twice blest,” Porzia continues. “It blesseth him that gives and him that takes”. “In this way,” Milward remarks, “the author prepares the stage for a kind of homily on mercy. But how can he do this? Shouldn’t a playwright just present the comedy at hand, critics would say, rather than climb into the pulpit? Certainly. But when a playwright wants to insert a homily into his drama, who is going to stop him? In any case, Shakespeare invites us not only to listen to the homily, but to meditate on its meaning. Actually, if we analyze the details of the Bard’s masterpieces, the stranger they become. Many monologues are in fact written in a homiletic style, and conversions and sudden turnarounds fly in the face of Aristotelian logic. We find this even in his most famous works, those we seem to know so well, like Hamlet. Deep down, the Prince of Denmark’s behaviour is often inconsistent with the internal economy of the play, as Piero Boitani writes in a wonderful study titled *The Gospel according to Shakespeare* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2004). In fact, if we judge the play according to rigid rationalist categories, it seems entirely incoherent, as Boitani stresses in an interview with Alessandro Zaccari published in the July 6th edition of the newspaper *Il Mondo*. For example, in the first part of the plot, the prince is prey to a madness that borders on insanity, be it feigned or real. Whatever the case may be, there is a brusque interruption between this and what follows. As soon as Hamlet returns from a mysterious journey in which he has claims to have been abducted by pirates, everything changes. He recognizes the divine order in all things, he, who is emotionally moved by the divine providence manifested in the death of a single sparrow. There is not much in the play to help us understand this transformation. Hamlet’s life was certainly in danger, and this may have contributed to his change in perspective. But the change is no less jarring for this.

There are other U-turns in the drama. Hamlet abuses Ophelia in a manifestly unjust way, giving reason to suspect that the young lady’s madness is, at least in part, due to the pain her fiancé has caused her. But in the second part of the play, in the scene at the cemetery, an unrecognizable Hamlet jumps into her grave and finally declares his love for her. It is a sign of repentance or at least, as Boitani points out, the beginning of something new. In a religious vein, we see here a glimmer of the Divine Shakespeare will allow to shine fully in his mature fantasy plays *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. Next to the theme of divine providence is that of the human desire for redemption, which comes into full bloom at the end of *Hamlet*, where irrationality is given full reign. Here we must keep in mind Hamlet’s relation to his friend Horatio. The two studied together at the University of Wittenberg and their conversations reveal their familiarity with philosophical and theological categories. When everything comes to light at the end of the play, Horatio is entirely aware that Hamlet is guilty of causing more than one death. The old Polonius, King Claudius, and Laertes: all have died in some way at the hand of Hamlet. And yet Horatio expresses his wish to the “sweet Prince” that “lights of angels sing thee to thy rest!” Boitani concludes that Shakespeare, at least in this instance, does not seem inclined to unveil the enigma. Hamlet’s last words “the rest is silence” should be taken literally. Amidst everything that has happened in his life, as in any human life, there is always an impenetrable nucleus that eludes all explanation.

The appeal for mercy in *Measure for Measure* is even more overtly homiletic. The novice Isabella implores mercy not only for her brother Claudio but also for Angelo, a judge who is harsh with others but indulgent with himself, a symbol of the despicable sin of hypocrisy. Isabella speaks of mercy as a powerful, regenerative force — “O, think on that; / and mercy then will breathe within your lips, / like man new made” — capable of giving rebirth (as in 1 Cor 15). King Lear, in the play of the same name, openly declares his intention to preach using words strangely similar to those Isabella directs at Angelo and foreshadowing those of another British king, Cymbeline (*Pardon’s the word to all!).

