Tens of thousands of young people from 200 dioceses throughout Italy will travel on foot to Rome early next month to meet Pope Francis on the weekend of 11-12 August. Rediscovering the pilgrimage routes of their native land along the way, they will converge on the Circus Maximus on Saturday evening, 11 August, for their first appointment with the Pope, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. In Saint Peter’s Square the following morning, the Holy Father will meet an estimated 70,000 young pilgrims and some 100 bishops at the conclusion of Sunday Mass which will be presided by Cardinal Gualtiero Bassetti, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference (CEI). Pope Francis will then entrust to the Italian youth his missionary mandate and bless the gifts which they will take with them to Panama for World Youth Day in January 2019: the Crucifix of St Damian and Our Lady of Loreto. After the Angelus the youth will return to their dioceses, carrying the stamp symbolizing the cross and roads traveled which will certify their pilgrimage. The CEI’s National Social Communications Office announced that further details of the event will be released in Rome at a press conference at 12:00 pm on Tuesday, 7 August, in Palazzo Pio’s Sala Marconi. For additional information, please visit: www.giovani.chiesacattolica.it.

On 14 October, Nunzio Sulprizio, a 19-year-old Italian layman beatified by Pope Paul VI on 7 December 1975, will be proclaimed Saint. Pope Francis made the announcement on Thursday, 19 July, during the Ordinary Public Consistory for the vote on the Cause for Canonization of the young Blessed from the Abruzzi. Sulprizio therefore, will be canonized together with Pope Paul VI and a number of religious during the Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment.”

At the Consistory of 19 May, it was announced that 24 October had been chosen for the Canonization of Pope Montini, Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, two diocesan priests and two religious sisters: a German and a Spanish missionary in Bolivia.

Blessed Nunzio was born in Pescosansonesco, Italy on 13 April 1817. He lost both his parents when he was very young and was brought up by an uncle who exploited him, not allowing him to go to school, and forcing him to work in his blacksmith shop. He found refuge before the Tabernacle. After contracting gangrene in one of his legs, he was sent to a hospital in Naples for people with incurable diseases. He suffered tremendously. Re-gaining his health, he started helping other patients. He died in Naples from bone cancer on 5 May 1836.
Bishop of Qingdao dies

Bishop Joseph Li Mingshu, Bishop of Qingdao, in the Province of Shandong, Mainland China, died on Friday, 15 June at age 93, following a long illness.

Bishop Mingshu was born on 1 December 1924 in the village of Licun, Pangiuzhen, Boxiong County, Binzhou, Shandong. He began his studies at the Zhoucun Seminary in 1937 and completed them at the Seminary in Jinan in 1948. He has served in parish ministry and as: vice rector of the Archdiocese of Southwark, Great Britain (9 July).

Bishop Joseph Li Mingshu
Archdiocese of Shandong, Mainland China, died on Friday, 15 June at age 93, following a long illness.

Bishop Mingshu was appointed vice rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary in Shandong.

Bishop Li Mingshu became diocesan administrator of the Diocese of Qingdao in 1994 and, on 15 August 2000, he was ordained a bishop by Bishop Ma Xuesheng of Zhoucun, with a mandate from the Pope. During the episcopal ordination rite, Bishop Li Mingshu announced that he wished to strengthen the new means of evangelization, to form lay people to be responsible for catechesis and to maintain relations of communion with the universal Church. On receiving his episcopal cross and his ring, he reaffirmed his fidelity to the Pope and to the universal Church in a letter dated August 2011.

In 2005, he had invited Sister Nimura Joshi, Superior General of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, to visit Qingdao to examine the possibility of opening a house for the poor in his diocese. However, the civil authorities did not accept their proposal.

Bishop Li Mingshu’s funeral was now celebrated on 18 June in the Church of Zhejianglu in Qingdao. The Diocese of Qingdao today numbers some 45,000 faithful, 10 priests and 10 sisters.

San Jose in California, USA. Until now he has served as Bishop of Las Cruces, USA (11 July).

Bishop Cantú, 51, was born in Houston, USA. He was ordained a priest on 21 May 1994. He was ordained a bishop on 2 June 2008, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Dardanus and Auxiliary of San Antonio, USA. On 10 January 2009 he was appointed Bishop of Las Cruces.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Héctor Julio López Hurtado, SDB, of Girardot, Colombia (11 July).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jaime Muñoz Pedroza as Bishop of Girardot. Until now he has served as Bishop of Arauca, Colombia (11 July).

Bishop Muñoz Pedroza, 59, was born in Ciénaga, Colombia. He was ordained a priest on 24 November 1984. He was ordained bishop on 4 December 2010, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Arauca.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Gerulhus Kheb-uhm Pareira, SVD, of Maumere, Indonesia (14 July).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ewaldus Martinus Sedu as Bishop of Maumere. Until now he has served as vicar general of the same diocese (14 July).

