

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Vatican City

Friday, 6 January 2017

On New Year's Day the Holy Father calls the faithful to celebrate Mary's motherhood

## The warmth that shelters us

### Francis calls bishops to defend children's dignity

On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Pope Francis took the occasion to write to bishops throughout the world and remind them of their task to foster and protect the joy that arises from the mystery of Christmas and, more specifically, to protect the innocents of today, for whom this time of joy may be fraught with tragedy and grief. He called on all bishops to renew with him their "complete commitment" to ensure that the atrocities committed against minors "no longer take place in our midst". Indeed, he continued, "let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to "zero tolerance". The Pontiff asked that bishops open their "eyes and ears to what is going on around us, and to let our hearts be attentive and open to the pain of our neighbours", especially the little ones, "so that their dignity as God's children will not only be respected but, above all, defended".

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"Flight into Egypt", Guglielmo Borremans (1733-1734),  
Museum of the Archdiocese of Palermo, Italy

On Sunday morning, 1 January 2017, the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica. The Pope spoke of Mary's motherhood of God's Son and of all God's people. He recalled that she had first "learned to listen to the heartbeat of her Son, and that in turn taught her, throughout her life, to discover God's heartbeat in history". Mary watched over "the beginnings of the first Christian community", the Pope said, and thus she "learned to be the mother of a multitude": our mother. As we "celebrate Mary as Mother of God and our mother at the beginning of the new year", Francis continued, we recall the certainty that "we are a people with a Mother; we are not orphans". Indeed, celebrating the feast of the Holy Mother of God reminds us that "we are children, we are family, we are God's People".

Following the Mass, the Holy Father prayed the Angelus with the faithful in Saint Peter's Square. He recalled that New Year's also marked the 50th World Day of Peace, instituted by Pope Paul VI "to strengthen the common commitment to build a peaceful and fraternal world". In light of the terrorist attack that had been carried out in Istanbul the previous night, Francis expressed his "closeness to the Turkish people", praying "for the numerous victims and for the wounded, and for the entire Nation in mourning" and asked for the Lord's help in facing "the scourge of terrorism ... which covers the world with a shadow of fear and dismay".

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First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God

## Looking at the manger

On Saturday afternoon, 31 December, the Pontiff presided at First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God, at the singing of the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for the past year, and at the adoration and blessing of the Eucharist in Saint Peter's Basilica. "As another year draws to an end", the Pope asked the faithful to "pause before the manger" and reflect on the "young faces" of Joseph and Mary, and on the "responsibility we have for our young". The year's end, he said, brings "the need to reflect on how concerned we are about the place of young people in our society".

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### Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae



A summary of the Holy Father's morning homilies throughout the month of December 2016.

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## VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES — 2016

Thursday, 22 December

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

Cardinal Francesco Coccopalmerio, President of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts

### CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE — 2016

The Holy Father appointed Fr Samuel Oton Sidin, OFM, Cap., as Bishop of Sintang, Indonesia. Until now he has been parish priest of Saint Francis of Assisi Parish in Tebet, Jakarta (21 Dec.).

Bishop-elect Sidin, 62, was born in Pontianak, Indonesia. He completed his philosophical and theological studies and holds a degree in spirituality. He made his perpetual vows for the Order of Capuchin Friars on 18 July 1982 and was ordained a priest on 1 July 1984. He has served in parish ministry and as: master of novices; minister of the Capuchin Province in Pontianak; director of the Rumah Pelangi House and head of planning for forest conservation. He was reelected Provincial of Pontianak for a three year term.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Geovane Luis da Silva from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Mari-

ana, Brazil, as Auxiliary Bishop of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Mons in Numidia. Until now he has been parish priest of Nossa Senhora da Piedade Parish in Barbacena (21 Dec.).

Bishop-elect da Silva, 45, was born in Carandaí, Brazil. He holds a licence in dogmatic theology and he also attended a course in culture and sacred art. He was ordained a priest on 21 June 1997. He has served in parish ministry and as: formator at the Minor Seminary; director of theology at the Major Seminary; curator of the Archdiocesan museum of sacred art; professor of sacramental theology and liturgy at the Major Seminary; episcopal vicar for the Southern Region; member of the episcopal council and of the College of Consultors.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Otacilio Ferreira de Lacerda from the clergy of the Diocese of Guarulhos, Brazil, as Auxiliary Bishop of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Tulana. Until now he has been parish priest of Santo Antônio Parish (21 Dec.).

Bishop-elect de Lacerda, 56, was born in Itapiruçu, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 10 April 1988. He has served in parish ministry and as: supervisor of the diocesan Caritas; coordinator of the pastoral ministry *ad intra*; assessor of the youth pastoral ministry; regional vicar; representative of presbyters of the South 1 Region; episcopal vicar for the clergy; vicar forane at Imaculada. For two years he worked as a *fidei donum* priest in the Diocese of Ji-Paraná and deputy treasurer of the diocese.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Alex Aly Tagbino as Auxiliary Bishop of Kankan, Guinea, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Cuicul. Until now he has served as professor and treasurer at the Interdiocesan Major Seminary Benedict XVI in Conakry, and as chancellor of the Diocese of Kankan (23 Dec.).

Bishop-elect Tagbino, 44, was born in Guéckédou, Guinea. He was ordained a priest on 2 March 2003. He holds a licence in canon law. He has served in various parishes.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Paul Desfarges, SJ, as Archbishop of

Algiers, Algeria. Until now he has been Bishop of Constantine, Algeria (24 Dec.).

Archbishop Desfarges, 72, was born in Saint-Étienne, France. He was ordained a priest on 14 June 1975. On 12 February 2009 he was ordained a bishop, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Constantine.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Adalbert Ndzana of Mbalmayo, Cameroon (27 Dec.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Joseph Marie Ndi-Okalla from the clergy of the Diocese of Mbalmayo, Cameroon, as Bishop of the same Diocese. Until now he has been vice-rector of the Catholic University of Central Africa in Yaoundé and secretary of the episcopal Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith (27 Dec.).

Bishop-elect Ndi-Okalla, 59, was born in Douala, Cameroon. He was ordained a priest on 13 August 1983. He holds a degree in biblical and systematic theology and a doctorate in dogmatic theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: associate vicar for the university pastoral ministry; professor of missiology; director of studies at the Interdiocesan Major Seminary, and head of the permanent formation of the clergy.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Cardinal Santos Abril y Castelló from his office as Archpriest and administrator of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. He is succeeded by Cardinal Stanisław Ryłko, who until now has been President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity (28 Dec.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Eduardo Benes de Sales Rodrigues of Sorocaba, Brazil (28 Dec.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Júlio Endi Akamine, SAC, as Archbishop of Sorocaba. Until now he has been titular Bishop of Thagamuta and Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, Brazil (28 Dec.).

Archbishop Akamine, 54, was born in Garça, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 24 January 1988. He was ordained a bishop on 9 July 2011, subsequent to his appointment

as titular Bishop of Thagamuta and Auxiliary of São Paulo.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Richard Gerard Lennon of Cleveland, USA (28 Dec.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Fernando Panico, MSC, of Crato, Brazil. He is succeeded by Bishop Gilberto Pastana de Oliveira, who until now has been Coadjutor of the same Diocese (28 Dec.).

Bishop de Oliveira, 60, was born in Boim, Brazil. He was ordained a priest on 27 July 1985. He was ordained a bishop on 28 October 2005, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Imperatriz. On 18 May 2016 he was appointed Coadjutor of Crato.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Julianus Kemo Sunarka, SJ, of Purwokerto, Indonesia (29 Dec.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Alfred Kipkoech Arap Rotich from his office as Military Ordinary for Kenya (30 Dec.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Benjamin Kituto Maswili as Military Ordinary for Kenya. Until now he has been Apostolic Administrator of the same Military Ordinariate (30 Dec.).

### START OF MISSION — 2016

On 31 August, Archbishop Paul Fitzpatrick Russell, titular Archbishop of Novi, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Turkey with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey.

On 24 October, Archbishop Franco Coppola, titular Archbishop of Vinda, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Mexico with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Enrique Peña Nieto, President of the United Mexican States.

On 23 November, Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, titular Archbishop of Nebbio, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in the United Arab Emirates with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to His Highness Vice President and Emir of Dubai Mr Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

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## Cardinal takes possession



On Sunday, 18 December 2016, Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalanga, CSSp., Archbishop of Bangui, Central African Republic, took possession of the Title Sant'Andrea della Valle, in a celebration held in the Basilica of the same name, located in Rome's Piazza Vidoni, 6.

