At the General Audience a new series of reflections dedicated to the Eucharist

Mass is not a spectacle

Addressing the faithful gathered in Saint Peter’s Square for the General Audience on Wednesday, 8 November, Pope Francis spoke about the Mass, which he described as the very “heart” of the Church and the source of her life. After concluding a series of catecheses on Christian hope in the light of the Word of God, the Holy Father began a new line of reflections dedicated to the Eucharist and the importance of the Mass for the Christian community.

We must remember the many Christians who have died defending the Eucharist, he explained, and all those who still today must “risk their lives in order to participate in Sunday Mass”. Their witness, he said, teaches us that “one can renounce earthly life for the Eucharist, because it gives us eternal life, making us participants in Christ’s victory over death”. Indeed, we must understand that without the Eucharist “we cannot live; our Christian life would die”. Thus, the Pontiff shared the rationale behind this new series of catecheses: “to grow in our understanding of the great gift that God has given us in the Eucharist”, which he described as the “wondrous event in which Jesus Christ, our life, makes himself present”.

The Pope reminded the faithful that Mass is not an occasion for distractions, but rather, when we participate in the Mass it is important to be conscious that “the Lord is there!”, because at Mass we are “living again the redemptive passion and death of Our Lord”. It is “not a spectacle” and therefore, remember that the priest says “lift up our hearts”, not “lift up your cell phones to take a photo”! Francis stressed. Thus, he shared: “it makes me sad when I am celebrating here in Saint Peter’s Square or in the Basilica to see many cell phones lifted up”. Instead, we must “return to the basics, to rediscover what is essential, through what we touch and see in the celebration of the Sacraments”.

Following a shooting in a Texas church

Pope Francis expresses his condolences

On Sunday, 5 November, at least 26 people were killed and many others wounded when a gunman opened fire on worshippers in a Baptist church in the small town of Sutherland Springs, Texas. On Tuesday, 7 November, in the aftermath of the tragedy, Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin sent a telegram on behalf of the Holy Father to Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio, expressing Francis’ condolences and support. The following is the text of the telegram.

Deeply grieved by news of the loss of life and grave injuries caused by the act of senseless violence perpetrated at the First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, the Holy Father asks you kindly to convey his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and the wounded, to the members of the congregation, and to the entire local community. He asks our Lord Jesus Christ to console all who mourn and to grant them the spiritual strength that triumphs over violence and hatred by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love.

26 white crosses have been erected in memory of the victims in Sutherland Springs. Photo by Larry W. Smith/Expa
Dialogue and peace in Asia

Following the release of the video message – as always, produced by the La Machi Agency in cooperation with the Vatican Television Center – Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay, told Vatican Radio that “dialogue is a necessity” for the people of Asia, and that in this respect, the Church on the continent is doing a great deal, but there is more to be done: “with prayer and with Pope Francis’ urging”, he said, “surely we can do more”. The Cardinal explained that effective dialogue requires “diversified initiatives” in relation to Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus, and that it is important to emphasize that dialogue “does not mean proselytizing” but, “in Pope Francis’ words, ‘it is walking together’”. Those who promote dialogue, the Cardinal said, must not be intimidated by bullying or violence.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Santiago Rodriguez Rodriguez from the clergy of the Diocese of Puerto Plata, as Bishop of San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic. Until now he has served as episcopal vicar for pastoral ministry and as parish priest of San Marcos Parish (3 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Rogelio Rodriguez, 49, was born in Mamey, Dominican Republic. He was ordained a priest on 24 June 2000. He holds a licence in moral theology and a Master’s in bioethics. He has served in parish ministry and as: university chaplain; head of the diocesan pastoral ministry for the vocations, vice-director of the National Tribunal; military chaplain; professor of bioethics at the Pontifical Catholic University Madre y Maestra.

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Leonardo D’AAscenzo from the clergy of the Diocese of Velletri-Segni, Italy, as Archbishop of Trieste-Bistrica. Msgr. is now he has been rector of the Pontifical Leonine College in Anagni (4 Nov.).

Archbishop-elect D’AAscenzo, 56, was born in Valmontone, Italy. He holds a licence in dogmatic theology, a Master’s in educational science and a doctorate in spiritual theology. He was ordained a priest on 5 July 1986. He has served in parish ministry and as: assistant and then unitary assistant of Catholic Action for young people, spiritual father, vice-rector and then director of the propaedeutic year at the Pontifical Leonine College; director of the diocesan and regional centre for vocations, vice-director of the National Centre for Vocations of the Italian Episcopal Conference; professor of spiritual theology.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Jean Patrick Iba-Ba as Bishop of Franceville, Gabon. Until now he has been rector of Saint Augustin National Major Seminary in Libreville (4 Nov.).

Bishop-elect Iba-Ba, 52, was born in Libreville, Gabon. He holds a degree in Canon Law E and last week in December) by Our Sunday Visitor, L’Osservatore Romano, English Edition, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750, 800-348-2440 x2171; fax: 866-891-7390 – e-mail: osvsales@osv.com.

