

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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The power of a name

Celebrating five years of Francis' Pontificate

GIOVANNI MARIA VIAN

Five years ago, truly few had been able to foresee the Conclave's election of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and fewer still had expected the name Benedict XVI's Successor would choose following the first pontifical resignation in over six centuries. Yet that name was anticipated, as some electors had suggested and, as curiously appeared in the image – repeatedly broadcast on television during the Conclave – of a man clad in a habit, kneeling in the freezing rain falling on Saint Peter's Square, around his neck a sign reading "Pope Francis". That sign summed up the expectation, recurrent during the Middle Ages, of a radical renewal thanks to a *papa angelicus*.

In the Jewish and then Christian tradition, a name embraces much more than a preference or inclination, as appears in the Bible: the Lord changes that of Abraham, and Jesus does likewise with Peter to indicate a transformation of one's life. The custom of taking a name different from one's own was affirmed much later in some religious orders, as had happened in papal successions after the first centuries. However, no Pontiff had ever chosen to call himself Francis, a name of profane origin which, in medieval Latin, indicated that one came from France, but which became Christian *par excellence* because it recalled the Saint of Assisi (who was baptized "John") and his radicalism in the imitation of Christ.

At the Angelus

Courage to admit our weaknesses



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As the sixth year of his Pontificate begins, the power of that name – which Pope Bergoglio sought to explain to journalists three days after his election – is clear. A name which evokes the figure of Saint Francis for three reasons: attention and closeness to the poor – recommended to the new Pontiff by "a great friend" (the Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes who was beside him in the Sistine Chapel) when the votes had surpassed the necessary two thirds –, preaching peace, and care for creation. Three components of the Christian message which characterize the days of the first American Pope, who is also the first non-European Pontiff in nearly 13 centuries, as well as the first Jesuit.

Just before the Conclave, indicating the necessity for the Church to go out to the world's real and metaphorical peripheries to proclaim the Gospel, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires illustrated an essentially missionary Pontificate, a blueprint which in just a few months' time would be developed in the lengthy programmatic document *Evangelii Gaudium*. Joy despite the persecution and martyrdom of so many Christians, despite the growing imbalance between the world's north and south, despite that "piecemeal" world war he so often condemns, despite the devastation of the planet to the detriment first and foremost of the poor described in *Laudato Si'*, an Encyclical embraced with interest and hope even by many people who seem not to recognize themselves in the Church. Just as well beyond the visible confines of the Church we hear the simple and impassioned words of a Christian who, bearing a great burden, asks us each day to pray for him.

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As Jesus prayed

At the General Audience a catechesis on the Lord's Prayer



Salvador Dalí, "Patremoster" (1966)

"When we pray the Our Father, we pray as Jesus prayed". At the General Audience in Saint Peter's Square on Wednesday, 14 March, Pope Francis continued his series of catecheses on the Holy Mass, this week focusing on the Lord's Prayer, which, he reminded the faithful, Jesus taught us in response to his disciples asking, "Master, teach us to pray as you pray". The Holy Father observed that, "consigned to us on the day of our Baptism, the 'Our Father' makes resonate within us those same sentiments that Christ Jesus bore within". Indeed, he said, "when we pray the 'Our Father', we pray as Jesus prayed".

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VATICAN BULLETIN

AUDIENCES

Thursday, 8 March

Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Members of the Episcopal Conference of the Latin Bishops of the Arab Regions (CELRA), on a visit *ad limina Apostolorum*:

- Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, titular Archbishop of Verbe, Apostolic Administrator "*sede vacante*" of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem for Latins, with the Auxiliaries: Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo, titular Bishop of Emmaus, for Israel; Bishop William Hanna Shomali, titular Bishop of Lydda for Jordan, and with: Fr Hanna Kaldani, Patriarchal Vicar for Israel; Fr Jerzy Kraj, OFM, Patriarchal Vicar for Cyprus; Fr Rafic Nahra, Patriarchal Vicar for Hebrew-speaking Catholics

- Archbishop Jean Benjamin Sleiman, OCD, of Baghdad for Latins, Iraq

- Bishop Giorgio Bertin, OFM, of Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti, Apostolic Administrator "*ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*" of Mogadishu

- Bishop Paul Hinder, OFM Cap., titular Bishop of Macon, Vicar Apostolic of Southern Arabia, United Arab Emirates

- Bishop Camillo Ballin, MCCJ, titular Bishop of Arna, Vicar Apostolic of Northern Arabia, Bahrain

- Bishop Georges Abou Khazen, OFM, titular Bishop of Rusadus, Vicar Apostolic of Alep, Syria

- Bishop Adel Zaki, OFM, titular Bishop of Flumenzer, Vicar Apostolic of Alexandria of Egypt, Egypt

- Bishop Cesar Essayan, OFM Conv., titular Bishop of Marcoetes, Vicar Apostolic of Beirut, Lebanon

Friday, 9 March

Cardinal Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardozo, Archbishop of Mérida, Venezuela

Archbishop Andrés Carrascosa Coso, titular Archbishop of Elo, Apostolic Nuncio in Ecuador

Saturday, 10 March

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, PSS, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops

Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga of Kampala, Uganda

Bishop Gustavo Óscar Zanchetta, Assessor of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See;



with Msgr Brian Edwin Ferme, Secretary of the Council for the Economy

Cardinal Leopoldo José Brenes Solórzano, Archbishop of Managua, Nicaragua

Monday, 12 March

Bishop Juan Rubén Martínez de Posadas, Argentina

Archbishop Bruno Musarò, titular Archbishop of Abari, Apostolic Nuncio in the Arab Republic of Egypt; Delegate of the Holy See to the League of Arab States

Bishop Han Lim Moon, titular Bishop of Thuca in Mauretania, Auxiliary of San Martín, Argentina

Br Alois, Prior of Taizé, France

Ms Bernice Albertine King

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, Archbishop of Perugia-Città della Pieve, Italy, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of São Carlos, Brazil, Fr Eduardo Malaspina from the clergy of the same diocese, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Pupiana. Until now he has been vicar general and parish priest of São Nicolau de Flie in São Carlos (7 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Malaspina, 50, was born in Tabatinga, Brazil. He holds a specialization in philosophy, in pastoral theology, and in communication sciences from the Pontifical Salesian University of Rome. In addition, he attended courses in journalism at the Sagrado Coração University of Bauru. He was ordained a

priest on 13 December 1991. He has served in parish ministry and as: diocesan pastoral secretary and then diocesan pastoral coordinator; member of the Presbyteral Council for three terms; professor at the diocesan propaedeutic Seminary and at the Seminary of Philosophy, and chancellor.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Slobodan Štambuk of Hvar, Croatia (9 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of Hvar Fr Petar Palić from of the clergy of the Diocese of Dubrovnik, secretary general of the Croatian Episcopal Conference (9 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Palić, 45, was born in Pristina, Kosovo. He holds a degree in theology and a doctorate in moral theology. He was ordained a priest on 1 June 1996. He has served in parish ministry and as: director of the diocesan Catechetical Office; private secretary to the Bishop of Dubrovnik; director of the diocesan Office for the Support of the Clergy; episcopal vicar for pastoral ministry; vicar general of the Diocese of Dubrovnik; member of the Presbyteral Council, of the College of Consultors, and of the Council of the Episcopal Conference for Catechesis and New Evangelization. In 2003 he was appointed president of the Central Committee for the preparations for the visit of the Holy Father John Paul II to Dubrovnik and president of the Preparatory Committee for the National Meeting of Croatian Youth in Dubrovnik in 2014.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jean-Marie Le Vert as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bordeaux, France, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Briançonnet. Until now he has been Bishop emeritus of Quimper et Léon, France (9 Mar.).

Bishop Le Vert, 58, was born in Paapeete, Tahiti. He was ordained a

priest on 10 October 1987. He was ordained a bishop on 8 January 2006, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Simidicca and Auxiliary of Meaux, France. On 7 December 2007, he was transferred to the See of Quimper et Léon. He resigned from this office on 22 January 2015.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Florencio Félix Paredes Cruz, CRL, as Coadjutor Bishop-Prelate of the Territorial Prelature of Humahuaca, Argentina. Until now he has served as parish priest of Nuestra Señora de Belén Parish in the same ecclesiastical circumscription (10 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Paredes Cruz, 56, was born in Selochca, Bolivia. He was ordained a priest on 1 February 1995 for the Congregation of the Canons Regular of the Lateran. He has served in parish ministry and as: member of the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Salta; master of novices; provincial of the Argentine Province of the Canons Regular of the Lateran, for two terms.

