

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH

*Unicuique suum Non praevalent*

Fifty-first year, number 19 (2546)

Vatican City

Friday, 11 May 2018

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violence and  
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## The indelible seal

At the General Audience the Pontiff speaks of Baptism

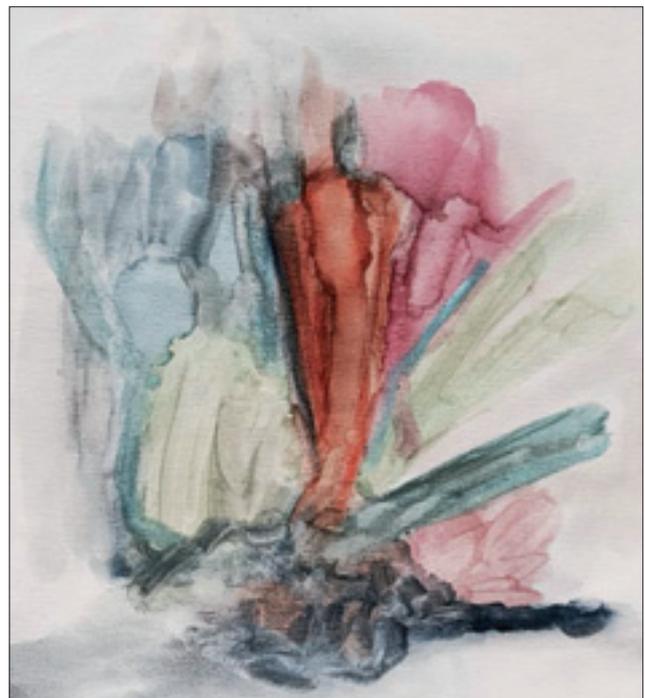
*Through Baptism "we are reborn as children of God for ever!". Pope Francis emphasized this key concept to the faithful who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the General Audience on Wednesday, 9 May. Continuing the series of catecheses dedicated to the*

*sacrament of Christian initiation, the Pontiff spoke about the central rite of "the holy immersion" accompanied by the invocation of the Holy Trinity. The following is a translation of the Pontiff's reflection, which he shared in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

The catechesis on the Sacrament of Baptism leads us to speak today about the holy immersion accompanied by the invocation of the Holy Trinity, that is, the central rite, which actually "baptizes" – that is, *immerses* – one in the Paschal Mystery of Christ (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1239). Saint Paul recalls the significance of this rite to the Christians of Rome, first asking: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?", and then responding: "We were buried [...] with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead [...], we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:4). Baptism opens for us the door to a life of resurrection, not to a worldly life. A life according to Jesus.

The baptismal font is the place in which one experiences the Easter Passover with Christ! The old man, with his "deceitful lusts" is buried (cf. Eph 4:22), so that a new creature may be born; truly the old things have passed away and new things are born (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). The "Catechetical Lectures" attributed to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem thus explain to the newly baptized what has happened to them in the water of Baptism. This is Saint Cyril's beautiful explanation: "And at the self-same moment you were both dying and being born; and that Water of salvation was at once your



C Armenta, "Born again"

grave and your mother" (n. 20, *On the Mysteries*, II, 4-6; PG 33; 1079-1082). The rebirth of the new man requires that the man corrupted by

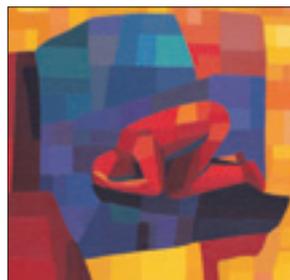
sin be reduced to dust. The images of the *tomb* and of the *maternal womb* referring to the font, indeed, clearly express what great things come about through the simple rite of Baptism. I like the inscription found on the ancient Roman Lateran Baptistery, which reads, in Latin, this expression attributed to Pope Sixtus III: "Mother Church conceives her offspring by the breath of God, and bears them virginally in this water. Hope for the Kingdom of Heaven, you who are reborn in this font".<sup>1</sup> It is beautiful: the Church that bears us, the Church which is womb, is our mother through Baptism.

If our parents have generated us in earthly life, the Church has regenerated us to eternal life in Baptism. We have become children in her Son Jesus (cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5-7). Upon each one of us too, born anew through the water and through the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Father makes his voice reson-

Three pillars for consecrated life

### Prayer, poverty, patience

The 'three Ps', 'prayer', 'poverty' and 'patience', are "pillars that endure, that are permanent in consecrated life". Pope Francis stressed this in his extemporaneous remarks on Friday morning, 4 May, to participants attending an international conference organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. "Prayer", he said, is "a return to the first call"; poverty is "the mother"; and patience is the "capacity to suffer", which sustains consecrated life.



Anica Govedarica, "Prayer in three acts, act number 1" (detail)

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# VATICAN BULLETIN



## AUDIENCES

### Thursday, 3 May

Cardinal Domenico Calcagno, President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See

Bishop Luis Urbanč of Catamarca, Argentina

Bishop-elect Heiner Wilmer, SCJ, of Hildesheim, Federal Republic of Germany

Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, on their visit *ad limina Apostolorum*:

– Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, Archbishop of Bangkok

– Bishop Silvio Siripong Charatsri of Chanthaburi

– Bishop Francis Xavier Vira Arpondratana of Chiang Mai

– Bishop Joseph Pibul Visitmondachai of Nakhon Sawan

– Bishop John Bosco Panya Kritcharoen of Ratchaburi

– Bishop Joseph Prathan Sridarunsil, SDB, of Surat Thani

– Archbishop Louis Chamniern Santisukniran of Thare and Nonseng

– Bishop Joseph Chusak Sirisut of Nakhon Ratchasima

– Bishop Philip Banchoong Chaiyara, CSSR, of Ubon Ratchathani

– Bishop Joseph Luechai Thatwisai of Udorn Thani

– Bishop-elect Joseph Vuthilert Haelom of Chiang Rai

### Friday, 4 May

Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

Bishop José Vicente Conejero Gallego of Formosa, Argentina

### Saturday, 5 May

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

## CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Ildio Pinto Leandro of Viseu, Portugal (3 May).

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of Viseu Canon António Luciano dos Santos Costa from the clergy of the Diocese of Guarda, Portugal. Until now he has served on the Presbyterial Council and as judge of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal (3 May).

Bishop-elect dos Santos Costa, 66, was born in Corgas, Portugal. He obtained a diploma as a professional nurse. He then worked at the University Hospital of Coimbra, at the same time attending the Institute for Theological Studies in Coimbra. Later he entered the Major Seminary of Guarda. He was ordained a priest on 29 June 1985. He obtained a licence in moral theology from the Alphonsianum Academy in Rome. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the Pre-Seminary and director of the Secretariat for junior education; professor of moral theology and of ethics; director of the

Diocesan Service for the Pastoral Care for Vocations; chaplain to the University of Beira, Covilhã; chief organizer of the diocesan process for the beatification and canonization of the Servant of God Bishop João de Oliveira Matos; chaplain to the Sousa Martins Hospital; head of the Apostolate for Higher Education at the Polytechnic Institute of Guarda.

## PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The Holy Father appointed as Ordinary Member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Mrs Elaine Fuchs, professor of cellular biology at Rockefeller University, New York, USA (5 May).

## PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

The Holy Father appointed as Consultant of the Pontifical Council for Culture Archbishop Anton Stres, CM, Archbishop emeritus of Ljubljana, Slovenia (3 May).

## START OF MISSION

On Sunday, 25 March, Archbishop Alessandro D'Errico, titular Archbishop of Carini, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Libya with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr Fayez Al-Sarraj, Chairman of the Presidential Council and Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord of Libya.

## NECROLOGY

Bishop Hans-Reinhard Koch, titular Bishop of Mediana, Auxiliary emeritus of Erfurt, Germany, at age 88 (25 Apr.)

Archbishop Pierre Plateau, Archbishop emeritus of Bourges, France, at age 94 (26 Apr.)

Bishop Ramón López Carrozas, O.d.M., Bishop emeritus of Bom Jesus do Gurguéia, Brazil, at age 80 (28 Apr.)