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Message of Pope Francis for the twenty-fifth World Day of the Sick

# With their own gift to share

*In his message for the 25th World Day of the Sick, which will be celebrated on 11 February, the Pontiff speaks of how every infirm must be looked at and treated as "a human being" and not as an object. The following is the English text of the Pope's message.*

Amazement at what God  
has accomplished:  
"The Almighty has done great things for  
me..." (Lk 1:49)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On 11 February next, the 25th World Day of the Sick will be celebrated throughout the Church and in a special way at Lourdes. The theme of this year's celebration is "*Amazement at what God has accomplished: 'The Almighty has done great things for me...'*" (Lk 1:49). Instituted by my predecessor Saint John Paul II in 1992, and first celebrated at Lourdes on 11 February 1993, this Day is an opportunity to reflect in particular on the needs of the sick and, more generally, of all those who suffer. It is also an occasion for those who generously assist the sick, beginning with family members, health workers and volunteers, to give thanks for their God-given vocation of accompanying our infirm brothers and sisters. This celebration likewise gives the Church renewed spiritual energy for carrying out ever more fully that fundamental part of her mission which includes serving the poor, the infirm, the suffering, the outcast and the marginalized (cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Motu Proprio Doletium Hominum*, 11 February 1985, 1). Surely, the moments of prayer, the Eucharistic liturgies and the celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick, the sharing with the sick and the bioethical and theological-pastoral workshops to be held in Lourdes in those days will make new and significant contributions to that service.

Even now, I am spiritually present at the grotto of Massabielle, before the statue of the Immaculate Virgin, in whom *the Almighty has done great things* for the redemption of mankind. I express my closeness to all of you, our suffering brothers and sisters, and to your families, as well as my appreciation for all those in different roles of service and in healthcare institutions throughout the world who work with professionalism, responsibility and dedication for your care, treatment and daily well-being. I encourage all of you, the sick, the suffering, physicians, nurses, family members and volunteers, to see in Mary, *Health of the Infirm*, the sure sign of God's love for every human being and a model of surrender to his will. May you always find in faith, nourished by the Word

and by the Sacraments, the strength needed to love God, even in the experience of illness.

Like Saint Bernadette, we stand beneath the watchful gaze of Mary. The humble maiden of Lourdes tells us that the Virgin, whom she called "the Lovely Lady", looked at her as one person looks at another. Those simple words describe the fullness of a relationship. Bernadette, poor, illiterate and ill, felt that Mary was looking at her as a person. The Lovely Lady spoke to her with great respect and without condescension. This reminds us that every person is, and always remains, a human being, and is to be treated as such. The sick and the those who are disabled, even severely, have their own inalienable dignity and mission in life. They never become simply objects. If at times they appear merely passive, in reality that is never the case.

After her visit to the Grotto, thanks to her prayer, Bernadette turned her frailty into support for others. Thanks to her love, she was able to enrich her neighbours and, above all, to offer her life for the salvation of humanity. The fact that the Lovely Lady asked her to pray for sinners reminds us that

when that life is frail, pain-filled, humbled, marginalized and suffering – and fills it with the power of hope that can sustain us and enable us to get up again.

This great wealth of humanity and faith must not be dissipated. Instead, it should inspire us to speak openly of our human weaknesses and to address the challenges of present-day healthcare and technology. On this World Day of the Sick, may we find new incentive to work for the growth of a culture of respect for life, health and the environment. May this Day also inspire renewed efforts to defend the integrity and dignity of persons, not least through a correct approach to bioethical issues, the protection of the vulnerable and the protection of the environment.



"The Sick Child", Edvard Munch

the infirm and the suffering desire not only to be healed, but also to live a truly Christian life, even to the point of offering it as authentic missionary disciples of Christ. Mary gave Bernadette the vocation of serving the sick and called her to become a Sister of Charity, a mission that she carried out in so exemplary a way as to become a model for every healthcare worker. Let us ask Mary Immaculate for the grace always to relate to the sick as persons who certainly need assistance, at times even for the simplest of things, but who have a gift of their own to share with others.

The gaze of Mary, *Comfort of the Afflicted*, brightens the face of the Church in her daily commitment to the suffering and those in need. The precious fruits of this solicitude for the world of suffering and sickness are a reason for gratitude to the Lord Jesus, who out of obedience to the will of the Father became one of us, even enduring death on the cross for the redemption of humanity. The solidarity shown by Christ, the Son of God born of Mary, is the expression of God's merciful omnipotence, which is made manifest in our life – above all

On this 25th World Day of the Sick, I once more offer my prayerful support and encouragement to physicians, nurses, volunteers and all those consecrated men and women committed to serving the sick and those in need. I also embrace the ecclesial and civil institutions working to this end, and the families who take loving care of their sick. I pray that all may be ever joyous signs of the presence of God's love and imitate the luminous testimony of so many friends of God, including Saint John of God and Saint Camillus de' Lellis, the patrons of hospitals and healthcare workers, and Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, missionary of God's love.

Dear brothers and sisters – the sick, healthcare workers and volunteers – I ask you to join me in praying to Mary. May her maternal intercession sustain and accompany our faith, and obtain for us from Christ her Son hope along our journey of healing and of health, a sense of fraternity and responsibility, a commitment to integral human development and the joy of feeling gratitude whenever God amazes us by his fidelity and his mercy.

Mary, our Mother,

in Christ you welcome each of us as a son or daughter.

Sustain the trusting expectation of our hearts, succour us in our infirmities and sufferings, and guide us to Christ, your Son and our brother.

Help us to entrust ourselves to the Father who accomplishes great things.

With the assurance of a constant remembrance in my prayers, I cordially impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing.

Franciscus

December 2016,  
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

Incardinated by Paul VI in 1973

## Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns dies

Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, OFM, Archbishop emeritus of São Paulo, Brazil, died on Wednesday, 14 December, at the age of 95. He was created a cardinal by Pope Paul VI at his penultimate Consistory. (Joseph Ratzinger was created cardinal at Pope Montini's last Consistory in 1977). Cardinal Arns played a fundamental role in the history of the Church in Brazil and in Latin America. Known by all as the "cardinal of the people", he is remembered for his strong character, for his determination to be close to the poor and the oppressed, and for his strenuous defence of human rights. Published here is a translation of the condolence telegram Pope Francis sent to Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, Archbishop of São Paulo, along with Cardinal Arns' biography.



Paulo Evaristo Arns was born on 14 September 1921 in Forquilha, Brazil, the fifth of 14 children, two of whom were adopted. One of his brothers became a priest and three sisters nuns. Arns' work was firmly rooted in his family's faith. "My mother", he recalled, "knew the entire catechism in Latin by heart, and thus passed it on to us children". After receiving a Franciscan education, he attended the Sorbonne in Paris, earning a degree in classic languages. He then deepened his knowledge of Saint Augustine and Saint Bonaventure, as well as ancient literature.

A professed religious of the Order of Friars Minor, he was ordained a priest on 30 November 1945, after which he continued his studies in Germany, England, The Netherlands, Belgium, the United States and Canada. After returning to Brazil, he taught French language and literature at the University of Bauru, and for 10 years taught patrology and Church history at the Franciscan seminary and at the Catholic University of Petrópolis, while carrying out his priestly ministry in the shantytowns surrounding Petrópolis. "Among the people of the shantytowns of Itamarati", he recalled, "I spent the happiest years of my life ... simply, sharing the people's joys and suffering. I knew the life history of each one. I made many friends. At the farewell Mass I celebrated outdoors in Itamarati, almost thirty thousand people participated", he said. It was "a demonstration of enormous friendship. I would have liked very much to live there".

He served as Provincial of his Order from 1961 to 1966, and as editor of *Sponsa Christi*, a monthly journal for women religious, and of *Vozes*, the Franciscan editorial centre which is one of Brazil's most important Catholic publishing organizations.

He was appointed to the titular See of Respecta on 2 May 1966, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of São Paulo. As Auxiliary, he was put in charge of the northern region of the diocese, which was "marked by mass emigration to the great metropolises, where the hope of employment led to disappointment and poverty, to subhuman living conditions". He understood that "not taking the side of the poor meant betraying the Gospel" and that "a new evangelization could not be but personal and societal".

