Dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, development, peace

Building Europe together brick by brick

Dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, development and peace: these are the five "bricks" that Pope Francis invited Christians to use in building up Europe, beginning on the solid foundations of person and community. The Pontiff offered these thoughts in a discourse he delivered on Saturday afternoon, 28 October, to participants in a conference entitled "(Re)Thinking Europe", promoted by the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE).

At the conclusion of the conference in the Synod Hall, Francis emphasized his vision of the European continent in light of the contributions that Christians can offer "in surmounting present crises and facing challenges yet to come". This contribution, according to Francis, is rooted in the concept of man considered in the Rule of Saint Benedict of Norcia, who "was not concerned about social status, riches or power" but instead "the nature common to every human being", and "the sense of the person created in the image of God".

This is because, the Pope explained, "the first and perhaps the greatest contribution that Christians can make to today's Europe is to remind her that she is not a mass of statistics or institutions, but is made up of people". And since "to be a person connects us with others", he added, the second fundamental contribution is to "recovery the sense of belonging to a community" as the "antidote to the forms of individualism typical of our times". Thus, he emphasized that "the family, as the primordial community, remains the most fundamental place", where "diversity is valued and at the same time brought into unity".

Beginning from the "foundations" of person and community, the Pontiff pointed to five "bricks" that contribute to building "the structure" that is Europe, which include "dialogue" that is "candid and constructive"; "inclusion" in which "differences are valued and viewed as a shared source of enrichment"; "solidarity", which is "the lifeblood of a mature community"; "development" fostered for "individual man, each human group, and humanity as a whole"; and "peace", which requires "love for the truth", "the pursuit of justice" and "creativity".

To representatives of the Church of Scotland

On Thursday, 2 November, the Feast of All Souls, Pope Francis celebrated Mass for the deceased faithful. During Mass at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy, he offered prayers in particular for all "the victims of war and of violence". Afterwards, he visited the Ardeatine Caves, where he prayed for the victims of the wartime massacre of 24 March 1944.

On Wednesday, 1 November, the Solemnity of All Saints, as he looked ahead to the following day's visit, he asked the faithful who had gathered for the Angelus in Saint Peter's Square to join him in prayer at those "two moments of remembrance and suffrage for the victims of war and violence. Wars produce nothing but cemeteries and death".
VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 26 October

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
Archbishop Alain Paul Lebeaupin, titular Archbishop of Vico Equense, Apostolic Nuncio in the European Union
Bishop Paul Hinder, OFM Cap., titular Bishop of Macon, Vicar Apostolic of Southern Arabia

Friday, 27 October

His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, with his wife and entourage
Cardinal Donald William Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, USA
Cardinal Agostino Vallini, former Vicar General of His Holiness for the Diocese of Rome
Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life

Saturday, 28 October

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, PSS, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops
Msgr Maurizio Bravi, Holy See Permanent Observer to the World Tourism Organization
Msgr Guido Marini Master of Papal Liturgical Celebrations
Hon. Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice President of the European Commission
Hon. Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
Hon. Ms Mairead McGuinness, First Vice President of the European Parliament

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Fr Paulo Celso Dias do Nascimento from the clergy of the Archdiocese of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, as Auxiliary Bishop of the same Archdiocese, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Aguinto. Until now he has been Archbishop of Toluca, Mexico, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Lagara. Until now he has been Bishop of Ciudad Altamirano, Mexico (28 Oct.).

Bishop Martínez Miranda, 65, was born in Palos Altos, Mexico. He was ordained a priest on 21 February 1982. He was ordained a bishop of the Western United States for Assyrians on 21 October 1984.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Paul Tighe, titular Bishop of Drivastum, as Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Culture. Until now he has served as Adjunct Secretary of the same Council (28 Oct.).

NECROLOGY

Bishop Joseph Mahn Ern, Bishop emeritus of Pathein, Myanmar, at age 92 (25 Oct.)
Bishop Cornelius Kipng’eno Arap Korir of Eldoret, Kenya, at age 67 (30 Oct.)

Catholic nun killed in Zimbabwe

After days of searching, the body of Sister Plaxedes Kamundiya was found floating in the basin of a dam in Mutemwa, Zimbabwe last week.

The 49-year-old religious had been visiting from Hartmann House, Saint George’s College in Harare, Zimbabwe, where she was a highly respected teacher.

On Sunday, 22 October, Sister Plaxedes was found murdered in a rural area near the village of Chouriri, and the young man has confessed to the murder.

Sister Plaxedes is the ninth pastoral worker to be murdered while carrying out duties in Africa this year.

Pope Francis with the Archbishop of Canterbury

On Friday morning, 27 October, the Holy Father received in audience His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, with his wife and entourage.

Following the encounter and an exchange of gifts, the Holy Father invited everyone to continue their conversation at lunch in the Santa Marta residence.

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God passes through

At the Angelus on the Solemnity of All Saints

Saints are not "supermen" nor "perfect models", Pope Francis said, but are everyday people who have "welcomed the light of God in their heart and have passed it on to the world, each according to his or her own "hue". The Pontiff shared this message with the faithful who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Angelus on Wednesday, 1 November, the Solemnity of All Saints. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he offered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning and happy Feast Day!