Archbishop Michele Castoro of Manfredonia-Vieste-San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, at age 66 (5 May)

Archbishop Leonard Anthony Faulkner, Bishop emeritus of Townsville and Archbishop emeritus of Adelaide, Australia, at age 91 (6 May)

## The Grand Master of the Order of Malta

Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre del Tempio di Sanguinetto took the oath of office as the 80th Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta on Thursday morning, 3 May, in the Church of *Santa Maria in Aventino* in Rome, before Archbishop Angelo Becciu, the Pope's Special Delegate to the Order and Substitute of the Secretariat of State, who celebrated a solemn Mass for the occasion. The new Grand Master had been elected the previous day for a life term by the 54-member Council Complete of State. Pope Francis was informed of the result of the ballot and in a Letter dated 2 May, the Pope thanked Archbishop Becciu for having assumed, 15 months previously, the "sensitive task" of "accompanying



... the Order in the process of updating its Constitutional Charter and the Code of the Order" in a process of reform. Considering that the "journey of spiritual and juridical renewal" of the Order has yet to be concluded, the Pontiff requested that Archbishop Becciu "continue to execute the office" as Special Delegate until the conclusion of the reform process or as long as the Pope deems it "beneficial for the Order itself". The new Grand Master was born in Rome in 1944 and became a member of the Order in 1985, taking his solemn vows in 2003. From 2008 to 2017 Fra' Giacomo Dalla Torre held the post of Grand Prior of Rome. He was elected Lieutenant of the Grand Master on 29 April 2017. Speaking to journalists, Archbishop Becciu defined Dalla Torre as "a man of great wisdom" and well-prepared, and said the Order therefore was "in good hands".

## With Bishops of Thailand



On Thursday morning, 3 May, the Holy Father met with Members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, on their visit *ad limina Apostolorum*.

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*The Holy Father with Cllr Tony Fitzgerald, Mayor of Cork, Ireland, with his wife, Lady Mayoress Georgina Fitzgerald, at the General Audience on Wednesday, 9 May*



## The indelible seal

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ate with infinite love, saying “You are my beloved son” (cf. Mt 3:17). This paternal voice, imperceptible to the ear but well audible to the heart of those who believe, accompanies us throughout our life, never abandoning us. Throughout our life the Father tells us: “You are my beloved son; you are my beloved daughter”. God loves us so much, as a Father, and never forsakes us. It is so from the moment of Baptism. We are reborn as children of God for ever! Indeed, Baptism is not repeated, because it imprints an indelible spiritual seal: “No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation” (CCC, n. 1272).

The seal of Baptism is never lost! “Father, but if a person becomes an infamous brigand, who kills people, who inflicts injustice, does the seal not disappear?”. No. To his own shame a child of God is the person who does these things; but the seal does not go away. And he continues to be a child of God, who opposes God; but God never disowns his

children. Do you understand this last point? God never disowns his children. Shall we all repeat it together? “God never disowns his children”. A little louder, because either I am hearing impaired or I did not understand: [they repeat, louder] “God never disowns his children”. There, that was better.

Incorporated in Christ through Baptism, the baptized are thus conformed to him, “the first-born son among many brethren” (Rom 8:29). Through the action of the Holy Spirit, Baptism purifies, sanctifies, justifies, to form in Christ, of many, one single body (1 Cor

6:11, 12, 13). The *crismal anointing* “signifies the royal priesthood of the baptized and enrollment into the company of the people of God” (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, n. 18:3). Hence the priest anoints the head of every baptized person with the sacred crism after pronouncing these words which explain the significance: God himself “anoints you with the crism of salvation, so that, united with his people, you may remain for ever a member of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King” (*ibid.*, n. 62). Brothers and sisters, here lies the entire Christian vocation: to live united to Christ in the holy Church, participants in the same consecration in order to carry out the same mission, in this world, bearing fruits that endure for ever. Enlivened by the One Spirit, in fact, the whole People of God participates in the offices of Jesus Christ, “Priest, Prophet and King”, and “bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them”. (CCC, nn. 783-386).

What does it mean to participate in the royal and prophetic priesthood of Christ? It means making of oneself an offering acceptable to God (cf. Rom 12:1), bearing witness to him through a life of faith and charity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12), placing it at the service of others, after the example of the Lord Jesus (cf. Mt 20:25-28; Jn 13:13-17). Thank you.

### SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, particularly those from England, Finland, Indonesia, the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. In a special way, I greet the “small farmers” from various countries meeting in Italy, with gratitude for their contribution to feeding our world. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

I address a special thought to *young people*, to *the elderly*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. We are in the month of May, a period dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Cultivate devotion to Our Lady, with the daily recitation of the Rosary, so that, like the Mother of God, welcoming the mysteries of Christ in your life, you may be an ever greater gift of love for all. Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> “*Virgineo fetu genitrix Ecclesia natos / quos spirante Deo concipit amne parit. / Caelorum regnum sperate hoc fonte renati*”.

Forty years since the murder of Italian statesman Aldo Moro

## A man of listening

The kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro and the still unthinkable and distressing memory of those days have indelibly marked the last decades of Italian history. All this, however, must not obscure the figure and the work of this man whom, in a letter to the Red Brigades dated 21 April 1978, Paul VI defined as “good and honest, on whom no one could lay blame for any crime, or accuse of having poor social sense or lack of service to justice and to peaceful social coexistence”. Within hours of Moro's assassination, *L'Osservatore Romano's* daily edition of 10 May 1978, along with the commentary of its editor-in-chief Valerio Volpini, published a memorial of Moro written by Raimondo Manzini, who had led the newspaper from 1960 until the beginning of that year, just weeks before the incredible kidnapping that led to the ruthless massacre of five members of the Italian statesman's security detail.

“He was a man ‘of listening’; and hence all the more horrifying, hateful and unforgivable was the violence

against him, a man respectful of his fellow men, open to sociability, attentive to the movements and phenomena of history, in order to understand them and to address them



humanely. There is something in this murder that is inexplicable and inhumane beyond all other crimes”, Manzini wrote. And he continued: “With indescribable torment, we see and think over and over of that sad, pensive face, in

which there was something of the perennial question of one trying to comprehend and understand the ‘others’, and the changing situations in which to weigh them, to unravel their meaning”. And Manzini also wrote: “I remember Aldo Moro, Secretary of the Party, in certain meetings with representatives and politicians from the peripheries, listening for hours on end, patient, attentive, with no signs of wear, to the widest variety of discourses, in order to fully understand the problems, expectations, moods of the various regions, and only ‘afterwards’, days after the debate concluded, to take an executive decision”. On 13 May in the Lateran Basilica the Pope took part in the funeral rite for the assassinated statesman and in the dramatic closing prayer mentioned the “surviving legacy of his forthright conscience, of his human and cordial example, of his dedication to civil and spiritual redemption”. Thus leaving an enduring bequest.

(G.M.V.)

To the Gabrielite Brothers the Pope recalls the figure of Saint Louis de Montfort

## Educators with heart



*In an audience in the Clementine Hall on Friday morning, 27 April, the Pontiff met with the Brothers of Saint Gabriel, who were in Rome for their General Chapter. He encouraged them to be teachers who "love with the heart and with the hands". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's remarks, which he delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the 32nd General Chapter of the Brothers of Saint Gabriel. I thank the Superior General for his kind words. I also greet the Montfort Missionaries and the Daughters of Wisdom, as well as the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Kottayam, with many good wishes for their anniversary.

This is an opportunity to remember, to offer thanks and to return to the foundations laid down more than 300 years ago by Saint Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort

— the anniversary of whose death you will celebrate tomorrow —, foundations to which Father Gabriel Deshayes gave new impetus. One of these cornerstones is the Word of God which must be constantly meditated upon, so that it may become incarnate in life and gradually model thoughts and gestures on those of Christ. The other is Wisdom, the love and constant search for which inspired Saint Louis Marie to write luminous pages. To obtain it, he advises us to "listen to God with humble submission; act in him and through him with persevering fi-

delity"; and lastly, to "acquire the light and unction you need to inspire others with that love for Wisdom which will lead them to eternal life" (*The Love of Eternal Wisdom*, ch. 2, n. 30). By putting this counsel into practice you will be able to discern the particular challenges that are always opportunities to "start afresh from Christ and from Montfort".

The theme chosen: *Fraternal life and the community dimension of the Montfort mission*, seeks to situate your mission in our world marked by individualism and globalization, by consumerism, efficiency and appearance, in order to try to be present in it as souls "of fire", inspired by the Spirit and living in Wisdom. According to Saint Louis Marie, this is the only treasure capable of "teaching us how to be". It is an appeal to each of you in your mission as educators. It rests on a certainty, that of the beauty of life, God's freely given gift, and on a hope: that of the possibility that it may fully develop thanks to the growth of love, which unifies all the dimensions of the person. This synthesis is built up every day in prayer, in docility to the Holy Spirit, in fidelity to your Rule of life and in lived charity. The perfect example to imitate is the Virgin Mary: as your Constitutions emphasize, total consecration to Jesus through Mary is the fundamental path of the Marian life of the members of the Institute.