Bishop-elect Sedu, 54, was born in Bajawa, Indonesia. He was ordained a priest on 7 July 1991. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of the catechetical commission of Maumere; formator and then rector at the Interdiocesan Major Seminary of Saint Peter in Rutapet.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Christopher Tri Harsono as Bishop of Purwokerto, Indonesia.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Pontifical Disposition concerning the Apostolic Nunciature in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Holy Father has decided to send Archbishop Etto Belestrero, titular Archbishop of Victoria, Apostolic Nuncio, to the Democratic Republic of Congo to manage the affairs of the Apostolic Nunciature in Kinshasa. Until now he has served as Pontifical Representative in Colombia (6 July).
At the Angelus the Pope explains that evangelizers are neither managers nor celebrities on tour

**Modesty and poverty are the missionary style**

Moisyd and poverty of means are "the missionary style" of the Church, Pope Francis told the faithful present at the Angelus in Saint Peter's Square on Sunday, 15 July. Commenting on the day's Gospel, he spoke about the time Jesus sent the Twelve on mission. The "messengers of the Kingdom of God" are not "omnipotent managers" or "irreplaceable officials", he said. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

**Good Morning.**

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Mk 6:7-13) narrates the moment Jesus sends the Twelve (Apostles) on mission. After calling each of them by name "to be with him" (Mk 3:14), listening to his words and observing his gestures of healing, he now calls them again to "send them out two by two" (6:7) to the villages he was going to visit. It is a sort of "internship" of what they would be called to do following the Resurrection of the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Gospel passage pauses on the style of the missionary which we can sum up in two points: the mission has a centre; the mission has a face.

First of all, the missionary disciple has his centre of reference who is Jesus himself. The narrative indicates this by using a series of verbs which have him as the subject — "He called to him"; he "began to send them"; he "gave them authority"; he "charged them", "he said to them" (vv. 7, 8, 10) —, so that the going out and working of Jesus in their missionary actions. This demonstrates that the Apostles have nothing of their own to proclaim, nor any abilities to manifest, but rather that they speak and act as "emissaries", as messengers of Jesus.

This episode of the Gospel also applies to us and not only to priests but to all baptized people called to witness to the Gospel of Christ in the various spheres of life. And for us too, this mission is authentic only in so far as its unchanging centre who is Jesus. It is not an initiative of faithful individuals nor of groups and not even of large gatherings. It is the mission of the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. No Christian proclaims the Gospel on his/her own, but is only sent by the Church who received the mandate from Jesus himself. Indeed it is Baptism that makes us missionaries. A baptized person who does not feel the need to proclaim the Gospel, to proclaim Jesus, is not a good Christian.

The second characteristic of the missionary's style is, so to speak, a face, which consists in the poverty of means. His equipment responds to a criteria of reference, the face of Jesus who was rejected and crucified anticipates the desolation of his messenger. And only if we are united to Him, who died and rose, can we find the courage to evangelize.

May the Virgin Mary, the first disciple and missionary of the Word of God, help us to convey to the world the message of the Gospel in a humble and radiant exultation, beyond any rejection, misunderstanding or tribulation.

**After the Angelus, the Holy Father added:**

Dear brothers and sisters, I offer a heartfelt greeting to you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from Italy and various parts of the world: the families, the parish groups and the associations.

I especially greet the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood from Monza, the novices of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from various countries and the Polish youth from the Diocese of Peltpin, who are attending a course of spiritual exercises in Assisi.

I wish everyone a pleasant Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.

**Arrivederci!**
The cry of suffering in the Middle East
To participants of the ROACO Plenary Assembly

On Friday morning, 22 June, in the Consistory Hall, Pope Francis met with participants of the Plenary Assembly for Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO). The Holy Father decided to set aside his prepared speech and addressed the group extemporaneously. The following is a translation of his address.

The cry of suffering in the Middle East is of great importance. Today, the Middle East is a crossroads of difficult and tragic situations. In the Middle East, there is the risk — although not necessarily the will of any single individual — of the elimination of Christians. A Middle East without Christians would not be the Middle East. On this, the 50th anniversary of the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches, I wanted to read this text to you. You should already have received the English text and so there is no point in simply repeating what has already been written. However, since the concern for the Middle East is great, I would like to make a few important remarks before giving the written address to Cardinal Sandri. You have it in English, therefore I will not bore you by repeating the same points.

Today, the Middle East is suffering. Some world powers look upon the Middle East not so much with concern for its culture, faith and the life of its people but rather to take advantage of it and gain control. People say, “Christians are the first peoples of the Middle East; we must respect them”. The facts, however, do not reflect this attitude. The overall number of Christians continues to decrease. I spoke of this the other day with Cardinal Zenari (Apostolic Nuncio in Syria). Their numbers are decreasing. Very few wish to return there because the suffering is so great. They love their land; they love their faith, but the suffering has been very great, very deep.