Fr Arns was ordained a bishop on 3 July 1966, and on 22 October 1970, he began his mission as Archbishop of São Paulo. He took Paul VI's Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* as his programme to "safeguard the faith and serve the poor". Pope Montini knew the city of Saint Paul well, having visited it in 1962, then as Archbishop of Milan. "It was on that occasion", Arns emphasized, "that he coined the famous affirmation: São Paulo is a proud head [city] with a crown of thorns". For this very reason Paul VI asked him "to visit the dioceses of the large metropolises". He recalled that period in this way: "I went to Paris, London, New York, Chicago. I drafted a report for the Pope on how the bishops were working. In 1975 he actually asked me to draw up a pastoral plan for large cities. In obedience to his request I did so, reflecting on the experience of collegiality in São Paulo".

In the Consistory of 5 March 1973, he was created cardinal by Paul VI,

Having learned with deep sorrow of the death of our venerable Brother, Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, I offer you, the auxiliary bishops, the clergy, the religious communities and the faithful of the Archdiocese of São Paulo, as well as the family of the late Cardinal, my condolences on the death of this intrepid Pastor. In his ecclesial ministry he showed himself to be an authentic witness to the Gospel amid his people, indicating to all the way of truth in charity and of service to the community, with constant attention to the most needy. I thank the Lord for having given the Church such a generous Pastor, and I raise fervent prayers that God welcome into his eternal happiness this good and faithful servant, as I impart a comforting Apostolic Blessing to this diocesan community that is mourning the loss of its beloved Pastor, to the Church in Brazil which had in him a sure point of reference, and to all those who share this moment of sorrow which proclaims the Resurrection.

FRANCIS

with the Title of Sant'Antonio di Padova in via Tuscolana.

Paulo Evaristo Arns was above all a representative of the Church on the front line in defence of the poor. His ministry was characterized by his regular contact with 'the least', and by his simplicity of faith. His tenacious perseverance in defence of the people's freedom and of human rights, especially during the protracted military regime in Brazil from 1964 to 1985, often gave rise to misunderstandings which even placed his life at risk. It was also thanks to his presence, his recognized authority, and his firm, courageous and prudent action, that the cruel military dictatorship in Brazil was replaced by a system of democracy, built without bloodshed. In 1982 he was the only religious in the world to be elected to the UN's International Commission on Humanitarian Issues. "I am just a poor bishop, a man of peace and hope", he said.

Throughout his life, until the very end, Paulo Evaristo Arns continued to raise his voice against injustice. In 1992, during a Conference in Santo Domingo, he was the victim of what he always defined as "an attack": he was hit by a car and sustained serious injuries.

He was a scholar, writer and journalist, and he authored numerous books which favoured reflection

and pastoral innovation in the dioceses. The fruit of his multifaceted interests can also be seen in a series of essays on Christian literature of the first centuries.

The Cardinal Archbishop resigned from office on 15 April 1998, and returned to the periphery in order "to leave the field free for his successor". He never stopped preaching and speaking out, however. Among other things, he continued to broadcast on the *Nove de Julho* radio programme, a Catholic station that had previously been shut down by the military regime. "The key moment of my life in retirement", he confided, "was the *Missa Cantata* that I celebrated every day in the rest home near my house".

"He consigned his life to God after having dedicated it to his brothers", said Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, Archbishop of São Paulo. All of Brazil remembers his stature and especially the strength of his voice during the period of military dictatorship. After being hospitalized for several days in intensive care with bronchitis and renal problems, Cardinal Arns died holding his pectoral cross in his hands. His funeral was celebrated in the Cathedral of São Paulo on Friday, 16 December.

Pope visits Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization

### Mercy and mission

Pope Francis made a surprise visit to the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization on Tuesday morning, 20 December. The Pontiff went to the office to extend his thanks to the officials and employees for their efforts during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Arriving unexpectedly, and accompanied by just one Vatican gendarme, the Holy Father was welcomed by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Vatican dicastery. He spoke with the staff for about 15 minutes, congratulating them on their work.

Speaking later to *L'Osservatore Romano*, Archbishop Fisichella described the visit: "Demonstrating a great sense of humanity and friendship in our regard, the Pope wanted to personally wish us a Merry Christmas and renew his gratitude for all our efforts during the Holy Year". The Archbishop added that all those present for the surprise visit were "amazed at his affability. He told us of his joy at the experience of the Jubilee, and he reiterated to us the particular importance of the missionaries of mercy".



Pope presides at First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God

## Looking at the manger

*On Saturday afternoon, 31 December, the Holy Father presided at First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God, the singing of the 'Te Deum' in thanksgiving for the past year, and the adoration and blessing of the Eucharist in Saint Peter's Basilica. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's Homily which was given in Italian.*

"When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5).

These words of Saint Paul are powerful. In a brief and concise way, they introduce God's plan for us: he wants us to live as his sons and daughters. The whole of salvation history echoes in these words. He who was not subject to the law chose, out of love, to set aside every privilege and to appear in the most unexpected place in order to free us who were under the law. What is so surprising is that God accomplishes this through the smallness and vulnerability of a newborn child. He decides personally to draw near to us and in his flesh to embrace our flesh, in his weakness to embrace our weakness, in his littleness to envelop our littleness. In Christ, God did not put on a human mask; instead he became man and shared completely in our human condition. Far from remaining an idea or an abstract essence, he wanted to be close to all those who felt lost, demeaned, hurt, discouraged, inconsolable and frightened. Close to all those who in their bodies carry the burden of separation and loneliness, so that sin, shame, hurt, despair and exclusion would not have the final word in the lives of his sons and daughters.

The manger invites us to make this divine "logic" our own. It is not a logic centred on privilege, exemptions or favours but one of encounter and closeness. The manger invites us to break with the logic of exceptions for some and exclusion for others. God himself comes to shatter the chains of privilege that always cause exclusion, in order to

introduce the caress of compassion that brings inclusion, that makes the dignity of each person shine forth, the dignity for which he or she was created. A child in swaddling clothes shows us the power of God who approaches us as a gift, an offering, a leaven and opportunity for creating a culture of encounter.

We cannot allow ourselves to be naïve. We know that we are tempted in various ways to adopt the logic of privilege that separates, excludes and closes us off, while separating, excluding and closing off the dreams and lives of so many of our brothers and sisters.

Today, before the little Child of Bethlehem, we should acknowledge that we need the Lord to enlighten us, because all too often we end up being narrow-minded or prisoners of an all-or-nothing attitude that would force others to conform to our own ideas. We need this light, which helps us learn from our mistakes and failed attempts in order to improve and surpass ourselves; this light born of the humble and courageous awareness of those who find the strength, time and time again, to rise up and start anew.

As another year draws to an end, let us pause before the manger and express our gratitude to God for all the signs of his generosity in our life and our history, seen in countless ways through the witness of those people who quietly took a risk. A gratitude that is no sterile nostalgia or empty recollection of an idealized and disembodied past, but a living memory, one that helps to generate personal and communal creativity because we know that God is with us.

Let us pause before the manger to contemplate how God has been present throughout this year and to



"Adoration of the Shepherds", Gerard van Honthorst (1622)

remind ourselves that every age, every moment is the bearer of graces and blessings. The manger challenges us not to give up on anything or anyone. To look upon the manger means to find the strength to take our place in history without complaining or being resentful, without closing in on ourselves or seeking a means of escape, looking for shortcuts in our own interest. Looking at the manger means recognizing that the times ahead call for bold and hope-filled initiatives, as well as the renunciation of vain self-promotion and endless concern with appearances.

Looking at the manger means seeing how God gets involved by involving us, making us part of his work, inviting us to welcome the future courageously and decisively.

Looking at the manger, we see Joseph and Mary, their young faces full of hopes and aspirations, full of questions. Young faces that look to the future conscious of the difficult task of helping the God-Child to grow. We cannot speak of the future without reflecting on these young faces and accepting the responsibility we have for our young; more than a responsibility, the right word would be debt, yes, the debt we owe them. To speak of a year's end is to feel the need to reflect on how con-

cerned we are about the place of young people in our society.

We have created a culture that idolizes youth and seeks to make it eternal. Yet at the same time, paradoxically, we have condemned our young people to have no place in society, because we have slowly pushed them to the margins of public life, forcing them to migrate or to beg for jobs that no longer exist or fail to promise them a future. We have preferred speculation over dignified and genuine work that can allow young people to take active part in the life of society. We expect and demand that they be a leaven for the future, but we discriminate against them and "condemn" them to knock on doors that for the most part remain closed.