Moreover, as described in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42-47), fraternal life itself bears witness to this. It attracts and evangelizes every day, and it is contagious. Those who see how we live are sensitive to our way of being, of accepting the diversity of viewpoints, of facing conflicts and of resolving them with sensitivity, charity and humility (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 227; *Gaudete et Exultate*, n. 89). In your communities or in apostolic working groups, fraternity should encourage everyone to be open to the Spirit and to forget themselves. Moving from a life in common to a fraternal life

can make the daily journey easier and more joyful. Attention to the brother beside me, as well as dialogue, foster communion in diversity. In the current spiritual crisis which generates anguish and sadness due to the loss of the meaning of life, I invite you to form welcoming communities in which it is beautiful to live, manifesting particularly to young people the joy of following Christ and answering his call. May they feel listened to without prejudice, recognized and valued, so that they may offer enthusiastically the gifts that God has bestowed on them for the good of all!

"*Love with the heart and with the hands*" summarizes what you aspire to live and to pass on. Only the "civilization of love" can give a soul to our globalized world in the grip of constant change. Thanks to your charism lived with dedication and wisdom, you can be beacons, highlighting the evangelical character of the educational mission. The Gospel refers to life

*Only the 'civilization of love' can give a soul to our globalized world in the grip of constant change*

and action in all areas. By meditating on it in this perspective, it will permeate both the life of your communities and your collective mission as teachers. Let us learn from Jesus, Wisdom Incarnate, how to welcome the other and to forge bonds with him, especially if he is different, from another culture, from another generation, by going to the heart of his expectations and expressing our love with concrete gestures of compassion, of sharing, at the cost of taking risks, as I recalled in *Evangelii Gaudium* (cf. n. 88). Thus, the challenges of transmitting the faith and of living together can be creatively met through pedagogy, the educational and social project of the Institutes. Concern for the poor and the marginalized has always been at the centre of your mission. May you continue to help them to be protagonists of their future so that they may take their place in society.

While I thank you for the treasure of your vocation in the Church, I invite you to "put out into the deep" with confidence and with renewed missionary zeal. In this Easter Season, may the mystery of Christ's death and Resurrection be at the heart of your faith and your consecration, to enlighten your journey in truth.

Entrusting the future of your mission to the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, Seat of Wisdom, I wholeheartedly bless you all, together with your co-workers. And I ask you not to forget to pray for me.

Thank you.

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days in the US

"A World Uprooted: Responding to Migrants, Refugees and Displaced People" was the theme of the 16th annual meeting of Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD), which took place 20-23 April in the United States. With this meeting, EAD — an ecumenical network founded in 2003 to strengthen the presence of Christians in American society through shared witness to the Word of God — sought to continue its commitment to advocate on behalf of society's most vulnerable and to encourage US legislators to work in favour of justice, peace and the protection of creation in their country and in the world.

In Arlington, Virginia, where the meeting began with a meditation by Bishop Ricardo Ramírez, CSB, Bishop emeritus of Las Cruces, New Mexico, participants discussed the many causes that lead to migration, a global phenomenon exacerbated by conflicts and violence which, in many parts of the world, put the lives of millions of people at risk. Migration, the Bishop stressed, also results from "the failure of policies to address the reality of climate change and an economic development respectful of creation, as evidenced by drought and desertification in the Sahel region, rising sea levels in Fiji and Tuvalu, and the destruction of homes by hurricanes in the Caribbean and the Philippines". Bishop Ramírez also denounced the injustices which affect "more than ten million men and women, as the Roma and the Rohingya" on account of their culture or religion.

In Washington, DC, organizers urged Congress to "act to help the world's uprooted peoples, the majority of whom are children and women", to "implement just and compassionate immigration policies; and confront root causes of forced displacement in light of US policy". An EAD statement also emphasizes that "our faith teaches us the importance of keeping families together, welcoming newcomers with compassion and dignity, and aiding our neighbors in need across the world".

Many of the discourses delivered during EAD's national gathering discussed the need for a strong environmental policy, guided by the ecumenical reflection of recent years, in order to put an end to the numerous environmental disasters that have caused enormous damage to crops and infrastructures as has happened in Puerto Rico, in the Virgin Islands, and in the US states of Texas and Florida.

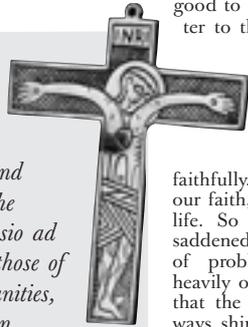
# On mission as disciples

The Pontiff meets Neocatechumenal Way at Tor Vergata in Rome

*"To 'announce' you must 'renounce'" because only a Church "free from power and money, free from triumphalism and clericalism bears witness in a credible way that Christ frees mankind". Pope Francis stressed this on Saturday morning, 5 May, during a meeting with members of the Neocatechumenal Way gathered at Tor Vergata for the 50th anniversary of the start of the missionary initiative in Rome. The following is a translation of the discourse, which the Holy Father delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

I am pleased to meet you and, with you, to say 'thank you!' Thank you to God and also to you, especially to those who have travelled a long way to be here. Thank you for your 'yes', for having welcomed the Lord's call to live the Gospel and to evangelize.



*During the event, Pope Francis blessed and distributed crosses to the leaders of 34 new 'missio ad gentes' groups and to those of 25 local parish communities, all of whom are sent on mission: the 'missio ad gentes' groups are families, accompanied by a priest, sent as an "itinerant Church" to live among and evangelize communities around the world; and the local mission groups are sent throughout the parishes of Rome.*

gelize. And a big thank-you also goes to those who began the Neocatechumenal Way 50 years ago.

Fifty is an important number in Scripture: on the 50th day the Spirit of the Risen One descended upon the Apostles and manifested the Church to the world. Earlier still, God had blessed the 50th year: "A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you" (Lev 25:11). A holy year, in which the chosen people would touch by hand new realities, such as the liberation and the return home of the oppressed: "you shall ... proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants", said the Lord. "each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his family" (v. 10). Thus, after 50 years of the Way it would be nice for each of you to say: "Thank you, Lord, because you have truly freed me; because I have found my family in the Church; because in your Baptism old things have passed away and I enjoy a new life" (cf. 2 Cor 5:17); because through the Way you have indic-

ated the path for me to discover your tender, Fatherly love".

Dear brothers and sisters, at the end you will sing the "*Té Deum* of thanksgiving for God's love and faithfulness". This is very beautiful: to thank God for his love and for his faithfulness. We often thank him for his gifts, for what he gives us, and it is good to do so. But it is even better to thank him for *what he is*, because he is the God who is *faithful in love*. His goodness does not depend on us.

Whatever we do, God continues to love us faithfully. This is the source of our faith, the great consolation of life. So take courage; never be saddened! And when the clouds of problems seem to thicken heavily over your days, remember that the faithful love of God always shines, like a sun that does not set. Remember his goodness, stronger than all evil, and the gentle memory of God's love will help you in anguish.

An important thank-you is still missing: to those who are about to go on mission. I would like to tell you something heartfelt precisely regarding mission, on evangelization, which is the Church's priority today. Because mission is giving voice to the faithful love of God; it is proclaiming that the Lord loves us and that he will never tire of me, of you, of us and of this world of ours, of which perhaps we tire. Mission is giving what we have received. Mission is fulfilling Jesus' mandate which we have heard and on which I would like to focus with you: "Go therefore and make disciples of all peoples" (cf. Mt 28:19).

Go. Mission calls for departure. But in life there is a strong temptation to linger, to avoid risks, to be content to have the situation under control. It is easier to stay home, surrounded by those who love us, but this is not Jesus' way. He sends forth: "Go". He does not use half measures. He does not authorize short transfers or reimbursed travel, but tells his disciples, *all* his disciples just one word: "Go!". Go: a powerful call that resonates in every cranny of Christian life; a clear invitation to always go out,

pilgrims in the world in search of the brother or sister who does not yet know the joy of God's love.