The Middle East is the cradle of Christianity: the land of Jesus Christ. Your efforts to support the Middle East and your concern for the Middle East are important and of great significance, and I am most grateful for this. There are great Churches in the Middle East, ancient Churches with their theology, their liturgies. And these wonders... their Holy Fathers, their spiritual teachers... The Tradition of the Middle East. We must preserve all of this. We must fight for it. You do this, and I thank you, because this, too, is the essence — shall we say — that is borne of these roots to give life to our soul. How many of us, in our spiritual lives, follow the doctrines of the Eastern Fathers, the ancient monks who teach one the way of contemplation and of holiness!

The Middle East, at this very moment, amid its suffering, is a land of migration, and this is one of the most serious problems. Let us consider Lebanon, where a third of the population are refugees, the majority of them are Syrian, because Lebanon took in so many Syrians. Let us think of Jordan, which also hosts a large number of Syrians who are suffering... And Turkey too. Then Europe. When I was in Lesbos, there were so many Syrians, so many, it was full... of Christians and Muslims who were fleeing. And in this case... From the same thing. It is a land of migration from abroad, from among those same Middle Eastern nations.

There is a great sin in the Middle East, and the poor are suffering as a result of it. It is the sin of the lust for power, the sin of war, worsening each time, in each case... With more sophisticated arms. The people suffer, children suffer. We cannot say that the Middle East is without schools, but there are very few schools, due to the continuous bombings that destroy everything. There are few hospitals. These are the afflictions of the Middle East. The greatest sin is war. But there is ours too, in the Middle East. Ours. The sin of inconsistency between life and faith. There are a few — not many, but there are some — priests, some bishops, some religious congregations who profess poverty but live as the rich. ROACO receives the smallest offerings from widows, as the Cardinal Prefect said, as symbolic offerings, the tiniest offering of the poor. I would like, however, that these “rich ones” — religious, Christians, some bishops or some religious congregations — would deprive themselves more, in order to support their sisters, their brothers. The Lord will never abandon us, and this is why the Middle East is a hope, a hope that we must nurture. It is a spiritual reality for which we must work, as you do.

I thank you, with all my heart, for all of your work. Thank you.
The desperate cries of the earth

"All governments should strive to honour the commitments made in Paris in 2015 in order to avoid the worst consequences of the climate crisis. Your presence here is the sign of "your commitment to take concrete steps to save the planet and its poor, who look for our help and concern. You have also gathered to testify to the urgent need to respond to the Encyclical's call for change, for an ecological conversion of hearts and lifestyles. You have given priority to solidarity and service, along with His Holiness Pope Francis, in the sign of your commitment to take concrete steps to save the planet and the life it sustains, inspired by the Encyclical's assumption that "everything is connected". That principle lies at the heart of an integral ecology.

Here we can think back on the call that Francis of Assisi received from the Lord in the little church of San Damiano: "Go and repair my house, which, as you can see, lies in ruins". Today, the "common home" of our planet also needs urgently to be repaired and secured for a sustainable future.

In recent decades, the scientific community has developed increasingly accurate assessments in this regard. Indeed, "the pace of conversion of hearts and lifestyles has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophic outcomes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world" (Laudato Si', 165). There is a real danger that we are witnessing different rubles, deserts and refuse. So I express my hope that concern for the state of our common home will translate into systematic and concerted efforts aimed at an integral ecology. For "the effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now" (ibid.).

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome all of you assembled for this International Conference marking the third anniversary of the Encyclical on Care for our Common Home. I thank all of you for coming together to "hear with your hearts" the increasingly desperate cries of the earth and its poor, who look for our help and concern. You have also gathered to testify to the urgent need to respond to the Encyclical's call for change, for an ecological conversion of hearts and lifestyles. You have given priority to solidarity and service, along with His Holiness Pope Francis, in the sign of your commitment to take concrete steps to save the planet and the life it sustains, inspired by the Encyclical's assumption that "everything is connected". That principle lies at the heart of an integral ecology.

Here we can think back on the call that Francis of Assisi received from the Lord in the little church of San Damiano: "Go and repair my house, which, as you can see, lies in ruins". Today, the "common home" of our planet also needs urgently to be repaired and secured for a sustainable future.

Financial institutions, too, have an important role to play, as part both of the problem and its solution. A financial paradigm shift is needed, for the sake of promoting integral human development. International organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank can encourage effective reforms for more inclusive and sustainable development. It is to be hoped that "finance... will go back to being an instrument directed towards improved wealth creation and development" (BENEDICT XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 15), as well as towards care for the environment.

All these actions presuppose a transformation on a deeper level, namely a change of hearts and minds. In the words of Saint John Paul II: "We must encourage and support an "ecological conversion" (Catechesis, 17 January 2001). Here the religions, and the Christian Churches in particular, have a key role to play. The Day of Prayer for Creation and its associated initiatives, begun in the Orthodox Church, are beginning to spread among Christian communities throughout the world.

Finally, dialogue and commitment to our common home must make special room for two groups of people at the forefront of the crisis: the poor and those who call the Amazon home.

On the one hand, "young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the consequences of the current environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded" (Laudato Si', 13). It is the young who will have to face the consequences of the current environmental and climate crisis. Consequently, intergenerational solidarity is "not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us" (ibid., 139).

