At the General Audience the Holy Father speaks about forgiveness

At the General Audience on Wednesday, 9 August, the Holy Father spoke of God’s mercy as the driving force of Christian hope. When Jesus forgives the sinful woman, the Pope said, his action causes scandal, because it overturns the dominant attitude of the time. Instead of rejecting sinners, however, Jesus embraces them, those who are outcast, the “untouchable”. Indeed, the Pope observed, “Jesus feels compassion. Literally: Jesus feels his heart tremble”. In this way, “Christ’s heart embodies and reveals the heart of God, who, wherever there is a man or woman suffering, wishes healing, liberation, full life for him or her”.

This astonishing attitude to those in desperate situations, even those who have made many mistakes in life, marks our Christian identity with the stamp of mercy, and gives a sure foundation to our hope. It is important to remember, recalled the Holy Father, that “we are all poor sinners, in need of God’s mercy which has the power to transform us and to give us back hope”, and that to those “who understand this fundamental truth, God gives the most beautiful mission in the world”, which is to love our brothers and sisters, and to proclaim “the message of a mercy which He does not deny anyone”.

Apology for peace in Nigeria and Central African Republic

End all hatred and violence

At the conclusion of the General Audience on Wednesday, 9 August, Pope Francis made an earnest entreaty for an end to hatred and violence against Christians in Africa. The following is a translation of the Pope’s appeal.

I was deeply distressed by the massacre that occurred this past Sunday in Nigeria, inside a church, where innocent people were killed. And sadly this morning there was news of homicidal violence against the Christian community in the Central African Republic. I pray that every form of hatred and violence may cease and that such shameful crimes committed in places of worship, where the faithful gather to pray, will never be repeated. Let us think of our brothers and sisters of Nigeria and of the Central African Republic. Let us pray for them, all together: Hail Mary, ....
Francis prays at the tomb of Paul VI

On Sunday, 6 August, Feast of the Assumption of the Lord and the 50th anniversary of the death of Paul VI, Pope Francis visited the Vatican Grotto, where he knelt in prayer at the tomb of his predecessor. Earlier that day, the Mass in celebration of the former Pontiff was presided over by Msgr Marcello Semeraro, Bishop of Albano and Secretary of the Archdiocese of the See of Rome.

The Holy Father appointed Fr John Kochuthundil as Bishop of the Major Archiepiscopal Curia, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Thuburbo maus and at the same time to the office of Apostolic Visitor for Syro-Malankara faithful resident in Europe and in Oceania. Until now he has been Proteosyncellus of the Archeparchy of Trivandrum (5 Aug).

Bishop Kochuthundil, 58, was born in Puthussery Bhagon, India. He holds a doctorate in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 22 December 1985. He has served in parish ministry and as: secretary to the Archbishop of Trivandrum, rector of the minor seminary, president of the Tribunal, and director of the Tribunal (5 Oct.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Philipose Mar Stephanos Thottathil as Bishop of the Eparchy of Saint Mary Queen of Peace for Syro-Malankara faithful in the United States and Canada. Until now he has served as titular Bishop of Sollievo della Sofferenza at San Giovanni Rotondo, diocesan administrator (5 Aug).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop John-Neel Dwoz of Takamanda, Senegal (5 Aug).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jean-Pierre Basséne of Kolda, Senegal, as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Tambacounda (5 Aug.).

Bishop Basséne, 66, was born in Essyl, Senegal. He was ordained a priest on 11 April 1980. He was ordained a bishop on 29 April 2000, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Kolda.

The Synod of Bishops of the Major Archiepiscopal Syro-Malankara Church, after consulting the Apostolic See and receiving Pontifical assent for the episcopal appointments has adopted the following provisions:

- the establishment of the new Eparchy of Parasalsa with territory taken from the Archieparchy of Trivandrum, and the appointment of Bishop Thomas Mar Eusebios Essyl, Senegal. He was ordained a priest on 11 April 1980, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Kolda.

Bishop Naickamparambil, 56, was born in Mylapura, India. He was ordained a priest on 29 December 1986. He was ordained a bishop on 21 September 2010, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Lares and first Exarch for Syro-Malankara faithful resident in the United States.

- the appointment of Fr George Kalayil as Bishop of the Exarchate of Puthur. Until now he has been Proteosyncellus of the said Eparchy (5 Aug).

Bishop-elect Kalayil, 59, was born in Renjalady, India. He holds a doctorate in dogmatic theology. He was ordained a priest on 1 May 1986. He has served in parish ministry and as: secretary to the Bishop, director of St Joseph’s School (Battery), vice rector and then rector of St Mary’s Major Seminary.

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We are all sinners in need of God's mercy

At the General Audience the Holy Father speaks of forgiveness

It does us good to consider that God did not choose people who never make mistakes as the first dough to shape his Church... we are all sinners in need of God's mercy

The Gospels reveal the first negative reactions toward Jesus precisely when he forgives a man's sins (cf. Mk 2:11). It is a man who is suffering doubly because he cannot walk and because he feels "inaudate". And Jesus understands that the second pain is greater than the first, to the extent that He greets him immediately with a message of liberation: "My son, your sins are forgiven" (v. 5). He frees that oppressive sense of feeling inadequate. It is then that several scribes - those who believe they are perfect - say: I think of the many Catholics who believe they are perfect and scorn others... this is sad - several scribes present there were scandalized by Jesus' words, which sound like blasphemy, because only God can forgive sins.