Particularly moving is the epitaph Shakespeare places in the mouth of Prospero, the protagonist of *The Tempest*: “And my ending is despair; / unless I be relieved by prayer, / which pierces so that it assuails / mercy itself and frees all faults”. These words, Milward notes, turn our thoughts to the humility of the greatest playwright of all time as he comes to the end of his theatrical career. Was that humility the reason Shakespeare left more than half his works unedited? It was up to two fellow actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, to collect his works almost seven years after his death and publish them as the *First Folio*. Rather, what Shakespeare needed at the time was not a simple solution to the human condition, but his prayers and his audience, whom he asked explicitly to pray for him. And so, Milward concludes, despite the encomiums Shakespeare continued to receive from every corner of the world, as the epicenter of Western literature and the man of the millennium, we should heed his request and pray for his eternal rest as Horatio does for Hamlet.
er natural number smaller than it other than 1 which can divide it into another natural number (e.g. 6 is composite because 6 divided by 3 equals 2). Prime numbers, on the other hand, whenever divided by a smaller natural number other than 1, yield a real number (e.g. 5 is prime because 5 divided by 4 equals 1.25, 5 divided by 3 equals 1.67, and 5 divided by 2 equals 2.5). Consequently, all natural even numbers (except for 2) are composite since they are multiples of 2, and all natural numbers that end in 5 (except for 5) are composite since they are multiples of 5. It also follows that all natural numbers whose digits add up to multiples of 3 cannot be prime since they are multiples of 3. These very simple observations are sufficient to explain why humans have been grappling with prime numbers even since prehistoric times.

About twenty thousand years ago some members of homo sapiens from Lake Edward in the modern Democratic Republic of Congo engraved a series of marks on the fibula of a baboon, representing a numeral system designed to carry out operations of multiplication and division. The so-called "Ishango bone", discovered by Jean de Hinselin de Braoucourt (1920-1998) and presided at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, displays three columns of numbers. On the left we see prime numbers between 10 and 20: 11, 13, 17, and 19. Seeing that the futility, so to speak, of prime numbers was discovered so early, it is difficult to understand why such efforts have been put forth for their systematic identification.

In fact, the larger the natural number, the more difficult it is to show that it is prime. This is because while individuating a composite number only requires us to find a single natural number that can divide it, a prime number requires us to show that dividing that number by each of the numbers smaller than it will result in a real number.

In fact, no less that three of Euclid's 12 books of the Elements take into consideration the uniqueness of prime numbers. Incidentally, there have been over a thousand editions of the Elements, the most interesting of which is kept in the Vatican Library, and the Bible is the only book that has seen more editions than the Elements. The Elements is a collection of theorems assembled by the great Alexandrian mathematician during the reign of Ptolemy (275-283 BCE). Besides the contribution it makes to geometry, the Elements also contains the so-called "number theory" (for example, the branch of mathematics that deals with whole numbers). Every great mathematician has had to confront an intuitive Euclid expresses in Book IX: "Prime numbers are more than any assigned multitude of prime numbers." 

Leonard Euler (1707-1783) subsequently confirmed that there is an infinite number of prime numbers. But what really drove ancient mathematicians, like Eratosthenes of Cyrene (275-195 BCE), to design algorithms in order to identify prime numbers was the fact that prime numbers can be used to write any number in the most basic form. If we take, for example, the number 720, which results from multiplying the numbers 2 through 6: if 2×3×5×2×3×2×5=720, then 2×3×(2×3)×(2×5)=720, and hence 2×3×(2×3)×5=720. This last equation is the most fundamental seeing that the prime numbers 2, 3, and 5 cannot be divided further, unlike the composite numbers 4 and 6.

This characteristic - which has become a basic feature in asymmetric cryptography (called asymmetric because the formula used to decipher the message is different from the one used to encrypt it) - and is the basis of modern digital transaction systems - stands at the horizon of mathematical problems, some of which remain unsolved today, regarding the frequency of prime numbers and their relationship to natural numbers. Take, for example, the hypothesis proposed by Christian Goldbach (1690-1764), according to which every even number can be written as the sum of two prime numbers, such as 8=5+3 and 10=3+7. Or take the theorem of twin prime numbers proposed in its primitive form by Alphonse de Polignac (1780-1843), who presumed the existence of an infinite number of twin prime numbers separated by only one digit, such as 5 and 7 or 7 and 9 (this was the inspiration for Paolo Giordano's debut novel The Solitude of Prime Numbers, which was awarded the Strega prize in 2008). Or finally, take the hypothesis of Marie-Sophie Germain (1776-1831), who studied the prime numbers which, multiplied by two, yield another prime number if you add 1, such as 5 (since 5×2+1=11), but not (7×2+1=15). Neither the genius Pierre de Fermat (1601-1665) nor the princip就是mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777-1855) could resist the fatal attraction of prime numbers, which, thanks to the infinity of their lengths, they had on Bernhard Riemann (1826-1866), would also play a key role in the mathematical aspect of the General Theory of Relativity.