But what can you do in order to go? You need to be agile; you cannot bring all your home furnishings. The Bible teaches this: when God freed the chosen people, he sent them into the desert with only the baggage of trust in him. And by becoming man, he himself journeyed in poverty, with nowhere to lay his head (cf. Lk 9:58). He asks the same manner of his own. Going requires being light. To *announce* you must *renounce*. Only a Church that renounces the world announces the Lord well. Only a Church free from power and money, free from triumphalism and clericalism bears witness in a credible way that Christ frees mankind. And those who, through his love, learn to renounce passing things, embrace this great treasure: freedom. They are no longer bridled by their own attachments, which always demand something more but never bring peace; and they feel their heart expand, without concerns, open for God and for brothers and sisters.

"Go" is the verb of mission and it tells us one more thing: that it is conjugated in the plural. The Lord does not say "you go, then

pilgrims who, accompanied by brethren, accompany other brethren, and it is good to do so *personally*, with care and respect for each one's journey and without forcing anyone's growth, because the response to God only matures in authentic and sincere freedom.

The Risen Jesus says: "*make disciples*". This is the mission. He does not say: conquer, capture, but rather, "*make disciples*", that is, share with others the gift you have received, the encounter of love that has changed your life. It is the heart of the mission: to bear witness that God loves us and that with him true love is possible, the love which leads to the offering of life everywhere, in the family, at work, by consecrated and married people. Mission is becoming disciples once again with Jesus' new disciples. It is rediscovering oneself part of a Church that is a disciple. Of course, the Church is a teacher, but she cannot be a teacher if she is not first a disciple, just as she cannot be a mother if she is not first a daughter. This is our Mother: a humble Church, daughter of the Father and disciple of the Teacher, happy to be *sister of humanity*. And this dynamic of discipleship – the disciple who creates disciples – is



you, then you...", but rather, a collective "go", together! Being fully missionary does not mean one who goes alone, but those who journey together. Journeying together is an art to be learned, always, every day. One must be careful, for example, not to dictate the pace to others. Rather, it is important to accompany and wait, remembering that the other person's journey is not identical to mine. As in life no one has exactly the same pace as another, so it is in faith and in mission: we go forward together, without closing off and without imposing our own direction; we go forward united, as a Church, with the Pastors, with all brothers and sisters, without fleeing ahead and without complaining about those who have a slower pace. We are

totally different from the dynamic of proselytism.

Herein lies the strength of the message, so the world may believe. What counts is not arguments that convince but life that attracts; not the capacity to impose but the courage to serve. And you have it in your "DNA", this vocation to proclaim by living as family, after the example of the Holy Family: in humility, simplicity and praise. You carry this familial atmosphere in many places that are desolate and devoid of love. Make yourselves known as friends of Jesus. Call everyone friends and be a friend to everyone.

"Go and make disciples of *all peoples*". And when Jesus says *all*,



Prayer, poverty, patience: these are the three "pillars" of religious life which Pope Francis re-emphasized to participants of an international conference organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The Pontiff received the group in audience on Friday morning, 4 May, in the Paul VI Hall. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's discourse, which he delivered in Italian.

Good morning everyone!

I thought about delivering a well-prepared, fine speech.... But then I had the idea to speak off-the-cuff, to say the things that are relevant to this moment.

The key to what I am about to say is what the Cardinal [Prefect of the Congregation] has asked: authentic criteria for discerning what is happening. Because truly, today so many things are happening that, in order not to get lost in this world, in the haze of worldliness, in the provocations, in the spirit of conflict, so many things, we need authentic criteria to guide us. To guide our discernment.

Then, there is another thing: that this Holy Spirit is a incorrigible [he laughs; they laugh], because he never

*In consecrated life, prayer is the air that allows that call to breathe in us; it renews that call. Without this air we cannot be good consecrated men and women.*

tires of being creative! Now, with the new forms of consecrated life, he is truly creative, with charisms.... It is interesting: he is the Author of Diversity, but at the same time the Creator of Unity. This is the Holy Spirit. And with this diversity of charisms and many other things, he creates the unity of the Body of Christ, and also the unity of consecrated life. And this, too, is a challenge.

I have wondered: what are the things that the Holy Spirit wishes to have firmly retained in consecrated life? And my thoughts have flown, wandered, spiraled about.... and the day I went to San Giovanni Rotondo always comes back to mind: I do not know why, but I saw so many consecrated men and women who were working there ... and I have thought about what I said there, about the "three Ps" that I spoke of there. And I said to myself: these are the pillars that endure, that are permanent in consecrated life. *Prayer, poverty and patience.* And I decided to speak to

you about this: what I think prayer is in consecrated life, and then poverty and patience.

Prayer is always a return to the first call. Any prayer, perhaps a prayer in need, but it is always a return to that Person who called me. The prayer of a consecrated man or woman is a return to the Lord who invited me to be near him. A return to the One who looked me in the eye and said to me: "Come. Leave everything and come" – "But I would like to leave only half..." (we will talk about this in relation to poverty) – "No, come. Leave it all. Come". And the joy at that moment of leaving the lot or the little we have. Each one knows what he or she has left behind: leaving mom, dad, family, career.... It is true that some seek a career "within", and this is not good. At that moment finding the Lord who has called me to follow him closely. Every prayer is a return to this. And prayer is what enables me to work for that Lord, not for my interests or for the institution I work for, no: for the Lord. There is a word that is used often; it has been used too much and has lost a bit of strength, but it indicated this well: *radicalness*. I do not like to use it because it has been overused, but it is this: I leave everything for You. It is the smile of the first steps.... Then problems arise, so many problems that we have all had, but it is always a matter of returning to the encounter with the Lord. And in consecrated life, prayer is the air that allows that call to breathe in us; it renews that call. Without this air we cannot be good consecrated men and women. We might perhaps be good people, Christians, Catholics who

work in many of the Church's activities, but you must continually renew your consecration in prayer, there, in an encounter with the Lord. "But I am busy; I am busy; I have so many things to do..." This is more important. Go and pray. And then there is that prayer that keeps us in the Lord's presence during the day. But in any case, prayer. "But I have work that is too critical that takes me the whole day...". Let us think of a consecrated woman of our time: Mother Teresa. Mother Teresa even went "in search of problems", because she was like a problem-seeking machine, because she went here, there, there.... But two hours of prayer before the Most Blessed Sacrament: no one could take them away from



her. "Ah, the great Mother Teresa!". Do as she did; do the same. Seek the Lord, the One who called you. Prayer. Not just in the morning... Each one must find how to do it, where to do it, when to do it. But do it always, pray. One cannot live the consecrated life, one cannot discern what is happening without speaking with the Lord.

I do not wish to say any more on this, but I think you understand. Prayer. And the Church needs men and women who pray, in this painful time for humanity.

The second "P" stands for *poverty*. In the Constitutions, Saint Ignatius wrote this to us Jesuits – but this was not his own original concept; I believe he may have taken it from the Desert Fathers, perhaps: "Poverty is the mother; it is the retaining wall of consecrated life". It is a "mother". Interesting: he does not say chastity, which is perhaps more closely related to motherhood, to fatherhood, no. Poverty is a mother. Without poverty there is no fruitfulness in consecrated life. And it is a "wall"; it protects you. It protects you from the spirit of worldliness, certainly. We know that the devil enters through the pockets. We all know this. And the little temptations against poverty are wounds to membership in the body of consecrated life. Poverty according to the Rules, the Constitutions of every congregation: it is not the same, the poverty of one congregation or another. The Rules say: "Our poverty is

will be halfway. Without patience, for example, the internal conflicts of a congregation are understandable; they are understandable. Because they have not had the patience to abide one another, and the stronger side, not always the better side, wins; nor is the side that lost better, because it is impatient. Without patience, careerism at the General Chapters is understandable, this organizing "rope teams" beforehand ... to offer two examples. You do not know how many problems, internal conflicts, quarrels are submitted to Msgr Carballo [Secretary of the Congregation]! But he is from Galicia; he is able to abide this! Patience. Abiding one another.

There are three steps to pass from religious consecration to religious worldliness. Yes, even religious; there is religious worldliness; many consecrated men and women are worldly. Three steps. First: money, that is, the lack of poverty. Second: vanity, which goes from the extreme of being a "peacock" to the small matters of vanity. And third: arrogance, pride. And from there, all the vices. But the first step is the attachment to wealth, the attachment to money. Attention to this prevents the others from coming. And I mean wealth, not just money. To wealth. It takes this spirit of poverty to be able to discern what is happening. A homework assignment is: how is my poverty? Look in the drawers, in the drawers of your soul; look into your personality; look into your Congregation... See how poverty is going. It is the first small step: if you are careful about that one, the others do not come. It is the wall that protects us from the others; it is the mother that makes us more religious and helps us to dedicate all our richness to the Lord. It is the wall that protects us from that worldly development that causes so much damage to every consecration. Poverty.