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of Kabankalan, the Philippines, Fr Louie Patalinghug Galbines from the clergy of the Diocese of Bacolod, the Philippines. Until now he has served as vicar general (12 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Galbines, 51, was born in Aliwanag, the Philippines. He holds a doctorate in theology. He was ordained a priest on 29 April 1994. He has served as: vice dean and spiritual director of the Sacred Heart Seminary; chancellor and secretary of the diocesan curia of Bacolod. On his return from Rome he served in parish ministry and as: treasurer and contributing member of the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines; vice president and then president of the diocesan commission for the clergy; rector of the Sacred Heart Seminary in Bacolod City.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Mário Lukunde of Menongue, Angola (12 Mar.).

VATICAN CITY STATE

The Holy Father appointed as judges of the Court of Appeal of Vatican City State Msgr Vito Angelo Todisco and Msgr Pietro Milite, Prelate Auditors of the Roman Rota (10 Mar.).

APOSTOLIC NUNCIO

The Holy Father appointed as Apostolic Nuncio in Lebanon Archbishop Joseph Spiteri, titular Archbishop of Sertis. Until now he has been Apostolic Nuncio in Côte d'Ivoire (7 Mar.).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Pope entrusts Via Crucis reflections to students

The Holy Father has assigned a group of young people the task of writing the meditations for this year's Via Crucis at the Colosseum on Good Friday, 30 March. In a statement announcing the decision, Greg Burke, Director of the Holy See Press Office, said that the young people, students from a high school in Rome, will be led by the writer Andrea Monda, a religion teacher at their school.

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As Jesus prayed

At the General Audience Francis speaks about the Our Father prayer

"When we pray the Our Father, we pray as Jesus prayed". Pope Francis reminded the faithful gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the General Audience on Wednesday, 14 March, of the richness of the Lord's Prayer which "connects" us ever closer to our heavenly Father. Continuing his series of Catecheses dedicated to the Mass, the Pontiff focused his reflection on the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he offered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Let us continue with the Catecheses on the Holy Mass. At the Last Supper, after Jesus took the bread and the cup of wine, and gave thanks to God, we know that "he broke the bread". In the Eucharistic Liturgy of the Mass, this action corresponds to the *Fraction of Bread*, preceded by the prayer that the Lord taught us, that is, by the "Our Father".

and he taught it to us; when the disciples said to him: "Master, teach us to pray as you pray". And this is how Jesus prayed. It is so beautiful to pray like Jesus! Formed by his divine teaching, we dare to turn to God calling him "Father", because we are reborn as his children through water and the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:5). No one, truly, could call him "Abba" – "Father" – in a familiar way without having been created by God, without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as Saint Paul teaches (cf. Rom 8:15). We must consider: no one can call him "Father" without the inspiration of the Spirit. How often there are people who say "Our Father" but do not know what they are saying. Because yes, he is the Father, but when you say "Father", do you feel that he is Father, your Father, the Father of mankind, the Father of Jesus Christ? Do you have a relationship with this Father? When we pray the "Our Father", we connect with the Father who loves us, but it is the Spirit who gives us this connection, this feeling of being God's children.

What better prayer than the one taught by Jesus could prepare us for sacramental Communion with him? Apart from in the Mass, the "Our Father" is prayed in the morning and at night, in the Praises and in Vespers; in this way, the filial attitude toward God and that of fraternity with our neighbour help give Christian form to our days.

In the Lord's Prayer – in the "Our Father" – we ask for our "daily bread", in which we see a particular reference to the Eucharistic Bread, which we need in order to live as children of God. We also implore "forgiveness of our trespasses". And in order to be worthy to receive God's forgiveness we commit to forgiving those who have offended us. And this is not easy. Forgiving the people who have offended us is not easy; it is a grace that we must ask for: "Lord, teach me to forgive as you have forgiven me". It is a grace. Through our own efforts we are unable: to forgive is a grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as we open our heart to God, the "Our Father" also prepares us for fraternal love. Lastly, we again ask God to "deliver us from evil" which separates us from him and divides us from our brothers and sisters. Let us clearly understand that these requests are quite appropriate to prepare ourselves for Holy Communion (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 81).

Indeed, what we ask in the "Our Father" is extended by the prayer of the priest who, in the name of all, implores: "Deliver us Lord from every evil, and grant us peace in

our day". He then receives a sort of seal in the Rite of Peace: what he first asks of Christ is that the gift of His peace (cf. Jn 14:27) – thus different from worldly peace – may help the Church to grow in unity and in peace, according to His will; then, with the concrete gesture exchanged among us, we express "ecclesial communion and mutual charity before communicating in the Sacrament" (cf. *GIRM*, 82). In the Roman Rite the exchange of the sign of peace, placed from antiquity before Communion, is ordered to Eucharistic Communion. According to Saint Paul's admonition, it is impossible to communicate with the one Bread that renders us one Body in Christ, without recognizing that we are reconciled by fraternal love (cf. 1 Cor 10:16-17; 11:29). Christ's peace cannot take root in a heart incapable of experiencing fraternity and of restoring it after it has been wounded. Peace is granted by the Lord: he grants us the grace to forgive those who have offended us.

The gesture of peace is followed by the *Fraction of Bread* (cf. *GIRM*, 83; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1329). Performed by Jesus during the Last Supper, the breaking of the Bread is the revelatory gesture that allowed the disciples to recognize him after his Resurrection. We remember the disciples of Emmaus who, in speaking of their encounter with the Risen One, recount "how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread" (cf. Lk 24:30-31, 35).

The breaking of the Eucharistic Bread is accompanied by the invocation of the "Lamb of God", the figure which John the Baptist indicated in Jesus "who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The biblical image of the lamb speaks of redemption (cf. Ex 12:1-14; Is 53:7; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 7:14). In the Eucharistic Bread, broken for the life of the world, the prayerful assembly recognizes the true Lamb of God, namely, Christ the Redeemer, and implores him: "Have mercy on us ... grant us peace".

"Have mercy on us", "grant us peace" are invocations that, from the "Our Father" prayer to the Fraction of Bread, help us to prepare our soul to participate in the Eucharistic banquet, the source of communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.

Let us not forget the great prayer: the one that Jesus taught us, and which is the prayer with which he prayed to the Father. This prayer prepares us for Communion.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Ireland, Norway, Australia, China, Indonesia and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that this Lent will be a time of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. Dear friends, Christ promised to always be with us and he manifests his presence in many ways. Each person has the responsible and courageous task of proclaiming and witnessing to His love which sustains us in every occasion of life. Therefore, never tire of entrusting yourselves to Christ and to spread his Gospel everywhere.

To Taoist Delegation of Taipei

On Wednesday, 14 March, before celebrating the General Audience in Saint Peter's Square, the Holy Father met with a Taoist Delegation from the Bao'an Temple of Taipei, Taiwan. The following is a translation of the Pope's greeting, which he delivered in Italian.



I thank you very much for your visit and for your words. I am pleased about this Joint Work with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. It is a dialogue not only of ideas; it is a human dialogue, from person to person, that helps everyone to grow, to grow as people, in our journey in search of the absolute, of God. Thank you very much, thank you for your good will. Thank you for your visit and thank you for your invitation to visit Taiwan. I greatly appreciate all of this.

May the Lord bless you all, and pray for me.

Thus begins the Communion Rite, continuing the praise and petition of the Eucharistic Prayer with the community's recitation of the "Our Father". This is not one of many Christian prayers, but the *prayer of the children of God*: it is the great prayer that Jesus taught us. Indeed, consigned to us on the day of our Baptism, the "Our Father" makes resonate within us those same sentiments that Christ Jesus bore within. When we pray the "Our Father", we pray as Jesus prayed. It is the prayer that Jesus prayed,

Bishop emeritus of Mainz and long-standing President of German Bishops' Conference

Cardinal Karl Lehmann dies

Cardinal Karl Lehmann, Bishop emeritus of Mainz, Germany, died early Sunday morning, 11 March, due to complications from a stroke and cerebral hemorrhage. He was 81 years old. After learning of Cardinal Lehmann's passing, Pope Francis expressed his condolences to all the faithful of Mainz in a telegram addressed to Bishop Peter Kohlgraf. The following is a brief biography, accompanied by a translation of the Holy Father's telegram.

Karl Lehmann was born on 16 May 1936 in Sigmaringen, in the Archdiocese of Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany. After graduating high school in his home town, he studied philosophy and theology at the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg. He studied philosophy at the *Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum* in Rome from 1957-1964, and then theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was ordained a priest in Rome on 10 October 1963, by Cardinal Julius Döpfner.

During that period Fr Lehmann had the opportunity to experience the climate of the Second Vatican Council. From 1964-1967, he also served as assistant to Jesuit Karl Rahner in the faculty of philosophy of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

He earned a degree in theology in 1967 at the Gregorian, after which he resumed his work as assistant to Rahner in the faculty of Catholic theology at the *Wilhelms-Universität of Münster*, and later received a grant from *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* to pursue a qualification. The Archbishop of Freiburg exempted Fr Lehmann from pastoral office, allowing him to pursue an academic course and begin his thesis on the theme *The hidden God and the concept of Revelation*.