We who are accustomed to experiencing the forgiveness of sins, perhaps at too "low" a "cost", must at times remind ourselves of how high a price God's love has cost. Each of us has cost a great deal: Jesus' life! He would have offered it even for just one of us. Jesus does not go to the Cross because he heals the sick, because he preaches charity, because he proclaims the beatitudes. The Son of God goes to the cross above all because he forgives sins, because he wants the total, definitive liberation of man's heart. Because he does not accept that the human being exhausts his entire existence with this indelible tattoo, with the thought of not being able to be welcomed by the merciful heart of God. And with these sentences Jesus goes to encounter sinners, which we all are.

This is how sinners are forgiven. They are not just comforted on the psychological level, because they are freed from the sense of guilt. Jesus does much more: he offers people who have made mistakes the hope of a new life. "But Lord, I am but a rag" - "Look forward and I will make you a new heart". This is the hope that Jesus gives us. A life marked by love. Matthew the publican becomes an Apostle of Christ: Matthew, who is a tax collector, his country, an exploiter of the people. Zacchaeus, the rich, corrupt man from Jericho - this man surely had a degree in bribery - is transformed into a benefactor of the poor. The Samaritan woman, who had five husbands and is now living with another, hears the promise of "living water" which can well up within her forever (cf. Jn 4:14). This is how Jesus changes hearts: he does so with all of us.

It does us good to consider that God did not choose people who never make mistakes as the first dough to shape his Church. The Church is a people of sinners who feel the mercy and forgiveness of God. Peter understood the truth about himself more from the crowing of the cock than from his impulses of generosity, which swelled his chest, making him feel superior to others.

Brothers and sisters, we are all poor sinners, in need of God's mercy which has the power to transform us and to give us back hope, and to do this every day. And he does! And to the people who understand this fundamental truth, God gives the most beautiful mission in the world, namely, love for brothers and sisters, and the message of a mercy which he does not deny anyone. And this is our hope. Let us go forth with this trust in the forgiveness, in the merciful love of Jesus.

Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from Malta, Nigeria, Guam, Canada and the United States of America. Upon all of you, I invoke the grace of the Lord Jesus, that you may be a sign of mercy and Christian hope in your homes and communities. May God bless you!

Lastly, my cordial thoughts go to the young people, the sick people and the newlyweds who have come to Rome during this period. I hope, dear young people, that the encounter with so many places laden with culture, art and faith may be a propitious occasion to know and imitate the example given to us by so many witnesses to the Gospel who lived here, such as Lawrence, whose feast day is tomorrow. I encourage you, dear sick people, that constantly join the suffering Jesus in faithfully carrying the cross for the redemption of the world. I wish you that, dear newlyweds, may build your family on the firm foundation of faithfulness to the Gospel of Love.
Archbishop emeritus of Milan, Italy

Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi dies

Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Archbishop emeritus of Milan, passed away in northern Italy on Saturday 5 August. The Cardinal had suffered a repeated episode of heart failure, from which he had been living in the Villa Sacro Cuore di Brianza, the Diocese of Milan’s spiritual home to which he had retired at the end of his mandate. Upon learning of Cardinal Tettamanzi’s passing, Pope Francis sent a telegram expressing his sentiments of profound sorrow and heartfelt Apostolic Blessing upon those who mourn his passing, with a special thought for his family, marriage and bioethics, in which he had particular expertise. I lift my prayer to the Lord so that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he so greatly loved, He may welcome His faithful servant in joy and eternal peace, and I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing upon those who mourn his passing, with a special thought for those who lovingly assisted him in these recent times of illness.

FRANCISCUS PP.

In learning of the death of dear Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, I would like to express my condolences to his family and to this diocesan community, which counts him among its most illustrious children and among its most amiable and beloved pastors. I think with affection and gratitude of this worthy brother who, in his fruitful life, joyfully witnessed to the Gospel and meekly served the Church, first as a presbyter in the Archdiocese of Milan, then as Archbishop of Ancona-Osimo, then as Secretary of the Italian Catholic Doctors Association, as Archbishop of Genoa, later as Archbishop of the dear Ambrosian Church, and lastly as Apostolic Administrator of Vigevano. He always distinguished himself as an attentive pastor, totally dedicated to the needs and the good of all the priests and the faithful, with especial attention to the themes of family, marriage and bioethics, in which he had particular expertise. I lift my prayer to the Lord so that, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whom he so greatly loved, He may welcome His faithful servant in joy and eternal peace, and I impart my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing upon those who mourn his passing, with a special thought for those who lovingly assisted him in these recent times of illness.

Moral theologian, Secretary General and Vice President of Italy’s Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Archbishop of Ancona-Osimo, then of Genoa and lastly, of Milan, the successor of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Dionigi Tettamanzi was a protagonist in the life of the Italian Church for many decades.

Born in Renate, in the territory of the Province and the Archdiocese of Milan, at the age of 10 he entered the San Pietro diocesan seminary in Seveso, where he began the studies he later completed at the Seminary in Venegono Inferiore, where he obtained a licence in theology in 1957. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Gio- vanni Battista Montini on 28 June 1957 and, a few months later, was sent to the Pontifical Lombard Seminary in Rome, where he attended the Pontifical Gregorian University.