And third, *patience*. "But father, what has patience got to do with this?" Patience is important. We usually do not speak about it, but it is very important. Looking at Jesus, patience is what Jesus had in order to get to the end of his life. When Jesus, after the Supper, goes to the Garden of Olives, we can say that at that moment, in a special way, Jesus "entered patience". "Entering patience" is an attitude that every consecration, which goes from the small matters of community life or of the life of consecration, which each one has, in this variety that the Holy Spirit creates.... From the small matters, the forbearance, the small gestures of smiling when I want to swear.... up to the sacrifice of self, of life. Patience. That "bearing on your shoulders" (*hypomene*) of Saint Paul: Saint Paul spoke of "bearing on your shoulders", as a Christian virtue. Patience. Without patience, that is, without the capacity to suffer, without "entering patience", a consecrated life cannot be sustained; it

Katherine Sanders, "Christ and the Rich Young Ruler"



will be halfway. Without patience, for example, the internal conflicts of a congregation are understandable; they are understandable. Because they have not had the patience to abide one another, and the stronger side, not always the better side, wins; nor is the side that lost better, because it is impatient. Without patience, careerism at the General Chapters is understandable, this organizing "rope teams" beforehand ... to offer two examples. You do not know how many problems, internal conflicts, quarrels are submitted to Msgr Carballo [Secretary of the Congregation]! But he is from Galicia; he is able to abide this! Patience. Abiding one another.

And patience too in facing the common problems of consecrated life: let us consider the scarcity of vocations. "We do not know what to do, because we have no vocations... We have closed three houses...". This is a daily complaint; you have heard it, heard by the ears and felt in the heart. Vocations do not come. And when this patience is not there.... What I am saying now has happened, is happening: I know of at least two cases, in a country that is too secularized, which concerned to two congregations and two respective Provinces. The Province began that journey which is also a worldly journey, of the "ars bene moriendi", the notion of dying well. What does this mean in that Province, in those two Provinces of two different congregations? Closing the Noviate to applicants, while here we are growing old and dying. And the congregation in that place is finished. And these are not fairy tales: I am speaking of two male Provinces that have taken this decision: Provinces of two religious congregations. Without patience we end up with the "ars bene moriendi". Patience is gone and vocations are not coming? Let us sell and hold onto the money for whatever may happen in the future. This is a signal, a signal that one is close to death: when a Congregation begins to cling to money. It lacks patience and falls prey to the second "P", in the absence of a sense of poverty.

I can ask myself: is what happened in those two Provinces, which opted for the "ars bene moriendi", happening in my heart? Have I lost my patience and I go on merely surviving? Without patience one cannot be magnanimous; one cannot follow the

Lord; we grow tired. We follow him to a certain point and at the first or second trial, say goodbye. I choose the "ars bene moriendi"; my consecrated life has reached this point; here I close my heart and survive. It is in a state of grace, yes, certainly. "Father, will I not go to hell?". No, perhaps you will not. But what about your life? Did you give up the possibility to be a father or mother of a family, to have the joy of children, grandchildren, all this, to end up like this? This "ars bene moriendi" is the spiritual euthanasia of a consecrated heart that cannot go on, does not

quality of women, this is ok, it is not bad –; she smiled, because she was thinking: "But I am 90 years old. And my husband, nearly 100, we shall have a child?". "Patience", the Lord said. Hope. Go onward, onward, onward.

Be mindful of these three "Ps": *prayer, poverty and patience*. Be mindful. I think the Lord will be pleased by choices – I will use the word that I do not like – choices that are *radical* in this sense. Be they personal, be they of the community. But you can bet on this.

I thank you for the patience you have had in listening to this sermon [they laugh, applaud]. I thank you. And I wish you fruitfulness. One never knows the ways through which fruitfulness passes, but if you pray, if you are poor, if you are patient, you are sure to be fruitful. How? The Lord will show you "on the other side"; but it is the recipe for bearing fruit. You will be fathers; you will be mothers; fruitfulness. That is what I hope for your religious life, that you may bear fruit.

Thank you! Continue to study, to work, to offer good proposals, but may they always be with the gaze that Jesus wants. And when you think of the first "P", think of me and pray for me. Thank you!

Now let us pray to Our Lady: "Hail Mary...".

[Blessing]

Have a good day!

*One never knows the ways through which fruitfulness passes, but if you pray, if you are poor, if you are patient, you are sure to be fruitful*

have the courage to follow the Lord; and does not call for help....

As my point of departure I chose to speak about the scarcity of vocations: this grieves the soul. "I have no descendants" was the lament of our father Abraham: "Lord, my riches will be inherited by a stranger". The Lord said to him: "Be patient. You shall have an heir" – "But at age 90?", and his wife behind the window was as – I beg your pardon – as women do: she was spying from the window – but this is a

## Pope reminds Missionaries of Mercy that the Church must not create obstacles to God's forgiveness



Kaye Redman  
"The joy of  
being found"

*"The Church cannot, must not and does not want to create any barriers or difficulties that obstruct access to the Father's forgiveness". The Pontiff emphasized this thought in an address to the Missionaries of Mercy, whom he received in audience in the Sala Regia on Tuesday morning, 10 April. The group of more than 500 had come to Rome from every continent for their second meeting with Francis, organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address, which he delivered in Italian.*

men who can bring his forgiveness and his mercy into the world. It is the same mission that the Risen Lord gave to the disciples on the day after his Easter: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (Jn 20:21-23). This responsibility placed in your hands – we are responsible for it! – calls for a style of life consistent with the mission we have received. It is again the Apostle who recalls it: we give no one reason for scandal, "so that no fault may be found with our ministry (2 Cor 6:3). Being co-workers of mercy, therefore, presumes that we share the merciful love that we were the first to receive. It could not be otherwise.

In this context Paul's words come to mind; those which, at the end of his life, then in old age, he wrote to Timothy, his faithful co-worker whom he would leave as his successor in the community of Ephesus. The Apostle thanks the Lord Jesus for having called him to the ministry (cf. 1 Tim 1:12); he confesses that he had "blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him"; yet, he says, "I received mercy" (1:13). I confide to you that many times, many times I have paused on this verse: "I was treated with mercy". And this does me good; it gives me courage. I feel, as it were, the Father's embrace, the Father's caress. To repeat this, it gives me, personally, a great deal of strength, because it is the truth: I too can say "I have been treated with mercy". The Lord's grace was overabundant in Paul; it acted in such a way as to enable him to understand how grievous a sinner he was and, starting from there, enabled him to discover the core of the Gospel. For this reason he writes: "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience" (1:15-16). The Apostle, at the end of his life, does not deny who he was; he does not hide his past. He could make a list of many successes, name the many communities he had established... Instead, he prefers to emphasize the experience that most impressed him and marked his life. He indicates to Timothy the path to be taken: to acknowledge God's mercy first and foremost in one's own personal existence. It is certainly not a matter of dwelling on the fact that we are sinners, almost seeking each time to be justified, thus nullifying the strength of the conversion. But it is important to always set out from this firm point: God has treated me with mercy. This is the key to becoming God's co-workers. We experience mercy and are transformed into ministers of mercy. Therefore, ministers do not place themselves above others as though they were judges

## With arms wide open

Dear Missionaries,

Welcome, thank you, and I hope that those who have been appointed bishops have not lost their ability to "bestow mercy". This is important.

It is a joy for me to meet you after the beautiful experience of the Jubilee of Mercy. As you well know, at the conclusion of that Extraordinary Jubilee, your ministry should have concluded. Yet, reflecting on the great service that you rendered to the Church, and on how much good you did and offered to so many believers with your preaching and above all with the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I found it opportune that your mandate should be extended for a little longer. I have received many testimonies about conversions that came about through your service. And you are witnesses to this. We truly must remember that God's mercy knows no bounds, and with your ministry you are tangible signs that the Church cannot, must not and does not want to create any barriers or difficulties that obstruct access to the Father's forgiveness. The "prodigal son" did not have to pass through customs; he was welcomed by the Father, without obstacles.

I thank Archbishop Fisichella for his introductory words, and the staff of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization for having organized these days of prayer and reflection. I extend my thoughts to those who were unable to come, so they may nonetheless feel they are taking part and, despite the distance, that they may feel included in my appreciation and thanks.