Having said this, who can blame Volpi when he affirms that prime numbers, even though they inhabit the domain of integers, form "a universe all on their own since they are most constitutive and fundamental of all numbers"? And how can anyone resist Volpi's suggestion that, even though the respective sets of natural numbers and prime numbers are infinite, the characteristics of prime numbers is such that the universe of prime numbers and the universe of natural numbers are not "in the same order of infinity"? The implications of this suggestion cannot be underestimated insofar as the very concept of infinity can, philosophically and theologically speaking, be open to reinterpretation.

Indeed, Volpi's suggestion draws attention to that of Georg Cantor (1845-1918), the father of set theory as well as an avid enthusiast of philosophy and theology. Cantor studied the possibility that one infinite set could be larger than another, insofar as each, in turn, is composed of infinite sets. Well aware that his proposals would shake more than a few mathematicians - Jules Henri Poincaré (1854-1912), for example, vociferously attacked him - as well as more than a few theologians - he kept up correspondence with high-caliber Jesuits like Cardinal Johann Baptist Franzelin (1816-1886), Filman Peuch (1857-1899), and Joseph Hontheim [1858-1929], the German intellectual even wrote to Pope Leo XIII, to argue that there is not only placed the absolute infinity of God in question, but also provided a defense against determinism and materialism.

Another Prussian mathematician, David Hilbert (1862-1943), considered the most influential of the modern era and the formulator of the "23 Hilbert problems" (the 23 most difficult mathematical problems, the first of which regards the work of Cantor and the eighth the frequency of the prime numbers), affirmed, with irresistible fideism, that "one can banish us from the field of mathematics if he has created", Volpi has given us yet another proof of that.

"Prime numbers and infinity" 

Fatal attraction

Maurizio Carolia Esocia, "Serpentis" (1965-1969). This work utilizes the fractal concept (a geometrical object that repeats itself in the same way on different scales). Recent studies show that the partitioning of prime numbers is akin to fractals.

**Source of the Secretariat of State**
Letter to the President of the Argentine Episcopate on the occasion of the Feast of St Cajetan

Bread and work

With emotion I recall 7 August in Buenos Aires. First, the Mass in the Shrine of Liniers and then the people standing in line up to the Stadium of Vélez. To greet, listen to, support the faith of this simple people... and many times, before the hardship of men and women who seek work and do not find it... it was possible only to shake a hand, give a caress, look into those eyes damp with pain, and to weep inside. To weep, yes, because it is hard to go through life with the father of a family who wants work but does not have the opportunity to obtain it.

Let us ask St Cajetan for bread and work. Bread is easier to obtain because there is always some good person or institution who offers it to you, at least in Argentina, where our people are very solidary. There are places in the world that do not even have this possibility. But work is very difficult to obtain, especially when one continues to experience times in which unemployment figures are significantly high. Bread resolves a part of the problem, however only half, because this bread is not what is earned with one’s labour. It is one thing to have bread to eat at home and it is another to bring it home as the fruit of one’s labour. This is what gives dignity.

When we ask for work we are asking to be able to feel dignity, and in this celebration of St Cajetan let us ask for the dignity that work confers; to be able to be a bread-winner.

The Pope’s greeting

The Olympics are for everyone

“May the courage and strength that you bring to the Olympic Games serve as a cry for peace and solidarity”. Pope Francis conveyed this wish in a letter to the Refugee Team taking part in the Rio Olympics, which officially opened on 5 August. In his letter, the Pope expressed his hope that, with the participation of these athletes, “all of humanity will understand that peace is possible, and that with peace you can achieve everything; whereas with war you can lose everything”. The Pope also dedicated a tweet to the games, launched from his account @Pontifex: “May you always be messengers of goodwill and true sporting spirit!”

The team of refugees present in Rio is made up of 50 athletes (six men and four women), who marched on Friday the 5th into Maracanã Stadium carrying the Olympic flag. The team includes two swimmers from Syria, two judo athletes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and six runners from Ethiopia and South Sudan. They all had to flee from violence and persecution and have found refuge in other countries.

Yusra Mardini, an 18-year-old Syrian refugee living in Lesvos, saved dozens of people, together with her sister, by pushing a boat to shore. Though these athletes speak different languages, they represent a single population of over 60 million people who have fled, people who share pain and hope, and seek a better future.

These refugees have no home, they have no team, they have no national anthem”, said Thomas Bach, President of the Olympic Committee. “We are offering them a home in the Olympic Village together with all the other athletes of the world. The Olympic anthem will be played in their honour, and the Olympic flag will lead them into the “Olympic Stadium”, added Bach.