After completing his doctorate in sacred theology, he returned to the diocese as a professor of theological disciplines for prefect clergies at the minor seminaries in Magno and Seveso, where he lived until the autumn of 1966.

After transferring to the Major Seminary in Venegono Inferiore, he taught fundamental moral theology for over 20 years, as well as courses on the sacraments of marriage and penance. At the same time, he taught pastoral theology in Milan, both at the Maria Immacolata Institute for the Priesthood (1967) and at the Lombardy Regional Institute for Pastoral Care. He also taught courses in moral theology at the Comboni Theological Seminary in Venegono Superi- ore, the Florentine Theological Institute and the Pontifical In- stitute for Foreign Missions in Milan.

His vast teaching career included a broad range of topics extending from fundamental to specific moral theology, with a particular focus on the spheres of marriage, family, sexuality and bioethics. In addition to his intense academic activity, he participated in many meetings, conferences, and theological-pastoral courses for priests and lay in Italy and abroad.

All the while he continued to serve in pastoral ministry, which he lovingly exercised by carrying out Sunday service in parishes, and by dedicating himself to preaching, offering spiritual direction to the sick, and serving in several roles, and by offering spiritual direction, especially to families and to the consecrated.

From 1973 to 1983 he served as ecclesiastical consultant to the Italian Confederation of Consultants on the Family, as head of cultural activities and then as president. He also collaborated with the Opera per l’Assistenza Religiosa agli Infermi, an organization providing assistance to the sick. For more than 20 years, he also served as ecclesiastical assistant of the Milan section of the Italian Catholic Doctors Association.

On 11 September 1987, upon nomination by the Lombard Episcopal, the Congregation for Catholi- c Education called him to direct the Lombard Pontifical Seminary. Then, on 28 April 1989, the Italian Bishops Conference (CEI) appointed him chairman of the board of directors of the newspa- per “Avvenire”.

He was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Ancona-Osimo on 1 July 1989 and was ordained by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini in the Cathedral of Milan on 23 September. At that time, he also served as President of the Bishops’ Conference of the Marches region, and was elected President of the CEI Commission for the Family in June 1990.

On 13 March 1991, he became Secretary Gener- al of the CCI and on 8 April of the same year he resigned from his leadership role in the Diocese of Ancona-Osimo, placing his service fully at the disposal of the Italian Church. On 20 April 1995, he was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Genoa, taking up his new position on 28 June and later served as President of the regional Epis- copal Conference.

On 25 May 1995, he was elected Vice-President of the CEI. He was appointed by the Pope to participate as an expert in the Synods of Bishops on the Family (1985), on the Laity (1987) and, as Synod Father, in the Special Assembly for Europe (1991) and in the Synod on Consecrated Life (1994). Among the various positions he held at the Holy See, Tettamanzi served as a consultant to: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Pontifical Council for the Family, the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers, and as a member of the Pontifical Councils for Health Pastoral Care and for Social Communications.

In the Consistory of 21 February 1998, John Paul II created him a Cardinal with the Title of Saints Ambrose and Charles.

On 15 July 2002, he was transferred to Milan, as the successor to Cardinal Archbishop Carlo Maria Martini, and assumed the office on 29 September.

On 28 June 2011, Cardinal Tettamanzi resigned from the office of Archbishop of Milan, while continuing to be present in the life of the Arch- diocese and offering his contribution at the ser- vice of the Church. In this spirit, between July 2012 and July 2013 he acted as Apostolic Admin- istrator of the Diocese of Vigevano. In September 2013, he participated in a work- ing session of the Council of Cardinals – established in 2013 for the reform of the Roman Curia – presenting, according to Pope Francis’ mandate, an in-depth feasibility study on the new Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. The following month, he attended the 14th Assembly of the Syn- od of Bishops on the Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Con- temporary World.

Cardinal Tettamanzi partici- pated in the Conclaves of 2005 and 2013, which elected Benedict XVI and Francis, with whom he had a friendly meet- ing in the Cathedral during the Pontiff’s visit to Milan this year on 25 March.
All religions need to "pray and work together for peace", in order to rebuild "harmony in the many parts of the world lacerated by war" and "terrorism". This appeal to promote, in every field, "just relationships and fraternal solidarity" was expressed by Pope Francis, according to his letter in the weekly of Fransiskus in Indonesia. "The Good Shepherd with his sheep on the mountain" is an image that comes to mind when reading this letter. The event of the Lord's Transfiguration, which took place on Mount Tabor, is a reminder of the importance of dialogue and friendship which follows the world's religions to work together in open- ing up new paths for peace in our human family. Prayer, the Pontiff affirmed in the letter, "inspires and sustains our commitment to peace, as it helps to deepen our mutual re spect as persons, strengthens the bonds of love between us and spurs us to make determined efforts to promote just relationships and fraternal solidarity". "The Pontiff also noted that "in today's world, marked by violence, by terrorism and by growing threats to the earth, our common home, this witness of prayer and shared solici tude conveys a fundamental message to men and women of good will". In fact, as men of faith, he continued, "we believe that lasting peace is truly possible, because we know that nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer, a concept that Francis had previously expressed at the Interreligious Peace Summit in Assisi on 20 September 2016.