In 1968, Lehmann was appointed chair of dogmatics in the faculty of theology of the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. In 1969 he joined the work of the ecumenical circle of Evangelical and Catholic theologians (Jaeger-Stählin-Kreis), becoming a scientific consultant in 1975, and then president in 1989.

He served as co-editor of the international periodical *Communio* from 1971, and between 1969-1983 was a member of the Central Committee of German Catholics (ZDK). From 1971-1983 he was a professor of dogmatic and ecumenical theology in the faculty of theology of the Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg. In addition, he became a member of the International Theological Commission in 1974. From 1975-1978 he served as managing editor of the official publication of the dioceses of the Federal German Republic, which was held in Würzburg from 1971-1975.

He was named an Honorary Prelate of His Holiness in 1979, and was appointed Bishop of Mainz on 21 June 1983. He was ordained a bishop the following 2 October by Cardinal Hermann Volk. The new Bishop chose as his episcopal motto *Stare in fide* ("Stand fast in the

Sadly I have learned the news of the death of His Eminence Cardinal Karl Lehmann. I express to you and to the faithful of the Diocese of Mainz my heartfelt condolences, assuring my prayers for the dear departed Cardinal whom the Lord has called to Himself after grave illness and suffering. In his extensive career as theologian and Bishop, as well as President of the German Episcopal Conference, he contributed to shaping the life of the Church and of society. He always had at heart openness to the issues and challenges of the time, and offered responses and directions beginning from Christ's message, in order to accompany people along their journey, seeking what unites beyond the confines of confessions, convictions and States. May Jesus, the Good Shepherd, grant to His faithful servant the fulfillment and fullness of life in His heavenly kingdom. I impart to you and to those who mourn and prayerfully remember the late Cardinal my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

FRANCIS



faith"), an expression drawn from Saint Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (16:13).

In 1984, in view of his commitment to improving ecumenical relations, he became a member of the circle for dialogue between representatives of the German Episcopal Conference and of the Council of the Evangelical Church of Germany. Then, from 1986-1988, he became first a member, and the president, of the Catholic delegation to the Lutheran-Roman Catholic ecumenical Dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

Beyond Germany, he also continued to hold high level positions in the Church. From 1993-2001, he served as Vice President of the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). In addition to participating in various Synods and having played the role of Extraordinary Secretary of the Special Assembly for Europe in 1991, he also served in the Roman Curia as a member of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and of the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for Bishops, and for the Oriental Churches. He also received nu-

merous prestigious honours, including the Grand Cross (*Grosses Verdienstkreuz mit Stern und Schulterband*) from the Federal Republic of Germany, and various *ad honorem* degrees, which included those from the Universities of Innsbruck and Graz in Austria, the Catholic University of Washington, Saint Patrick's College in Ireland and the Catholic University of Warsaw. Lehmann joined the European Academy of Sciences in 1991; he received the Karl Barth Award from the Union of Evangelical Churches in Germany (UEK), and the Romano Guardini Prize from the Catholic Academy in Bavaria. He was also the first Catholic to receive the Martin Luther Medal of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

He made countless valuable theological contributions and produced numerous publications, authoring over 4,000 monographs and articles, while his personal library contained over 100,000 volumes.

Lehmann was elected four times – in 1987, 1993, 1999 and 2005 – to the Presidency of the German Episcopal Conference, serving in that position for 21 years.

John Paul II created Lehmann Cardinal with the Title of San Le-

one 1 in the Consistory of 21 February 2001. Cardinal Lehmann resigned his office as Bishop of Mainz on 16 May 2016.

In a statement, German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her sadness at Cardinal Lehmann's passing, describing him as a "gifted mediator ... in the spirit of ecumenism between the Christian churches, but also between Christians and the faithful of other religions". Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, also expressed gratitude and appreciation for Cardinal Lehmann's commitment to dialogue and peace on the continent.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, President of the German Bishops' Conference, said in a statement that the German Church "bows before a person who has played a major role in shaping the Catholic Church worldwide" and that with his death, German Catholics have lost "a formative figure". Cardinal Lehmann, he said, "worked tirelessly for international understanding and reconciliation, bridge-building and dialogue".

Funeral services will be celebrated for Cardinal Lehmann on Wednesday, 21 March, in the Cathedral of Mainz.

VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

START OF MISSION

The Holy Father appointed as Apostolic Nuncio in Georgia Archbishop José Avelino Bettencourt, titular Archbishop of Cittanova and Apostolic nuncio in Armenia (8 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed as Apostolic Nuncio in Suriname Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, titular Archbishop of Acquaviva, Apostolic Nuncio in Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the Commonwealth of Dominica, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, Santa Lucia, Grenada, and The Bahamas, and Apostolic Delegate in the Antilles (9 Mar.).

On 17 January, Archbishop Piero Pioppo, titular Archbishop of Torcello, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Indonesia with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Joko Widodo, President of the Republic.

On 25 January, Archbishop James Patrick Green, titular Archbishop of Altino, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Norway with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to King Harald v.

LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 9 March, in the presence of the Holy Father, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household,

delivered the third Lenten Sermon in the Vatican's Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

NECROLOGY

Bishop Jean-Guy Hamelin, Bishop emeritus of Rouyn-Noranda, Canada, at age 92 (1 Mar.)

Bishop Werner Radspieler, titular Bishop of Thugga and Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Bamberg, Germany, at age 79 (7 Mar.)

Archbishop Elias Yanes Álvarez, Archbishop emeritus of Zaragoza, Spain, at age 90 (9 Mar.)

Bishop Roch Pedneault, titular Bishop of Aggersel and Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Chicoutimi, Canada, at age 90 (10 Mar.)

Bishop Jean Damascène Bimenyimana of Cyangugu, Rwanda, at age 64 (11 Mar.)

Sieger Köder, "Peter and the crowing rooster"



A love that knows no bounds

Penitential celebration in the Vatican Basilica

God's love "is an infinite love, one that knows no bounds. It is free of all those obstacles that we, for our part, tend to set in front of others, out of fear that they may strip us of our freedom". This was Pope Francis' focus during the penitential celebration on Friday afternoon, 9 March, at which he presided in Saint Peter's Basilica. The following is the English text of his homily.

What great joy and consolation are offered us by the words of Saint John that we just heard: God so loves us that he has made us his children, and, when we see him face-to-face, we shall discover all the more the greatness of his love (cf. 1 Jn 3:1-10, 19-22). Not only that. The love of God is always greater than anything we can imagine; it even reaches beyond any sin with which our conscience may charge us. His is an infinite love, one that knows no bounds. It is free of all those obstacles that we, for our part, tend to set in front of others, out of fear that they may strip us of our freedom.

We know that the state of sin distances us from God. But in fact, sin is the way that we distance ourselves from him. Yet that does not mean that God distances himself from us. The state of weakness and confusion that results from sin is one more reason for God to remain close to us. The certainty of this should accompany us throughout our lives. The words of the Apostle are a reassuring confirmation that our hearts should

trust, always and unhesitatingly, in the Father's love: "No matter what our hearts may charge us with, God is greater than our hearts" (v. 20).

His grace is constantly at work in us, to strengthen our hope that his love will never be lacking, in spite of any sin we may have committed by rejecting his presence in our lives.

It is this hope that makes us realize at times that our life has lost its direction, as Peter did in the Gospel account that we heard. "And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times'. And he went out and wept bitterly" (Mt 26:74-75). The evangelist is extremely sober. The crowing of the cock startles a man who is bewildered; he then recalls the words of Jesus, and at last the curtain is lifted. Peter begins to glimpse through his tears that God is revealed in Christ, who is buffeted and insulted, whom he himself has denied, yet who now goes off to die for him. Peter, who wanted to die for Jesus, now realizes that he must let Jesus die for him. Peter wanted to teach the Master; he wanted to go before him. Instead, it is Jesus who goes off to die for Peter. Peter had not understood this; he didn't want to understand it.

Peter is now confronted with the Lord's charity. Finally he understands that the

Lord loves him and asks him to let himself be loved. Peter realizes that he had always refused to let himself be loved. He had always refused to let himself be saved by Jesus alone, and so he did not want Jesus to love him completely.

How truly difficult it is to let ourselves be loved! We would always like a part of us to be freed of the debt of gratitude, while in reality we are completely indebted, because God loved us first and, with love, he saves us completely.

Let us now ask the Lord for the grace to know the greatness of his love, which wipes away our every sin.

Let us allow ourselves to be purified by love, in order to recognize true love!

Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Promulgation of Decrees

On Tuesday, 6 March, the Holy Father received in audience Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. During the audience, the Supreme Pontiff authorized the Congregation to promulgate the Decrees concerning:

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini), Supreme Pontiff, born in Concesio, Italy on 26 September 1897 and died in Castel Gandolfo, Italy on 6 August 1978;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Oscar Arnulfo Romero Galdámez, Archbishop of San Salvador, martyr, born in Ciudad Barrios, El Salvador on 15 August 1917 and killed in San Salvador, El Salvador on 24 March 1980;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Francesco Spinelli, diocesan priest, Founder of the Institute of the Sisters Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, born in Milan, Italy on 14 April 1853 and died in Rivolta d'Adda, Italy on 6 February 1913;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Vincenzo Romano, diocesan priest, born on 3 June 1751 in Torre del Greco, Italy and died there on 20 December 1831;

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Maria Katharina Kasper, Foundress of the Institute of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, born on 26 May 1820 in Dernbach, Germany and died there on 2 February 1898;



A mural in San Salvador depicting Archbishop Romero

– the miracle attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God María Felicia of Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament (in the world: María Felicia Guggiari Echeverría), professed nun of the Order of the Carmelites, born in Villarrica, Paraguay on 12 January 1925 and died in Asunción, Paraguay on 28 April 1959;

– the martyrdom of the Servant of God Anna Kolesárová, laywoman, born on 14 July 1928 in Vysoká nad Uhom, Slovakia and killed there in hatred of the faith on 22 November 1944;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Bernardo Łubieński, professed priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, born in Guzów, Poland on 9 December 1846 and died in Warsaw, Poland on 10 September 1933;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Cecilio Maria Cortinovis (in the world: Antonio Pietro), professed reli-

gious of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, born in Nespello, Italy on 7 November 1885 and died in Bergamo, Italy on 10 April 1984;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Giustina Schiapparoli, Foundress of the Congregation of the Benedictine Sisters of Divine Providence, born in Castel San Giovanni, Italy on 19 July 1819 and died in Voghera, Italy on 30 November 1877;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Schiapparoli, Foundress of the Congregation of the Benedictine Sisters of Divine Providence, born in Castel San Giovanni, Italy on 19 April 1815 and died in Vespolate, Italy on 2 May 1882;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Antonella Bordoni, lay woman, of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, Foundress of the Lay Fraternity of the Little Daughters of the Mother of God, now Little Daughters of the Mother of God, born in Arezzo, Italy on 13 October 1916 and died in Castel Gandolfo, Italy on 16 January 1978;

– the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Alessandra Sabattini, lay woman, born in Riccione, Italy on 19 August 1961 and died in Bologna, Italy on 2 May 1984.



Mercy

JEAN-MARIE GUENOIS

Who remembers the *Misericordina* – that little package that looked like a box of medicine but contained a Rosary and prayer card, a spiritual remedy to treat and heal the depths of the heart and spirit? It was all the rage at the start of the Pontificate because that ‘pharmacy of the heart’ was a perfect symbol for the treatment that the new Pope prescribed for the Catholic Church. On the package leaflet was a phrase so often repeated by Francis: “revolution of tenderness”.

It indicated a treatment but also and above all a diagnosis: that of a Catholic Church was unable to convey her most essential message: the compassion and mercy of Christ for all of life’s miseries. The Saviour rejects none of them, especially the most hidden, the most unspeakable, that invisible cellular tissue where the true acid of human conscience thrives, that lethal virus that convinces man of two things: that he will never be able to escape his squalor and that God will never forgive him; a perfect ingredient of deep despair because it is silent and secret.

Yet the message of mercy had long been approaching from afar. Focusing on the 1900s, Sr Faustina Kowalska, the Polish Saint of Divine Mercy, had a decisive influence on Karol Wojtyła who dedicated his second Encyclical to mercy. And the Council had been opened and closed precisely in the sign of mercy, the heart of the Gospel.

In hindsight one could say that the precious message of Divine Mercy was quite remarkable, but was unable to win over public opinion, that of believers or non-believers, neither Christians nor even Catholics.

Public opinion continued to have an image of the Catholic Church as an intransigent moral gendarme. In fact it was difficult, after centuries of scrupulous moralism, to erase that negative image by explaining that, by then, an “inconceivable mercy” reigned, as Sr Faustina would say, and no longer the sad accounting of sins.

It is perhaps one of the great upheavals of these first five years of Francis’ Pontificate. This Pope, insisting on confession, celebrating an Extraordinary Holy Year dedicated to mercy, managed to win over the general public and to communicate that spiritual message of unconditional divine love: mercy. What his Predecessors had sown now appears to be cultivated by Francis, on a grand scale and in the form of spiritual nourishment for all.

Peripheries

LUCETTA SCARAFFIA

The Pope who came from the ends of the earth immediately brought to Rome, to the Vatican, the periphery as seen through his eyes. The viewpoint from which he saw the role that he was to assume, the lifestyle expected of a Pope, was so novel that he immediately accepted the risk of becoming separated from real life, and from relationships with other human beings, especially those unexpected relationships from which – he knew well – inspiration and strength could come.

Looking at the world from the viewpoint of the peripheries has inspired every act and every decision of his Pontificate: from his first journey to Lampedusa, a remote island in the middle of the Mediterranean which held his interest because it was the point of arrival for thousands of migrants, a periphery which welcomed those who were fleeing from the devastated peripheries of the world. Then came the journeys to the US-Mexico border, another place consumed by the tragedy of migration, and to the most devastated areas of the planet – like the shantytowns of Latin American cities where drugs are produced and distributed and then sold in rich countries – always searching for the right words to shake up a wealthy world that does not want to hear talk of the poor.

Pope Francis is well aware that evil comes from the peripheries, and therefore good can also come, for the world. With this perspective, revolutionizing the traditions of the Curia, he has created many Cardinals who work in peripheral areas and are considered of little account, in order to make understood once again that looking at the peripheries means turning the tables and taking renewal seriously.

The two most compelling acts he has accomplished have been: the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which completely reversed the point of view from which pollution was considered, casting before the eyes of the world – accustomed to complaining about the smog in the big cities – the enormous and unjust price that those living in poor countries pay for development which does not take into account the needs of human beings and of nature, but only profit; and then the opening of the Jubilee of Mercy in Bangui. When Francis opened the door of that poor cathedral, in the midst of a population tormented by war, the whole world understood that the era of the triumphant Church that has displayed her beauty and her opulence since the time of Saint Peter was over. The Church herself was asking for mercy for the oft-forgotten peripheries.

But there is still another periphery to be saved, right in the heart of the Church: women, both religious and lay, who have so much to say, so much to give, but are not heard.

The Poor

JOSE BELTRAN

Inside the Sistine Chapel, an ovation. The votes are tallied. There is no turning back. Centre stage. Bergoglio’s serene face, pensive. Beside him is Hummes. An embrace. Hummes says something in his ear. Truly centre stage. “Do not forget the poor”. A whisper from the Brazilian. God, speaking softly. The breeze of the Spirit echoing in the Argentine’s head: “the poor, the poor”. Straight away another word rises from his heart. ‘Francis’ is born. Another *poverello*. Those who count for nothing in society, those condemned to live nameless, give the new Pontificate its name and meaning. Minute zero: “I dream of a poor Church for the poor”. The Bishop of Rome’s programme for all Catholics. A dream, not a figment.

A roadmap that he himself establishes with his own steps, with worn out fisherman’s sandals that carry him to Lampedusa as his first destination. The refugees whom the sea swallows up, pushed into the abyss by the powerful. Poor among the poor. Since then the papal suitcase has traveled through the outskirts of the world. From a girl, a victim of trafficking in the Philippines, to the mothers incarcerated in Colombia. Washing the feet of a Muslim immigrant and then extending a hand to the reviled Rohingya. “He took a child, and put him in the midst of them, taking him in his arms”. From the periphery to the centre, Francis embraces poverty as a way of life. A provocation, because poverty has a foul odour; it is not photogenic and it only leads to problems. This is clearly understood by the pastor who travelled far and wide among the *villas* of Buenos Aires, who sought to complicate his life with the *cartoneros*, with child labourers from the *paco* and with single mothers. And as Pope he has complicated the life of more than one person who preferred to observe that reality from a distance, or at most to touch it with sterile gloves.

Francis forced the Church out of the official vehicle of false compassion in order to become soiled by mud. He has not lost himself in parlour discussions, each day at Santa Marta pronouncing the homily of austerity, humility and simplicity that was born in the stable of Bethlehem. Because for him embracing poverty is not an ethical postulate nor mere welfarism. It is the Gospel, discovering Jesus’ face in the penetrating gaze of the indigent. It is being viscerally moved like the father of the prodigal son, in order to rise up against the situations of injustice that have led to the creation of ghettos in all nations. The Bergogliian premise: I am privileged to be in debt to the poor, and not vice versa. For this reason this is a troublesome papacy. For the first Latin American Pope, embracing poverty means denouncing its causes and fighting them; indignation in the face of inequality; crying out for an end to an economy that rejects and starves, against a piecemeal war that creates new pockets of poverty, against a public opinion that renders invisible those who sleep in front of a bank or who beg at a supermarket entrance. The poor, at centre stage for Francis. From minute zero. Until today.