I would like to share some reflections with you aimed at giving more support to the responsibility that I have placed in your hands, and so that the ministry of mercy that you are called to live in a wholly particular way may be better expressed, according to the will of the Father whom Jesus revealed to us and that,

in the light of Easter, it may acquire its most complete meaning. And with these words – the discourse might be rather long – I would like to highlight the doctrine that underpins your ministry, which is not an idea – "let's have this pastoral experience and then we'll see how it goes" – no. It is a pastoral experience backed by a true and proper doctrine.

A first reflection is suggested to me by the text of the Prophet Isaiah where we read: "In a time of favour I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; ... the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.' 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?' Even if these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Is 49:8, 13-15). It is a text steeped in the theme of mercy. Benevolence, consolation, closeness, the promise of eternal love... are all expressions intended to express the richness of divine mercy, without being able to exhaust it in any single aspect.

Saint Paul, in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, returning to this text of Isaiah, updates it and seems to wish to apply it precisely to us. Thus he writes: "Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain". He says in fact: "At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation" (6:1-2). The first indication offered by the Apostle is that we cooperate with God. It is easy to verify how intense this call is. A few verses before, Paul had expressed the same concept, saying: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you" – it seems he is on his knees – "on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (5:20). The message that we convey as ambassadors on behalf of Christ is that of making peace with God. Our apostolate is an appeal to seek and receive the Father's forgiveness. As seen, God needs

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with regard to their brother and sister sinners. A true missionary of mercy mirrors the Apostle's experience: God has chosen me; God trusts me; God has placed his trust in me by calling me, though I be a sinner, to work with him in order to make his mercy real, effective and palpable.

This is the point of departure, so to speak. Let us move on.

Saint Paul, however, adds something extremely important to the words of the Prophet Isaiah. Those who are God's co-workers and administrators of mercy must be careful not to foil God's grace. He writes: "we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1). This is the first admonition that is given to us: to recognize the action of grace and its primacy in our life and that of others.

You know that I really love the neologism "*primerear*". Like the almond blossom, as the Lord defines himself: "I am like the almond blossom". *Primerear*: Springtime, *primerear*. And I like this neologism to express the very dynamic of the first act by which God comes to encounter us. God's *primerear* can never be forgotten nor taken as obvious, otherwise one cannot fully understand the mystery of salvation achieved with the act of reconciliation that God fulfils through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation is not, as is often thought, our private initiative nor the result of our diligence. If that were so, we would fall into that form of neo-pelagianism that tends to overestimate man and his projects, forgetting that the Saviour is God and not us. We must always emphasize, but especially with regard to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that the first initiative is the Lord's; it is he who precedes us in love, but not in a universal form: case by case. He precedes in every case, with every person. For this reason, the Church "can move forward" – she must do so – she can "boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast". The Gospel tells us that the banquet was made with them (cf. Lk 14:21). "Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24).

When a penitent approaches us, it is important and comforting to recognize that we have before us the first fruit of the encounter that has already occurred with the love of God, who with his grace has opened his heart and made it available for conversion. Our priestly heart should perceive the miracle of a person who has encountered God and who has already experienced the power of His grace. There could be no true reconciliation if this did not begin with an encounter with God, which precedes the one with us confessors. This gaze of faith allows the experience of reconciliation to be established as an event whose origin is in God, the Shepherd who, as soon as he becomes aware that a sheep is lost, goes and searches until he has found it (cf. Lk 15:4-5).

Our task – and this is a second step – consists in not rendering vain God's action of grace, but supporting it and enabling it to reach fulfilment. At times, unfortunately, it can happen that a priest's conduct, instead of drawing the penitent near, distances him or her. For example, in order to defend the integrity of the Gospel ideal he fails to see the steps that a person is taking day after day. This is not the way to nurture God's grace. Recognizing a sinner's repentance is tantamount to welcoming him or her with arms wide open, after the example of the father in the parable who welcomes his son when he returns home (cf.



Lk 15:20); it means not even letting him finish speaking. This has always struck me: the father did not need to hear his son's excuses; he embraced him. The son had a speech at the ready, but [the father] embraced him. It means the father did not need to hear the apology the son had prepared (cf. v. 22), because the confessor already understood everything, strong from his own experience of being a sinner. There is no need to shame someone who has already recognized his sin and knows he has done wrong; an inquisition is not necessary – those confessors who ask and ask, 10, 20, 30, 40 minutes.... "And why was it done? And how?..." – it is not necessary to question where the Father's grace has already intervened; it is not permissible to violate a person's sacred space in his relationship with God. An example from the Roman Curia: we criticize the Roman Curia, but there are saints in here. One cardinal, the Prefect of a Congregation, goes regularly to hear confession at Santo Spirito in Sassia two or three times a week – he has a set schedule – and one day, explaining, he said: "When I realize that a person is beginning to have difficulty speaking, and I have understood what it is about, I say: 'I understand. Go on'. And that person 'breathes'. It is good advice: when you know what it's about, 'I understand, go on'".

Here the Prophet Isaiah's beautiful expression acquires all its significance: "In a time of favour I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you" (49:8). Indeed, the Lord always answers the voice of those who cry out to him with a sincere heart. Those who feel abandoned and lonely can feel that God comes to encounter them. The Parable of the Prodigal Son recounts that "while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him" (Lk 15:20). And he threw his arms around his neck. God does not stand idle, awaiting the sinner: He runs to him, because the joy of seeing him return is too great, and God loves to rejoice, rejoice when He sees the sinner coming. It almost seems that God himself has a "restless heart" until he finds the son that was lost. When we welcome the penitent we need to look him in the eye and listen to him in order to allow him to perceive the love of God who forgives despite all; He dresses him in the best robe and ring, a sign of belonging to His family (cf. v. 22).

The text of the Prophet Isaiah helps us to take another step in the mystery of reconciliation, where he says: "he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them" (49:10). Mercy, which calls for listening, permits one then to guide the steps of the reconciled sinner. God frees him from fear, from anguish, from shame, from duress.

Forgiveness is really a form of liberation in order to restore joy and meaning to life. To the cry of the poor who implore help corresponds the cry of the Lord who promised freedom to prisoners, and to those in darkness he says: "Come forth" (cf. 49:9). An invitation to emerge from the sinful condition to don once again the vestments of the Children of God. Hence, in pardon, mercy restores dignity. The penitent does not hesitate to repent of the sin committed; and the priest does not blame him for the wrong for which he feels remorse, but rather, encourages him to look to the future with new eyes, guiding him to "springs of water" (cf. 49:10). This means that forgiveness and mercy allow one to look at life anew with trust and commitment. It is as if to say that mercy opens one to hope, creates hope and nurtures hope. Hope is also realistic; it is concrete. The confessor is also merciful when he says: "Go ahead, go on, go on". He gives the penitent hope. "And if something happens?" – Come back, there is no problem. The Lord always awaits you. Do not be ashamed to return, because the journey is full of stones and banana peels that cause you to slip.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola – allow me to do a little family advertizing – has a rich teaching in this regard, because it speaks about the capacity to make one feel God's consolation. There is not just forgiveness, peace, but also consolation. He writes: "interior consolation [...] evaporates all perturbation, and brings a soul to complete love of the Lord; and to such as He enlightens with this consolation He reveals many secrets, both at the time and still more later on. Indeed, thanks to that divine consolation all labours are a pleasure and all fatigue is rest. To him that walks with the fervour and warmth of this interior consolation, there is no burden however great that does not seem light, and no penance nor other trial so great but it appears to be sweet. It points out and lays open to us the way that we must follow, and it teaches us to flee from the opposite" – I repeat – "this consolation points out and lays open to us the way that we must follow, and it teaches us to flee from the opposite". We must learn to live in consolation. "It" – Ignatius continues – "does not remain always with us; it ever follows certain periods according to appointment. And this is for our good" (*Letter to Sr Teresa Rejadell*, 18 June 1536; *Epistolario* 99-107). It is good to think that the very sacrament of Reconciliation can become a favourable moment for the perception and growth of interior consolation, which animates the journey of the Christian. And I have to say this: we, with the "spirituality of complaining", run the risk of losing the sense of consolation. Also of losing that oxygen that

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## The Holy Father addresses Missionaries of Mercy

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consists in living in consolation. At times it is strong, but there is always a minimum consolation that is given to everyone: peace. Peace is the first degree of consolation. We must not lose it. Because it is precisely the pure, smog-free oxygen of our relationship with God. Consolation. From the highest to the lowest, which is peace.