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Mass is not a spectacle to be photographed

At the General Audience a new series of reflections dedicated to the Eucharist

The Pope began a new series of catecheses at the General Audience in Saint Peter’s Square on Wednesday, 8 November. Concluding a series on Christian hope in the light of the Word of God, he began a new line of reflections dedicated to the Eucharist and the importance of Mass for the Christian community. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s catechesis, which he gave in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

Today we begin a new series of catecheses, which will direct our gaze toward the “heart” of the Church, namely, the Eucharist. It is fundamental that we Christians clearly understand the value and significance of this mystery, in order to live ever more fully our relationship with God.

We cannot forget the great number of Christians who, throughout the world, in 2,000 years of history, have died defending the Eucharist, and how many, still today, risk their lives in order to participate in Sunday Mass. In the year 904, during the Diocletianic Persecution, a group of Christians from North Africa was surprised as they were celebrating Mass in a house, and were arrested. In the interrogations, the Roman Proconsul asked them why they had done so, knowing that it was absolutely prohibited. They responded: “Without Sunday we cannot live”, which meant: if we cannot celebrate the Eucharist, we cannot live; our Christian life would die.

Indeed, Jesus said to his disciples: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (Jn 6:53-54).

Those Christians from North Africa were killed because they were celebrating the Eucharist. They gave witness that one can renounce earthly life for the Eucharist, because it gives us eternal life, making us participants in Christ’s victory over death. This witness challenges us all and calls for a response as to what it means for each of us to participate in the Sacrifice of Mass and approach the Lord’s Table. Are we searching for that wellbeing that “gushes forth living water” for eternal life, that makes of our life a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and makes of us one body in Christ? This is the most profound meaning of the Holy Eucharist, which means “thanksgiving”: thanksgiving to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers us and transforms us in his communion of love.

In the forthcoming catecheses I would like to give some important questions about the Eucharist and Mass, in order to rediscover, or discover, how God’s love shines through this mystery of faith.

The Second Vatican Council was deeply inspired by the desire to lead Christians to understand the great

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joy and peace in our Lord Jesus

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ing for ways to use for us to encounter him.

Thus, through these catecheses that we are beginning today, I would like to rediscover with you the beauty that is hidden in the Eucharistic celebration and that, once revealed, gives full meaning to each person’s life. May Our Lady accompany us on this new stretch of road. Thank you.

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pil-
groms and visitors taking part in
today’s Audience, particularly the
groups from New Zealand, the Phil-
ippines, Korea, Canada and the
United States of America. Upon all
of you, and your families, I invoke
joy and peace in our Lord Jesus

Christ.

Lastly I greet young people, the sick, and
newlyweds. May today’s remem-
brance of the Holy Martyrs, whose
relies are held here in Saint Peter’s
Basilica, cultivate in you, dear young
people, an attention to the Christian wit-
ness even in difficult contexts; may it
help you, dear sick people, to offer
your suffering in order to support the
many persecuted Christians; may it
encourage you, dear newlyweds, to
trust in God’s help and not just in
your own abilities.
Oppose discrimination and xenophobia

The Pope emphasizes the need to educate conscientes

Pope Francis identified the need to educate conscientes as the best antidote to discrimination and xenophobia, during an audience on Saturday, 4 November in the Consistory Hall, where he received participants in a conference entitled “Migrants and Refugees in a Globalized World: Responsibility and Responses of Universities”. The conference was organized by the International Federation of Catholic Universities. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you at the conclusion of the International Conference entitled “Migrants and Refugees in a Globalized World: Responsibility and Responses of Universities”, organized by the International Federation of Catholic Universities. I thank the President for the words with which he introduced our meeting.

For little less than a century this organization, with the motto “State ut serviat”, has sought to promote Catholic formation at a higher level, availing itself of the great richness that derives from the encounter of many diverse university situations. An essential aspect of this formation aspires to promote social responsibility, for the building of a more just and more humane world. Thus, you have felt a sense of responsibility, for the building of a more just and more humane world. Thus, you have felt a sense of responsibility, for the building of a more just and more humane world.

In order to respond satisfactorily to the new challenges of migration, it is important to train, in a specific and professional way, the pastoral workers who strive to assist migrants and refugees: this is another compelling task for Catholic universities. At a more general level, I would like to invite Catholic universities to educate their own students, to form leaders, entrepreneurs and creators of culture — to understand the migratory phenomenon, in a perspective of justice, global co-responsibility and communion in cultural diversity.

With regard to the complex world of migration, the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has recommended “on Action Points” as a contribution to the process that will lead to the international community’s adoption of two Global Compacts, one on migrants and the other on refugees, in the second half of 2018. In this and other areas, universities can carry out their role as privileged actors in the world, such as, for example, by encouraging students to engage in volunteer assistance programmes for refugees, asylum seekers, and newly arrived migrants.