Five key words of Pope Francis

Go forth

SILVINA PÉREZ

Go forth. A phrase that encompasses one of the novelties of Francis’ Pontificate, a phrase around which the pastoral programme set out in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* is centred. Without a doubt it is an expression with which the Pontiff seeks to explain how, before a humanity suffering from wounds of every kind, evangelization must be carried out, that is, by taking the Gospel to the existential peripheries. “Go out to the streets and go to the thoroughfares, and invite as many as you find, exclude no one” (cf. Mt 23). “Accompany especially those who are on the roadside, ‘the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb’ (Mt 15:30). Wherever you may be, build neither walls nor borders but village squares and field hospitals”. With these words addressed to Italian Bishops on 10 November 2015 in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, the Pope indicated the style of the Church that “goes forth”, capable of consoling, helping, healing and, above all, making God’s mercy visible. Being a Church that goes forth means seeking out those who are lost, and welcoming those who seek help. The Church is thus energized to “go forth”, because she is animated by the Word of God’s “capacity for liberation and renewal”. But for Francis, going forth assumes a preceding step: that of conversion, because one is not ready if one does not first come out of oneself, toward God and toward others. Willingness to go out and listen is one of the interpretive keys to understanding all of Francis’ action; it is the way in which the Pope sees in his Magisterium the signs of the missionary nature of the Church. Pope Bergoglio had the ecclesial and pastoral intuition to go out, to go into the peripheries and reverse the gaze, departing anew from them, where, by celebrating the Eucharist in communion he finds the image of the Church he prefers: that expressed by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, of the “holy faithful people of God”. Thus, for Pope Francis *sentire cum ecclesia* means being a Church “in a permanent state of mission”. A Church that also “goes forth”, out of self-referentiality, from being locked up in “a little chapel that can only hold a small group of select people”. A missionary Church projected toward a world where the “globalization of indifference” prevails. Indifference which provokes that “throw-away culture” based on the preeminence of individual interests which, according to Francis, must be countered with the Gospel of mercy.

The Devil

ENZO BIANCHI

“The devil also exists in the 21st century, and we need to learn from the Gospel how to battle against him”. In this observation from his homily at Santa Marta on 11 April 2014, the Pope’s thinking is concentrated not so much on the devil’s existence as – much more profoundly – on how a Christian must confront this presence which, even when lacking its stereotypical images and personifications, never ceases to affect the daily life of each person. Francis is not really interested in describing the demon, the “divider” who tries endlessly to separate us from God and to set us against one another. The Pope takes especially to heart that a Christian be able to fight day after day against the demons, using as a weapon the Gospel, the Good News of God who became man in order to heal the sick, to save those who are lost, and to restore “division” every being to himself. And the weapons of the Gospel that is Jesus Christ are honed with discernment – of thoughts, of words, of acts and omissions – which leads one to recognize what comes from God and what comes from the Evil One. A discernment, the Pope clarifies, which is able to understand how the devil’s temptation – which has three characteristics: it “grows, spreads and justifies itself” – is embodied in us as individuals and as an ecclesial community. Yes, the tempter, like a virus, subtly works his way in, at first showing himself as a minor entity, then spreading his infection around him, until appearing to be, all in all, a justifiable condition.

So the battle must occur with the sword of the Word of God (cf. Heb 4:12) which penetrates and creates a “division” rivaling that of the demon, inspiring one to take a position which returns the Christian to the *sequela* of the Lord, setting him straight on the path, guiding him to conversion. It is attentiveness to the Word of God that prevents temptation from growing and taking root, that stops its spread and destroys its justifications. At the same time the Spirit battles within us and beside us, comforting us, once again lifting us out of despair, proclaiming to us the Good News of the Lord who forgives our sins. This merciful face of the Lord is the antidote that Francis constantly recalls in order to strengthen Christians in their struggle against idolatry and to console those who are tempted to give in to the devil’s flattery. The Lord Jesus – narrated and preached in the Gospel, the One who has broken down the dividing wall, who has created unity among two peoples (cf. Eph 2:14), and who each day recreates communion among his disciples – is the only One who can defeat the divider and unify our heart. Indeed, the Pope has affirmed since the day after his election, quoting Léon Bloy: “When we do not profess Jesus Christ, we profess the worldliness of the devil”.

Letter on Certain Aspects of Christian salvation

'Placuit Deo'

Addressing two tendencies resembling the ancient heresies of Pelagianism and Gnosticism

CONGREGATION FOR THE
DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Letter *Placuit Deo*
to the Bishops of the Catholic
Church on Certain Aspects of
Christian Salvation

I. Introduction

1. "In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (cf. Eph 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2:18; 2 Pt 1:4). The deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation".¹ The teaching on salvation in Christ must always be deepened. Holding fast to the gaze of the Lord Jesus, the Church turns toward all persons with a maternal love, to announce to them the plan of the Covenant of the Father, mediated by the

Neo-pelagianism and neo-gnosticism are the two reductionist tendencies that threaten Christianity today. To offer clear responses to these tendencies the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has published the Letter 'Placuit Deo', to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Aspects of Christian Salvation. The following is the English text of the Letter.

Holy Spirit, "to sum up all things in Christ, the one head" (Eph 1:10). The present Letter is intended, in light of the greater tradition of the faith and with particular reference to the teachings of Pope Francis, to demonstrate certain aspects of Christian salvation that can be difficult to understand today because of recent cultural changes.

II. The effect of current cultural changes on the meaning of Christian salvation

2. The contemporary world perceives not without difficulty the confession of the Christian faith, which proclaims Jesus as the only Savior of the whole human person and of all humanity (cf. Acts 4:12; Rom 3:23-24; 1 Tm 2:4-5; Tit 2:11-15).² On one hand, individualism centered on the autonomous subject tends to see the human person as a being whose sole fulfilment depends

only on his or her own strength.³ In this vision, the figure of Christ appears as a model that inspires generous actions with his words and his gestures, rather than as He who transforms the human condition by incorporating us into a new existence, reconciling us with the Father and dwelling among us in the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 5:19; Eph 2:18). On the other hand, a merely interior vision of salvation is becoming common, a vision which, marked by a strong personal conviction or feeling of being united to God, does not take into account the need to accept, heal and renew our relationships with others and with the created world. In this perspective, it becomes difficult to understand the meaning of the Incarnation of the Word, by which He was made a member of the human family, assuming our flesh and our history, for us and for our salvation.

3. Pope Francis, in his ordinary magisterium, often has made reference to the two tendencies described above, that resemble certain aspects of two ancient heresies, Pelagianism and Gnosticism.⁴ A new form of Pelagianism is spreading in our days, one in which the individual, understood to be radically autonomous, presumes to save oneself, without recognizing that, at the deepest level of being, he or she derives from God and from others. According to this way of thinking, salvation depends on the strength of the individual or on purely human structures, which are incapable of welcoming the newness of the Spirit of God.⁵ On the other hand, a new form of Gnosticism puts forward a model of salvation that is merely interior, closed off in its own subjectivism.⁶ In this model, salvation consists of improving oneself, of being "intellectually capable of rising above the flesh of Jesus towards the mysteries of the unknown divinity."⁷ It presumes to liberate the human person from the body and from the material universe, in which traces of the provident hand of the Creator are no longer found, but only a reality deprived of meaning, foreign to the fundamental identity of the person, and easily manipulated by the interests of man.⁸ Clearly, the comparison with the Pelagian and Gnostic heresies intends only to recall general common features, without entering into judgments on the exact nature of the ancient

errors. There is a great difference between modern, secularized society and the social context of early Christianity, in which these two heresies were born.⁹ However, insofar as Gnosticism and Pelagianism represent perennial dangers for misunderstanding Biblical faith, it is possible to find similarities between the ancient heresies and the modern tendencies just described.

4. Both neo-Pelagian individualism and the neo-Gnostic disregard of the body deface the confession of faith in Christ, the one, universal Savior. How would Christ be able to mediate the Covenant of the entire human family, if human persons were isolated individuals, who fulfil themselves by their own efforts, as proposed by neo-Pelagianism? Also, how could it be possible for the salvation mediated by the Incarnation of Jesus, his life, death and Resurrection in his true body, to come to us, if the only thing that mattered were liberating the inner reality of the human person from the limits of the body and the material, as described by the neo-Gnostic vision? In the face of these two trends, the present Letter wants to reaffirm that salvation consists in our union with Christ, who, by his Incarnation, death and Resurrection has brought about a new kind of relationship with the Father and among human persons, and has introduced us into these relationships, thanks to the gift of the Spirit, so that we are able to unite ourselves to the Father as sons in the Son, and become one body in the "first-born among many brothers" (Rom 8:29).