We are asked to be something other than the innkeeper in Bethlehem who told the young couple: there is no room here. There was no room for life, for the future. Each of us is asked to take some responsibility, however small, for helping our young people to find, here in their land, in their own country, real possibilities for building a future. Let us not be deprived of the strength of their hands, their minds, and their ability to prophesy the dreams of their ancestors (cf. Jl 2:28). If we wish to secure a future worthy of them, we should do so by staking it on true inclusion: one that provides work that is worthy, free, creative, participatory and solidary (cf. *Address at the Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize*, 6 May 2016).

Looking at the manger challenges us to help our young people not to become disillusioned by our own immaturity, and to spur them on so that they can be capable of dreaming and fighting for their dreams, capable of growing and becoming fathers and mothers of our people.

As we come to the end of this year, we do well to contemplate the God-Child! Doing so invites us to return to the sources and roots of our faith. In Jesus, faith becomes hope; it becomes a leaven and a blessing. "With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, Christ makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 3).

Archbishop Gómez at the Central Jail of Los Angeles

### The hope to start again

Archbishop José Horacio Gómez of Los Angeles celebrated Mass on Christmas Day at the Men's Central Jail of LA county. "God is with them even if they did something really bad", he said, remembering the backgrounds of the many inmates. "Independently of what is the situation of our life or what we do or what we have done" – stated the Archbishop during the homily – "God wants to be with you. Isn't that amazing? God loves you, God loves me personally," he said. "He loves each one of us personally by name."

The inmates who participated in the Eucharistic celebration were invited by Archbishop Gómez to receive either Communion or a blessing and they had the opportunity to speak with the Archbishop.

The Archbishop also went to the cells of those inmates unable to attend the Mass due to security concerns, greeting them and exchanging a few words. At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Archbishop Gómez stressed that "if they are aware that God's presence is in their lives, they can change their lives and see the hope of beginning again".



Photo courtesy of the Los Angeles Times

At Mass on New Year's Day the Holy Father calls the faithful to acclaim the Holy Mother of God

# The warmth that shelters us

*On Sunday morning, 1 January 2017, the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God, and also the 50th World Day of Peace, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica. During his homily, the Pope asked everyone present to rise to their feet to acclaim the Blessed Mother three times, as done at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The Mass, with prayers in five languages, included in particular a prayer for peace, that "the Lord, king of justice and peace, break the chains of war, set minds and hearts free of hatred, and inspire new paths of fraternity and reconciliation", and the intention for all mothers, that "the Lord bless women who bring forth life, make them gentle in caring for their children and steadfast in guiding them to maturity". The following is the English text of the Pope's Homily, which was delivered in Italian.*

"Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart" (cf. Lk 2:19). In these words, Luke describes the attitude with which Mary took in all that they had experienced in those days. Far from trying to understand or master the situation, Mary is the woman who can treasure, that is to say, protect and guard in her heart, the passage of God in the life of his people. Deep within, she had learned to listen to the heartbeat of her Son, and that in turn taught her, throughout her life, to

discover God's heartbeat in history. She learned how to be a mother, and in that learning process she gave Jesus the beautiful experience of knowing what it is to be a Son. In Mary, the eternal Word not only became flesh, but also learned to recognize the maternal tenderness of God. With Mary, the God-Child learned to listen to the yearnings, the troubles, the joys and the hopes of the people of the promise. With Mary, he discovered himself a Son of God's faithful people.

In the Gospels, Mary appears as a woman of few words, with no great speeches or deeds, but with an attentive gaze capable of guarding the life and mission of her Son, and for this reason, of everything that he loves. She was able to watch over the beginnings of the first Christian community, and in this way she learned to be the mother of a multitude. She drew near to the most diverse situations in order to sow hope. She accompanied the crosses borne in the silence of her children's hearts. How many devotions, shrines and chapels in the most far-off places, how many pictures in our homes, remind us of this great truth. Mary gave us a mother's warmth, the warmth that shelters us amid troubles, the maternal warmth that keeps anything or anyone from extinguishing in the heart of the Church the revolution of tenderness inaugurated by her Son. Where there is a mother, there is tenderness. By her motherhood, Mary shows us that humility and tenderness are not virtues of the weak but of the strong. She teaches us that we do not have to mistreat others in order to feel important (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 288). God's holy people has always acknowledged and hailed her as the Holy Mother of God.

To celebrate Mary as Mother of God and our mother at the beginning of the new year means recalling a certainty that will accompany our days: we are a people with a Mother; we are not orphans.

Mothers are the strongest antidote to our individualistic and egotistic tendencies, to our lack of openness and our indifference. A society without mothers would not only be a cold society, but a society that has lost its heart, lost the "feel of home". A society without mothers would be a merciless society, one that has room only for calculation and specula-

tion. Because mothers, even at the worst times, are capable of testifying to tenderness, unconditional self-sacrifice and the strength of hope. I have learned much from those mothers whose children are in prison, or lying in hospital beds, or in bondage to drugs, yet, come cold or heat, rain or draught, never stop fighting for what is best for them. Or those mothers who in refugee camps, or even the midst of war, unfailingly embrace and support their children's sufferings. Mothers who literally give their lives so that none of their children will perish. Where there is a mother, there is unity, there is belonging, belonging as children.

To begin the year by recalling God's goodness in the maternal face of Mary, in the maternal face of the Church, in the faces of our own mothers, protects us from the corrosive disease of being "spiritual orphans". It is the sense of being orphaned that the soul experiences when it feels motherless and lacking the tenderness of God, when the sense of belonging to a family, a people, a land, to our God, grows dim. This sense of being orphaned lodges in a narcissistic heart capable of looking only to itself and its own interests. It grows when we forget that life is a gift we have received – and owe to others – a gift we are called to share in this common home.

It was such a self-centred orphanhood that led Cain to ask: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen 4:9). It was as if to say: he doesn't belong to me; I do not recognize him. This attitude of spiritual orphanhood is a cancer that



A painting of Our Lady of the Miracle by Domenico Bartolini was on display in Saint Peter's Basilica during the *Tu Deum* on 31 December and the Mass on 1 January, both presided by Pope Francis. The work was displayed in commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin to Alphonse Ratisbonne at an altar in the Church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte in Rome, where the painting normally hangs today. Ratisbonne, a French Jew, was highly critical of the Catholic Church. As a young

## Our Lady of the Miracle

man, while visiting Rome in 1842, he accepted a Miraculous Medal – which bore the image later illustrated in Bartolini's painting –, agreeing to wear it and to recite a daily prayer to the Virgin Mary. When he later experienced the apparition of Our Lady, Ratisbonne immediately converted to Catholicism. He subsequently became a Jesuit Priest, abandoned his life of luxury and devoted his life to the conversion of Jews. The painting now hangs in the place where this miracle of divine intervention occurred.

name" we bear. The loss of the ties that bind us, so typical of our fragmented and divided culture, increases this sense of orphanhood and, as a result, of great emptiness and loneliness. The lack of physical (and not virtual) contact is cauterizing our hearts (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 49) and making us lose the capacity for tenderness and wonder, for pity and compassion. Spiritual orphanhood makes us forget what it means to be children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, friends and believers. It makes us forget the importance of playing, of singing, of a smile, of rest, of gratitude.

Celebrating the feast of the Holy Mother of God makes us smile once more as we realize that we are a people, that we belong, that only within a community, within a family, can we as persons find the "climate", the "warmth" that enables us to grow in humanity, and not merely as objects meant to "consume and be consumed". To celebrate the

feast of the Holy Mother of God reminds us that we are not interchangeable items of merchandise or information processors. We are children, we are family, we are God's People. Celebrating the Holy Mother of God leads us to create and care for common places that can give us a sense of belonging, of being rooted, of feeling at home in our cities, in communities that unite and support us (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 15).

Jesus, at the moment of his ultimate self-sacrifice, on the cross, sought to keep nothing for himself, and in handing over his life, he also handed over to us his Mother. He told Mary: "Here is your son; here are your children". We too want to receive her into our homes, our families, our communities and na-

tions. We want to meet her maternal gaze. The gaze that frees us from being orphans; the gaze that reminds us that we are brothers and sisters, that I belong to you, that you belong to me, that we are of the same flesh. The gaze that teaches us that we have to learn how to care for life in the same way and with the same tenderness that she did: by sowing hope, by sowing a sense of belonging and of fraternity.