Then too, "it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions" (ibid., 146). It grieves us to see the lands of indigenous peoples expropriated and their cultures trampled on by predatory schemes and by new forms of colonialism, fuelled by the culture of waste and consumerism (cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology, 8 June 2018). "For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values" (Laudato Si', 146). How much we can learn from them! The lives of indigenous peoples "are a living memory of the mission that God has entrusted to us all: the protection of our common home" (Address, Puerto Maldonado, Peru, 19 January 2018).

Dear brothers and sisters, challenges are not lacking! I express my heartfelt gratitude for your efforts in the service of care for creation and a better future for our children and grandchildren. Sometimes it might seem too arduous a task, since "there are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected" (Laudato Si', 54). Yet "human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start" (ibid., 205). Please continue to work for "the radical change which present circumstances require" (ibid., 171). For "injustice is not invincible" (ibid., 74).

May Saint Francis of Assisi continue to inspire and guide us on this journey, and "may our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (ibid., 244). After all, that hope is based on our faith in the power of our heavenly Father. He, "who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and he loves constantly impels us to find new ways forward. Praise be to him!" (ibid., 245).

To all of you I impart my blessing. And please, remember to pray for me.

Thank you!
L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

number 23, Friday, 27 July 2018

The experience of encounter

Holy Father’s press conference on the return flight from Geneva to Rome

The experience of encounter

Well, this is nothing new, because the Code of Canon Law provides for what the German Bishops were talking about — Communiation in special cases. They were looking at the issue of divorced people, of their relationship, of their children, and so on. However, the Code says that the Bishop of the respective particular Church — this word is important, peculiar Church, it is a has to manage this matter, it is in his hands. This is in the Code. The German Bishops, since they had seen that the case was not new, and also that several priests were doing things that the bishop did not agree with, wanted to study the issue and conducted this study which — I do not want to exaggerate — was more than a research study. I do not know for sure but more than a year, well done, well done. And the study was restricted: what the bishops wanted was to state clearly in the Code. And I saw, having read it, this is a restrictive document. It was not open to everyone. No. It was a matter of the matter, but it was not open to everyone, and they decided to do it for the local Church, but not the Episcopal Conference (the institutional sphere). They did not want to do that. The matter has differed from that point, that is stating that it is for the German Episcopal Conference, and at that point there is a problem, because the Code does not provide for this. It concerns the competence of the diocesan bishop, but not of the Episcopal Conference. Why? Because something approved in an Episcopal Conference, immediately becomes universal. And this was the difficulty with the discussion not so much the content, but this. They sent the document: then there were two or three meetings for dialogue and clarification. And there was also a meeting with my permission, he did not use on his own at all. It is better to avoid this: he is better to avoid this and say that the document is not yet matu-

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It is called Casa Malala – a shelter run by three congregations of women religious in the Dominican Republic. 

Thanks to an agreement signed on the Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on 27 June, the State is to hand over management of the house, previously under its care, to the Sisters Adorers, Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and Charity, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Oblates of the Most Holy Redeemer. Speaking to Fides news agency, Sister Nieves de la Cruz, an Oblate resident in the Dominican Republic, said meetings with institutions to discuss the project began in 2016. The authorities accepted the nuns’ offer to manage the structure after receiving their project proposal for providing assistance to trafficking victims. Significantly, the home will continue to be called Casa Malala, to underline the importance of the work of Malala Yousafzai – the young Pakistani activist and recipient of the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy on behalf of girls and their right to an education.

Sister Nieves explained that the project was created in response to a lack of shelters where victims of human trafficking could be received in a welcoming family atmosphere. “We had to respond to this human tragedy”, Sister Nieves said. Particularly to the problem of the large number of Venezuelan women who have entered the Dominican Republic as victims of trafficking, often for the purpose of sexual exploitation. She noted that this situation is caused by many factors: poverty, violence and the disenfranchisement suffered by many in their native country which lead them to seek a better life elsewhere. Yet often, they fall into the snares of traffickers. “Many of them”, the nun said, “are mothers and skilled professionals, but they all have desperation in their eyes and a desire for economic stability so that they can send money to their families, even if they are currently in the Dominican Republic in an irregular situation”. Not all of them, she observed, are adults: in recent years, the number of girls and adolescents has risen sharply.

The Dominican Republic is not always their final destination; sometimes the refugees are just passing through. “Many women are hijacked by the big mafias in other countries such as Panama, Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and even Spain and Lebanon”. As members of an anti-human trafficking network, the Oblates of the Most Holy Redeemer and Charity have been working together for many years.

Sister Nieves de la Cruz said the nuns realized that their anti-trafficking network needed help and thus have been seeking the assistance of other religious by trying to raise awareness among congregations to combat the phenomenon in the Dominican Republic. Lay people are also involved; three of them, including a psychologist, will work at Casa Malala.

According to NGO reports, many Dominican women are being taken to Europe and the Near East, while almost all foreign victims remain in the Central American country.