With eyes and hearts transfigured

At the Angelus the Holy Father invites silence and contemplation

Pope Francis' letter for 50th interfaith prayer meeting in Japan

New paths for peace

The historic World Day of Prayer for Peace which was held in Assisi on 57 October 1988 was the source of inspiration for a group of Japanese Buddhists to relaunch the idea of an interfaith prayer meeting in their homeland. The 80-year-old Ven. Etai Yamada had been particularly moved by the event in Assisi and, with that same spirit, organized a prayer event a year later. In Au gust 1989, he invited leaders of professed religions to the Land of the Rising Sun for a meeting on Mount Hiei, a sacred place for Buddhists. The date, 6 August, was chosen in commemoration of the tragedy of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

At the conclusion of his letter, the Pontiff renewed the promise of his prayers and invoked "upon all people gathered on Mount Hiei an abundance of divine blessings".
Biblical Association of America

The number of women in the New Testament who are named Mary creates a good deal of confusion over which is which. The mother of Jesus is the most prominent, appearing in Matthew 1:18-21, 26-27, Luke 1:26-38, 45-55, Luke 2:19-35, Acts 1:14, Mary of Magdalene figures in four gospels as a woman of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. She is the woman in the Garden (Mar 15:40), in the tomb (Mar 16:8), in the empty tomb, the seat of Christ (Lk 24:15), and in the upper room (Jn 20:17). Mary of Bethany is one of the women who are called “Daughters of Zion” (Song 1:1). She is mentioned by name in the Synoptics (Jn 12:7-8), where she is named Mary, the mother of James and John (Mar 15:40). She is Mary the mother of Jesus in John 1:46. The name of Mary is not a formal one in the New Testament, as Barbara E. Reid observes in church world world women church world women

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women church world world women church world

Biblical Association of America

In the New Testament distinguishing among women who share her name

Mary of Bethany, a model of listening

In John 11, Mary is introduced to us as the younger daughter of Martha and Lazarus (Jn 11:10). She was a married woman and became known as “Mary the sister of Martha” (Lk 10:39). In John 12:3, she is called “Mary of Bethany,” which she had been here, my brother would have been rescued. Mary’s words echo those of Martha (Lk 10:40), but not in order. In the early church, Mary spoke in a more familiar way than the author’s male disciples. The drama moves a climax to Mary’s tears and of her connection to Jesus. She is moved, and restored, and devoted in spirit (Jn 11:33). Jesus sharing in Mary’s grief makes a powerful statement that even in a community that believes the resurrection and life eternal, death and the pain it causes still are real.

Jesus’ sharing in Mary’s grief makes a powerful statement that even in a community that believes in the resurrection ... and the pain it causes still are real.

Here she is described as a woman of considerable influence. Jesus likens her to the prophetess Deborah (Lk 8:39). Luke characterizes Mary as a woman of faith and love who has both experienced the pain of Jesus’ death and witnessed the empty tomb (Lk 8:35). While the oldest manuscript of the Gospel, P75 renders v. 42 as “There is no greater love than this...” the text of Luke 8:35 is closer to the ancient text, which reads, “For there is no greater love than this, that a woman should give up her life for her children.” This passage speaks to the idea that Mary was a model of listening, someone who was able to empathize with Jesus’ grief and share in his pain. The passage highlights Mary’s role as a listener, someone who was able to comfort Jesus during his times of sorrow.

In the context of the story, Jesus is shown to be the one who provides comfort and support to Mary. He is the one who attends to her needs and listens to her. The story serves as a reminder that Jesus is not just a teacher, but a compassionate friend who is able to understand and empathize with the pain of others.

There are several instances in the New Testament where Jesus expresses his love for Mary. In John 1:27, Jesus says, “Blessed are you, Mary, for you have believed that I would do what you have said.” This statement is often interpreted as a reference to Mary’s faith in Jesus. However, it is also possible to see it as an expression of Jesus’ love for Mary. Jesus is expressing his love for Mary in a very direct and personal way.

In the earlier New Testament, it is often the men who are portrayed as the listeners and the ones who are able to understand and empathize with others. Mary, on the other hand, is portrayed as a model of listening, someone who is able to understand and empathize with the pain of others. The story of Mary at the funeral of her brother Jesus is a powerful example of this.

Mary’s role as a model of listening is important for several reasons. First, it highlights her role as a listener, someone who was able to comfort Jesus during his times of sorrow. Second, it shows that Jesus is not just a teacher, but a compassionate friend who is able to understand and empathize with the pain of others. Finally, it serves as a reminder that Jesus is able to understand and empathize with the pain of others.

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The Pope’s prayer intention for August

Rediscovering art and nature

The summer season can lead us to the rediscovery of the beauty of art and nature through a true experience of prayer and faith. Pope Francis expressed this idea in his video message for August’s prayer intention, which is available on the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, www.popesprayer.net.

“The arts give expression to the beauty of the faith and proclaim the Gospel message of the grandeur of God’s creation”, the Pontiff states in the video. “When we admire a work of art or a marvel of nature, we discover how everything speaks to us of Him and of His love.” As we hear Pope Francis speaking the words in Spanish, images display the perfect harmony between the sounds of nature and the notes of a violin, a guitar and a saxophone played by young musicians. The images accompanying the Pontiff then expand to reflect today’s artists throughout the world — dancers, writers, painters and musicians — representatives of various cultures, races and religions.