All the work that you carry out in these great areas — research, education and social promotion — finds a sure reference in the four milestones on the Church’s path through the situations of contemporary migration: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate (cf. Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018).

Today we are commemorating Saint Charles Borromeo, an enlightened and impassioned Pastor who made humility his motto. May his exemplary life inspire your intellectual and social activity and also the experience of fraternity that you promote in the Federation.

May the Lord bless your commitment at the service of the university world and of our brother and sister migrants and refugees. As I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I ask that you, please, not forget to pray for me.

To the Sistine Group

The children in Francis’ heart

Pope Francis has “a special place in his heart for the least and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters”. He stressed this in an address to representatives of the Sistine Group, whom he received in audience in the Clementine Hall on Saturday morning, 4 November. At the beginning of the encounter, Regine Sixt introduced the organization’s activities to the Pontiff, in particular the ‘Drying Little Tears’ initiative which assists children in difficulty. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s discourse.

Dear Members of the Sistine Family,

Dear Friends,

I offer a warm welcome to you, the representatives of the Sistine company from throughout the world. I thank Mrs Regine Sixt for her introduction, which spoke of your shared commitment to works of charity, carried out through the Drying Little Tears Foundation and aimed at helping children in various situations of need.

These efforts allow you the opportunity to make your professional activity a noble vocation, by recognizing a greater meaning in life. Beyond personal and financial success, you are striving to serve the common good by working to increase the goods of this world and to make them more available to all (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 205).

You have assembled here in Rome to meet the Successor of Peter, who has a special place in his heart for the least and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. Such are our children. Drying their tears, through concrete projects of assistance is a way of combating the culture of waste and helping to build a more humane society.

I encourage you to pursue your work in the conviction that God’s tender love can be seen in a particular way on the faces of innocent children in need of care and support. May the Lord reward you with his many gifts.

I ask your prayers for my mission in the service of the Church, and to you, your dear grandchildren and all your families, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.
For deceased cardinals and bishops

In the prospect of eternal life

Pope Francis recalled the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who died over the past year, as he celebrated a Mass in suffrage for them on Friday morning, 3 November, at the Altar of the Chair in Saint Peter’s Basilica. Fourteen Cardinals and 137 Archbishops and Bishops died between October 2016 and October 2017. There were 38 Cardinals and numerous prelates of the Roman Curia present at the Mass, which was served by the Salesians of Don Bosco, while music was provided by the Sistine Chapel Choir. The following is the English text of the Pontiff’s homily.

Today’s celebration once more sets before us the reality of death. It renews our sorrow for the loss of those who were dear and good to us. Yet, more importantly, the liturgy increases our hope for them and for ourselves.

The first reading expresses a powerful hope in the resurrection of the just: “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). Those who sleep in the dust of the earth are obviously the dead. Yet awakening from death is not in itself a return to life: some will awake for eternal life, others for everlasting shame. Death makes definitive the “crossroads” which even now, in this world, stands before us: the way of life, with God, or the way of death, far from him. The “many” who will rise for eternal life are to be understood as the “many” for whom the blood of Christ was shed. They are the multitude that, thanks to the goodness and mercy of God, can experience the life that does not pass away, the complete victory over death brought by the resurrection.

In the Gospel, Jesus strengthens our hope by saying: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:53). These words evoke Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. He accepted death in order to save those whom the Father had given him, who were dead in the slavery of sin. Jesus became our brother and shared our human condition even unto death. By his love, he shattered the yoke of death and opened to us the doors of life. By partaking of his body and blood, we are united to his faithful love, which embraces his definitive victory of good over evil, suffering and death. By virtue of this divine bond of Christ’s charity, we know that our fellowship with the dead is not merely a desire or an illusion, but a reality.

The faith we profess in the resurrection makes us men and women of hope, not despair, men and women of life, not death, for we are comforted by the promise of eternal life, ground in our union with the risen Christ.

This hope, rekindled in us by the word of God, helps us to be trusting in the face of death. Jesus has shown us that death is not the last word; rather, the merciful love of the Father transfigures us and makes us live in eternal communion with him. A fundamental mark of the Christian is a sense of anxious expectation of our final encounter with God. We reaffirmed it just now in the responsorial psalm: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?” (Ps 42:2).

These poetic words poignantly convey our watchful and expectant yearning for God’s love, beauty, happiness, and wisdom. These same words of the psalm were impressed on the souls of our brother cardinals and bishops whom we remember today. They left us after having served the Church and the people entrusted to them in the prospect of eternity. As we now give thanks for their generous service to the Gospel and the Church, we seem to hear them repeat with the apostle: “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5). Truly, it does not disappoint! God is faithful and our hope in him is not vain. Let us invoke for them the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, that they may share in the eternal banquet of which, with faith and love, they had a foretaste in the course of their earthly pilgrimage.
A lesson for a world bracing for war

Prayer at the Ardeatine Caves

God knows all faces and names

On his return from the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery, the Pope visited the Ardeatine Caves outside Rome in pay for respects at the memorial for victims of the wartime massacre of 16 March 1944. The following is a translation of the prayer he recited at the memorial:

"God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob" (cf. Ex 3:6).