**VATICAN BULLETIN**

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Launay Saturné of Jacmel, Haiti, as Archbishop of Cap-Haïtien, Haiti (06 July).

Archbishop Saturné, 54, was born in Delatte, Haiti. He was ordained a priest on 10 March 1991. He was ordained a bishop on 25 May 2010, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Jacmel.

**START OF MISSION**

On Monday, 18 June, Archbishop Waldemar Stanisław Sommertag, titular Archbishop of Maastricht, began his mission as Apostolic Visitor to Nicaragua with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mr. Francisco Ortega, President of the Republic.

**SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

On Saturday, 24 July, for the upcoming 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment”, the Holy Father appointed as President Delegates the following:

- Cardinal H.B. Louis Raphael 1 Sako, Patriarch of Babylon for the Chaldeans, Head of the Synod of the Chaldean Church, Iraq
- Cardinal Desiré Tzarahazana, Archbishop of Timbo, Madagascar
- Cardinal Charles Maung Bo SDB, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar
- Cardinal John Rihak MGC, Archbishop of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

**NECROLOGY**

Bishop José María Sotomayor Alberro, Bishop emeritus of San Sebastian, Spain, at age 90 (10 July)

Bishop Richard John Garcia, of Monterey in California, USA, at age 71 (01 July)

Archbishop Giovanni Marta, Bishop emeritus of Messina-Lipari-Santa Lucia del Mela, Italy, at age 87 (11 July)

Run by three congregations of women religious in the Dominican Republic

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2**

now he has served as vicar general of Bogor, Indonesia (14 July).

Bishop-elect Harsono, 52, was born in Bogor, Indonesia. He was ordained a priest on 3 February 1993. He holds a licence in Islamic studies from the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome. He has served in parish ministry and as: formator at the Minor Seminary of Bogor, rector and formator at the Major Seminary in Bandung; professor of Islamic studies and of Catholic religion and Comparative religion; member of the civil association West Java F KU B Forum for Religious Dialogue; member of the civil association Catholic religion and Comparative religion; professor of Islamic studies and of the Islamic State University of Indonesia; President of the Diocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Antony Devotta of Tiruchirapalli, India (14 July).
Mary in the Qur'ān

LEJLA DEMIRI*

The Qur'ān honours Mary with the title "siddiqa, 'a woman of truth', as a sign of her sincerity as a true believer and a righteous woman. In Islamic tradition, siddiqa, or truthfulness, is a very exalted degree of sanctity, and even one of the distinctive qualities of prophethood. No wonder that in the eyes of a number of medieval Muslim theologians, Mary in fact did appear as a truthful prophet of God. Notable among these commentators were the Andalusian authors Qurtubi and Ibn Hazm, and also Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani of Palestine, one of the most distinguished figures of the Islamic middle ages. Still, the prevalent theological view has always regarded her as not quite a prophet, but as a saintly woman, siddiqa, a close 'friend' of God. She is praised in the Qur'ān for affirming the words of her Lord and His scriptures (Q 66:12). Her unwavering trust in God and her unreserved submission to His will and decree remain exemplary in the piety of Islam, since the very name of the religion signifies 'submission to God'. It is remarkable that just like siddiqa, sayyida, 'friend' in Arabic, also has its root in s-4-d, implying that sincerity serves as the true catalyst for the bond of friendship. Not only does Mary uphold truth, but also, due to her sincere relationship and faithful devotion to her Lord, she merits His intimate friendship.

The third chapter of the Qur'ān is called Al Imran, or 'the family of Imran', after the name of Mary's father. It is in this chapter that Mary’s story makes its first appearance in the Qur'ānic text. The infancy narrative of Mary opens with Imran’s wife praying and vowing to God that the child in her belly would be dedicated and consecrated to Him (Q 3:35). When the baby is born she names her Maryam and prays to God to protect her and her offspring from Satan (Q 3:36). The Qur'ān then narrates that the Lord accepted Mary with full approval and made her grow in goodness, and that she experienced miracles of divine favour while growing up in the sanctuary under the guardianship of Zachariah (Q 3:37). The second part of the Marian story tells us of the Annunciation: angels inform her that God had chosen her, made her pure, and elected her at the root in s-4-d, implying that sincerity serves as the true catalyst for the bond of friendship. Not only does Mary uphold truth, but also, due to her sincere relationship and faithful devotion to her Lord, she merits His intimate friendship.

In addition to the Qur'ān, Islam’s second scripture known as the Hadith grants Mary a high spiritual rank, laying attributed to the Prophet, Mary is described as one of the four women of the world who have attained spiritual perfection. The other three being Khadija (wife of the Prophet), Fatima (the Prophet’s daughter), and Asiya (the oppressed wife of the Pharaoh, the Exodus), each one representing a specific type of saintly female life. A further prophetic tradition describes Fatima as ‘the chief lady (ayyidā) of the people of Heaven, with the exception of Mary’. There is also an account (preserved by the historian Azaqī), which describes the Prophets and the early Muslim community’s respect for Mary, narrating that during the Muslim conquest of Mecca, the Prophet ordered all idols and images to be obliterated, except an image of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus that had been inside the Kaaba from the pre-Islamic times.