I return to the words of Isaiah. It is there, then, that we find the sentiments of Jerusalem, which feels abandoned and forgotten by God: "Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me'. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even if these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (49:14-15). On the one hand, this reproach addressed to the Lord for having abandoned Jerusalem and his people seems curious. Much more frequently, one reads in the prophets that it is the people who abandon the Lord. Jeremiah is very clear about this when he says: "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:13). Sin is abandoning God, turning one's back on him

and tragic, because it does not find hope. It is necessary, therefore, that the prophet's expressions concerning God's abandonment of Jerusalem be placed in the light of Golgotha. Jesus' cry on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mk 15:34), gives voice to the abyss of abandonment. But the Father does not answer him. The words of the Crucified One seem to resonate in the void, because this silence of the Father for the Son is the price to pay so that no longer may anyone feel abandoned by God. The God who loved the world to the point of giving his Son (cf. Jn 3:16), to the point of abandoning him on the cross, can never abandon anyone: his love will always be there, close, greater and more faithful than any abandonment.

Isaiah, after repeating that God would not forget his people, concludes by saying: "Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands" (49:16). Incredible: God has "tattooed" my name on his hand. It is like a seal that gives me certainty, through which he promises that he will never distance himself from me. I am always before him; every time God looks at his hand, he remembers me, because my name is engraved upon it! And let us not forget that as the prophet writes, Jerusalem is actually destroyed; the Temple no longer exists; the people are slaves in exile. Yet the Lord says, "Your walls are continually before me" (*ibid.*). In the palm of God's hand the walls of Jerusalem are as solid as an impregnable fortress. The image is also valid for us: while life is destroyed under the illusion of sin, God keeps his salvation alive and comes to meet us with his help. Upon his fatherly hand I find my life renewed and projected toward the future, full of the love that only He can bring about. The book of love, the *Song of Songs*, also comes to mind, where we find an expression similar to that recalled by the prophet: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" (8:6). As we know, the seal's function was to prevent something intimate from being violated; in the ancient culture it was taken as an image to indicate that the love between two people was so solid and stable that it continued beyond death. Continuity and perpetuity are the basis of the image of the seal that God has placed upon himself to prevent anyone from thinking that he has abandoned

them: "I will not forget you" (Is 49:15). A seal. A tattoo.

And I will conclude. It is this certainty typical of love that we are called to support in those who approach the confessional, to give them the strength to believe and hope. The ability to know how to start afresh, despite everything, because, each time, God takes us by the hand and encourages us to look ahead. Mercy takes us by the hand, and instills the certainty that the love God loves with defeats all forms of solitude and abandonment. The Missionaries of Mercy are called to be interpreters of and witnesses to this experience that is imbued in a community which welcomes all and always without distinction, which supports anyone in need and in difficulty, which experiences communion as a fountain of life.

In recent weeks, I was particularly struck by a Collect of the Lenten Season (*Wednesday of the Fourth Week*), which somehow seems to summarize these reflections. I shall share it with you so that we can make it our prayer and way of life:

"O God, who reward the merits of the just and offer pardon to sinners who do penance,

have mercy, we pray, on those who call upon you,

that the admission of our guilt may serve to obtain your pardon for our sins".

Amen.

And I would like to end with two anecdotes of two great confessors, both in Buenos Aires. One, a Sacramentine Father who had had important duties in his congregation; he served as Provincial, but he always found time to go to the confessional. I do not know how many, but the majority of the priests of Buenos Aires went to confession with him. Even when Saint John Paul II was in Buenos Aires and asked for a confessor, they called him from the Nunciature. He was a man who gave one the courage to go on. I experienced this because I confessed to him when I was Provincial, in order not to do so with my Jesuit director... When he began: "good, fine, that's good"; and he encouraged you: "Go on, go ahead!". How kind he was. He died at the age of 94 and served as confessor up to a year earlier, and when he wasn't in the confessional, you rang the bell and he would come down. And one day, I was vicar general and I left my room, to where there was a fax machine – I did this early every morning to see the urgent news –, it was Easter Sunday and there was a fax: "Yesterday, half an hour before the Easter Vigil, Father Aristi" – as he was called – "passed away...". I went to the priests' retirement home to have Easter lunch with them and on the way back I went to the church that was in the city centre, where the funeral vigil was. There was a casket and two elderly ladies praying the rosary. I approached, and there was not one flower, nothing. I thought: but this is the confessor of all of us! This struck me. I have heard how bad death is. I went out and went 200 meters, where there was a flower stand, those that are in the streets; I bought some flowers and I went back. And, while I was putting the flowers by the casket, I saw that in his hands he held a rosary... The seventh Commandment says, "Do not steal. The rosary stayed there, but as I pretended to fix the flowers I did 'like so', and took the cross. And the elderly women were watching, those elderly women. I have carried that cross here with me ever since that moment and I ask him for the grace to be merciful. I carry it with me always. This would have been in the year 1996, more or less. I ask him for this grace. The witness of these men is great.

Then the other case. This man is alive, 92 years old. He is a Capuchin who has a queue of penitents, of all colours, poor, rich, lay people, priests, some bishops, nuns ... everyone, it never ends. He is a great forgiver, but not "indulgent", a great forgiver, a greatly merciful man. And I knew this; I knew him. Twice, I went to the Sanctuary of Pompeii in Buenos Aires where he heard confession and I greeted him. He is now 92 years old. When he came to me at that time he would have been 85. And he said to me: "I want to talk to you because I have a problem. I have great misgivings: sometimes I think I forgive too much". And he explained to me: "I must not forgive a person who comes to ask for forgiveness and says that he would like to change, that he will do everything, but he doesn't know if he will be able to... Yet I forgive him! And sometimes I feel anxious; I have misgivings...". And I told him, "What do you do when you feel this misgiving"? And he replied thus: "I go to the chapel, to the chapel inside the convent, in front of the tabernacle, and I sincerely apologize to the Lord: 'Lord, forgive me, today I have forgiven too much. Forgive me... But mind you, it was you who set a bad example for me'". This is how that man prayed.



to gaze only at oneself; a tragic self-confidence, which is full of cracks and is not able to bring stability and consistency to life. We know that we experience this daily in the first person. Still, there are times when one really feels the silence and abandonment of God; not only in the great dark hours of humanity in every age, which raise in many the question of God's abandonment. I am now thinking of Syria today, for example. It happens that even in personal affairs, even in those of the saints, one can experience abandonment.

What a sad experience, that of abandonment! It has different degrees, up to the definitive separation with the arrival of death. Feeling abandoned leads to disappointment, sadness, sometimes despair, and the different forms of depression from which so many suffer today. Yet every form of abandonment, paradoxical as it may seem, is part of the experience of love. When one loves and experiences abandonment, then the ordeal becomes dramatic and the suffering possesses traits of inhuman violence. If it is not part of the realm of love, abandonment becomes meaningless

Homily in the Vatican Basilica

# The force of attraction

Following their meeting in the Sala Regia, on Tuesday, 10 April, the Pope presided a Mass at the Altar of the Chair in the Vatican Basilica, together with the Missionaries of Mercy, members of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, and the Curia. At the conclusion of the liturgy, the Holy Father gave each Missionary an artistic replica of a tile of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's homily, which he delivered in Italian.

We heard in the Acts of the Apostles: "And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33).

Everything begins with the Resurrection of Jesus: from it stems the witness of the Apostles and, through this derives the faith and new life of the members of the community, with its straightforward evangelical style.

Today's Readings for the Mass bring out these two inseparable aspects: *personal rebirth and community life*. And so, in addressing you, dear brothers, I am thinking of your ministry which you have been carrying out since the Jubilee of Mercy. A ministry that moves in both of these directions: at the service of people, so that they may be "born anew", and at the service of communities, so that they may live the commandment of love, with joy and consistency.

In this sense, the Word of God today offers two indications that I would like to offer you, thinking precisely of your mission.

The Gospel reminds us that one called to bear witness to Christ's Resurrection must *himself, personally, be "born anew"* (cf. Jn 3:7). Otherwise one ends up becoming like Nicodemus who, despite being a teacher in Israel, did not understand Jesus' words when He said that in



order to "see the kingdom of God" one must be "born anew", be born "of water and the Spirit" (cf. vv. 3-5). Nicodemus did not understand the logic of God, which is the logic of grace, of mercy, whereby one who becomes small is great, one who becomes last is first, one who acknowledges being sick is healed. This means truly leaving primacy to the Father, to Jesus and the Holy Spirit in our lives. Attention: it is not a question of becoming "obsessed" priests, as if they were depositaries of some extraordinary charism. No. Priests are normal, simple, meek, balanced people, who

are capable of allowing themselves to be constantly regenerated by the Spirit, docile to his power, interiorly free – above all of themselves – because moved by the "wind" of the Spirit that "blows where it wills" (cf. Jn 3:8).