III. The human desire for salvation

5. Man perceives himself, directly or indirectly, as a mystery: 'Who am I? I exist, and yet do not have the principle of my existence within myself.' Every person, in his or her own way, searches for happiness and attempts to obtain it by making recourse to the resources one has available. However, this universal aspiration is not necessarily expressed or declared; rather, it is often more secret and hidden than it may appear, and is ready to reveal itself in the face of particular crises. Often it coincides with a hope for physical health; sometimes it takes the form of worrying about greater economic well-being; it expresses itself widely as the need for interior peace and for a peaceful coexistence with one's neighbour. On the other hand, while the question of salvation presents itself as



Sieger Köder, "Jesus, Peter and the waves"

Joel Whitehead, "Zacchaeus"



'Placuit Deo'

dedicated toward a higher good, it also maintains the character of endurance and of overcoming pain. Together with the struggle to attain the good comes the fight to ward off evil: ignorance and error, fragility and weakness, sickness and death.

6. Regarding these aspirations, faith in Christ teaches, rejecting all claims of self-realization, that these can be fulfilled completely only if God himself makes it possible, by drawing us toward Himself. The total salvation of the person does not consist of the things that the human person can obtain by himself, such as possessions, material well-being, knowledge or abilities, power or influence on others, good reputation or self-satisfaction¹⁰. No created thing can totally satisfy us, because God has destined us for communion with Him; our hearts will be restless until they rest in Him.¹¹ "The ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine."¹² Revelation, in this manner, does not limit itself to announcing salvation as an answer to any particular contemporary desire. "If redemption, on the contrary, were to be judged or measured according to the existential needs of human beings, how could we avoid the suspicion of having simply created a Redeemer God in the image of our own need?"¹³

7. It is also necessary to affirm that, according to biblical faith, the origin of evil is not found in the material, corporeal world experienced as a boundary or a prison from which we need to be saved. On the contrary, this faith proclaims that all the universe is good because it was created by God (cf. Gen 1:31; Wis 1:13-14; 1 Tim 4:4), and that the evil that is most damaging to man is that which comes from his heart (cf. Mt 15:18-19; Gen 3:1-19). By sinning, man abandoned the source of love, and loses himself in false forms of love that close him ever more into himself. It is this separation from God – He who is the font of communion and life – that brings about the loss of harmony among human persons, and between humanity and the world, introducing the dominion of disintegration and death (cf. Rom 5:12). As a result, the salvation that faith announces to us does not only pertain to our inner reality, but to our entire being. In fact, it is the whole person, body and soul, that was created by the love of God, in his image and likeness, and is called to live in communion with Him.

IV. Christ, Savior and Salvation

8. At no moment in history did God stop offering his salvation to the sons and daughters of Adam (cf. Gen 3:15), establishing his covenant with all of humanity in Noah (cf. Gen 9:9) and, later, with Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen 15:18). Therefore, Divine salvation takes on the creaturely order shared by all humanity and accompanies their concrete journey in history. By choosing a people to whom He offered the means to fight against sin and to draw close to him, God prepared the coming of "a powerful Savior, in the house of David, his servant" (Lk 1:69). In the fullness of time, the Father sent to the world his Son, who proclaimed the Kingdom of God, curing every disease and illness (cf. Mt 4:23). The healings performed by Jesus, in which he makes present the providence of God, were a sign that pointed back to his own person, He who is fully revealed as Lord of life and of death in his paschal event. According to the Gospel, salvation for all people begins with welcoming Jesus: "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19:9). The good news of salvation has a name and a face: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."¹⁴

9. The Christian faith has illustrated, throughout its centuries-long history, by means of multiple figures, this salvific work of the Son incarnate. It has done so without ever separating the healing dimension of salvation, by which Christ redeems us from sin, from the elevating dimension, by which he makes us sons and daughters of God, participants in his divine nature (cf. 2 Pt 1:4). Considering the salvific perspective in a descending manner, that is, beginning with God who comes to redeem humanity, Jesus is the illuminator and revealer, the redeemer and liberator, the One who divinizes and justifies the human person. According to an ascending vision, that is, beginning with the human person turning towards God, Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant, offering perfect worship to the Father, in the name of all humanity: He sacrifices Himself, expiates sins, and remains forever alive to intercede on our behalf. In this manner, an incredible synergy between divine and human action appears in the life of Jesus, a synergy that shows how baseless

the individualist perspective is. The descending perspective bears witness to the absolute primacy of the gratuitous acts of God; humility is essential to respond to his salvific love and is required to receive the gifts of God, prior to all of our works. At the same time, the ascending perspective recalls that, by means of the fully human action of his Son, the Father wanted to renew our actions, so that, conformed to Christ, we are able to fulfil "the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them" (Eph 2:10).

10. Moreover it is clear that the salvation that Jesus brought in his person does not occur only in an interior manner. In fact, the Son was made flesh, in order to communicate to every person the salvific communion with God (cf. Jn 1:14). By assuming flesh (cf. Rom 8:3; Heb 2:14; 1 Jn 4:2), and being born of a woman (cf. Gal 4:4), "the Son of God was made the son of man"¹⁵ and our brother (cf. Heb 2:14). Thus, inasmuch as He became part of the human family, "he has united himself in some fashion with every man and woman"¹⁶ and has established a new kind of relationship with God, his Father, and with all humanity; we can be incorporated in this new kind of relationship and participate in the Son of God's own life. As a result, rather than limiting the salvific action, assuming flesh allows Christ to mediate the salvation of God for all of the sons and daughters of Adam.

11. In conclusion, to respond both to the individualist reductionism of Pelagian tendency, and to the neo-Gnostic promise of a merely interior salvation, we must remember the way in which Jesus is Savior. He did not limit himself to showing us the way to encounter God, a path we can walk on our own by being obedient to his words and by imitating his example. Rather, Christ opens for us the door of freedom, and becomes, himself, the way: "I am the way" (Jn 14:6).¹⁷ Furthermore, this path is not merely an interior journey at the margins of our relationships with others and with the created world. Rather, Jesus gave us a "new and living way that he inaugurated for us

through his flesh" (Heb 10:20). Therefore, Christ is Savior in as much as he assumed the entirety of our humanity and lived a fully human life in communion with his Father and with others. Salvation, then, consists in incorporating ourselves into his life, receiving his Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 4:13). He became, "in a particular way, the origin of all grace according to his humanity."¹⁸ He is at the same time Savior and Salvation.

V. Salvation in the Church, Body of Christ

12. The place where we receive the salvation brought by Jesus is the Church, the community of those who have been incorporated into this new kind of relationship begun by Christ (cf. Rom 8:9). Understanding this salvific mediation of the Church is an essential help in overcoming all reductionist tendencies. The salvation that God offers us is not achieved with our own individual efforts alone, as neo-Pelagianism would contend. Rather, salvation is found in the relationships that are born from the incarnate Son of God and that form the communion of the Church. Because the grace that Christ gives us is not a merely interior salvation, as the neo-Gnostic vision claims, and introduces us into concrete relationships that He himself has lived, the Church is a visible community. In her we touch the flesh of Jesus, especially in our poorest and most suffering brothers and sisters. Hence, the salvific mediation of the Church, "the universal sacrament of salvation",¹⁹ assures us that salvation does not consist in the self-realization of the isolated individual, nor in an interior fusion of the individual with the divine. Rather, salvation consists in being incorporated into a communion of persons that participates in the communion of the Trinity.