Mary thus features as an immensely esteemed female type in Muslim scriptures, theology, spirituality and popular piety. Unlike Christianity, however, Islam does not call her theotokos, the mother or ‘bearer’ of God. She is saluted as a truthful servant of God, the mother of Jesus the Messiah whose righteousness and prophethood are also affirmed. Each time the name of Mary is mentioned in the Qur'ān it is accompanied by his mother’s name, so that he is identified as ‘Jesus son of Mary’. Furthermore, we find that the story of the Annunciation and the Nativity seem to be more about Mary and her agones than about Jesus. She stands at the very centre of the Qur'ānic narrative. Similarly, the Qur'ān's miraculous birth traditionally was not seen as a miracle of Jesus only, but also of Mary. In fact the medi eval theologians who regarded Mary as a female prophet considered this to be a proof of her prophethood. Mary and Jesus are credited with the performing of miracles, but in their very existence, they were also signs of God. Thus the Qur'ān describes both Mary and Jesus as signs or miracles (ayyā) of God (Q 21:91; 35:50) who mirrored the creative power of God and His sovereignty.

To stress Jesus’ humanity and his servant-hood to God, a comparison between Jesus and Adam often appears in theological writings by Muslims, inspired by the Qur'ānic verse (3:36) that tells us that in God’s eyes Jesus is as the likeness of Adam: he created him from dust, and said to him, ‘Be’, and he was. A number of medieval theologians (Jahiz, Basillani, Qur-tubi, Ibn Taymiyya, Tufi and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya) compare Jesus’ creation also to that of Eve. This triad of Adam, Eve and Jesus is further developed into a typology of four types of human creation. There is Adam who had no mother or father, and then the rest of mankind who were brought into life through their parents, with only two exceptions: Eve, who was created from a man and Jesus who was given life through a woman alone. In this model of creation, Adam and Mary stand on the same level. Adam serves as the basis for the creation of Eve, while Mary is the basis for the creation of Jesus. Theological parallels have been also drawn between Mary and Muhammad in their receptivity to the divine word. Mary’s virginity is sometimes compared to Muhammad’s illicity, as it was through

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The definitive character of the doctrine of ‘Ordinatio Sacerdotalis’

In response to certain doubts

Luis F. Ladaria, SJ

“Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me” (Jn 15:4). If the Church can offer life and salvation to the entire world, it is only because she is rooted in Jesus Christ, her Founder. This rootedness occurs in first place through the sacraments, with the Eucharist at the center. Instituted by Christ, they are the foundational pillars of the Church that continually give life to her as His Body and His Spouse. Intimately connected to the Eucharist is the Sacrament of Holy Orders, in which Christ becomes present to the Church as the source of her life and work. Priests are confirmed “to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head” (Presbyterorum Ordinis, n. 5).

Christ willed to confer this sacrament on the twelve apostles, all of whom were men, provided that, in turn, they communicated it to other men. The Church understands herself to be always bound to this decision of the Lord, which excludes that the ministerial priesthood may be validly conferred on women. John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter Ordinatio Sacerdotalis of May 22, 1994, taught, “Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church’s divine constitution itself, in virtue of the authority of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32-33) I declare that the Church has no authority whatever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful” (n. 1). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in response to a doubt about the teaching of Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, has reaffirmed that it concerns a truth belonging to the deposit of faith.

In this light, a serious concern is seen arising in some countries regarding opinions that put into doubt the definitive nature of this doctrine. In order to maintain that it is not definitive, it is argued that it has not been defined ex cathedra and that an eventual decision by a future Pope or Council could overturn it. Spreading these doubts creates grave confusion among the faithful, not only with regard to the sacrament of Holy Orders as belonging to the divine constitution of the Church, but also with regards to the Ordinary Magisterium that can teach Catholic doctrine in an infallible manner.

First, concerning the ministerial priesthood, the Church recognizes that the impossibility of ordaining women belongs to the “substance of the sacrament” (cf. VT II, 7). The Church does not have the power to change this substance, because it is precisely from the sacraments, instituted by Christ, that the Church is made. It does not pertain only to a disciplinary element, but a doctrinal one, inasmuch as it pertains to the structure of the sacraments, which are the original place of encounter with Christ and of the transmission of the faith. Therefore, this should not be understood as a limit that would impede the Church from being more efficacious in her activity within the world. If the Church cannot intervene in this matter it is because it is at that point that the original love of God intervenes. It is He that is at work in the ordination of priests, in such a way that the Church always holds, in every situation of her history, the visible and efficacious presence of Jesus Christ “as the principal source of grace” (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, n. 94).