At least three billion people from around the world watched the grand opening ceremony, held in the refurbished Maracanã stadium, which holds 60,000 spectators. Brazilian director Fernando Meirelles, one of the three creative directors, decided to organize the show around two key themes: respect for the environment and multiculturalism. The show did not disappoint. More than 5000 volunteers and 500 artistic producers contributed to its production. Three tons of fireworks were used. Law enforcement and military were present to ensure the safety of some 80,000 people there for the celebration.

Worldwide Prayer Network

Sports a vehicle of fraternity

“Through sports it’s possible to build a culture of encounter, for everyone, for a world of peace”, with these words Francis presented his universal prayer intention for the month of August, which took on special significance on the eve of the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. The message is accessible on the website of the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network: www.apmej.org (sponsored by the Apostleship of Prayer). In Spanish – though the video is available with subtitles in six languages – the Pontiff confides his “dream of sports as a practice of human dignity, turned into a vehicle of fraternity among nations around the world”.

The Pope’s words are set to footage of five young athletes leaping down a brick wall. “Do we want exercise together, with this prayer intention, so that sports may promote fraternal encounter among peoples and contribute to the cause of peace in the world?”. More than a question, it is an appeal and direct sports towards the tearing down of the walls of indifference.

Like other videos before it, the film was directed by the communica- tions agency “La Machi”. Production and distribution was overseen by the Vatican Television Centre, which recorded the images.
Invisible stories of inconceivable pain

The phenomenon of unaccompanied minor migrants

LUCA M. PORSATTI

The phenomenon is dramatically growing, and is a tragedy within the tragedy. Thousands of unaccompanied minor children are left alone and too often become easy targets for unscrupulous traffickers. Re-launching this alert is the new report published on 27 July by the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), which is on the front line in monitoring assistance. According to their research, in almost 10 years, the number of unaccompanied migrant children has practically doubled: in 2004 there was talk of 7,570 minors assisted in the country, and in 2014 there were 17,352 out of a total of 26,000 migrant minors who arrived in Italy. The largest increase coincided with the outbreak of the war in Syria, when the number grew in just a few months from 4,588 in 2010 to 9,107 in 2011. "According to data from the Ministry of the Interior", Giovanna Di Benedetto told our newspaper — Giovanna is the current spokeswoman for "Save the Children" and for years has been active in assisting refugees and migrants —, "the largest group of unaccompanied minors are African, and specifically Gambians, Egyptians, Eritreans, Guineans, Somalis, Nigerians and Ivorians. The areas of origin are mainly Sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa, while unaccompanied Syrian minors are not as numerous".

These minors carry with them stories of unprecedented violence, which are ignored by the media. Some flee because they have lost their families, others have left in secret. Others, however, leave in order to support families who are in debt to traffickers. "These people", Di Benedetto said, "are mostly Egyptians: they arrive in Italy and are forced to work to repay debts, and then become trapped in illegal work and exploitation. Girls, especially Nigerians, end up trapped in networks of criminal organizations that exploit prostitution." Often the journey to Europe itself is already extremely traumatic. Africans experience difficult stages such as crossing the desert, or, according to witnesses — a terrible squabble in Libya awaiting their departure. And once they arrive? "After landing", Di Benedetto explained, "these children are sent to the first reception facility where, in theory, they should remain for about two to three years. In reality, however, the time ends up being much longer due to the high number of people arriving; once past the first stage, they are welcomed into other facilities, smaller communities of so to 12 people, where they face the road to integration." There are, however, critical issues. And unfortunately, they are many, and not only in Italy: "As minors, according to Italian law, these unaccompanied minors are entitled to be welcomed regardless of their country of origin". This is an Italian rule, however, and is shared by few other countries, but not by Europe. On this issue, the EU has remained stagnant, "raising barriers, without offering assistance, without understanding that behind these minors are stories of unimaginable violence", said Di Benedetto. In Italy, however, "a unified national system of assistance and protection for unaccompanied migrant minors is lacking." The necessity of one unified national system of assistance and protection is also insisted upon by Umberto Di Primio, Vice President of ANCI. "The situation requires a system of reception and structured integration that is effectively spread throughout the national territory", he said. We need to address "certain crucial issues, such as increasing the number of places in the first and second reception networks, and reducing the amount of time it takes to appoint guardians and the time for issuing residence permits".