13. Both the individualistic and the merely interior visions of salvation contradict the sacramental economy through which God wants to save the human person. The participation in the new kind of relationships begun by Jesus occurs in the Church by means of

'Placuit Deo'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

the sacraments, of which Baptism is the door,²⁰ and the Eucharist is the source and the summit.²¹ In this, the inconsistency of the claims to self-salvation that depend on human efforts alone can be seen. Faith confesses that we are saved by means of Baptism, which seals upon us the indelible mark of belonging to Christ and to the Church. The transformation of the way of living our relationships with God, with humanity, and with creation derives from Baptism (cf. Mt 28:19). Thus, purified from original, and all other sins, we are called to a new existence conforming to Christ (cf. Rom 6:4). With the grace of the seven sacraments, believers continually grow and are spiritually renewed, especially when the journey becomes more difficult. When they abandon their love for Christ by sinning, believers can be re-introduced into the kind of relationships begun by Christ in the sacrament of Penance, allowing them to again walk as He did (cf. 1 Jn 2:6). In this way, we look with hope toward the Last Judgement, in which each person will be judged on the authenticity of one's love (cf. Rom 13:8-10), especially regarding the weakest (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

14. The salvific economy is also opposed to trends that propose a merely interior salvation. Gnosticism, indeed, associates itself with a negative view of the created order, which is understood as a limitation on the absolute freedom of the human spirit. Consequently, salvation is understood as freedom from the body and from the concrete relationships in which a person lives. In as much as we are saved "by means of offering the body of Jesus Christ" (Heb 10:10; cf. Col 1:22), true salvation, contrary to being a liberation from the body, also includes its sanctification (cf. Rom 12:1). The human body was shaped by God, who inscribed within it a language that invites the human person to recognize the gifts of the Creator and to live in communion with one's brothers and sisters.²² The Savior re-established and renewed this original language by his Incarnation and his paschal mystery and communicated it in the economy of the sacraments. Thanks to the sacraments, Christians are able to live faithful to the flesh of Christ and, as a result, in fidelity to the kind of relationships that he gave us. This type of relationality particularly calls for the care of all suffering humanity through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.²³

VI. Conclusion: communicating the faith, in expectation of the Savior

15. The knowledge of the fullness of life into which Christ the Savior introduces us propels Christians onward in the mission of announcing to all the joy and light of the Gospel.²⁴ In this work, Christians must also be prepared to establish a sincere and constructive dialogue with believers of other religions, confident that God can lead "all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way"²⁵ towards salvation in Christ. While dedicating

herself with all of her efforts to evangelization, the Church continues to invoke the definitive coming of the Savior, since it is "in hope that we are saved" (Rom 8:24). The salvation of men and women will be complete only when, after having conquered the last enemy, death (cf. 1 Cor 15:26), we will participate fully in the glory of the risen Jesus, who



David Leiberg, untitled

will bring our relationship with God, with our brothers and sisters, and with all of creation to fullness. Total salvation of the body and of the soul is the final destiny to which God calls all of humanity. Founded in faith, sustained by hope, and working in charity, with the example of Mary, Mother of the Savior and first among the saved, we are certain

that "our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself" (Phil 3:20-21).

The Sovereign Pontiff Francis, on February 16, 2018, approved this Letter, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation on January 24, 2018, and ordered its publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, February 22, 2018, on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter.

LUIS F. LADARIA, SJ
Titular Archbishop of Thibica
Prefect

GIACOMO MORANDI
Titular Archbishop of Cerveteri
Secretary

¹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2.

² Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), 5-8: AAS 92 (2000), 745-749.

³ Cf. FRANCIS, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 67: AAS 105 (2013), 1048.

⁴ Cf. ID., Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (29 June 2013), 47: AAS 105 (2013), 586-587; Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 93-94: AAS (2013), 1059; *Address to the Participants in the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church* (10 November 2015), Florence: AAS 107 (2015), 1287.

⁵ Cf. ID., *Address to the Participants in the Fifth Convention of the Italian Church* (10 November 2015), Florence: AAS 107 (2015), 1288.

⁶ Cf. ID., Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 94: AAS 105 (2013), 1059: "the attraction of gnosticism, a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings"; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE – PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the water of life. A Christian reflection on the "New Age"* (January 2003), Vatican City, 2003.

⁷ Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 47: AAS 105 (2013), 586-587.

⁸ Cf. ID., *Address to the Participants in the Pilgrimage from the Diocese of Brescia* (22 June 2013): AAS 95 (2013), 627: "in this world where man is denied, where people prefer to take the road of Gnosticism, [...] of the "no flesh" – a God who did not take flesh [...]."

⁹ According to the Pelagian heresy, developed during the fifth century around Pelagius, man, in order to fulfil the commandments of God and to be saved, needs grace only as an external help to his freedom (like light, for example, power), not like a radical healing and regeneration of the freedom, without prior merit, until he can do good and reach the eternal life.

More complex is the gnostic movement, sprung up in the first and second centuries, which has many different forms among themselves. In general, the gnostics believed that salvation is obtained through an esoteric knowledge or gnosis. Such gnosis reveals to the gnostic his true essence, i.e., a spark of the divine Spirit that lives inside him, which has to be liberated from the body, external to his true humanity. Only in this manner, the gnostic

returns to his original being in God from whom he has turned away due to a primordial fall.

¹⁰ Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 2.

¹¹ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, I, 1: *Corpus Christianorum*, 27, 1.

¹² SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

¹³ INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Select questions on the theology of God the Redeemer* (1995), 2.

¹⁴ BENEDICT XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 1: AAS 98 (2006), 217; cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3: AAS 105 (2013), 1020.

¹⁵ IRENAEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 19, 1: Sources Chrétiennes, 211, 374.

¹⁶ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

¹⁷ Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Tractatus in Ioannem*, 13, 4: *Corpus Christianorum*, 36, 132: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). If you search for the truth, follow the way, because the way is the same as the truth. The goal you aim for and the way you must tread are the same. You cannot reach your goal following another way, for you cannot reach Christ through another way. You can reach Christ only through Christ. In what sense do you come to Christ through Christ? You reach Christ the God through Christ the man. Through the Word made flesh, you reach the Word that was in the beginning God with God".

¹⁸ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Quaestio de Veritate*, q. 29, a. 5, co.

¹⁹ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 48.

²⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 63, a. 3.

²¹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

²² Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 155: AAS 107 (2015), 909-910.

²³ Cf. ID., Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera* (20 November 2016), 20: AAS 108 (2016), 1325-1326.

²⁴ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 40: AAS 83 (1991), 287-288; FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 9-13: AAS 105 (2013), 1022-1025.

²⁵ SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

Annual Collection for the Holy Land

Let us not leave them alone

The following is the English text of a letter sent on Ash Wednesday, 14 February, to the Bishops of the world from Cardinal Leonardo Sandri and Archbishop Cyril Vasil', respectively Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, on the occasion of the annual Collection for the Holy Land, which is traditionally taken up on Good Friday.

The Lenten Season, which we are living once again, invites us to go to Jerusalem through the way of the Cross upon which the Son of God accomplished his redemptive mission. On this pilgrimage the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the meaning of the Word of God accompanies us. Besides the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are strengthened by prayer and almsgiving. It is the right time to get closer to Christ by recognizing our poverty and our sins and living the same emptiness and humility of the Son of God who "became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

It is also an exceptional time to reach out to others through the works of charity. Knowing that the Lenten journey is not a solitary act, but an itinerary of solidarity by which each one of us is called to pause and like the Good Samaritan accompany our brethren who for many reasons find it difficult to stand up and continue their journey.

Also this year, the traditional *Collection for the Holy Land* held on Good Friday, is a proper occasion for the faithful to be one with our brethren in the Holy Land and the Middle East. Unfortunately, from those territories, the outcry of thousands of persons who are deprived of everything, at times even of their own human dignity, continues to reach us, heart-breaking us and in-

viting us to embrace them through Christian charity, a sure source of hope.

Without the spirit of Christ who "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:7-8), the outcry of our brother remains unheard and the faces of thousands of less fortunate persons remain unnoticed.

Which place could be the best to meditate on this *Kenosis* of the Son of God, if not the same places that for more than 2000 years keep the memory alive of our redemption? I indicate with particular attention two Basilicas, the one of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, built on the grotto where Jesus was born and the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, built on the tomb of Jesus, which became the womb of life through His Resurrection. Last year, both Basilicas were restored, thanks to the collaboration and the generosity of so many persons of good will. Building the Church in the Holy Land, through the edifices of cult and the living stones – the Christian faithful – is the responsibility of all the Particular Churches of Christianity, recognizing that the Christian faith had its first impulse from the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

The Catholic Community in the Holy Land, with all its facets, namely, the Latin one of the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody and the other Oriental Circumscriptions – Greco-Melkite, Coptic, Maronite, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian – with all the religious families and every type of organism, has a special vocation to live the faith in a multi-religious, political, social and cultural context. Notwithstanding the challenges and



Displaced Iraqi Christians in Erbil

the insecurities, the parishes continue their pastoral service with a preferential attention to the poor. We hope against hope, that the schools serve as a place of encounter for the Christians and the Muslims, where they prepare a future of mutual respect and collaboration; the hospitals and clinics, the hospices and meeting centres continue to welcome the suffering and those in need, refugees and displaced, persons of all ages and religions struck by the horror of war.

We cannot forget the thousands of families who fled from the violence of the war in Syria and Iraq, among whom children and youth, a great number of them of schooling age, who appeal to our generosity in order to resume their scholastic life and dream of a better future.