Aware that there cannot be a change to this tradition, in obedience to the Lord, the Church strives also to deepen its significance, so that the will of Jesus Christ, who is the Logos, is never deprived of meaning. The priest acts in the person of Christ, spouse of the Church, and his being a man is an indispensable element of this sacramental representation (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Inter Digniores, n. 3). Certainly, the difference of roles between man and woman does not carry in itself any subordination, but a mutual enrichment. Recall that the most perfect image of the Church is Mary, the Mother of the Lord, who did not receive the apostolic ministry. It is thus evident that the masculine and the feminine, the original language that the Creator inscribed on the human body, were assumed in the work of our redemption. It is proper this fidelity to the plan of Christ for the ministerial priesthood that allows for the deepening and the promotion of the specific role of women in the Church, given that, “woman is not independent of man or man of woman in the Lord” (1 Cor 11:11). Moreover, this teaching throws light on the cultural struggle to understand the significance and the goodness of the difference between man and woman, and their complementary mission in society.

Secondly, the doubts raised about the definitive nature of Ordinatio Sacerdotalis also have grave consequences for the manner of understanding the Magisterium of the Church. It is important to reaffirm that infallibility does not only pertain to solemn pronouncements of a Council or of the Supreme Pontiff when he speaks ex cathedra, but also to the universal and ordinary teaching of bishops dispersed throughout the world, when they propose, in communion among themselves and with the Pope, the Catholic doctrine to be held definitively. John Paul II referred to this infallibility in Ordinatio Sacerdotalis. In this manner he did not declare a new dogma, but, with the authority conferred upon him as the Successor of Peter, he formally confirmed and made explicit, so as to remove all doubt, that which the Ordinary and Universal Magisterium has long considered throughout history as belonging to the deposit of faith. This manner of declaration reflects a mode of ecclesial communion, since the Pope did not want to act alone, but as a witness listening to an uninterrupted and lived tradition. On the other hand, nobody denies that the Magisterium can express itself infallibly on truths that are necessarily connected with what has been formally connected, since only in this manner is it able to exercise its function of devoutly safeguarding and faithfully expressing the deposit of the faith.

Further proof of the commitment with which John Paul II examined the question is the prior consultation that he undertook in Rome with the Presidents of the Episcopal Conferences who were seriously interested in the problem. All of them declared, with complete conviction, through obedience of the Church to the Lord, that the Church does not have the faculty to confer on women priestly ordination.

Pope Benedict XVI also reaffirmed this teaching, recalling in the Chrism Mass of April 5, 2012, that John Paul II “declared in an irrevocable manner” that the Church, with regard to the ordination of women, “has received no authority from the Lord” (Benedict XVI). Then, again, with regard to some who do not accept this doctrine: “But is disobedience really a way to do this? Do we sense here any kind of action against the Lord, which is the precondition for all true renewal, or do we merely sense a desperate push to do something to change the Church in accordance with one’s own preferences and ideas?”

Pope Francis also returned to the argument. In his Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, he reaffirmed “the Church cannot ordain women to the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives herself to her spouse in the Eucharist, and it is not open to discussion, and he asked for an interpretation of this doctrine not as a question of power, but of service, in a manner that better perceives the equal dignity between men and women in the one Body of Christ (n. 104). During the Press Conference of the return flight from the Apostolic trip to Sweden, on November 1, 2016, Pope Francis reaffirmed: “On the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the last word was clearly given by Saint John Paul II, and this remains”.

In these times, in which the Church is called to respond to many challenges of our culture, it is essential that she remains in Jesus, as the branches on the vine. This is why the Teacher invites us to make certain that his words remain in us: “If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love” (Jn 15:10). Only the fidelity to his words, that will not pass away, assures our rootedness in Christ and in his love. Only the welcoming of his wise design, which takes bodily form in the sacraments, replenishes the roots of the Church, so that we may bear the fruits of eternal life.

*Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Lay people protagonists in the Church

Cardinal Farrell to Irish Bishops’ magazine ‘Intercom’

“The Church does not want to clericalize the laity”. On the contrary, Pope Francis decried and decries the participation of lay women and in particular lay women, roles of greater responsibility. Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, highlighted this during an interview with “Intercom”, a magazine published by the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. Replying to questions put forth by Intercom’s editor Father Chris Hyden in the July-August edition ahead of the World Meeting of Families in Dublin, the Cardinal – who was born in the Irish capital – explained that historically “the laity have played a second class role within the Church”.

Cardinal Farrell said that Pope Francis had told him “he wants a department in the Vatican for the laity, for people that are not priests”. “No priest is going to be able to run a parish of that magnitude without competent lay people”, he said.

Cardinal Farrell views on the increased presence of the laity in the church also extends to the family context. “I travelled to a country to speak about Amoris Laetitia recently, and they organized a meeting of about six or seven hundred people. Eighty percent of them were priests”, he said. “My theme is that priests are not the best people to train girls. The other woman is married and right-leaning university. The other person, Gabriella Gambino, is a research doctor of bioethics at the University of Rome at Tor Vergata, which is something but a moderate or right-leaning university. The other person, Linda Ghisoni, is a very brilliant woman who taught Canon Law, and she also has a doctorate in theology. She’s married and has two teenage girls. The other woman is married and has five children. So, Francis, unnoticed, has gradually been putting women into positions of power”.