Artists, the Pope suggests, are truly the custodians and communicators of that beauty which can also heal the wounds of the human spirit, bringing hope and trust to people experiencing difficult times. It is to them, therefore, that Francis’ prayer intention for the month of August is dedicated, because, he says, the “artists of our time, through their creativity, may help us discover the beauty of creation”.

The video message, like preceding videos, was produced and distributed by La Machi agency in cooperation with the Vatican Television Center, which recorded it.

An appeal from the Pontiff in a message to Knights of Columbus

End the spiral of violence in the Middle East

We must not “be blind to the sufferings of those whom fratricidal violence and religious fanaticism have left homeless or forced to flee their ancient homelands”. Pope Francis entrusted this central task to the Knights of Columbus, who gathered from 13 August in St Louis, Missouri, USA, for their 135th Supreme Convention, which was dedicated to the theme “Convinced of God’s Love and Power”. The Pontiff also asked them to “defend and promote the sanctity of marriage and the dignity and beauty of family life”.

In a message signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, the Pontiff recalls that the Order’s history “demonstrates how a spirit of solidarity and mutual concern inspired by God’s love can grow... into something immensely greater, contributing to the glory of God, the spread of his Kingdom, and the universal mission of the Church”.

The message recalls the Pontiff’s observation that “in our own day a new world war is being fought piecemeal, as an ungodly thirst for power and domination, whether economic, political or military, is leading to untold violence, injustice and suffering in our human family”. Hence his appeal for the rejection of “this mentality and to combat the growth of a global culture of indifference that discards the least of our brothers and sisters.”

In full fidelity to the vision of their Founder, the Servant of God Michael McGivney, the Knights are thus called “to respond generously to this challenge, first and foremost by recommending themselves to their proper lay vocation of striving for the sanctification of the world from within, by carrying out their daily responsibilities in the spirit of the Gospel and revealing Christ to others through the witness of their lives. In this way, the message continues, “they will help to lay solid foundations for the renewal of society as a whole, by working to change hearts and build peace”.

The text expresses the Pope’s appreciation for the “unremittent efforts of the Knights of Columbus to defend and promote the sanctity of marriage and the dignity and beauty of family life”, because “it is in the family that we come to see that the larger world is also our home, in which we are called to live together, to learn closeness, care and respect for others, and to value the God-given gifts that each of us has to offer for the good of all”. The strengthening of these “sound family values”, the message continues, along with “a renewed vision of our responsibility for the moral health of the greater community will contribute to overcoming the polarization and general coarsening of the fabric that is an increasing source of concern even in the most prosperous of our societies”.

The missive also expresses Francis’ continuing gratitude for the Order’s support of “our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East in their witness of fidelity to the Lord, often borne at great personal cost”. No one, he says, “can be blind” to their suffering. In this regard, the message notes the importance of “the Knights of Columbus Refugee Relief Fund” which he noted as “an eloquent sign” of their “firm commitment to solidarity and communion with our fellow Christians”. In this regard, Cardinal Parolin writes, “the Holy Father once more asks the Knights and their families to pray for those in need, for the conversion of hearts, and for an end to the spiral of violence, hatred and injustice in that region”.

Holy See voices its concern

A negotiated solution for Venezuela

The Secretariat of State issued a communiqué on 4 August with regard to the escalating crisis in Venezuela. The following is a translation of the text:

The Holy See reiterates its profound concern regarding the radicalization and worsening of the crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with the increase in deaths, injuries and detentions. The Holy Father, directly and through the Secretariat of State, is closely following the situation and its humanitarian, social, political, economic, and also spiritual implications, and assures his constant prayer for the country and all Venezuelans, while inviting the faithful throughout the world to pray fervently for this purpose.

At the same time, the Holy See asks all political actors, and in particular the government, to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for the existing Constitution; to avoid or suspend ongoing initiatives that would create a new Constituent which, rather than fostering reconciliation and peace, foment a climate of tension and confrontation and put the future at stake; and to create the conditions for a solution negotiated in line with the indications expressed in the letter from the Secretariat of State dated 1 December 2016, taking into account the severe suffering of the population due to the difficulty of obtaining food and medicine, and to the lack of security.

Finally, the Holy See addresses a heart-felt appeal that the entire society not avoid any forms of violence, inviting the security forces in particular to abstain from the excessive and disproportionate use of force.