The Solemnity of All Saints is "our" celebration, not because we are good, but because the sanctity of God has touched our life. The Saints are not perfect models, but people through whom God has passed. We can compare them to the Church windows which allow light to enter in different shades of colour. The saints are our brothers and sisters who have welcomed the light of God in their heart and have passed it on to the world, each according to his or her own "hue". But they were all transparent; they fought to remove the stains and the darkness of sin, so as to enable the gentle light of God to pass through. This is life's purpose: to enable God's light to pass through, it is the purpose of our life too.

Indeed, today in the Gospel, Jesus addresses his followers, all of us, telling us we are "Blessed" (Mt 5:3). It is the word with which he begins his sermon, which is the "Gospel". Good News, because it is the path of happiness. Those who are with Jesus are blessed; they are happy. Happiness is not in having something or in becoming someone, no. True happiness is being with the Lord and living for love. Do you believe this? True happiness is not in having something or in becoming someone; true happiness is being with the Lord and living for love. Do you believe this? We must go forth, believing in this. So, the ingredients for a happy life are called Beatitudes: blessed are the simple, the humble who make room for God, who are able to weep for others and for their own mistakes, who remain meek, fight for justice, are merciful to all, safeguard purity of heart, always work for peace and abide in joy, do not hate and, even when suffering, respond to evil with good.

These are the Beatitudes. They do not require conspicuous gestures; they are not for supermen, but for those who live the trials and toils of every day, for us. This is how the reality help God to move the world forward. And there are so many of them today! There are so many of them! Thanks to these unknown brothers and sisters who help God to move the world forward, who live among us, let us salute them all with a nice round of applause!

First of all — the first Beatitude says — they are "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3). What does this mean? That they do not live for success, power and money; they know that those who set aside treasure for themselves are not rich toward God (cf. Lk 12:21). Rather, they believe that the Lord is life's treasure, and love for neighbour the only true prayer our deceased, so they are forever joyful in the Lord. Let us remember our loved ones with gratitude and let us come forth from Courbevoie, France, and Derry, Ireland. I greet the faithful from Terrasini, the young confirmands from Modena, the "Impugnata serse" Association.

I address a special greeting to those participating in the Corsa dei Santi (Race of Saints), promoted by the Don Bosco in the World Foundation to offer a dimension of popular celebration to the religious celebration of All Saints. Thank you for your fine initiative and for your presence!

Tomorrow afternoon I will go to the American Cemetery in Nettuno and then to the Ardeatine Caves: I ask you to accompany me with your prayers in these two moments of remembrance and suffrage for the victims of war and violence. Wars produce nothing but cemeteries and death: this is why I wished to offer this gesture at a time when it seems our humankind has not learned the lesson or has not wanted to learn it.

I wish everyone a happy celebration in the spiritual company of the Saints. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! Arrivederci!
The mission is not credible without unity

Audience with Moderator and Delegation of the Church of Scotland

On Thursday morning, 26 October, in the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father received in audience the Right Rev. Derek Browning, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Moderator then introduced his Delegation, comprising two leaders each delivered an address. The following is the English text of Pope Francis’ discourse, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Moderator, Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I offer you a warm welcome and I thank the Moderator for his decades of work, and also for our meeting [private, which took place previously]. Your presence affords us the privilege to offer a warm greeting to all the members of the Church of Scotland.

Our meeting takes place during the fifth Assembly of the Reformation, which I joined in commemorating last year in Lund. Let us thank the Lord for the great gift of being able to live this year in true fraternity, no longer as adversaries, after long centuries of estrangement and conflict. This has been possible, with God’s grace, by the ecumenical journey that has enabled us to grow in mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. The mutual purification of memory is one of the most significant fruits of this common journey. The past cannot be changed, yet today we at last see one another as God sees us. For we are first and foremost his children, reborn in Christ through the one Baptism, and therefore brothers and sisters. For so long we regarded one another from afar, all too humanly, harbouring suspicion, dwelling on differences and errors, and with hearts intent on recrimination for past wrongs.

In the spirit of the Gospel, we are now pursuing the path of humble charity that leads to overcoming division and healing wounds. We have begun a dialogue of communion, employing language befitting those who belong to God. Such language is essential to evangelization, for how can we proclaim the God of love if we do not love one another (cf. 1 Jn 4:8)? It was in Scotland itself, in Edinburgh, more than a hundred years ago, Christian missionaries had the courage to set forth once again with renewed vigour the way to those Christians who in our day face grave trials and sufferings, enduring persecution for the name of Jesus. So many of them bear a heavy cross as they profess their faith, many to the point of martyrdom. Their witness impels us to persevere, with love and courage, to the end. Our dialogue directed to full unity, our witness to our shared service, our commitment to pray for one another and to overcome the wounds of the past have also a response that is owed to them, within this great “we” of faith.

It is my prayerful hope that the journey to visible unity will continue daily and bear rich fruits for the future, as it has in the recent past. The Catholic Church, especially through the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, has engaged for decades in a fundamental study and work to open the way to those Christians who in our day face grave trials and sufferings, enduring persecution for the name of Jesus, the Lord for the great gift of being able to live this year in true fraternity, no longer as adversaries, after long centuries of estrangement and conflict. This has been possible, with God’s grace, by the ecumenical journey that has enabled us to grow in mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. The mutual purification of memory is one of the most significant fruits of this common journey. The past cannot be changed, yet today we at last see one another as God sees us. For we are first and foremost his children, reborn in Christ through the one Baptism, and therefore brothers and sisters. For so long we regarded one another from afar, all too humanly, harbouring suspicion, dwelling on differences and errors, and with hearts intent on recrimination for past wrongs.