With this name you presented yourself to Moses, when you revealed to him the very painful resignation, with that senseless slaughter, that women are able to experience, because it is their charm — said: "May do everything possible to declare and urge you, and in the end they destroy themselves."

This is war, our own self-destruction, that woman, that elderly woman, that grandmother, and grandchildren there, all she had left was hears and tears, and if today is a day of hope, today is also a day of tears. Tears as those felt and sent by women when the mail arrived. Madame, you have the honor to have had a husband who was a hero for the Homeland, that your sons are heroes for the Homeland. They are tears that today humanity must not forget. This pride of the humankind that has not learned its lesson and that seems un-willing to learn it.

When so many times in history men think of waging a war, they are convinced they are bringing about a new world, they are convinced they are creating a "springtime". And it ends in a dreadful, cruel winter, with the reign of terror and death. Today he to us pray for all the dead, all in a special way for these young people, today in the world it is once more at war and is preparing to engage men aggressively in war. "No more, Lord. No more. With war all is lost."

What comes to mind is that elderly woman who — looking at the map of Homeland, minority, knows so much human affliction. "I am certain, Lord, that your covenant of steadfast love is mightier than death and it is a guarantee of resurrection."

"God of faces and of names, God of each of the 335 people slaughtered here on 24 March 1944, who remain not in these graves. You know their faces and their names. All, even the one who remain unknown to us; for you no one is unknown."

God of Jesus, our Father who art in heaven. Thanks to Him, the crucified and Risen One, we know that your name: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob", means that you are not God of the dead but of the living (cf. Mt 22:30), that your covenant of steadfast love is mightier than death and is a guarantee of resurrection.

"O Lord, in this place, consecrated to the memory of those who have fallen for freedom and justice, let us direct ourselves of the trapings of selfishness and indifference, and through the burning hands of this mausoleum, in silence, may we hear your name:" God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob; God of Jesus, God of the living. Amen.

At the Sicily-Rome American cemetery

On Thursday afternoon, a Novena, All Souls' Day, Pope Francis celebrated Mass at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in the Italian seaside town of Nettuno, in suffrage for the faithful departed and in particular for those who have lost their lives on account of war. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's homily, which was delivered extemporaneously in Italian.

"No more, Lord. No more. With war all is lost."

and is preparing to engage more aggressively in war. "No more, Lord."

as the world is once more at war and is preparing to engage men aggressively in war. "No more, Lord."

This is war: our own self-destruction. Surely that woman, that elderly woman who — looking at the burning bush of this mausoleum, can repeat Job's words here today in hope. We have all gathered around this place to pray for all the departed, but in a special way for those young people, at a moment in history that so many die in the daily battles of this present war. Let us, also pray for today's dead, the victims of war, the children, innocents. This is the result of war death. May the Lord grant us the grace to weep.
Mercy and law in ‘Amoris Laetitia’

LISTENING FOR THE VOICE OF JESUS

With regard to Pope Francis’ Post-Synodal Exhortation Amoris Laetitia (46), there are some among the faithful who fail to understand a subtle but important distinction between law and mercy that runs throughout the Exhortation. Some discern the voice of Jesus, who says to Christians who divorce from a valid marriage and remarry with adequate knowledge and consent that they enter the state of mortal sin. They insist that God gives the justified sufficient strength to bear whatever difficulties that may arise, that married couples can endure what comes their way if they take advantage of the grace offered to them.

The positions adopted by such opponents, however, rely dispositionally on the sense of the law. The clarity of the law gives confidence and predictability to one’s actions. The directives of AL seem to give neither.

Famously, Pope Francis has championed mercy as the forgotten virtue in Christian thought and practice today. Although aware of abstract principles, mercy attends primarily to concrete circumstances. There is no law of mercy. No recipe exists for when and how it should be applied. Mercy subsists in a different realm. It pertains to concrete circumstances that need individual assessment. Mercy resists legal formulation. Nor is mercy an alternative to law. Mercy is rather a way of applying laws. Jurisprudence that attends only to abstract principles, therefore, can result in a mean-spirited application of the law. Mercy, on the other hand, listens for the voice of Jesus in the application of the law in appropriate circumstances. This is the point of discernment, accompanied by an experienced priest, so they can re-evaluate on relevant issues. After a suitable period of time, they may discern a sacramental confession in which they accept an appropriate penance and receive absolution. Communion may follow that dispensation and receive absolution, which they accept an appropriate period of time, they may celebrate.

In his Gospel, Matthew consistently features Jesus as applying the law, but with mercy. Matthew presents the Church’s dispensation, which seeks to discover their unity. The Christian dispensation, for example, the man takes to his senses about the first marriage. He admits his sin, and seeks pardon and forgiveness. What does conversion require of him? Must he leave his second wife and their children to return to his first wife? What if his first wife has remarried? Is there no way for the repentant husband to stay in the second marriage and still receive Communion?