The drama of war

The following is a statement given by Archbishop Bernardito, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, on 2 August, at the Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict in New York.

Mr President,

My Delegation wishes to thank the Malaysian Presidency for convening this particularly important Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, and to convey to Malaysia its appreciation for all that it has done and will continue to do as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The year 2014 was described as the worst year for children affected by armed conflict. But as the Secretary-General’s Report on Children and Armed Conflict covering the year 2015 illustrates, the 2014 priority list has been surpassed by the number of children caught in armed conflicts and the scale and severity of violations in 2015. As the Secretary-General states in his Report, the impact on children of our collective failure to prevent and end conflict is severe, and the present Report highlights the increased intensity of grave violations in a number of situations of armed conflict.

No one can ignore this damning observation. Never in recent memory have so many children been subjected to such violent brutality: children used as soldiers, suicide bombers, sex slaves, and disposable intelligence-gatherers in the most dangerous military operations. The deliberate destruction of their schools and hospitals in total disregard of international humanitarian law has become a strategy of war. These crimes must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

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Moreover, while the International Community plays an important role in supporting States in their primary responsibility to protect their citizens, it must also interact with the local communities affected by violence, particularly children caught in armed conflict so that solutions and programs can emerge organically, while fostering the means of solution to the plight of children caught in armed conflict, in particular, the need for children’s sensitiviy to finding ways to reintegrate these children back into their own communities. While we witness barbaric acts beyond anyone’s imagination committed also by child soldiers, we must remember that these children are exploited and manipulated into what they have become. Thus, while their reintegration into society requires that we recognize the atrocities they may have committed, we must also build pathways for counseling and reconciliation with a view to accomplishing fully that reintegration.

The obligation to put an end to violations against children caught in armed conflict is incumbent upon every one of us. In a particular way, it is incumbent upon this Council, as it is incumbent on all States to put in place and implement stronger measures for the protection of children affected by conflict, and as it ensures that UN peacekeeping operations strictly adhere to all laws and measures in this regard.

Thank you, Mr President.
From 27 to 30 August, a continental Celebration of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy will take place in Bogotá, Colombia. The Celebration was convoked and organized by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (CAL), together with the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), in collaboration with the episcopates of the United States and Canada. The event will be presided by Cardinal Marc Ouellet, President of CAL, accompanied by his collaborators and by Cardinal Rubén Salazar, Archbishop of Bogotá and President of CELAM. The Church of the Americas will be assembled in Bogotá to live the Jubilee as a sign of the communion of the churches of the whole continent. It will be one of the greatest ecclesiastical event of the year. Having passed the halfway point of the Jubilee Year, in Bogotá the initiative, experiences and works already carried out, as well as the fruits received, will be briefly summarized. The celebration proposes that this "year of grace" be lived as a renewed impetus to the continental mission, especially in light of the Aparecida impetus to the continental mission, and building strong relationships to prevent and resolve conflicts".

A continental celebration of the Extraordinary Jubilee to be held in Bogotá

A land of Mercy

Another major moment of the Celebration will be dedicated to the American saints. Indeed, the entire event is being presented under the motto taken from an expression of Pope Francis when on 2 May 2015 he made the invocation: "May a powerful gust of holiness sweep through all the Americas during the coming Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy!". Several speakers will talk about "the missionary saints of the first evangelization, who include: Bishop Laval, José de Anchieta, Ignacio Serra, the saintly priests: Toribio de Mogrovejo, Rafael Guizar y Valencia, Brochero, the saintly mystics: Rose of Lima, Mariana of Quito, Teresa of the Andes, the saints of the defenceless: Peter Claver, Laura Montoya, Mother Cabrini; the saints of charity: Martin de Porres, Katharine Drexel, Peter of St Joseph of Betancur; Mexico's martyrs saints: Kateri Tekakwitha, Oscar A. Romero; and the educator saints: Miguel Febres Cordiero, John Neumann."

An entire day will be dedicated to World of Mercy on the American continent. A panel will meet to discuss some of the most significant ones, such as the "Hogar de Cristo" (Christ’s Home) in Chile, the "Fazendas da Esperança" (Hope Farms), "Project Rachel", and migrant assistance centres. Additionally, all participants may visit different sites of corporal and spiritual mercy, particularly in the poorest areas and environs of Bogotá.