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Among the blessings of this year of Commemoration is the fact that for the first time Lutherans and Catholics have seen the Reformation from an ecumenical perspective. This has allowed new insight into the events of the sixteenth century which led to our separation. We recognize that while the past cannot be changed, its influence upon us today can be transformed to become a stimulus for growing communion, and a sign of hope for the world to overcome division and fragmentation. Again, it has become clear that what we have in common is far more than that which still divides us.

We rejoice that the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, solemnly signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church in 1999, has also been signed by the World Methodist Council in 2006 and, during this Commemoration Year of the Reformation, by the World Communion of Reformed Churches. On this very day it is being welcomed and received by the Anglican Communion at a solemn ceremony in Westminster Abbey. On this basis our Christian communions can build an ever closer bond of spiritual consensus and common witness in the service of the Gospel.

We acknowledge with appreciation the many events of common prayer and worship that Lutherans and Catholics have held together with their ecumenical partners in different parts of the world, as well as the theological encounters and the significant publications that have given substance to this year of Commemoration.

Looking forward, we commit ourselves to continue our joint journey, guided by God’s Spirit, towards the greater unity according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ. With God’s help we intend to discern in a prayerful manner our understanding on Church, Eucharist and Ministry, seeking a substantial consensus in prayerful manner our understanding on Church, Eucharist and Ministry, seeking a substantial consensus of the sixteenth century which led to our separation. This has allowed new insight into the events of the sixteenth century which led to our separation. We recognize that while the past cannot be changed, its influence upon us today can be transformed to become a stimulus for growing communion, and a sign of hope for the world to overcome division and fragmentation. Again, it has become clear that what we have in common is far more than that which still divides us.

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To 3rd Conference on International Humanitarian Law

Assisting populations victimized by warfare

Pope Francis denounced the "omissions and hesitations" that characterize some international instruments designed to protect civilian populations victimized by warfare. He offered this in an address on Saturday, 28 October, to participants in the 3rd Conference on International Humanitarian Law taking place in Rome through 29 October. The Holy Father received the group in audience in the Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's discourse, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you and I thank the Honourable Ministers of the Italian Government for their words of introduction to this meeting. I cordially greet the Authorities present and all those participating in the 3rd Conference on International Humanitarian Law, which has the theme "The Protection of Civilian Populations in Warfare — The Role of Humanitarian Organizations and Civil Society".

This theme is particularly significant on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the two Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions regarding the protection of victims of armed conflicts. Convinced of the essentially negative character of war and that man's most worthy aspiration is its abolition, the Holy See ratified these two Accords with the aim of encouraging "a humanization of the effects of armed conflicts." It did not fail to appreciate in particular the dispositions relative to the protection of the civilian population and of the goods indispensable to its survival, with respect to health care and religious personnel, and to the protection of cultural and religious assets, as well as the natural environment, our common home. Nevertheless, the Holy See, conscious of the omissions and hesitations that more specifically characterize the Second Additional Protocol, namely, that regarding the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts, continues to consider these Instruments an appropriate way to further develop international humanitarian law, able to take into account the characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts and of the physical, moral and spiritual suffering deriving from them.

Indeed, despite the laudable effort to reduce, through the codification of humanitarian law, the negative consequences of hostilities on the civilian population, there is too often, from various theatres of war, proof of criminal atrocities, of intentional disrespect for people and their dignity, perpetrated without any regard for the most elementary consideration of humanity. Images of lifeless people, of mutilated or decapitated bodies of our tortured brothers and sisters, crucified, burned alive, offenses even against their remains, challenge humanity's conscience. Furthermore, news continues to arrive of ancient cities, with their millennia-old cultural treasures, reduced to piles of rubble, of hospitals and schools deliberately attacked and destroyed, thus depriving entire generations of their right to life, to health and education. How many churches and other places of worship have been the object of targeted aggression, often during liturgical celebrations, with countless victims among the faithful and ministers gathered in prayer, in violation of the fundamental right to freedom of religion! At times, unfortunately, the dissemination of this news may have a certain anestheticizing saturation effect and even relativize the gravity of the problems, such that it becomes more difficult to feel compassion, to open the conscience to a sense of solidarity.

To bring this about would require a conversion of hearts, an opening to God and to neighbour which persuades people to overcome indifference and to live in solidarity, as a moral virtue and a social attitude, inspiring a commitment in favour of suffering humanity.