The traditional response to this unfortunate circumstance requires him and his second wife to live in a “brother-sister” relationship denoting to each other normal conjugal relations. Some circumstances may indeed call for such an arrangement. Some may not. Some couples may want their family to continue to grow, and may recoil at the very idea of simulating the sacrament. Can nothing be done?

In Mt 19:9, Jesus declares, “I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for porneia, commits adultery.” Notice that Jesus himself grants an exception to the rule against divorce, the exception of porneia. Most likely, porneia refers to null marriages. But here the issue becomes murky. Null marriages are not real marriages. Well, then, what are they? No one would say that such couples lived in sin before the annulment. Those marriages certainly looked valid at the beginning. They are certainly treated as marriages until a final declaration of nullity is issued. The categories of the law do not present the neat distinctions some would expect.

Most biblical scholars would say that the more primitive form of Mt 19:8-9 is found in Mk 10:11-12 where the Lord’s prohibition against divorce takes an absolute form (“Whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, commits adultery.”) Matthew reformulates the question in a way that looks for an exception, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” (Mt 19:9). When Matthew reports the Lord’s reply, he feels free to add the porneia exception. While the change leaves the prohibition against divorce intact, it renders it more nuanced. Are such changes legitimate?

It is not as if this sort of solution were without precedent. Saint Paul did the same sort of thing approximately 50 years before Matthew wrote his Gospel. If a married man wishes to convert to Christianity and his non-Christian wife resists, Saint Paul permits the man to divorce and enter a second marriage to a Christian woman (1 Cor 7:12-15). The privilege has long been recognized as an exception to the ban against second marriages.

Joseph Fitzmyer has noticed that when Matthew added the porneia exception to the saying of Jesus, the evangelist was still operating under inspiration, as was Paul when he described his permission to divorce. If the Church remains a Spirit-guided institution, why can’t the Church of a later day make a similar exception as the occasion demands? Similarly, the Church has long recognized the Petrine privilege (based on the power of the keys, Mt 16:19) to dissolve certain marriages at the discretion of the pope. Both privileges are not so much commentaries on the indissolubility of marriage as they are affirmations of the centrality of mercy. Furthermore, the Church has long recognized that, if a just cause exists, the pope may grant a dispensation even from a valid sacramental but unconsummated marriage (Canon 1658). If the dispensation is granted, the partners are free to marry without fear of committing adultery.

Law and mercy belong together in the Christian dispensation. One need only perceive the two correctly to discover their unity. The Christian never needs to choose between mercy and the law. Mercy is the sensibility with which Christians interpret the sense of the law. Sometimes mercy will produce a hug, and sometimes a rebuke. It depends on the circumstances.

Dissenters treat the Pope’s exhortation as if he were trying to fashion a new doctrine. He is not. He is trying to incorporate a merciful way of applying the law, and that cannot itself become a law. The change of doctrine that may, to some, appear like a new doctrine is really the application of mercy, which itself cannot be encoded into another law.

In his Gospel, Matthew consistently features Jesus as applying the law, but with mercy. Matthew presents the Church’s dispensation for the sake of justice and authoritarianism by insisting that the voice of Jesus be heard in the application of any law. Jesus mercifully relaxes the application of the law in appropriate circumstances. For example, he will not allow a strict observance of the Sabbath laws to prevent a simple act of mercy that dispels the hunger of his disciples (Mt 16:1-12). Moreover, mercy sometimes demands more than the law. So Jesus will not allow the son to bypass his obligation to his parents by declaring certain property as dedicated to the Lord (Mt 15:17-20). Mercy in both of these circumstances overrules the law. Jesus does not abrogate the law, but neither does he use it simply to condemn those who run afoul of its requirements. Pope Francis does the same in AL.

The issue is not whether divorce is permissible. Clearly it is not. The issue is whether a second marriage must be characterized continuously as adultery. That precise question has not been addressed before, not even in Famiitis Consortii.

Pope Francis shows mercy to those who come to realize all too late that their actions have offended the moral order. After they confess their sin, must they settle only for a simulated marriage? All agree that after a divorce from a valid marriage and upon remarriage, the guilty party should repent and reconcile. If there is no reconciliation, as years pass, the situation of the parties may change. Mercy may call for leaving the second marriage in place.

Opponents try to force sensibility into a rule that is compatible with the rest of the rules. They assume that Francis is trying to formulate a new law when in fact he is only trying to incorporate compassion into the application of the old law. The Pope’s position should not be viewed as a softening of the law – as if permission for divorce were being granted. AL does not treat divorce as any more virtuous or permissible than present law allows. It does not look forward to declare some divorces as “tragic but good.”

It looks backward to see the mess caused by the sin, and to see whether mercy to contrite parties might make reconciliation and Communion possible again. It tries to help couples pick up the pieces, and resume the Christian journey. Divorce is not only tragic, it is wrong. Mercy shown to those guilty of divorce does not make it right, but it can allow the parties to breathe again.