The event will end with "A Continental Rosary for Peace", to be followed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided by Cardinal Rubén Salazar Gómez. The American Celebration of the Jubilee of Mercy will conclude with Cardinal Ouellet’s intervention.

Initiatives of the US bishops following incidents of racial violence

A special task force for the promotion of peace and reconciliation among communities who live in situations of racial tension, and a national Day of Prayer to be held in all dioceses of the country on 9 September. Catholic bishops in the US have launched these two initiatives in the wake of the recent incidents of violence and racial tension between various factions and law enforcement. The situations, which occurred in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis and Dallas, have caused numerous casualties on both sides. In recent weeks these episodes have caused the country to slip back into an atmosphere of horror, imbued with feelings of hatred and vengeance. It is an atmosphere that, as we know, the US previously experienced in a terrible way during the 1960s.

The task force, to be chaired by Archbishop Wilton Daniel Gregory of Atlanta, who from 2001 to 2004 led the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), will be sustainably composed of five bishops and will also rely on the collaboration and advice of lay experts as well as that of Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston. Vice-President of the episcopate, and bishops whose dioceses have been particularly affected by violence. The commission – as explained on the USCCB website – will aim to "help bishops engage the challenging problems directly, by various means: gathering and disseminating supportive resources and ‘best practices’, actively listening to the concerns of members in troubled communities and law enforcement; and building strong relationships to help prevent and resolve conflicts".

Overcoming suspicion and enmity

On 8 July, in response to the latest incidents of violence, Archbishop Joseph Edward Kurtz of Louisville, President of the USCCB, noted the need for the Catholic Church to find new ways of accompanying and helping the local communities that are experiencing dangerous incidents of racial violence. The initiatives announced seem to aim precisely at meeting these needs. "I have stressed the need to look toward additional ways of nurturing an open, honest and civil dialogue on issues of race relations, restorative justice, mental health, economic opportunity, and addressing the question of pervasive gun violence", explained Archbishop Kurtz, who said that both the Day of Prayer and the Task Force "will help us advance in that direction", and in this way to take a step "forward to embrace the suffering, through unified, concrete action animated by the love of Christ". In this sense, the hope is to help "nurture peace and build bridges of communication and mutual aid in our own communities".
The Cardinal Secretary of State on the Holy Father’s visits to the Caucasus region

A peacemaker

With great humility Francis seeks to encourage every initiative of dialogue

MAUROZIO FONTANA

Shortly after the release of Pope Francis’ schedule for his visit to Georgia and Azerbaijan, which will take place from 30 September to 2 October, Cardinal Pietro Parolin spoke about the complex situation in the Caucasus region. By linking the Pontiff’s visit with the recent trip to Armenia, Cardinal Parolin traced the framework of the efforts that Francis has carried out in favour of dialogue and peace. In this interview with our newspaper the Secretary of State also addressed the issues of ecumenism, persecution in the Middle East, the role played by major religions in building more just societies, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh and – referring to Pope Francis’ words during the press conference on his return from Yerevan – the particular European situation following the Brexit.

I would say that it is quite easy to see that the Pope has a strong desire to be a peacemaker wherever he goes. In this sense, even political situations or strategic plans, so to speak, pass into the background. In this concrete case, I do not think we can assume an easy solution to all of the problems that concern the Caucasus region. They require effort, political will and a readiness to compromise. However, Pope Francis is visiting the Caucasus countries with great humility, seeking first to listen, to understand, and consequently to encourage every initiative for dialogue and openness towards others.

During the ecumenical meeting and the Prayer for Peace in Yerevan on 25 June, Pope Francis referred to the concrete issue of Nagorno-Karabakh, an international instrument already exists which was created by the OSCE and is called the Minsk Group. I must note that, after the painful resurgence of conflict at the beginning of April, the representatives of that entity spoke of relaunching initiatives in pursuit of a lasting solution, possibly through some compromise between Parties. All that remains is to hope that these efforts will bear fruit.

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I would say that it is quite easy to see that the Pope has a strong desire to be a peacemaker wherever he goes. In this sense, even political situations or strategic plans, so to speak, pass into the background. In this concrete case, I do not think we can assume an easy solution to all of the problems that concern the Caucasus region. They require effort, political will and a readiness to compromise. However, Pope Francis is visiting the Caucasus countries with great humility, seeking first to listen, to understand, and consequently to encourage every initiative for dialogue and openness towards others.

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