At the same time, however, it is encouraging to see the numerous demonstrations of solidarity and charity which are not lacking in times of war. There are many people, many charitable groups and non-governmental organizations, both within and outside the Church, whose members brave difficulties and dangers in order to care for the injured and sick, and to bury the dead, to bring food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, to visit detainees. Truly, assistance to populations victimized by warfare is like performing various works of mercy, on which we will be judged at the end of life. May the humanitarian organizations always act in conformity with the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Indeed, I hope that these principles, that constitute the core of humanitarian law, may influence the conscience of the combatants and of the humanitarian workers so as to be put into practice. Thereafter, wherever humanitarian law then meets with hesitation and omissions, may the individual conscience be able to recognize the moral duty to respect and protect the dignity of the human being in every circumstance, especially in situations in which it is most threatened. In order for this to be possible, I would like to recall the importance of prayer and that of assuring, along with technical and juridical formation, the spiritual accompaniment of the combatants and the humanitarian workers.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus words — "Whatsoever you did to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (cf. Mt 25:40) — are addressed to all those — and more than a few of you are among them — who have placed their own lives in danger in order to save that of another or to soothe the suffering of populations stricken by armed conflicts. I entrust you to the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Queen of Peace, and, as I ask that you please pray for me too, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you and to your families.

Thank you!

2. Cf. ibid.
5. Cf. ibid., 7.
The quote seems incomplete and not coherent. It appears to be a mix of different sentences and topics. It includes references to the European Union, politics, and religion, but the overall coherence is lacking. The text seems to be discussing the role of politics in society, the importance of dialogue, and the challenges faced by the European Union.

**Dialogue, inclusion, solidarity, development, peace**

Building Europe together brick by brick

**Politics are essential for reviving a "Christian" circle that starts from investments that favour the family and education, enable the harmonious and peaceful development of the entire civil community.**

**Room for solidarity**

Sitting for an inclusive community means making room for solidarity. To be a community is in fact essentially opposing one another, learning to be a community, and making extraordinary sacrifices to do so. But while we still remain in this world, the need remains in order to be a community, to be a part of a larger society.
deficit. To become once more a solidary community means rediscovering the value of our own past, in order to enrich the present and to pass on a future of hope to future generations. Instead, many young people are lost, with roots or prospects, they are uprooted, "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph 4:14). At times they are even "held captive" by possessive adults who struggle to carry out their own responsibilities. It is a grave responsibility to provide an education, not only by offering technical and scientific knowledge, but above all by working "to promote the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human." This demands the involvement of society as a whole. Education is a shared duty that requires the active and combined participation of parents, schools, universities, religious and civil institutions. Without education, culture does not develop and the life of the community dries up.

A source of development

A Europe that rediscovers itself as a community will surely be a source of development for herself and for the whole world. Development must be understood in the terms laid down by Blessed Paul VI: "To be authentic, it must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man. As an eminent specialist on this question has rightly said: 'We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is man – each individual man, each human group, and humanity as a whole.'"

Work certainly contributes to human development; it is an essential factor in the dignity and growth of the person. Employment and suitable working conditions are needed. The last century provided many eloquent examples of Christian entrepreneurs who understood that the success of their ventures depended above all on the ability to provide employment opportunities and dignified working conditions. There is a need to recover the spirit of those venturers, for they are also the best antidote to the imbalances caused by a "wallowing globalization," a "spherical globalization which, more and more, is attentive to profits than people, has created significant pockets of poverty, unemployment, exploitation and social unease.

It would also be helpful to recover a sense of the need to provide concrete opportunities for employment, especially to young people. Today, many young people tend to shy away from certain jobs because they seem physically demanding and unprofitable, forgetting how indispensable they are for human development. Where would we be without the workers who produce the clothes we wear and build the houses in which we live? Many essential professions are now looked down upon. Yet they are essential for society and, above all, for the satisfaction that they give to those who realize that they are being useful in themselves and for others, thanks to their daily work. Governments also have the duty to create economic conditions that promote a healthy entrepreneurship and appropriate levels of employment. Politicians are especially responsible for realizing a virtuous circle that, starting from investments that favour the family and education, enable the harmonious and peaceful development of the entire civil community. A promise of peace

Finally, the commitment of Christians in Europe must represent a promise of peace. This was the central concern that inspired the signatories of the Treaties of Rome. After two World Wars and atrocious acts of violence perpetrated by peoples against peoples, the time had come to affirm the right to peace. For it is a right. Yet today we continue to see how fragile is that peace, and how particular and national agendas risk thwarting the courage and dreams of the founders of Europe.

Being peacemakers (cf. Mt 5:9), however, does not mean simply striving to avoid internal oppression; it means working to end the bloodshed and conflicts throughout our world, or relieving those who suffer. To be workers for peace entails promoting a culture of peace. This requires the pursuit of justice, without which authentic human relationships cannot exist; it also requires the recognition of the right of every Christian to declare himself freely and without oppression becomes the rule in any community.

Peace also requires creativity. The European Union will remain faithful to its commitment to peace only to the extent that it does not lose hope and confidence in itself in order to respond to the needs and expectations of its citizens. A hundred years ago, in these very days, the battle of Caporetto was fought, one of the most dramatic of the First World War. It was the culmination of that war of attrition, which set a smothering record in reaping countless casualties for the sake of riseable gains. From that event we learn that entrenchment in one’s own positions only leads to failure. Now is not the time, then, to dig trenches, but instead to work courageously to realize the intertwined dreams and aspirations of a united and harmonious Europe, a community of peoples desirous of sharing a future of development and peace.

To be the soul of Europe

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests.

The author of the Letter to Diognetus states that "what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world." In today’s day, Christians are called to revitalize Europe and to revive its conscience, not by occupying spaces – this would be proselytism – but by realizing "Father's dream of a united and harmonious Europe, a community of peoples desirous of sharing a future of development and peace."