*Vice-Rector and Professor of Systematic Theology, Saint Mary Seminary (Diocese of Cleveland, USA)
Working towards global nuclear disarmament

For a world free of nuclear weapons

On this day, when the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is opened for signature, I want to focus especially on CTBT as a critical complement to broader nuclear disarmament efforts. On September 24, 2016, Pope Francis urged the United Nations General Assembly “to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.” Pope Francis added, "An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an anathema to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as 'nations united by fear and distrust.' In his letter to H.E. Ms Elyane Whyte Gomé, President of the UN conference on a nuclear ban, he urged the international community to “go beyond nuclear deterrence ... [and] to adapt forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security.”

While having no illusions about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the challenges posed by the status quo ante of growing tensions, continuing proliferation, and new modernization programs are far more daunting. Nuclear arms offer a false sense of security. The uneasy peace promised by nuclear deterrence has time and time again proved a tragic illusion. Nuclear weapons cannot create a stable and secure world. Peace and international stability cannot be founded on mutually assured destruction or on the threat of annihilation. The peace-of-a-sort that is based on a balance of power, with threats and counter-threats, and ultimately fear, is an unstable and false peace. In order to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, it is essential to replace a logic of fear and mistrust with an ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust which values multilateral dialogue through consistent and responsible cooperation between all the members of the international community. The norms embodied in the UN Charter, human rights law, arms control conventions, and other elements of international law represent an indispensable commitment to cooperative security and a juridical embodiment of this global ethic of responsibility. Entry into force of the CTBT would be one important manifestation of a commitment to this ethic of responsibility. Two decades is too long to wait to demonstrate this commitment.

1 Declaration of the Holy See attached to the Instrument of adhesion to the CTBT, 24 September 1996.

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

On Friday and Saturday, 10-11 November, in the Vatican’s New Synod Hall, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is sponsoring an International Symposium entitled “Prospects for a World Free from Nuclear Weapons and for Integral Disarmament”. Cardinal Peter K. A. Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery, pointed out that “the event responds to the priorities of Pope Francis to...”

This Vatican Conference represents the first global gathering on Atomic Disarmament since the “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” was adopted with the approval of 122 Countries of the international community on 7 July 2017 in New York, where it opened to signature on 20 September.

Participants in the International Conference include 11 Nobel Peace Laureates, top UN and NATO representatives, diplomats from the Russian Federation, United States, South Korea, Iran, as well as leading experts on armaments and weapons and the heads of major foundations and of civil society organizations that have long been actively engaged in this issue. Representatives of Episcopal Conferences, of Christian denominations and of other faiths, a delegation of Senior Professors and students from US and Russian universities, are also to be in attendance.

Significantly, among those attending is one of the last survivors of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, Masako Wada, Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo, representing the victims of nuclear weapons and of nuclear experiments.

Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin and the leadership of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development are taking part on behalf of the Holy See.

Pope Francis is to deliver an official address to participants, receiving them in a midday audience on 10 November in the Clementine Hall.

The Conference benefits from the cooperation of the Embassy of Italy to the Holy See, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Germany and of Japan, the Interdisciplinary Center for Peace Studies of the University of Pisa, the University of Notre Dame University, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, Senzatomba, Soka Gakkai International, and the Union of Scientists for Disarmament (USFD, an Italian NGO).
To Trappists the Pontiff recommends prayer, self-restraint and unity in charity

Concentrate on the essential

Constant prayer, self-restraint and unity in charity were the three objectives the Holy Father highlighted during an audience with participants of the General Chapter of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance ("Trappists") on Saturday morning, 23 September, in the Clementine Hall. The following is a translation of the discourse which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you with joy on the occasion of your General Chapter. I thank each of you for this visit, beginning with the Abbot General who has acted as interpreter for all of you, also illustrating the aims and objectives of your Assembly. Through you, I wish to send a warm greeting to all Trappist communities dispersed throughout your monasteries in various countries.

With deep heart and mind, I think of your silent cloisters, from which constant prayer rises for the Church and the world, and I thank the Lord for the irreplaceable presence of monastic communities which represent a spiritual wealth and a constant witness to the world, all the things from above, so as to experience in a just measure our earthly realities.

In these days of reflection and exchange of experiences, you are called to identify the objectives and pathways to live your vocation and your consecration with ever increasing authenticity, keeping in mind the needs of the present moment, so as to be witnesses of constant prayer, self-restraint and unity in charity.

Your contemplative life is characterized by constant prayer, the expression of your love for God and the reflection which embraces all humankind. By following the example of Saint Benedict, you do not place anything before the Ora Dei. I urge you to give great importance to contemplation on the Word of God, especially on the lectio divina which is the source of prayer and school of contemplation. To be a contemplative requires a faithful and dedicated journey in order to become men and women of prayer, evermore filled with love for the Lord and transformed into his friends. It is a case of not being "professionals" – in a negative sense – but rather of being enamoured of prayer, taking into consideration the fidelity that is beyond the practises and norms which respecting to soul brothers and sisters, Quận, not as an end, but as the means to advance in the personal relationship with God. In this way you become teachers and witnesses who offer Him the sacrifice of praise and intercession. You also convey to all the monks and nun. As I ask you to pray for me, I implore that this will be the Catholic way of revealing the presence of God, our safe haven, can give.