Aid for Iraq from the K of C

The Knights of Columbus (K of C) are collecting funds to rebuild the Iraqi city of Kirkuk, which was, in 2014, the so-called Islamic State’s stronghold. The Order has pledged two million dollars for the project in the town from which, in 2017, the K of C, who recently gathered in St Louis for their annual Supreme Convention, will also help Christian families return to their homes.
Interview with the Superior General of the Society of Jesus

The Jesuit mission

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

For Fr Arturo Sosa, who nine months ago became the first non-European Superior General of the Jesuits in his first time to experience the Feast of Saint Ignatius at the helm of the Society and to celebrate in the Roman Church of the Gesù, where the Founder’s body is venerated. This celebration of the Saint, who died on 31 July 1556, prompted an interview by L’Osservatore Romano on the beginning of Fr Sosa’s term as General. Shortly after midday on 28 July, a hot midsummer’s day, the meeting with the Superior General took place just steps away from Saint Peter’s Square: on the fourth floor of the Society’s General Curia, in the room where he works when in Rome, at a round table empty as the walls are bare, and which is evidently used for frequent meetings. It is thanks to these meetings and to his many travels that the successor of the Saint of Loyola is able to govern the Society of Jesus, which is divided into 85 provinces within six provincial conferences. In nine months the Venezuelan General, elected last 14 October, has already participated in four of these meetings, but the number of countries he has visited is much higher: India, Peru, Spain, Germany, Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Indonesia, Cambodia and, soon, Belgium. His days fly by, packed with meetings and commitments, rigorously scheduled and opened each morning with at least two hours of prayer before Mass, which he celebrates at 7:00 - “but if you want to kill a religious, just postpone his lunch and rest period”, he quips, as he accompanies his guest to the elevator after nearly an hour of conversation - extended and peaceful, but inevitably opened by a question on the current dramatic state of his country.

Let us be won over by the Lord Jesus and, led by Him, place ourselves and, by Him, place ourselves under the protection of the Saint, who died on 31 July 1556. Consequently, the Pope, the Cardinal Secretary of State and the Holy See in many ways. But I would like to emphasize one fact: the 10 July referendum was the most important civil manifestation in the entire history of Venezuela because seven and a half million people participated. That is half the electorate. The course of political debate would be the only way to stop the violence and to make policies that serve the tremendous needs of the people.

More than nine months have passed since your election. How have you spent them?

With great peace, with a lot of work, and with the need to learn many new things quickly. First of all with spiritual peace because I am filling a role that I did not seek and that I did not even imagine could fall to me: I received it from my brothers in the General Congregation, but I understand it and experience it as something that comes from the Lord Jesus, whom I chose as my companion over half a century ago. There is truly a great deal of work and it is not easy to get to know, from my new position, a body as rich and varied as the Society of Jesus and my companions in the mission. All this is at high speed, because the decisions cannot wait.

What is the mission of the Society of Jesus?

Today the Society must find a way to put reconciliation into practice each day. On three levels: with God, with human beings, with the environment. We are collaborators in the mission of Christ, the raison d’être of the Church we belong to. It is precisely the experience of God that restores interior freedom to us and leads us to turn our gaze to those who are crucified in this world, to better understand the causes of injustice and contribute to developing alternative models to the system that today produces poverty, inequality, exclusion and places at risk life on the planet.

What would Ignatius of Loyola do today?

This is the question I ask myself every day, along with all Jesuits. First of all, along with 15 general advisors that I regularly meet with every week one by one, when we are not hindered by our respective travels, while on Tuesdays and Thursdays the entire council meets. And three times a year, in January, June and September, for a whole week we have an extended meeting with the presidents of the six provincial conferences and the four secretaries, 24 people in all.

What is the aim of this very complex and demanding method of governance, which I imagine is nonetheless very useful for decisions that the General Father has to make.

The intent is indeed that of understanding the choices to make, because for the Society of Jesus, and thus for all Jesuits, it is fundamental and necessary to be truly and faithfully to its vocation and mission. Looking to Saint Ignatius, we must constantly make the journey of returning to our original sources. This is what the Second Vatican Council called for and this decision was the salvation for religious life, which in the Catholic view is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Are there criteria for understanding how to achieve this faithfulness?

We look to the experience of the first Jesuits, when Ignatius and his companions were in Venice for a journey to the Holy Land. The project became impossible and, decisively for the Society, it evolved into the journey to Rome, as the sources say and as recalled last autumn by our 36th General Congregation which gathered to elect the Father General. This is the Venice model: the union of mind and heart, the practice of an austere life, affective and effective closeness to the poor, common discernment and being available to the needs of the whole Church identified and expressed by the Pope.

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Slaughter of Christians in Nigeria

**Attack on Saint Philip’s Church in Ozubulu**

Gunmen attacked a Catholic Church in the town of Ozubulu in southeastern Nigeria, during Mass on Sunday, 6 August, killing at least 11 and injuring nearly 20. A telegram signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin was dispatched to Bishop Hilary Paul Oluoji Okeke of Nnewi on behalf of the Holy Father, expressing his condolences and spiritual closeness to the families of the victims.

"Deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life and injury following the violent attack in Saint Philip's Catholic Church, Ozubulu", the telegram reads, "His Holiness Pope Francis extends heartfelt condolences to you and to all the faithful of the Diocese of Nnewi, in particular the families of the deceased and all those affected by this tragedy". Pope Francis also invoked "the divine blessings of consolation and strength" upon all those in the Diocese.

In the aftermath of the attack, Nigerian police have reported that the weekend morning shootings may have been related to drug trafficking and a feud between local rivals. Investigations have been launched to bring the perpetrators to justice. While Islamist militants have been known to carry out attacks on churches in other parts of the country, such violence in the predominantly Christian southeast is rare. Nigeria’s president condemned "an appalling crime against humanity and unspeakable sacrilege".