The second indication concerns service to the community: being priests capable of "lifting up" in the "wilderness" of the world the sign of salvation, that is, the Cross of Christ, as a source of conversion and renewal for the whole community and for the world itself (cf. Jn 3:14-15).

In particular, I would like to stress that the Lord, dead and Risen, is the power that *creates communion* in the Church and, through the Church, in all of humanity. Jesus said it before the Passion: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn 12:32). This power of communion was manifested from the beginning in the community of Jerusalem where – as the Acts of the Apostles attests – "the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (4:32). It was a communion that meant practical sharing of goods, so that "they had everything in common" (*ibid.*) and "there was not a needy person among them" (v. 34). But this manner of community life was also "contagious" outside of it: the living presence of the Risen Lord exerts a force of attraction that, through the witness of the Church and through the different forms of proclaiming the Good News, tends to reach everyone, no one excluded. You, dear brothers, also place your specific ministry as Missionaries of Mercy at the service of this dynamism. In fact, both the Church and the world today particularly need Mercy so that the unity willed by God in Christ may prevail over the negative action of the evil one who exploits so many current means, good in themselves, but which, when misused, instead of uniting, divide. We are convinced that "unity is greater than conflict" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 228), but we also know that without Mercy this principle does not have the strength to be put into concrete practice in life and history.

Dear brothers, start afresh from this encounter with the joy of being confirmed in the ministry of Mercy. Confirmed first and foremost in the welcome knowledge that you are the first called to be reborn, always and again "anew", through God's love. And at the same time, confirmed in your mission to offer to all the sign of Jesus "lifted up" from the earth, so that the community may be a sign and instrument of unity throughout the world.

## Neocatechumenal Way celebrates 50th anniversary

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he apparently wishes to emphasize that there is room for all people in his heart. No one is excluded. As children for a father and mother: even if there are many, big ones and little ones, each one of them is loved wholeheartedly. Because by giving oneself, love does not diminish; it grows. And it is always hopeful. Like parents, who see first and foremost not all the defects and shortcomings of their children, but the children themselves, and in this light they accept their problems and their difficulties, as do missionaries with the peoples beloved by God. They do not put the negative aspects and things to be changed at the forefront, but "see with the heart", with a gaze that appreciates, an approach that respects, a faith that waits patiently. Go on mission in this way, with the idea of "playing on home turf". Because the Lord is at home with each people and his Spirit has already sown the seeds before your arrival. And thinking of our Father, who so loves the world (cf. 3:16), may you be inspired by humanity, working together for the joy of all (cf. 2 Cor 1:24), respected because you are neighbours, listened to because you are close. May you love the cultures and traditions of the peoples, without applying pre-established models. Do not begin from theories and strategies, but from concrete situations:

thus the Spirit will shape the message according to his times and his ways. And the Church will grow in his image: united in the diversity of peoples, of gifts and of charisms.

Dear brothers and sisters, your charism is a great gift of God for the Church of our time. Let us thank the Lord for these 50 years: a round of applause for 50 years! And looking to his paternal, fraternal and loving faithfulness, never lose faith: he will protect you, spurring you at the same time to go, as beloved disciples, to all peoples, with humble simplicity. I accompany and encourage you: Go forth! And please, do not forget to pray for me, who remain here!



Members of the Parish of the Nativity, one of the 25 local communities which Pope Francis sent on mission to the parishes of Rome

# Say 'no' to violence and revenge

At the Regina Caeli an appeal for the Central African Republic

*Addressing the faithful gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Regina Caeli on Sunday morning, 6 May, Pope Francis invited prayer "for the people of the Central African Republic" where "grave violence resulting in numerous deaths and wounded" has recently erupted. Prior to his appeal, the Pontiff commented on the Gospel reading for the Sixth Sunday of Easter: "Abide in my love" (John 15:9). The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he offered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

During this Easter season, the Word of God continues to point out to us the *styles of life* that are consistent with being the *community of the Risen One*. Among these, today's Gospel presents us with Jesus' instructions: "abide in my love" (Jn 15:9): to abide in Jesus' love. To live in the flow of God's love,

love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (v. 10). Love is fulfilled in everyday life, in attitudes, in deeds. Otherwise, it is only something illusory. They are words, words, words: that is not love. Love is concrete, every day. Jesus asks us to follow his commandments, which are summarized in the following: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (v. 12).

19th century, was beatified yesterday in Aachen, Germany. Let us give thanks to God for this zealous witness of the Gospel, caring educator of disadvantaged youth.

I invite you to pray for the people of the Central African Republic, a country I had the joy of visiting and which I carry in my heart, and where in recent days there has been grave violence resulting in numerous deaths and wounded, including a priest. May the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, help everyone to say 'no' to violence and revenge in order to build peace together.

I greet you all, Romans and pilgrims, in particular those from Oviedo, Spain, students from Vrbové, Slovakia and altar boys



to take up permanent residence there, is the condition to ensure that our love does not lose its ardour and boldness along the way. Like Jesus and in him, we too must welcome with gratitude the love that comes from the Father and abide in this love, trying to avoid being separated from it by egoism and sin. It is a demanding project but it is not impossible.

First and foremost, it is important to realize that Christ's love is not a superficial feeling, no; it is a fundamental attitude of the heart which is manifested in living as he wishes. In fact, Jesus states: "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my

Prayer intention for May

## Witnesses in everyday life

Scenes of everyday life with the family, at the office, during free time; people engaged in initiatives of solidarity, youth sports, newlyweds beginning their journey together and planning their future. This look at everyday life accompanies the Holy Father's prayer intention for the month of May, which he shares in the video message entrusted to the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network. It can be found at [www.thepopevideo.org](http://www.thepopevideo.org). A call to prayer for the laity, to help them "fulfill their specific mission, the mission that they received in Baptism, putting their creativity at the service of the challenges of today's world".

The Church, the Pontiff explains, truly needs lay people and their "testimony regarding the truth of the Gospel and their example of expressing their faith by practicing solidarity". A valuable mission for which the Pope thanks all the lay people who, faithful to the baptismal mandate, are able to "take risks, who are not afraid and who offer reasons for hope to the poorest, to the excluded, to the marginalized".

The video, translated into nine languages, just as those that have preceded it, was produced and distributed by La Machi agency, in cooperation with Vatican Media which recorded it.

How can this love which the Risen Lord gives us be shared with others? Jesus has many times pointed out to us who the "other" to love is, not with words but with actions. It is the person I encounter on the street and who, with his face and his story, challenges me; it is the one who, with his very presence, compels me to leave my interests and my certainties behind; it is he who awaits my willingness to listen and to walk a stretch of road together. Openness towards each brother and sister, whoever they may be and whatever their situation, beginning with those who are close to me in the family, in the community, at work, at school.... In this way, if I remain united to Jesus, his love can reach the other and draw him to it, to His friendship.

And this love for the other cannot be reserved for exceptional moments, but must be constant in our lives. That is why we are called, for example, to safeguard the elderly like a precious treasure and with love even if they cause economic difficulties and inconveniences, but we must safeguard them. This is why we must give all the assistance possible to the sick, even in the final stages. This is why unborn children are always to be welcomed; this is why, ultimately, life is always to be protected and loved, from conception to its natural end. And this is love.

We are loved by God in Jesus Christ who asks us to love one another as he loves us. But we cannot do this if we do not have his same Heart within us. The Eucharist, in which we are called to participate every Sunday, has the aim of forming the Heart of Christ within us, so that our entire life may be guided by his generous attitudes. May the Virgin Mary help us to remain in Jesus' love and to grow in our love towards all, especially the weakest, so as to correspond fully to our Christian vocation.

*After reciting the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:*

Dear brothers and sisters, Clara Fey, the Foundress of the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus who lived in the second half of the

from Bern. A special greeting goes to the new Swiss Guards, their relatives and friends on the feast day of this historic and worthy Corps. A round of applause for them!

I greet the representatives of the Meter Association, whom I encourage to continue their commitment to child victims of violence; as well as the faithful from Piacenza and Borgorico and the gymnasts from Castelfranco Emilia.

I also heard some songs from the Neocatechumenals. There they are! Thank you! Thank you for your work of evangelization. You are everywhere, thank you!

I also greet all the inmates from the Latina correctional facility who are spiritually joined with us at this time.

Have a happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*



Clara Fey