Celebrating the Holy Mother of God reminds us that we have a Mother. We are not orphans. We have a Mother. Together let us all confess this truth. I invite you to acclaim it, on your feet [everyone stands], three times, like the faithful of Ephesus: Holy Mother of God, Holy Mother of God, Holy Mother of God, Holy Mother of God.



silently eats away at and debases the soul. We become all the more debased, inasmuch as nobody belongs to us and we belong to no one. I debate the earth because it does not belong to me;

I debate others because they do not belong to me; I debate God because I do not belong to him, and in the end we debate our very selves, since we forget who we are and the divine "family

## At the Angelus the Pope expresses closeness with those affected by the attack in Istanbul Peace is built by saying 'no' to hatred

*"Unfortunately, violence has struck even in this night of good wishes and of hope. Sadly, I express my closeness to the Turkish people", Pope Francis said after the Angelus on Sunday, 1 January. Before reciting the Marian prayer with the faithful in Saint Peter's Square, the Pontiff commented on Sunday's Gospel reading. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In recent days we have rested our adoring gaze on the Son of God, born in Bethlehem; today, the Solemnity of Mary Most Holy Mother of God, we turn our gaze to the Mother, while reflecting upon each of them in their close relation. This bond is not exhausted for the fact of having begot and been begotten; Jesus is "born of woman" (Gal 4:4) for a mission of salvation, and his mother is not excluded from this mission, but rather, is intimately associated with it. Mary is aware of this. Therefore she is not closed to considering only her maternal relationship with Jesus, but remains open and attentive toward all the events that take place around him: she keeps and ponders, scrutinizes and closely examines them, as today's Gospel reading tells us (cf. Lk 2:19).

She has already said her 'yes' and conveyed her willingness to be involved in the fulfillment of the salvific plan of God, who "has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree, he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away" (Lk 1:51-53). Now, silent and attentive, she tries to understand what God asks of her day by day.

The visit of the shepherds offers her the opportunity to understand something of God's will as manifested by these humble and poor people. Luke the Evangelist recounts for us the shepherds' visit to the grotto with a close succession of verbs expressing movement. He thus says: *they go with haste, they find the Babe with Mary and Joseph, they see, they report what*

they had been told about him, and lastly they glorify God (cf. Lk 2:16-20). Mary closely follows this passage, what the shepherds say, what has happened to them, because she already perceives in it the movement of salvation, which will flow from the work of Jesus, and she adapts, ready for every request of the Lord. God asks Mary not only to be mother of his only begotten Son, but also to cooperate with the Son and for the Son in the plan of salvation, in order that in her, a humble handmaid, great works of divine mercy may be fulfilled.

Now, as we, like the shepherds, contemplate the icon of the Babe in his mother's arms, we feel growing in our hearts a sense of immense gratitude to She who has given the Saviour to the world. For this reason, on the first day of a new year, we say to her:

Thank you, O Holy Mother of the Son of God, Holy Mother of God! / Thank you for your humility which drew the gaze of God; / thank you for the faith with which you received his Word; / thank you

for the courage with which you said "here I am", / forgetting yourself, enthralled by Holy Love, / made wholly one with his hope. / Thank you, O Holy Mother of God! / Pray for us, pilgrims in time; / help us to walk on the path of peace. / Amen.

After the Angelus the Pope added:

Dear brothers and sisters, Happy New Year! The year shall be good in the measure that each of us, with God's help, seeks to do good day by day. In this way peace is built; saying 'no' – with deeds – to hatred and to violence, and 'yes' to brotherhood and reconciliation. Fifty years ago, Blessed Paul VI began celebrating on this day the World Day of Peace, so as to strengthen the common commitment to build a peaceful and fraternal world. In this year's Message, I proposed adopting *non-violence as a style of politics for peace*.

Unfortunately, violence has struck even in this night of good wishes and of hope. Sadly, I express my closeness to the Turkish people; I pray for the numerous victims and



for the injured, and for the entire Nation in mourning, and I ask the Lord to support all men and women of good will who roll up their sleeves to face the scourge of terrorism and this stain of blood which covers the world with a shadow of fear and dismay.

I wish to thank the President of the Italian Republic for the expression of good wishes that he addressed to me last evening, during his Message to the Nation. I reciprocate wholeheartedly, invoking the Lord's blessing upon the Italian people so that, with their responsible contribution in solidarity with all, they may look to the future with confidence and hope.

I greet all of you present here, families, associations and youth groups, wishing you a happy and

peaceful new year. I express my gratitude for the many initiatives of prayer and of commitment to peace taking place in every part of the world. I remember in particular last evening's national march held in Bologna, sponsored by CEI, Caritas, Catholic Action and Pax Christi, with the support of the Diocese and Municipality of Bologna.

I greet the participants in the "Peace in all lands" demonstration, sponsored by the Community of Sant'Egidio. Thank you for your presence and your witness!

To all I wish a year of peace in the Lord's grace and with the maternal protection of Mary, Mother of God.

Happy feast day and, please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci!*

# Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

*During Mass at the Casa Santa Marta in December, Pope Francis touched on a variety of themes, including, for example, resistance to the Lord's grace, and the greatness of humility. The following is a summary of the Pope's morning homilies given throughout the final month of 2016. For more detailed coverage, please visit <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/section/santa-marta>.*

– Thursday, 1 December – Pope Francis' reflection arose from the day's Gospel reading (Mt 7:21, 24-27) and from his remembrance of Bl. Charles de Foucauld, to whom the Pontiff referred as a model of conquering resistance. The Pontiff said resistance can be hidden by: "empty words" – saying 'yes' when we really mean 'no'; "justificatory words", – which cannot truly justify us, for the Word of God is "the only word that justifies us"; and "accusatory words" – blaming others instead of looking to ourselves. Although resistance can be good, the Pope said, it is bad when we "use it as a defence against the Lord's grace"; instead we must ask the Lord for the "grace to overcome the resistance of sin".

– Monday, 5 December – From the Book of Isaiah (35:1-10) and the account of Mary Magdalene, the Pope focused the day's homily on renewal. The prophet foretold that the desert would blossom and the sick would be healed: thus the people awaited this change to come with the Messiah. Indeed, Jesus healed and renewed, but this was not just a cosmetic change. As God created the world, Jesus re-creates us, transforming everything from within, changing sinner into an upright person. Like Mary Magdalene, we must realize our sin is like a wound within: that Jesus can "heal not only the body, but the wound of the soul", re-creating us. We must have courage to recognize our sin and allow Jesus to go to its roots, re-creating us as new men and women.

– Tuesday, 6 December – From the Gospel reading (Mt 18:12-14) the

Pope spoke of the "good news of Christmas". The Lord is a Good Shepherd who knows and loves us all individually, not as a pack. He is tender and comes to save us through his caress. If we reject his caress, we become lost sheep; however, the Lord never stops looking for lost sheep and brings them back to his caress. Allow yourself to await the Lord this Christmas, with open wounds so that he may heal you.

– Friday, 9 December – In his morning homily the Pope addressed seminarians, warning them not to live the priesthood as "intermediary functionaries" but as "authentic mediators". Indeed, "an intermediator does his work and takes his pay", giving in to the logic of worldliness and rigidity, which leads to dissatisfaction. A priest's satisfaction comes instead from being the mediator between God and the people, from giving his very life "to unite the flock, to unite the people, to lead them to Jesus", following the "logic of Jesus", which is that "of humbling oneself".

– Tuesday, 13 December – Pope Francis' reflection arose from the day's Gospel reading taken from Matthew (21:28-32). Clericalism in the Church is a great evil that victimizes the poor and humble, and restricts clericalist leaders from entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who create and impose a system of laws constructed from science and intellectual morals while disregarding the revelations of God, cause great pain to those who live with a capacity to regret and be humble. Referring to those who discard the Commandments, he warned that the suffering and the sick, and even "sinners and prostitutes will go before you into the Kingdom of Heaven".

– Thursday, 15 December – Pope Francis spoke of John the Baptist, whose "attention to the least of men" made him a shepherd of men, and whose greatness lay in "his faithfulness to his mission", in his forthright manner of speaking, and in his ability to understand the

people, to help them move forward with the Lord". However, the Pontiff observed, despite being "great, strong, sure of his vocation", John also had "dark moments" of "doubt". Great men, those who are strong in their vocation, Pope Francis observed, "can afford to doubt, because they are great". Thus, he asked "John for the grace of apostolic courage", of "pastoral love", and "even the grace to doubt".