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thank you.

May the Lord bless us all, bless our work, bless our peoples, our families, our youth, our elderly, may he bless Europe.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

Footnotes:

1 SAINT BENEDICT, Rule, Prologue, 14; cf. Ps 3:12.
2 La distttria del pensiero unico, Morning Reflection in the Domus Sanctae Marthae Chapel, 10 April 2014.
4 Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Declaration Gaudium et Spino, Educaionis (28 October 1965).
5 PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter Populorum Progressio (56 March 1965), 14.
6 Cf. Address to Students and Academic Authorities, Bologna, 1 October 2017, 3.
7 Ibid.
Francis speaks of discernment to newly appointed bishops

Antidote to rigidity

A “remedy to ... immobility”, a “creative process”, an “antidote to rigidity”; this is how Francis describes the discernment to which every bishop is called in the exercise of his ministry at the service of the People of God. The Pontiff offered this advice in the Clementine Hall on Thursday, 14 September as he received in audience the newly appointed bishops who participated in the annual formation course organized by the Congregations for Bishops and for the Oriental Churches. The following is a translation of the Father’s remarks, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers,

With great joy I welcome you in this moment, almost at the end of your Roman pilgrimage, organized by the Congregations for Bishops and for the Eastern Churches. I thank Cardinal Marc Ouellet and Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, and the Dicastery respectively, for their generous efforts in organizing this event, which now allows me to meet you personally and to consider with you, new Pastors of the Church, the grace and responsibility of the mission you have received.

Indeed, not by our merit, but by pure divine benevolence we have been entrusted “the ministry ... to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24; cf. Rom 15:16) and “the dispensation of the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17). This year, the programme of your days in Rome has sought to understand the mystery of the Episcopate through one of its central tasks, that of offering to “the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made [us] guardians” (Acts 20:34) that spiritual and pastoral discernment necessary for it to reach the knowledge and fulfillment of God’s will in which all fullness abides.

Allow me, therefore, to share a few reflections on this subject that is increasingly important in our time, paradoxically marked by a sense of self-referentiality, which proclaims the end of the time of the masters, whose authority are lost. The actual men and women continue to cry out the need to be helped in facing the dramatic issues that assail them, to be paternally guided in the obscure path that challenges them, to be initiated in the mystery of their search for life and happiness.

It is precisely through authentic discernment, which Paul presents as one of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12:10) and Saint Thomas Aquinas calls “the superior virtue that judges according to those higher principles” (Sum Theol., II-II, q. 51, a. 4, ad 3) that we can respond to this human need today.

The Holy Spirit, protagonist of any discernment

Not long ago, the Church invokes the “Spiritus Principalis” or the “Pneuma hegemonikon”, the power that the Father gave to the Son and which They transmitted to the Church. This is, “the Spirit that supports and guides”.

One must be aware that this great gift, so much with gratitude we are perpetual servants, rests on fragile shoulders. Perhaps for this reason the Scripture “prayer for episcopal consecration, derived this expression from the Misericors” (cf. Ps 57:148) in which he who prays, after exposing his failure, implores that He predisposes in His mysterious plan of love for each and for all. This wisdom is the practical wisdom of the Cross, which, though it includes reason and prudence, transcends them because it leads to the very source of immortal life, namely, the “Father, the only true God, and the One who sent Jesus Christ” (cf. Jn 17:3).

The bishop cannot take for granted the possession of a gift so lofty and transcendent, as if it were an acquired right, without falling into a ministry devoid of fructuality. It is necessary to continually implore it as a primary condition to illuminate all human, existential, psychological, sociological and moral wisdom that may be of service to us in the task of discerning the ways of God for the salvation of those who have been entrusted to us.

Therefore, it is imperative to continuously return to Gibson in prayer (cf. 1 Kings 3:5-14), to remind the Lord that before him we are perennial “children who do not know how to settle”, and to implore “not long life or riches or the life of enemies”, but only “discernment in judging among his people.” Without this good of the People of God and of all those who can offer him a useful contribution, also through concrete and not merely formal contributions.

When one does not consider his brother in any way, and even considers oneself superior, then one ends up swelling with pride even against God Himself.

In peaceful dialogue, he is not afraid to share, and even sometimes modify, his discernment with others: with confessors to whom he is sacramentally joined, and then discernment becomes collegial, with his priests, for whom he is the guarantor of that unity that is not imposed by force, but rather is woven with the patience and wisdom of an artisan; with the lay faithful, because they retain the “sense” of the true infallibility of the faith that resides in the Church: they know that God does not diminish in His love and does not forsake His promises.

As history teaches, the great Pastors, in order to be able to be one with the people, for whom we want nothing other than to offer our concrete witness of union with God, serving the Gospel that should be cultivated and helped to grow in that specific situation.

Discernment, therefore, is born in the heart and mind of the bishop through his prayer, when he puts the people and situations entrusted to him into contact with the Divine Word pronounced by the Spirit. It is in this intimacy that the Pastor matures the interior freedom that makes him steadfast in his choices and conduct, both personal and ecclesial. Only in the silence of prayer can one learn the voice of God, perceive the traces of His language, have access to His truth, which is a very different light, that “is not above one’s mind in the same way as it is above water”, and much higher since only “he who knows the Truth knows that light” (cf. Augustine, Confessions VII, 10:10).