Happiness which only God, our safe haven, can give. It is not enough to simply free victims enslaved by human traffickers. It is the responsibility of individuals, organizations, governments and the Church to help them reintegrate into society. This was one of the principal conclusions to come out of the 4-6 November Vatican workshop entitled "Assisting Victims of Human Trafficking – Best Practices in Legal Aid, Compensation and Resettlement", the latest in a series of conferences on combating human trafficking organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PAS).

Speaking at a press conference at the Vatican on Monday, 6 November, at the conclusion of the workshop, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of PAS, noted that trafficking in persons leads to slavery, forced labour, prostitution and organ trafficking. Recalling Francis' and Benedict XVI's words condemning human trafficking, the Chancellor described it as a "crime against humanity". He explained that the two-day workshop was attended by survivors, police, experts, policy makers and Church leaders, and focused on prevention and reparation in the measure of what the Church, establishes the essential traits of the General Chapter, and it is a vital experience of the present which lies between the different branches of the Order. For through its history, your Order has known times of grace and moments of difficulty; but it has always persevered in fidelity to the sacrifice of Christ, having as its purpose the glory of God and the good of the people. Continuing in the name of your spiritual tradition, you can read the present state of the Order in its stirrings of light and shadows and, in the novelty of the Spirit, identify with courage new opportunities and occasions to witness your charity in the present of the Church and of Society. I hope that this witness will be made even more eloquent by an increasingly organic coordination between the different branches of the Order.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, example of all consecrated life, accompany the work of your Chapter and the journey of the Order with her maternal intercession. As I ask you to pray for me, I impart my Apostolic Blessing which I also convey to all the monks and nuns of your community. Thank you.

A call for social reintegration of victims

Vatican conference on human trafficking

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Throughout its history, your Order has known times of grace and moments of difficulty; but it has always persevered in fidelity to the sacrifice of Christ, having as its purpose the glory of God and the good of the people. Continuing in the name of your spiritual tradition, you can read the present state of the Order in its stirrings of light and shadows and, in the novelty of the Spirit, identify with courage new opportunities and occasions to witness your charity in the present of the Church and of Society.
The adventure of the ‘brothers of the cord’

Eight centuries of Franciscan presence in the Holy Land

The following is a translation of a Letter sent by the Pontiff to Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM Custos of the Holy Land, on the occasion of the Eighth Centenary of Franciscan presence there.

To the Most Reverend Father FRANCESCO PATTO, OFM Custos of the Holy Land

I have learned with joy that this Custody, on the occasion of 800 years of Franciscan presence in the Holy Land, has wished to celebrate this important and happy occasion with numerous religious, pastoral and cultural events, all geared toward the rediscovery of the commendable contribution of the “brothers of the cord” — as they were known — in the places where the Son of God became flesh and dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1:14). On this occasion, I am pleased to address a special greeting to you and to all the friars who keep the Christian witness alive, study Scripture and welcome pilgrims.

The seraphic Father Francis, in the Pentecost Chapter of May 1217, opened the Order to the people as witnesses to faith, fraternity and peace; and in this way the Province of the Holy Land, initially referred to as the “Overseas” or “Syria” Province, was established. This broadening of the horizon of evangelization was the beginning of an extraordinary adventure, which eight centuries ago led the first Friars Minor to disembark at Acri, where, on this past 11 June, you began your centenary celebrations, renewing your adherence to Jesus’ call, faithful to the Gospel and to the Church.

Since my visit in 2014, our common pilgrimage to the Holy Places has been the immense task of your friars. With the Apostolic Blessing, I entrust the Custody of the Holy Land, each of its communities and all the friars to the care of Saint Anthony of Padua, I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 17 October 2017

The Church in the United States celebrates annual week for vocations

Prayer and witness

Through witness and prayer, young people are called to discern whether they have received a vocation to religious life. In order to encourage vocations, the Catholic Church in the United States is celebrating its annual National Vocation Awareness Week this week, 5-11 November, with special Masses and educational activities in parishes across the US, inviting the faithful to renew their prayers and support those who are contemplating entering the priesthood, diaconate or consecrated life.

In a statement, Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Chairman of the US Bishops’ Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life, and Vocations, said that all the faithful are called to offer an example of Christian witness. “As we go about our everyday lives and most especially this week, we must keep vocations in our prayers, while, at the same time, being a mindful witness with our own vocations. We may never know how our lives may have an impact on someone else’s story. Simply living out our call as disciples of Jesus Christ fully and joyfully in the world bears witness to the love of Christ as God’s generously bestows on each of us our own personal call.”