– Friday, 16 December – Returning again to John the Baptist, the Pope spoke of the prophet's witness, his way of always "pointing to Jesus", and also of his greatness, which lay in his humility. John made it clear that he was merely "a voice crying in the wilderness", and that he was not "the Word. He told the people: "after me one is coming, who is greater and grander than me". By pointing to Jesus, John "opened the door" to the Father. We should ask ourselves, the Pontiff said, whether

our "own Christian life has always led the way to Jesus", and whether this gesture of "pointing to Jesus" plays a prominent role.



"John the Baptist", Matthias Grünewald



"The Penitent Magdalene", Angelo Caroselli, San Diego Museum of Art

## Pope sends aid for the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis

In the name of the Holy Father, the first distributions of aid for the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis were made this Christmas. The Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* reported that close to six million euros were received in 12 collections. The funds are to be delivered to over two million beneficiaries, without regard to denomination or ethnicity, particularly in the regions of Donetsk, Lugansk, Zaporizhia, Kharkiv and Dnepropetrovsk.

The initiative began with an extraordinary collection in European churches on 24 April 2016, to assist those affected by the conflict. The Holy See, through the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, formed a local Committee presided over by Bishop Jan Sobito, Auxiliary of Kharkiv-Zaporizhia, with the collaboration of Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, Apostolic Nuncio in Ukraine. Since its work began in July, the Zaporizhia-based Committee has evaluated and selected humanitarian aid projects presented by various Christian charitable



organizations and international agencies. The Committee will now finance 20 "large-scale" projects (for individual amounts up to 250 thousand euros) and 39 "solidarity" initiatives (for amounts up to 20 thousand euros). Funds are to be distributed with the cooperation of the Apostolic Nunciature to support assistance operations in the food, housing, health and hygiene sectors.

According to a recent report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the ongoing conflict resulted in 9,758 deaths and 22,779 injuries between April 2014 and 1 December 2016.

## Francis to visit Fatima in May

At the invitation of the President and the Bishops of Portugal, Pope Francis will visit Fatima on 12-13 May. For the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Cova da Iria, the Pontiff will make a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima.



At the General Audience of 28 December the Pope speaks of Abram's hope

## More than just stars

*"Complaining to the Lord is a way of praying". Pope Francis expressed this in his reflection at the General Audience held in the Paul VI Hall on Wednesday, 28 December, as he continued the series of catecheses on the theme of Christian hope. The Pope focused in particular on the experience of Abram, whom, the Pontiff explained, God leads away "from his narrow vision" so he may see the stars – in other words, enabling Abram "to see with the eyes of faith". The following is a translation of the catechesis which the Holy Father delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

In the Letter to the Romans, Saint Paul reminds us of the great figure of Abraham, to indicate to us the way of faith and hope. The Apostle writes of him: "he believed, steadfast in hope against all hope, that he should become the father of many nations" (cf. Rom 4:18). "Steadfast in hope against all hope". This is a powerful concept: even when there is no hope, I hope. This is how our father Abraham was. Saint Paul is referring to the faith with which Abram believed in the Word of God who promised him a son. It truly was an act of entrustment, hoping "against all hope", so unlikely was what the Lord was announcing, because he was elderly – [Abram] was nearly 100 years old – and his wife was barren. She could not conceive! But God had said so, and he believed. There was no human hope because he was elderly and his wife barren: and he believed.

Trusting in this promise, Abram sets out on a journey, is ready to leave his land and become a sojourner, hoping in this "impossible" son that God is to give him although Sarah's womb was by then lifeless. Abram believes, his faith opens to a hope that appears illogical; it is the ability to go beyond human reasoning, wisdom and worldly prudence, beyond what is normally considered common sense, to believe in the impossible. Hope opens new horizons, makes one capable of dreaming of what is not even imaginable. Hope enables one to enter

the darkness of an uncertain future in order to walk in the light. The virtue of hope is beautiful; it gives us much strength to walk in life.

But it is a difficult journey. The moment arrives, even for Abram, of the crisis of discouragement. He entrusted himself, left his house, his land, his friends ... everything. He departed; he arrived in the country that God had indicated to him; time had passed. At that time to make such a journey was not like today, with air travel – which happens in a few hours. It took months, years! Time passed, but the son did not arrive, Sarah's womb remained closed in its barrenness.

Abram, I do not say that he lost patience, but he complains to the Lord. This too we learn from our father Abraham: complaining to the Lord is a way of praying. At times when I hear confession, people say: "I complained to the Lord ...", and I respond: "No, do complain! He is the father!". This is a way of praying: complaining to the Lord, this is good. Abram complains to the Lord, saying: "O Lord God, ... I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus". (Eliezer was the one who managed everything). "And Abram said, 'Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir'. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir'. And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to

number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And [Abram] believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:2-6).

The scene takes place at night; it is dark outside, but also in Abram's heart there is the darkness of delusion, of discouragement, of the difficulty of continuing to hope in something impossible. At this point the patriarch is too advanced in years. It seems there is no longer time to expect a son, and a slave will take over, inheriting everything.

Abram is addressing the Lord, but even though God is present there and speaks with him; it is as if God has distanced himself, as if He had not kept his word. Abram feels alone; he is old and weary; death is approaching. How can he continue to believe?

Yet, his lamenting is already a form of faith, it is a prayer. Despite everything, Abram continues to believe in God and to hope that something might still happen. Otherwise, why challenge the Lord, grumble to him, remind him of his promises? Faith is not only silence which accepts everything without responding; hope is not an assurance that keeps you safe from doubt and uncertainty. But so often, hope is darkness; but hope is there ... which leads you forward. Faith is also struggling with God, showing our bitterness, without "pious" pretences. "I was angry with God and I told him this, this...". But he is the father, he understands you: go in peace! It is important to have this courage! This is hope. Hope is also not being afraid to see reality for what it is and to accept its contradictions.

Thus, in faith, Abram asks God to help him continue to hope. It is curious: he does not ask for a son. He asks: 'Help me continue to hope', the prayer to have hope. The Lord's response is to repeat his unlikely promise: the heir will not be a slave, but his son, born of Abram, begotten of him. Nothing has changed on God's side. He continues to emphasize what he has already said, and does not offer pretexts to Abram, so as to reassure him. His one assurance is trusting in the Word of the Lord and continuing to hope.

That sign that God gives to Abram is a request to continue to believe and hope: "Look toward the heaven, and number the stars.... So shall your descendants be". (Gen 15:5). It is again a promise, it is again something to await in the fu-



"Abram", Sieger Köder (2002)

ture. God brings Abram out of the tent, in reality from his narrow vision, and shows him the stars. To believe, it is necessary to be able to see with the eyes of faith; they are only stars, which everyone can see, but for Abram they must be the sign of God's faithfulness.

This is faith; this is the journey of hope that each one of us must make. If the only possibility that remains to us is that of looking toward the stars, then it is time to trust in God. There is nothing more beautiful. Hope does not disappoint. Thank you.

### SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from Bangladesh and the United States of America. May each of you, and your families, cherish the joy of Christmas and draw near in prayer to the Saviour who has come to dwell among us. God bless you!

In this Season of Christmas we have before our eyes the wondrous mystery of the child and adolescent Jesus, who, as Luke the Evangelist recounts, "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man" (2:52).

I am pleased to offer a special greeting to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. May the martyred Holy Innocents, whom we remember today, help everyone to be strong in faith, looking to the divine Child, who in the mystery of Christmas offers himself for the whole of humanity. Dear *young people*, may you, too, be able to grow as he did: obedient to your parents and ready to understand and to abide by the will of the Father in heaven. Dear *sick people*, I hope you may glimpse, in the vivid light of Bethlehem, the meaning of your suffering. And I encourage you, dear *newlyweds*, in building your family, to maintain constant love and dedication beyond all sacrifice.

## VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

### FUND FOR HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE – FAS

The Holy Father appointed Dr Stefano Loreti as Director of the FAS as of 1 January 2017. Until now he has been manager at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (23 Dec. 2016).

### VATICAN MUSEUMS

The Holy Father appointed Ms Barbara Jatta as Director of the Vatican Museums as of 1 January 2017. Until now she has been vice director of the same (20 Dec. 2016).

### NECROLOGY – 2016

Bishop Jean Gagnon, Bishop emeritus of Gaspé, Quebec, at age 75 (23 Dec.)

Bishop Léon Soulier, Bishop emeritus of Limoges, France, at age 92 (25 Dec.)

Bishop Karl Golser, Bishop emeritus of Bolzano-Bressanone, Italy, at age 73 (25 Dec.)

Bishop Jaume Camprodon Rovira, Bishop emeritus of Girona, Spain, at age 90 (26 Dec.)