One particular thought, at this moment, goes to the small Christian Community in the Middle East, which continues to sustain the faith among the displaced persons from

Iraq and Syria and among the refugees in Jordan and Lebanon who also are assisted by their Pastors, religious and volunteers from different countries. The faces of these persons question us about the meaning of being a Christian. Their strained lives inspire us. The Holy Father, Pope Francis in his Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace of this year affirms: "In a spirit of compassion, let us embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands" (n. 1). Let us show them concretely our closeness, through our constant prayer and through our monetary aid, particularly after the liberation of Niniveh Plain. Most Iraqi Christians and Syrians want to return to their own land where their houses were destroyed, with schools, hospitals and churches devastated. Let us not leave them alone.

All of us are invited to resume the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, because the knowledge of, and the living experience in the places of our redemption, walking in the steps of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the disciples, helps us to deepen our faith and also to understand the context in which the Christians live in the Holy Land. Besides, the pilgrimages are a form of sustenance for the survival of thousands of families.

During these days leading to Holy Easter, I fraternally invite you to commit yourselves to overcome hate with love, sadness with joy, by praying and working so that peace finds abode in every person's heart, and especially in our brethren's hearts in the Holy Land and the Middle East.

I am glad to transmit to you, to all the priests, religious and faithful who work for the success of the Holy Friday Collection, the sentiments of deepest gratitude of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, together with my own gratitude and that of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Whilst I invoke upon you and your pastoral ministry and upon all the faithful entrusted to your care an abundance of Divine Blessings, I wish you Happy Easter and fraternal greetings in the Lord Jesus.

British astrophysicist Stephen Hawking dies

The renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking died at his home in Cambridge, Great Britain, on 13 March. He was 76 years old.

He was born on 8 January 1942 in Oxford, where his mother had taken refuge to escape the Nazi bombing of London. Despite suffering most of his life from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), a serious and disabling disease, Hawking firmly established himself in the fields of academia and science at a very young age. By 32 he had already been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. And from 1979 to 2009, he held the prestigious Lucasian Chair of Mathematics at Cambridge University, a position once occupied by Isaac Newton. A self-proclaimed atheist, he argued that the simplest explanation for the existence of the universe was in the negation of a Creator God.

His studies on black holes, quantum cosmology and the origin of the universe are particularly well



known. In 1974 Hawking demonstrated how black holes can be described by the laws of thermodynamics as emitting radiation that leads to the evaporation of the black hole itself according to the laws of quantum mechanics: this ef-

fect, now known as "Hawking radiation", was confirmed in scientific experimentation in 2010. The study brilliantly harmonizes quantum mechanics data with those of Einstein's theory of relativity. Pursuing his study of the field, Hawking later demonstrated, with the collaboration of other mathematicians, that black holes are characterized by three properties: mass, angular momentum and electric charge.

In 1986 Pope John Paul II appointed him a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. In a tribute to the late physicist, Br Guy Consolmagno, SJ, Director of the Vatican Observatory, described Prof. Hawking as having given "a human face to cosmology and astronomy". Among the numerous prestigious awards Hawking received in recognition of his achievements were the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, the Albert Einstein Medal and the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society.

At the Angelus the Holy Father explains the significance of the Sunday of joy

Courage to admit our weaknesses

"Laetare" Sunday, that is, the day to "rejoice", is thus called because it "invites us to joy". Pope Francis explained this at the start of the Fourth Week of Lent to the some 30,000 faithful gathered for the Angelus prayer in Saint Peter's Square on Sunday, 11 March. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he shared in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent, called *"laetare"*, that is, "rejoice", because this is the opening antiphon of the Eucharistic liturgy that invites us to joy: "Rejoice, Jerusalem" – thus, it is a call to joy – "Be joyful, all who were in mourning". This is how the Mass begins. What is the reason for this joy? The reason is God's great love for mankind, as today's Gospel passage tells us: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). These words, spoken by Jesus during the encounter with Nicodemus, summarize a theme that lies at the centre of the Christian message: even when the situation seems desperate, God intervenes, offering man salvation and joy. Indeed, God does not remain apart from us, but enters the history of mankind; he "meddles" in our life; he enters, in order to animate it with his grace and save it.

We are called to listen to this message, rejecting the temptation to value our own self-confidence, to think we can do without God, to claim absolute freedom from him and from his Words. When we find the courage to recognize ourselves for what we are – this takes courage! – we realize we are people

called to take our weaknesses and our limitations into account. So it may happen that we are gripped by anguish, by anxiety about the future, by fear of illness and death. This explains why many people, searching for a way out, sometimes take dangerous shortcuts such as, for example, the path of drugs or that of superstition or of disastrous magic rituals. It is good to know our limitations and our weaknesses; we must be aware of them, however, not in order to despair, but to offer them to the Lord. And he helps us on the path of healing; he takes us by the hand, and never abandons us, never! God is with us and for this reason I "rejoice"; we "rejoice" today: "Rejoice, Jerusalem", [the antiphon] says, because God is with us. And we have the true and great hope in God the Father rich in mercy, who gave us his Son to save us, and this is our joy. We also have many sorrows, but, when we are true Christians, there is the hope that is a small joy which grows and gives us certainty. We must not become disheartened when we see our limitations, our sins, our weakness: God is near; Jesus is on the Cross to heal us. This is God's love. To look at the Cross and tell ourselves within: "God loves me". It is true, there are these limitations, these weaknesses, these sins, but he is

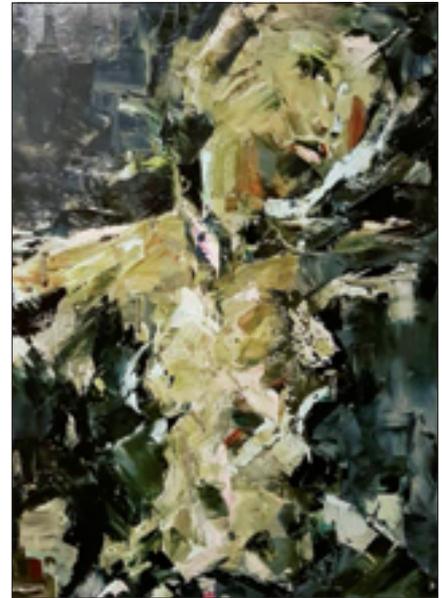
greater than the limitations and the weaknesses and the sins. Do not forget this: God is greater than our weaknesses, than our infidelities, than our sins. And let us take the Lord by the hand; let us look to the Crucifix and go forward.

May Mary, Mother of Mercy, place in our hearts the certainty that we are loved by God. May she be close to us in the moments in which we feel alone, when we are tempted to surrender to life's difficulties. May she convey to us the sentiments of her Son Jesus, so that our Lenten journey may become an experience of forgiveness, of welcome and of charity.

After the Angelus, Pope Francis added:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and from other countries, in particular the faithful from Agropoli, Padua, Troina, Foggia and Caltanissetta, and the young people of Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Serra di Pepe.

I greet the Brazilian community of Rome, the confraternities of Tivoli with their Bishop, the young people of Avigliano and the youth of Saronno.



Jennifer Mills, "Fragile Human"

I offer a special greeting to the university students who have come from various parts of the world and joined in the first "Vatican Hackathon" promoted by the Dicastery for Communication: dear young people, it is good to place the intelligence, which God gives us, at the service of truth and of the most needy.

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

Ecological conversion

Telegram to Cardinal Turkson for International Conference on Laudato Si'



Linda Lennea, "Creation"

The Pontifical Gregorian University, in cooperation with the Embassies to the Holy See of Georgia, Germany and the Netherlands hosted an international Conference 7-8 March, devoted to the teachings outlined in Pope Francis' Encyclical, Laudato Si'. Entitled "Radical Ecological Conversion after Laudato Si': Discovering the Intrinsic Value of all Creatures Human and Non-

Human, the workshops aimed to identify new ways to bring about a radical change of hearts – not only in the individual, but also within economic, social and political communities – towards caring for our common home. On the occasion of the Conference, Pope Francis sent a telegram to Cardinal Peter Turkson who gave the keynote speech. The following is the text of the Holy Father's telegram.

His Eminence
Cardinal Peter Turkson
Prefect of the Dicastery for
Promoting Integral Human
Development

On the occasion of the international conference entitled: "Radical Ecological Conversion after *Laudato Si'*", I would ask you to convey my cordial greetings and prayerful best wishes to all the participants. Conscious in a particular way dur-

ing this season of Lent of the importance of conversion in the renewal of Christian life, which includes the responsible stewardship of creation, I encourage those taking part to reaffirm their commitment to promoting a more profound appreciation for the gift of our common home. I also trust that through their deliberations they will be better enabled to communicate to the world the beautiful truth that every creature is "the object

of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection" (*Laudato Si'*, 77). Upon all those present for this important event, I willingly invoke an abundance of Almighty God's blessings.

FRANCISCUS PP