Discernment is a gift of the Spirit to the Church, to which she responds with listening.

Discernment is the grace [given] to the holy faithful People of God by the Spirit, who constitutes it a prophetic People, endowed with the sense of faith and that spiritual instinct that makes it able to feel even Eclesio. It is a gift received in the midst of the People and is oriented towards their salvation. Since the Spirit has indeed dwelt in the heart of the faithful since Baptism, the apostolic faith, beatitude, righteousness, and evangelical spirit are not strangers to them.

Therefore, although vested with inestimable personal responsibility (cf. Directory Apostolorum Successorum, 16b-16b), the Bishop is called to experience his own discernment as a Pastor, as a member of the People of God, or in an ever ecclesial dynamic, at the service of the Eclesio. The Bishop is not a self-sufficient “father and master”, nor is he a fearful and attention-seeking or narcissistic, to offer your concrete witness of union with God, serving the Gospel that should be cultivated and helped to grow in that specific situation.

Discernment therefore means humility and obedience. Humility with regard to one’s own projects. Obedience to the Gospel in the Church; to the Magisterium, which safeguards it; to the norms of the universal Church; and to the concrete situation of the people, for whom we want nothing other than to offer our concrete witness of union with God, serving the Gospel that should be cultivated and helped to grow in that specific situation.

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The family in India today faces a “feminization of culture, ideological, social and spiritual crisis” due to the “negative influence of the mass media, the hedonistic culture, relativism, materialism, individualism, secularism, atheism and a profusion of ideologies and an excessive and selfish liberalization of morals.” Cardinal Gracias explained that “the Church has to present itself as the restorer, the teacher and the advocate of the Gospel, even in the most sensitive areas of India’s Catholic Bishops’ Conference.”

In his address to participants, Cardinal Gracias warned that “the drastic decline in spiritual and moral values in society and the rapid growth of secularization is constantly threatening the very existence and survival of the Church.”

In addition to the challenges faced by Indian families, the Cardinal said, “there is a need for a constructive response to the many challenges faced by Indian families today. ‘Every family’,” the Cardinal said, “is to be seen as a gift from God and the privileged environment where children are enabled to be born with dignity, and to grow and develop in an integral manner.”

Contrary to this laudable goal, however, the Cardinal noted that many families today are considered “a burden” and that “many belong to vulnerable groups which struggle to survive in the peripheries.”

By way of example, the Cardinal highlighted the challenges faced by the Dalit ethnics minorities, which he noted continues to suffer exploitation and oppression. He stressed that the Church is duty-bound to assist them “so that they can have access at least to the basic essentials of life.”

In addition to the plight of Dalits, symposium participants discussed some of India’s most concerning trends which are putting families and especially women, at risk: violence against women, female foeticide, dowry and honour killings, gender discrimination, trafficking and exploitation of women and children. Particularly mentioned was the vulnerability of street children, who, due to precarious economic situations, have been abandoned by families and suffer from malnourishment, are often subjected to sexual abuse and sometimes forced into child labour and prostitution.

“The family needs to have a home, employment and a just recognition of the domestic activity of parents, the possibility of schooling for children, and basic health care for all,” Cardinal Gracias affirmed. “When society and public policy are not committed to assisting families in these areas, the Church has the duty to manipulate the reproductive act, making it independent of the sexual relationship between man and woman.”

And this, he noted, reduces human life and parenthood to “a process and separable realities, subject mainly to the wishes of individuals or couples.”

Interfaith marriages, divorced and remarried couples, civil marriages and marital difficulties also present unique challenges for the Church’s pastoral care, the Cardinal observed. Strengthening marriage is “more important today than ever.”

To add fuel to the fire, the Church must “pour out the balm of God’s mercy” on all those who sincerely ask for it. And, Cardinal Gracias noted, the Pontiff clearly states that the challenging situations facing families require “a constructive response.”

And therefore, the Church’s pastoral care should seek to “transform” these challenges “into opportunities that can lead to the full reality of marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel” and that such couples “be welcomed and guided patiently and discreetly.”

Pope Francis to newly appointed bishops CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

to rigidity, because the same solutions are not valid everywhere. It is always the perennial today of the Risen One, who demands that we not resign ourselves to the repetition of the past, and have the courage to ask ourselves whether the proposals of the past are still ecclesiastically valid. Do not let yourselves be imprisoned by the nostalgia of having only one response to apply in all cases. This would perhaps quell our performance anxiety, but it would leave us relegated to the margins to be watered by the grace in our safekeeping (cf. Mk 3:6-7; Ezek 37:4).

I recommend a special sensitivity to the culture and religiosity of the people. They are not something to be tolerated, or mere tools to manoeuvre, or a “Cinderella” to keep hidden because they are unworthy of access to the noble salon of the concepts and superior reasoning of the faith. Indeed, it is necessary to care for and dialogue with them, because apart from their adherence to the bedrock of the people’s self-understanding, they are a true subject of evangelization, which your discernment cannot overlook. Such a charism, given to the community of believers, cannot but be recognized, called upon and engaged in the ordinary path of discernment made by Pastors.