According a statement released by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), who sponsors National Vocations Awareness Week, the celebration is “designed to help promote vocation awareness and to encourage young people to ask the question: ‘To what vocation in life is God calling me?”’. In order to assist them along this path of discernment, the bishops have encouraged parishes and schools across the country to engage in prayerful activities, and especially the youth, in events, activities, and prayer aimed at raising awareness about vocations. Cardinal Tobin’s office has posted information and resources for National Vocation Awareness Week online at: https://www.usccb.org/faith-and-teachings/vocations/national-vocation-awareness-week.cfm; the information includes a prayer card, homily suggestions, sample prayers and other materials.

Vocation Awareness Week began in 1976 when US bishops designated the 58th Sunday of the year for the celebration. Between 1997 and 2015, it was observed on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord in January. In 2014 the USCCB Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations moved the observance of National Vocation Awareness Week to November in order to more effectively engage Catholic schools and colleges in the effort.
Authority derives from good example

The Pope advises Christians not to seek vain accolades

He says to the crowd: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you”. Meaning that they have the authority to teach what is in conformity with the Law of God. However, immediately after, Jesus adds: “but do not do what they do; for they preach, but do not practice” (vv. 2-3). Brothers and sisters, a frequent flaw of those in authority, whether civil or ecclesiastic authority, is that of demanding of others things — even righteous things — that they do not, however, put into practice in the first person. They live a double life. Jesus says: “They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with their finger” (v. 4). This attitude sets a bad example of authority, which should instead derive its primary strength precisely from setting a good example. Authority arises from a good example, so as to help others to practise what is right and proper, sustaining them in the trials that they meet on the right path. Authority is a help, but if it is wrongly exercised, it becomes oppressive; it does not allow people to grow, and creates a climate of distrust and hostility, and also leads to corruption.

Jesus openly denies some of the negative conduct of the scribes and of some Pharisees: “they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the marketplaces” (vv. 6-7). This is a temptation that corresponds to human pride and that is not always easy to overcome. It is the attitude of living only for appearances.

Then, Jesus entrusts the mandates to his disciples: “you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. [...] Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ. He who is greatest among you shall be your servant” (vv. 8-11).

We disciples of Jesus must not seek titles of honour, of authority or supremacy. I tell you, it pains me personally to see people who, psychologically, live in pursuit of vain accolades. We disciples of Jesus must not do this, because among ourselves there must be a simple and fraternal attitude. We are all brothers and sisters and in no way must we abuse others or look down on them. No. We are all brothers and sisters. If we have received talents from the heavenly Father, we must place them at the service of our brothers and sisters, and not exploit them for our own satisfaction and personal interests. We must not consider ourselves superior to others; modesty is essential for an existence that seeks to conform to the teaching of Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart and came not to be served but to serve.

May the Virgin Mary, “humble and exalted more than any creature” (Dante, Paradiso, XXXII, 93), help us, with her motherly intercession, to spurn pride and vanity, and to be meek and docile to the love that comes from God, for the service of our brothers and sisters and for their joy, which will also be our own.

After praying the Angelus, Pope Francis added:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Indore, India, Regina Maria Vattalil was beatified. A religious of the Congregation of the Franciscan Clarist Sisters, killed in 1995 for her Christian faith, Sister Vattalil bore witness to Christ in love and in meekness, and she joins the multitude of martyrs of our time. May her sacrifice be the seed of faith and peace, especially on Indian soil. She was so good. They called her “the smiling sister”.

I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims, in particular those who have come from Gomel, Belarus; the members of Madrid’s Centro Académico Romano Fundación, the faithful from Valencia, Murcia and Torrente, Spain; and the Ermita da Divina Providência women religious, who are celebrating 175 years of their Institute.

I greet the Mingolfoiani youth choir from Trento — afterwards sing some more! — the choirs from Candiana, Maser and Bagnoli di Sopra, Italy; those taking part in the Sacred Music and Arts Festival, who have come from various countries; the faithful from Altamura, Guidonia and Lodri, Italy, and from Saint Luke’s Parish in Rome.

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

Authority derives its strength from “setting a good example” and not from demanding of others what one does not practice. Pope Francis emphasized this at the Angelus in Saint Peter’s Square on Sunday, November 5. The following is a translation of the reflection that he offered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today’s Gospel passage (cf. Mt 23:1-12) is set in the final days of Jesus’ life, in Jerusa-
lem; days filled with expectations and also tension. On the one hand, Jesus directs harsh criticism at the scribes and Pharisees, and on the other, he entrusts important mandates to Christians of all times, thus also to us.

With the Grand Imam of al-Azhar

On Tuesday morning, 7 November, in the studio of the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father received in audience H.E. Ahmed Muhammad al-Tayyib, Grand Imam of al-Azhar, with his entourage. Following the encounter, the Holy Father invited the religious leader of Sunni Muslims to lunch in the Santa Marta residence.

Christ was victorious over death. He is our resurrection and our life. Be witnesses to this message of hope.

(@Pontifex)