To the question “where does all that lead to?” Cardinal Farrell warned about the danger “recognized by many people including non-church people, regarding the role of women: do we want to turn them into clerics? We don’t. They have to be of people the world who live in the world”, he stressed. None of the women mentioned who were appointed to the Doctrine and to the Congregation “are consecrated members of lay communities. They are married women”, he pointed out. “I don’t want anything but gradually, this will happen at all levels of the Church, if we follow Pope Francis’ lead... The Pope realized that “administrative functions within the Church can be done by anybody. They have mainly been done by priests, but they can be done by lay people too”, Cardinal Farrell said.

Mary in the Qur’an

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by the seeker of God on the path of spiritual purification. The heart needs to be freed from worldly occupations and purified in order to reflect the divine attributes of beauty and majesty. It is this fascination with the Marian spiritual path that led Rumi to utter his famous words: ‘It was not until the pains of parturition manifested in her that Mary made for the tree. […] The body is like a tree. Mary Every one of us has a Jesu sus within him, but until the pains manifest in us our Jesus is not born. If the pains never come, then Jesus repents his orig in the same secret path by which he came, leaving us here and without portion of him’.

Muslim piety continues to be deeply inspired by Marian spirituality, humility and self-giving. It comes as no surprise that the Iranian film Maryam-e moqaddas, ‘Holy Mary’, has become globally popular among Muslims today. She remains a source of inspiration not only for scholarly writing, but also for poetry and popular prose. One such publication (Patrick Ali Pahlavi, La Fille d’Eurasie, 1991) proposes, for instance, a form of ‘Liberation Mariology’, arguing that thanks to her autonomy, strength and spirituality, Mary should be regarded as the ‘prophet of the third millennium’. With her sincere devotion to God and persistence in prayer, Mary remains a living spiritual model for the followers of Islam.

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Paoletti Giovani, “Il popolo illuminato” (The Enlightened People).
Youth transforming the Caribbean family

Pope Francis’ video message to young people of the Antilles

In a video message to young people of the Antilles on Sunday, 15 July, Pope Francis focused on how to transform the family in the Caribbean in line with his Exhortation Amoris Laetitia. The occasion for the message was the gathering of the Sixth Antilles Episcopal Conference Youth Assembly, from 10 to 23 July in Fort-de-France, Martinique. The following is a translation of the Pope’s message, which he delivered in Spanish.

Good morning!
I affectionately greet you young people who want to transform the Caribbean family. It’s a big job! You obviously have courage and want to join the effort. So go ahead!

It is a challenging issue; you are young. But I do wonder: are you young people, or young people who have grown old? Because if you are young people who have grown old, you cannot accomplish anything! You have to be youthful ‘young people’! It takes all the strength of youth to be able to change things. And the first thing you need to do is check to see if you have gotten too comfortable. It’s not a good thing if you have. For those who are “comfortable” you must jump into action and join the effort.

You want to change things; you want to move forward. You have taken seriously the indications of the Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Family, and you want the family to move forward, in order to transform the family of the Caribbean. You want to transform it today for tomorrow: working in the present to build the future. And today, if you want to grasp the present, you must know how to describe it, how to understand it, in order to face tomorrow. To make the journey from today to tomorrow, you need the teaching on the family, and you can find it in Chapter Four among the family. Discuss Chapter Four among your elders. There, you will find much love. How to live the love of the family. Discuss Chapter Four among yourselves. There, you will find much strength to go forward and to transform things. And don’t forget something else: love has a strength all its own. And love never ends. Saint Paul says: Faith and hope will end when we are united with the Lord, but love will continue with Him (cf. 1 Cor 13:1). You are transforming something that is for all eternity. It is precisely this strength of love that will remain forever. You have a lot of work to do! Keep going. May God bless you. I pray for you, and I ask you please do not forget to pray for me. Adöö.

Prayer intention for the month of July
For priests and their ministry

So often in the many settings in which priests serve on the front lines in faithfulness to their ministry, they find themselves facing disappointment, wearied by misunderstandings, exhausted. Therefore, Pope Francis says in a video message on the Worldwide Prayer Network, “it’s good for them to remember that the people love their priests, need them, and trust in them”. The video can be found at www.thepopevideo.org. The Pontiff has dedicated the prayer intention for the month of July to priests who “experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work".

“The tiredness of priests...”, Francis says, “do you know how often I think about it?”. To illustrate his request for prayers, the video contains a rapid succession of moments in which the importance of the priest’s presence is tangible: in administering the sacraments, first and foremost; and then in giving support to the communities and individuals entrusted to him, especially the weakest. Priests who welcome, who comfort, who roll up their sleeves and share in toils and suffering. For all of them, the Pope asks us to pray that they “may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their brother priests”.

The video, which is translated in nine languages, was prepared for the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network by La Machi agency, which handles production and distribution, in cooperation with Vatican Media, which recorded it.