Remember that God was already present in your dioceses when you arrived and will still be there when you are gone. And, in the end, we will be measured not on an accounting of our works but on the cultivation of God’s work in the heart of the flock that we watch over in the name of the “Shepherd and Guardian of our souls” (cf. 1 Pt 2:25).

Called to grow in discernment We must strive to grow in incarnate and inclusive discernment, which dialogues with the consciences of the faithful which are to be formed and not replaced (cf. Amoris Laetitia, 37) in a patient and courageous process of accompaniment, so as to mature the capacity of each one the faithful, families, priests, communities, and societies —, all called to advance in the freedom to choose and accomplish the good that God wills. Indeed, the activity of discernment is not reserved to the wise, the periscopacious and the perfect. Rather, God does not resist the present and reveals himself to the humble (cf. Mt 11:25).

The Pastor knows that God is the one who trusts in His company; he knows and never doubts His truth, nor despairs of His promise of life. But the Pastor acquires these certainties in the humble darkness of faith. To convey them to the flock, he is not to announce obvious proclamations but to introduce — by supporting and guiding the possible steps to be taken — the experience of God who saves.

Therefore, authentic discernment, although definitive at each step, is always an open and necessary process that can be completed and enriched. It is not to be reduced to the repetition of formulas which, like lofty clouds bring little rain” to actual men and women, are often immersed in a reality that cannot be reduced to black and white. The Shepherd is called to make available to the flock the grace of the Word, who knows how to pierce the folds of reality and to take account of its nuances to reveal what God wishes to achieve at each moment. I think particularly of young people, families, priests, those who have the responsibility for leading society. From your lips, may they seek and find the best witness to this lofty Word, which is “the lamp to our feet and light to our path” (cf. Ps 119:105).

An essential condition for progressing in discernment is to educate ourselves in the patience of God and His times, which are never our own. He does not “burn fire upon the infidels” (cf. Lk 9:53-54), but does he permit zealous to “pull the weeds from the field” that they see growing there (cf. Mt 13:25). It is up to each day to welcome from God the hope that preserves us from all abstraction, because it enables us to discover the hidden grace in the present without losing sight of the forbearance of his design of love that transcends us.

May the Virgin, who keeps her gaze fixed serenely on her Son, protect and bless you and your particular Churches.

1 Dorotheus of Gaza, Communionis deo et con gli uomini, Edizioni Queriniane, 1999, p. 64.
The author, a Discalced Carmelite priest, was a close neighbour and fellow parishioner of the Indian nun who was brutally murdered in 1995.

A young martyr for social justice

Sr Rani Maria Vattalil to be beatified in Indore.

Rani Maria, known as Marykunj (Little Mary) to her family, was born on 29 January 1974, to Eleeswa and Paily Vattalil, the second daughter of seven children. Pulluvazhy, her birthplace in the Emakulam district of Kerala state in India, was a remote village consisting of both traditional Christian and non-Christian families. Her parents and family members were traditionally rooted in the Christi-an faith. Saint Thomas Parish Church, belonging to the Syro-Malabar rite, was the centre of the faith for parishioners. Her parents worked hard in the fields to feed and take care of their children. God's greatest gifts to them.

The family prayer at the end of the day was a moment when the entire family gathered before the images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Blessed Virgin Mary to raise their hearts to God. Marykunj never failed to be present there and often led the daily family prayer. Besides attending daily Mass, she was also a member of Marian sodality, which was very active within the parish. Her parents taught her to love the poor and the regular workers in the fields. Rani Maria’s selfless dedication in the remotest villages of central and northern India has been traced back to these lessons. It is of no doubt that the God-fearing and the God-loving families of the newly Blessed and their exemplary life played a great role in sowing and nurturing the ardent desire to offer herself courageously to the service of the Lord, even to the point of becoming a martyr of social justice.

Rani Maria entered the Clarist convent in Kidangoor on 5 July 1972, and made her first profession on 1 May 1974, at the age of 20. With an ardent wish to be a missionary witness to the poor, the young nun was happy when asked to go to the Bijnor Mission in Uttar Pradesh in December 1975, just one year after her religious profession. She served different mission areas in a short span of time, all with her unique and creative ways of witnessing to the Lord. For eight years she lived and worked in the Diocese of Bijapur, where she found her own way to fulfil her mission, engaging in the specific apostolate of uplifting the poor and the marginalized. For the next nine years (1983-92), she was coordinator of the social apostolate of the Diocese of Satna, in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, organizing educational programs for children, young people and the aged, and working for the empowerment of the Adivasis (indigenous peoples). Her works attracted many to embrace Christianity.

Her final phase of missionary life was in the Diocese of Indore in the same state, from 1992-95. Here she came to be called by her admirers as Indore Rani (Queen of Indore). It was here that she became an enemy of the landlords who were exploiting poor workers, and of the money lenders who were extorting the income of the people in the form of exaggerated interest rates. Maria Rani sought earnestly to make the exploited conscious of their rights, by organizing study classes and forming self-help groups. The programmes and services that she carried out were a true fulfillment of her prophetic mission toward the poor. It gave the exploited hope for a better future, as they fought for justice from their oppressors. Rani Maria argued in favour of those who were unjustly imprisoned and consorted them. All these works infuriated the exploiters, as they challenged their vested interests. But she never stepped back from her initiatives in spite of their threats.