A law against social boycotting in Maharashtra

**A step in the right direction**

The Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC) has welcomed a new law banning “social boycotts” aimed at ostracizing people over their perceived difference from others within a community. After receiving presidential approval on norms passed in 2016, Maharashtra has become the first state in India to adopt a law that seeks to enforce strict rules of coexistence between castes. The move is significant because it prohibits abuses by informal village councils known as Khap panchayats, unelected village councils comprised of men of a particular clan or caste. The new legislation is aimed at abolishing practices of “misdeeds” such as marrying between castes or dressing immodestly; others have been branded as “witches” and sentenced to a punishment of rape or killing.

Social boycotts, Dr George said, also “have serious economic implications, since our fellow Christians make up the majority of poor and day labourers who are denied jobs, food rations and access to village wells”. This law, he added, “will give great dignity to Dalit and tribal Christians who are often forced to live a migrant life on the margins of society".

Pope Francis’ greetings for Asian Youth Day

**Respond with courage to God’s call**

In a message signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, the Pope’s best wishes were conveyed to participants in Asian Youth Day which took place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 2-6 August. The following is the English text of the message.

His Holiness Pope Francis sends warm greetings and prayerful best wishes to all gathered in Yogyakarta for the seventh Asian Youth Day. He prays that young people from across Asia will listen ever more attentively to God’s call and respond with faith and courage to their vocation. As they prepare for the next World Youth Day, His Holiness invites them to look to the Mother of the Lord as a model of missionary discipleship, to speak to her as they would to a mother, and to trust always in her loving intercession. In this way, as they seek to follow Christ more closely, they too, like the young woman of Nazareth, can truly “improve the world and leave an imprint that makes a mark on history” (Message to Young People, 21 March 2017). Entrusting all the youth and their families to the maternal intercession of Our Lady, Pope Francis gladly imparts his Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of peace and joy in the Lord.
Explosive beginning and silent end

by Carl E. Sagan (1934-1996) pioneered by meteorologist Edward Norton Lorenz (1917-2008) to explain the difficulty of meteorological predictions, since the flap- ping of the wings of a butter- fly in the Pacific can give rise to a cascade of events that lead to the formation of a hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico.

Thus, there would be relatively little time remaining for terrestrial life forms to emigrate to a so-called exoplanet with the characteristics to sustain life in its known form. Until now, fewer than ten extrasolar planets or natural satel- lites with an index of sufficient adaptability have been identified, but many more could orbit one of the at least 200 billion stars of the Milky Way. Nevertheless, as the Lucine scholar de Bernardis would point out, even if terrestrial life is not extinguished during a journey that could last decades, if not centuries, the speed permitted by current technology, our galaxy, being in a rotational motion itself, in approx- imately six billion years, could collide with our gigantic cousin An- dromeda, in a clash with unfore- seeable consequences.

Hoping against the occurrence of such a cataclysm, Hubble’s law would not in any case, allow an escape. The American astrophys- cist Edwin P. Hubble (1889-1953), who lent his name to the largest telescope ever put in orbit, ob- served that the farther galaxies were from our vantage point, the more rapidly they were moving away. His investigation was based on the Doppler Effect – first de- scribed by Austrian physicist Christian A. Doppler (1803-1853) – which everyone knows: when you hear an ambulance pass, you note the shift in frequency of red light is lower than that of violet, which represents the wave length of the light arriv- ing from stars, implies that the universe, after originating from the explosion of an extremely dense, incredibly hot nucleus, is constantly expanding, becoming profoundly emptier and glacially colder in an irreversible process which, over billions and billions of years, will lead to its extinction in a plaus- ible thermal death. Thus it would be the tri- umph of the second prin- ciple of thermodynamics which provides that the entropy (the degree of disorder) of a system inevit- ably increases when it is transformed. It should not be too shocking that one of the mythical fathers of thermodynamics, Ludwig Boltzmann (1844-1906), conscious, perhaps more than anyone, of the inevit- ability of the victory of chaos, committed suicide by hanging while on holiday in the pictur- esque town of Duino near Trieste, Italy, and that the tombstone at his grave in Vienna’s Central Cemetery bears only the inscrip- tion of the laconically merciless formula he discovered: $S \propto k \log \Omega$ (entropy, $S$ is the product of the logarithm of a system’s possible configurations, $\log \Omega$, multiplied by the Boltzmann constant $k$).

But it should be rather surpri- sing that the man who formulated the theory of an explosive begin- ning of the universe which thrust us into an irreversible expansion was a priest from the Wallonian province – a Jesuit priest whose Jesuit mentor, the Barnabite Denza (1834-1894), the Barnabite priest whose Jesuit mentor, the brilliant astrophysicist Sir Fred Hoyle (1915-2001) increased the reputation of its originator, who would become first a member (1936) and later President (1956) of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. The life and work of the professor of the Catholic University of Leuven – who confided in 1933 to “New York Times Magazine” that he had found two ways to the truth (faith and science) and followed both – were proof of the sound- ness of the 1893 Encyclical Providentissimus Deus: “Nulla quidem theologam inter et physicam nec dis- sensio interessat” (“There can never, indeed, be any real discrep- ancy between the theologian and the physicist”)