Archbishop Justo Mullor García, titular Bishop of Bolsena, Apostolic Nuncio, at age 84 (30 Dec.)

Archbishop Peter Fernando, Archbishop emeritus of Madurai, India, at age 77 (31 Dec.)

# Six new Ambassadors to the Holy See

*Burundi, Fiji, Moldova, Mauritius, Sweden, and Tunisia. The new Ambassadors of these six countries met with Pope Francis on Thursday morning, 15 December, to present their Letters of Credence accrediting them to the Holy See. Among the new diplomats are two women and four men: Else Nizigama Ntamagiro, Jitoko Tikolevu, Vitalie Rusu, Girish Nunkoo, Cecilia Björner and Mourad Bourehla. In the Clementine Hall, after receiving the Credentials of each Diplomat, the Pontiff delivered an address to them and their coworkers and their family members.*

## Burundi



H.E. Mrs *Else Nizigama Ntamagiro* was born in Bujumbura in 1972. She is married and has one son. She holds a state diploma in biology-chemistry, a degree in political and administrative sciences, and an advanced diploma in political and social sciences, focused on international relations. She has served as: director *ad interim* at the Department of International Organizations (2002-2004); counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of International Organizations (2002-2004); director *ad interim* at the Department of International Organizations (2006-2009); first counselor at the Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Kinshasa (2009-2012); chargée d'affaires *ad interim* at the Department of International Organizations (2009-2010); first counselor and chargée d'affaires *ad interim* at the Embassy in Canada; Ambassador to the Federation of Russia and to Georgia with residence in Moscow (2014-2016). Since April 2016 she has served as Ambassador to Germany.

## Fiji



H.E. Mr *Jitoko Tikolevu* was born in Waiyevo. He is married and has three children. He holds a degree in economics and business and a master's in tax law. He has served as: official at the Ministry of Commerce (1981-1988); auditor at the Auditor General's Office (1989-1990); head of policy and research at the Fiji Islands Revenue & Customs Authority

– FRCA (2002); head of WEF policy at FRCA (2004); national manager of the Policy, Economic Analysis & Research Section of FRCA (2005); general director of development services, and then Chief Executive Officer of FRCA (2007); vice president of the boards of directors of the Fiji development bank (FDB) and of Fiji investments of FRCA (2007-2015); chairman of the Oceania Customs Organisation and of the Pacific Islands Tax Administrators Association. Since January 2016 he has served as Ambassador in London.

## Moldova



H.E. Mr *Vitalie Rusu* was born in the county of Sângerei in 1966. He is married and has two children. He holds a degree in philosophy and communication sciences and a master's in philosophy. He has served as: director of the Art Gallery of the Union of Artists of Moldova at the Ministry of Culture (1995-1997); second secretary at the UN and the Specialized Agencies Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration – MFAEI (1997-1999) and later as first secretary at the UN and Specialized Agencies Division at the MFAEI (1999-2001); national coordinator of the Governmental and Civil Society Working Group on Elaboration of the Periodical Reports on Implementation of the International Conventions/Covenants on Human Rights at the MFAEI (1999-2002); counselor at the Department of European Security and Political-Military Affairs at the MFAEI (2001-2002); head of the Disarmament and Arms Control Division at the MFAEI (2002-2004); counselor to the Permanent Delegation to the OSCE, UNOV/UNODC, CTBTO, IAEA, UNIDO in Vienna (2004-2007); director at the OSCE and the International Security Directorate at the MFAEI (2007-2010); counselor and deputy head of the Permanent Delegation to the OSCE and at the UN in Vienna (2010-2013); director for policy

analysis, monitoring and evaluation at the MFAEI (2013-2016). Since 2016 he has served as Ambassador to the Czech Republic.

## Mauritius



H.E. Mr *Girish Nunkoo* was born in 1958. He is married and has one daughter. He holds a law degree. He has served as: member of the Law Society of Mauritius, legal adviser to various ministries and lawyer at numerous courts and tribunals; attorney at law in many sectors (1992-2015); commissioner for the Protection of Borrowers under the Borrower Protection Act 2007 (2011); permanent representative to the Commonwealth, the International Maritime Organization, and the International Sugar Organization. Since 2015 he has served as High Commissioner in London, where he resides. Since 2016 he has served as High Commissioner in Stockholm. He is also serving as Ambassador-designate to Ireland, Norway and Denmark.

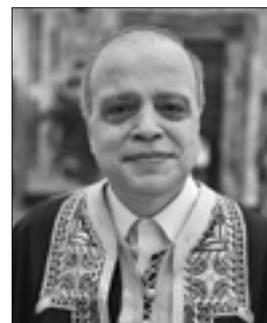
## Sweden



H.E. Mrs *Cecilia Björner* was born in Härmösand in 1959. She holds a degree in economics and business

administration and a master's in public administration. She has served as desk officer in the department for policy and management of international development cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – MFA (1991-1994); in the secretariat of the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs (1994-1995), and as: desk officer in the MFA department responsible for UN affairs regarding finances and reforms (1995-1996); cabinet chief for the Minister of Development, Cooperation and Migration (1996-1998); minister to Sweden's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva (1998-2002); deputy head and later head of the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia at the MFA (2003-2006); Ambassador to Hungary (2006-2011); project manager for internal management development investigation at the MFA (2011-2013); Ambassador and counter-terrorism coordinator at department of security policy at the MFA (2013-2014); director general for international development cooperation at the MFA (2014-2016).

## Tunisia



H.E. Mr *Mourad Bourehla*, was born in Tunis in 1960. He is married and has one daughter. He holds a Master's in economics from the University of Tunis and a doctorate from l'École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in Tunis. He entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then served as: head of management of diplomatic missions abroad; deputy director for financial affairs (1992); consul in Lyons, France (1992-1998); deputy director for European and Mediterranean institutions (1998); member of the minister's cabinet at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in charge of European Affairs (2000); minister plenipotentiary deputy head of mission in Warsaw (2000-2004); consul in Nanterre, France (2004-2005); director in the General Inspectorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005-2009); ambassador in Islamabad, Pakistan, and in Dhaka, Bangladesh (2009-2014); secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014). Since June 2015 he has served as Ambassador in Bern.

Address of Pope Francis to Ambassadors newly accredited to the Holy See

# The path to pursue

Scandalous amounts outlaid for arms while so many lack the very necessities of life

*The choice of nonviolence as a style of life, as mentioned in the Message for the coming World Day of Peace, was the theme of Francis' address to the New Ambassadors from six countries: Burundi, Fiji, Mauritius, Moldova, Sweden and Tunisia. On Thursday, 15 December 2016, the diplomats presented the Letters accrediting them to the Holy See. The following is the English text of the Pope's address.*

Your Excellencies,

I am pleased to receive you for the presentation of the Letters accrediting you as Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See on the part of your respective countries: Burundi, Fiji, Mauritius, Moldova, Sweden and Tunisia. I thank you for your presence, which attests to your desire to maintain and develop the relations of esteem and cooperation which you enjoy with the Holy See, and I ask you to convey to the Heads of State whom you represent my gratitude and the assurance of my prayers for them and for their nations.

You have come from distant and very different areas of the world. Here in Rome this is always a source of satisfaction, since the horizon of the Holy See is intrinsically universal. This is due to the vocation and mission entrusted by God to the Successor of the Apostle Peter, a mission that is essentially religious, yet in the course of history has also involved relations with states and those who govern them. The Catholic Church, whose centre of unity and direction is found, as it were, in



the Holy See, is called to pass on and bear witness to those spiritual and moral values grounded in the very nature of human beings and society, and which, as such, can be shared by all those committed to the pursuit of the common good.

Preeminent among these values is that of peace, as seen in the fact that for 50 years now, the Popes have dedicated the first day of January to peace, addressing a special Message to the world's civil and religious authorities, and to all men and women of goodwill. The Message for the coming World Day of Peace, published just three days ago, has as its theme: *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics*

for Peace. The happy occasion of our meeting today allows me to share with you some brief reflections on that theme.

Nonviolence is a typical example of a universal value that finds fulfilment in the Gospel of Christ but is also a part of other noble and ancient spiritual traditions. In a world like our own, sadly marked by wars and numerous conflicts, to say nothing of widespread violence evident in various ways in day-to-day life, the choice of nonviolence as a style of life is increasingly demanded in the exercise of responsibility at every level, from family education, to social and civil commitment, to polit-

ical activity and international relations. In every situation, this means rejecting violence as a method for resolving conflicts and dealing with them instead through dialogue and negotiation.