While travelling by bus to Indore on 25 February 1995, fellow travellers witnessed the merciless attack on the nun by Samundher Singh, who had been hired by the exploiters. Sr Rani Maria was brutally stabbed to death in the attack, marking the end of her earthly life of bearing witness to Jesus Christ. Her martyrdom can be called “martyrdom for the social cause of the Church”, as it arose from her fight for the dignity and rights of the human person, created in the image of God. Through the attention of the late Carmelite Fr Michael Porathukara, Singh repented his brutal acts and was ready to do penance and lead a good life if released from prison. Later, at Fr Michael’s suggestion, Rani Maria’s own blood sister Selmi, who belonged to the same province of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation as her sister, voluntarily visited Singh and forgave him.

Rani Maria’s mother and brother Stephen Vattalil also visited Singh in prison and assured him of their forgiveness. Together with the Franciscan sisters and Fr Michael, the family approached the civil authorities to request Singh’s release from confinement. He was freed in August 2006 and now leads a simple life in his village, working in the fields and regularly visiting Sr Rani Maria’s tomb. Lending further credibility to his conversion, he wishes to be instrumental in the conversion of those who provoked him to do such a brutal act.

A still greater act of forgiveness stunned the whole world, when Singh was heartily welcomed into Rani Maria’s native family, in Pulluvazhy on 13 January 2007. Accompanied by Fr Michael, Singh arrived at Rani Maria’s family home and fell prostrate at the feet of her mother and ailing father, asking for pardon. Her mother Eleeswa embraced Samundher and with motherly tenderness kissed his hands, which had once been stained with the blood of her own daughter.

Her martyrdom can be called “martyrdom for the social cause of the Church", as it arose from her fight for the dignity and rights of the human person, created in the image of God.

This young nun from Kerala, who went to the extreme point of giving her life in order to bear witness to the Gospel through her social activities, is a great example for the world, especially for the youth. Her life and witness exhorts the youth and missionaries to courageously get involved in eliminating corrupt and unjust social evils from the face of the earth. The great instance of forgiveness practiced by Sr Rani Maria and her family members is a challenge to the whole world in which the manufacturing and trading of weapons grow against charity, and walls are built in the place of bridges.
The great commandment

At Sunday’s Angelus the Pope recalls that mankind is created to love

"To love God and neighbour "is the great commandment" that Jesus entrusts to each man and woman. The Pontiff recalled this at the Angelus in Saint Peter’s Square on Sunday, 29 October, commenting on the day’s Gospel reading from Matthew (22:34-40). The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s reflection which he offered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

This Sunday, the Liturgy presents us with a brief, but very important Gospel passage (Mt 22:34-40). Matthew the Evangelist recounts that the Pharisees assemble in order to put Jesus to the test. One of them, a doctor of the Law, asks him this question: “Teacher, which one is the great commandment in the law?” (v. 39). It is an insidious question, because more than 600 precepts are mentioned in the Law of Moses. How should the great commandment be distinguished among these? But the Pontiff then says: “And who are those who enjoy his protection? The Bible says: the widow, the orphan and the stranger, the migrant, that is, the most lonely and defenseless people. And who are those who mistreat those who enjoy his protection. You may do many good things, fulfill many precepts, many good things, but if you do not have love, this serves no purpose. It is confirmed by another text in the Book of Exodus, the so-called “Covenant Code”, where it is said that one cannot separate what is less important. Jesus says: “On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets” (Mt 22:40). They are the most important, and the others depend on these two. And Jesus lived his life precisely in this way: preaching and practising what truly matters and is essential, namely, love. Love gives impulse and fruitfulness to life and to the journey of faith: without love, both life and faith remain sterile.

What Jesus proposes in this Gospel passage is a wonderful ideal, which corresponds to our heart’s most authentic desire. Indeed, we were created to love and to be loved. God, who is Love, created us to make us participants in his life, to be loved by him and to love him, and with him, to love all other people. This is God’s “dream” for mankind. And to accomplish it, we need his grace; we need to receive within us the capacity to love which comes from God himself. Jesus offers himself to us in the Eucharist for this very reason. In it we receive Jesus in the utmost expression of his love, when he offered himself to the Father for our salvation.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to welcome into our life the “great commandment” of love of God and neighbour. Indeed, if we have experienced it ever since we were children, we will never cease converting ourselves to it and putting it into practice in the various situations in which we find ourselves.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father added:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Caxias do Sul, Brazil, John Schiavo, priest of the Josephites of Murialdo, was proclaimed Blessed. Born in the hills of Vicenza at the start of the 1900s, he was sent as a young priest to Brazil, where he worked zealously at the service of the People of God and in the formation of men and women religious. May his example help us to fully live our bond with Christ and with the Gospel.

I warmly greet all of you, pilgrims from Italy and from other countries, in particular those from Ballygawley, Ireland; Salzburg, Austria; and from the Traunstein and Berchtesgaden region of Germany. I greet those attending the Conference of Italian Secular Institutes, whom I encourage in their witness to the Gospel in the world; and the FIDAS blood donors’ association from Orta Nova, Foggia. I see there are Colombians there!

I greet the Togolese community in Italy, as well as the Vincentian community with the image of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, the “Chinita”. Let us entrust to the Virgin Mary the hopes and legitimate expectations of these two Nations!

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