Maria Rosati Buffetti – in La Specola Vaticana. Racconto fotogra- fico d’una straordinaria avventu- ra scientifica scientifica (The Specola Vaticana. A Photograph Account of an Extraordinary Scientific Adventure) (Rome, Gangemi Editore, 2016) – recalls that it was Leo XIII who re- launched the work of the well known observatory, following the recommendations of Francesco Denza (1854-1894), the Barnabite priest whose Jesuit mentor, the brilliant astrophysicist Angelo Sec- chi (1858-1887), had the bolder idea of classifying stars according to the spectral analysis of their light, thereby opening the door to observation of the so-called red- shift. All these priests, enthusiasts of the observation of celestial bod- ies, perfectly embody the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881- 1955) in the fifth chapter on the Christian perfection of human strength in the first part dedicated to the divination of human activ- ities of its origin Divine Eros de spiritualitate [The Divine Milieu: Eros says on Spirituality]: “By virtue of creation and even more so, of the incarnation, nothing is profane, here on the Earth, to those who know how to see”. The stars, one would be tempted to add.

Extraordinary Scientific Adventure

From the Big Bang to infinite expansion

Robert Hooke (1635-1703) et al. that the universe was expanding as early as the 1630s, well before the formulation of the Big Bang theory. Hooke’s proposal was based on the observation of the expanding universe, as evidenced by the redshift of light from distant galaxies. This redshift is a result of the universe expanding, and it is a fundamental prediction of the Big Bang model. The discovery of the redshift was a key piece of evidence that supported the idea of an expanding universe.

The Big Bang theory is supported by many other observations as well. For example, the cosmic microwave background radiation, which is the remnant heat from the early universe, is consistent with the predictions of the Big Bang model. Additionally, the abundance of light elements in the universe, such as hydrogen and helium, is also consistent with the Big Bang model.

In conclusion, the Big Bang theory provides a comprehensive and self-consistent description of the history of the universe, from its origin to its current state. It is supported by a wide range of observational evidence, and it remains the leading cosmological model. However, it is important to remember that science is always evolving, and the Big Bang theory will continue to be tested and refined as new observations are made.
A few steps from Pope Francis’ residence

Casa Santa Marta: a name and a place that from the first day of Pope Francis’ Pontificate have become known throughout the world. Few, however, know that this place name, together with the square on which the building stands, is linked to a corner of the Vatican which has since disappeared.

In fact, just a few metres from the Pope’s current residence behind Saint Peter’s Basilica, where the Palazzo of the Tribunals now stands, the Church of Santa Marta (Saint Martha) was built in the first half of the 16th century. A hospital and cemetery were annexed to the church for use by the officials and personnel of the apostolic palaces. These belonged to the Confraternity of the Serventi, those servants who, just as Saint Martha – sister of Mary and of Lazarus – served Jesus, were at the service of Pope Paul III.

The church, which went through various restorations, was completed in the 18th century and contained exquisite sculptures. With the dissolution of the Confraternity, the Santa Marta complex was entrusted to the Congregation of the Discalced Trinitarians in 1726, and the hospital became the new site of the Vatican Seminary, to which it was joined since the end of the 19th century, was planned to flank the 16th century church. Seminary building, adjoined since the late 16th century, was thus significant part of the 18th century urban fabric – as the result of the single project of the architect Valeri during the pontificate of Pius XI (1922-39) – that is, dimensionally reduced to just one part of the central nave, with the exclusion of the transept perhaps the very choice of restoring the sacred building to the larger proportions of the early medieval basilica – with the reinstatement of the apse and the transept (and a portion of the lateral aisles) – prompted the decision to demolish the Church of Santa Marta in order to make way for the road.

So where was Santa Marta?

In 1930 the Church of Santa Marta, like much of the area behind the Michelangelo’s Tribunal, was included in the vast remodeling project undertaken by Pius XI (1922-39) following the foundation of Vatican City State (1929). From the drawings by the architects Giovannoni (1931-33) and Serventi, a road that, in Momo’s decision which, today, appears to have been inevitable, was spared. Incredibly though, contrary to what was planned in one of Momo’s projects, the 18th century church annexed to it was not preserved; its surviving artwork was transferred in part to the Vatican Pinacoteca, and in part to the chapel of the new Governatorate building, which was given the same name as the church that no longer stands.

The surviving buildings of the Basilica of Saint Stephen, restored by Gustavo Giovannoni (1931-33), and the Vatican seminary – used since the 18th century church.

The church that once stood in the Vatican

ILARIA DEL SERE

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The surviving buildings of the Basilica of Saint Stephen, restored by Gustavo Giovannoni (1931-33), and the Vatican seminary – used since the 18th century church.

Since the Saint Stephen structure still appears in its 18th century facies – that is, dimensionally reduced to just one part of the central nave, with the exclusion of the transept perhaps the very choice of restoring the sacred building to the larger proportions of the early medieval basilica – with the reinstatement of the apse and the transept (and a portion of the lateral aisles) – prompted the decision to demolish the Church of Santa Marta in order to make way for the road.

The name ‘Santa Marta’ which today still indicates the same square and which was reclaimed by Leo XIII for the building of the Pontificium Hospitium Sanctae Marthae (1892) that overlooks it (today the heart of the present Domus Sanctae Marthae, rebuilt in the 1990s by John Paul II) – is thus deeply rooted in the centuries-old history of a charitable structure and of a valuable bygone architectural episode.