In a particular way, those who hold public office on the national and international levels are called to cultivate a nonviolent style in their consciences and in the exercise of their duties. This is not the same as weakness or passivity; rather it presupposes firmness, courage and the ability to face issues and conflicts with intellectual honesty, truly seeking the common good over and above all partisan interest, be it ideological, economic or political. In the course of the past century, marred by wars and genocides of unheard-of proportions, we have nonetheless seen outstanding examples of how nonviolence, embraced with conviction and practised consistently, can yield significant results, also on the social and political plane. Some peoples, and indeed entire nations, thanks to the efforts of nonviolent leaders, peacefully achieved the goals of freedom and justice. This is the path to pursue now and in the future. This is the way of peace. Not a peace proclaimed by words but in fact denied by pursuing strategies of domination, backed up by scandalous outlays for arms, while so many people lack the very necessities of life.

Dear Ambassadors, it is my desire, and that of the Holy See, to advance, together with the governments of your countries, this process of promoting peace and those other values that contribute to the integral development of individuals and society. With this in mind, I now offer you my heartfelt best wishes for the mission that you begin today, while assuring you of the ready cooperation of the Roman Curia. Upon you and your families, and upon your respective countries, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

Congregation for the Causes of Saints

## Promulgation of Decrees

*On Wednesday, 21 December, the Holy Father received in audience Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, during which the Pontiff authorized the Congregation to promulgate the following Decrees:*

– a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Faustino Miguez, professed priest of the Order of the Poor Clerics Regular of the Mother of God of the Pious Schools (Piarists), Founder of the Congregation of the Calasanzian Sisters, Daughters of the Divine Shepherdess, born on 24 March 1831 and died on 8 March 1925;

– a miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God Leopoldina Naudet, Foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, born on 31 May 1773 and died on 17 August 1834;

– the martyrdom of the Servant of God Mateo Casals, professed priest; Teófilo Casajús, professed scholastic; Fernando Saperas, professed religious, and 106 Companions of the Congregation of the Missionaries, Sons of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Claretians), killed in hatred of the faith during the Civil War in Spain between 1936 and 1937;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Jean-Baptiste Fouque, diocesan priest, born on 12 September 1851 and died on 5 December 1926;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Lorenzo of the Holy Spirit (in the world: Egidio Marcelli), professed religious of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ (Passionists), born on 30 August 1874 and died on 14 October 1953;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Rafoela del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (in the world: Sebastiana Lladó y Sala), Foundress of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, born on 2 January 1814 and died on 8 March 1899;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Clelia Merloni, Foundress of the Congregation of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, born on 10 March 1861 and died on 21 November 1930;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Isidoro Zorzano Ledesma, layperson of the personal prelature of the Holy Cross and *Opus Dei*, born on 13 September 1902 and died on 15 July 1943.

Letter to Bishops of the world

# Zero tolerance

*"I would like us to renew our complete commitment" to ensure that the atrocities committed against minors "no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to "zero tolerance". Pope Francis wrote this in a Letter to the world's Bishops on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The following is the English text of the Pope's letter.*



Letter of the Holy Father  
to Bishops

Dear Brother,

Today, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, as the words of the angel to the shepherds still resound in our hearts – "I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour" (Lk 2:10-11) – I feel the need to write to you. We do well to listen to that proclamation again and again; to hear over and over again that



*"The Massacre of the Innocents", Giotto*

God is present in the midst of our people. This certainty, which we renew each year, is the source of our joy and hope.

In these days we experience how the liturgy leads us to the heart of Christmas, into the Mystery which gradually draws us to the source of Christian joy.

As pastors, we are called to help foster this joy among the faithful. We are charged with protecting this joy. I ask you once again that we not let ourselves be robbed of this joy, for we can be disillusioned at times, not unreasonably, with the world around us, with the Church, or even with ourselves, and feel tempted to indulge in a certain melancholy, lacking in hope, which can

lay hold of our hearts (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 83).

Christmas is also accompanied, whether we like it or not, by tears. The Evangelists did not disguise reality to make it more credible or attractive. They did not indulge in words that were comforting but unrelated to reality. For them, Christmas was not a flight to fantasy, a way of hiding from the challenges and injustices of their day. On the contrary, they relate the birth of the Son of God as an event fraught with tragedy and grief. Quoting the prophet Jeremiah, Matthew presents it in the bluntest of terms: "A voice is heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children" (2:18). It is the sobbing of mothers bewailing the death of their children in the face of Herod's tyranny and unbridled thirst for power.

Today too, we hear this heart-rending cry of pain, which we neither desire nor are able to ignore or to silence. In our world – I write this with a heavy heart – we continue to hear the lamentation of so many mothers, of so many families, for the death of their children, their innocent children.

To contemplate the manger also means to contemplate this cry of pain, to open our eyes and ears to what is going on around us, and to let our hearts be attentive and open to the pain of our neighbours, especially where children are involved. It also means realizing that that sad chapter in history is still being written today. To contemplate the manger in isolation from the world around us would make Christmas into a lovely story that inspires warm feelings but robs us of the creative power of the Good News that the Incarnate Word wants to give us. The temptation is real.

Can we truly experience Christian joy if we turn our backs on these realities? Can Christian joy even exist if we ignore the cry of our brothers and sisters, the cry of the children?

Saint Joseph was the first to be charged with protecting the joy of salvation. Faced with the atrocious crimes that were taking place, Saint Joseph – the model of an obedient and loyal man – was capable of recognizing God's voice and the mis-



sion entrusted to him by the Father. Because he was able to hear God's voice, and was docile to his will, Joseph became more conscious of what was going on around him and was able to interpret these events realistically.

The same thing is asked of us pastors today: to be men attentive, and not deaf, to the voice of God, and hence more sensitive to what is happening all around us. Today, with Saint Joseph as our model, we are asked not to let ourselves be robbed of joy. We are asked to protect this joy from the Herods of our own time. Like Joseph, we need the courage to respond to this reality, to arise and take it firmly in hand (cf. Mt 2:20). The courage to guard this joy from the new Herods of our time, who devour the innocence of our children. An innocence robbed from them by the oppression of illegal slave labour, prostitution and exploitation. An innocence shattered by wars and forced immigration, with the great loss that this entails. Thousands of our children have fallen into the hands of gangs, criminal organizations and merchants of death, who only devour and exploit their neediness.

To illustrate this point, there are at present 75 million children who, due to prolonged situations of emergency and crisis, have had to interrupt their education. In 2015, 68% of all persons who were victims of sexual exploitation were children. At the same time, a third of all children who have to live outside their homelands do so because forcibly displaced. We live in a world where almost half of the children who die under the age of five do so because of malnutrition. It is estimated that in 2016 there were 150 million child labourers, many of whom live in conditions of slavery. According to the most recent report presented by UNICEF, unless the world situation changes, in 2030 there will be 167 million children living in extreme poverty, 69 million children under the age of five will die between 2016 and 2030, and 16 million children will not receive basic schooling.

We hear these children and their cries of pain; we also hear the cry of the Church our Mother, who weeps not only for the pain caused to her youngest sons and daughters, but also because she recognizes the sins

of some of her members: the sufferings, the experiences and the pain of minors who were abused sexually by priests. It is a sin that shames us. Persons responsible for the protection of those children destroyed their dignity. We regret this deeply and we beg forgiveness. We join in the pain of the victims and weep for this sin. The sin of what happened, the sin of failing to help, the sin of covering up and denial, the sin of the abuse of power. The Church also weeps bitterly over this sin of her sons and she asks forgiveness. Today, as we commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents, I would like us to renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to "zero tolerance".

Christian joy does not arise on the fringes of reality, by ignoring it or acting as if it did not exist. Christian joy is born from a call – the same call that Saint Joseph received – to embrace and protect human life, especially that of the holy innocents of our own day. Christmas is a time that challenges us to protect life, to help it be born and grow. It is a time that challenges us as bishops to find new courage. The courage that generates processes capable of acknowledging the reality that many of our children are experiencing today, and working to ensure them the bare minimum needed so that their dignity as God's children will not only be respected but, above all, defended.

Let us not allow them to be robbed of joy. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of joy, but guard it and nourish its growth.

May we do this with the paternal fidelity of Saint Joseph and guided by Mary, Mother of tender love, so that our own hearts may never grow hard.

With fraternal affection,

*Francis*

From the Vatican, 28 December 2016  
*Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs*