

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH

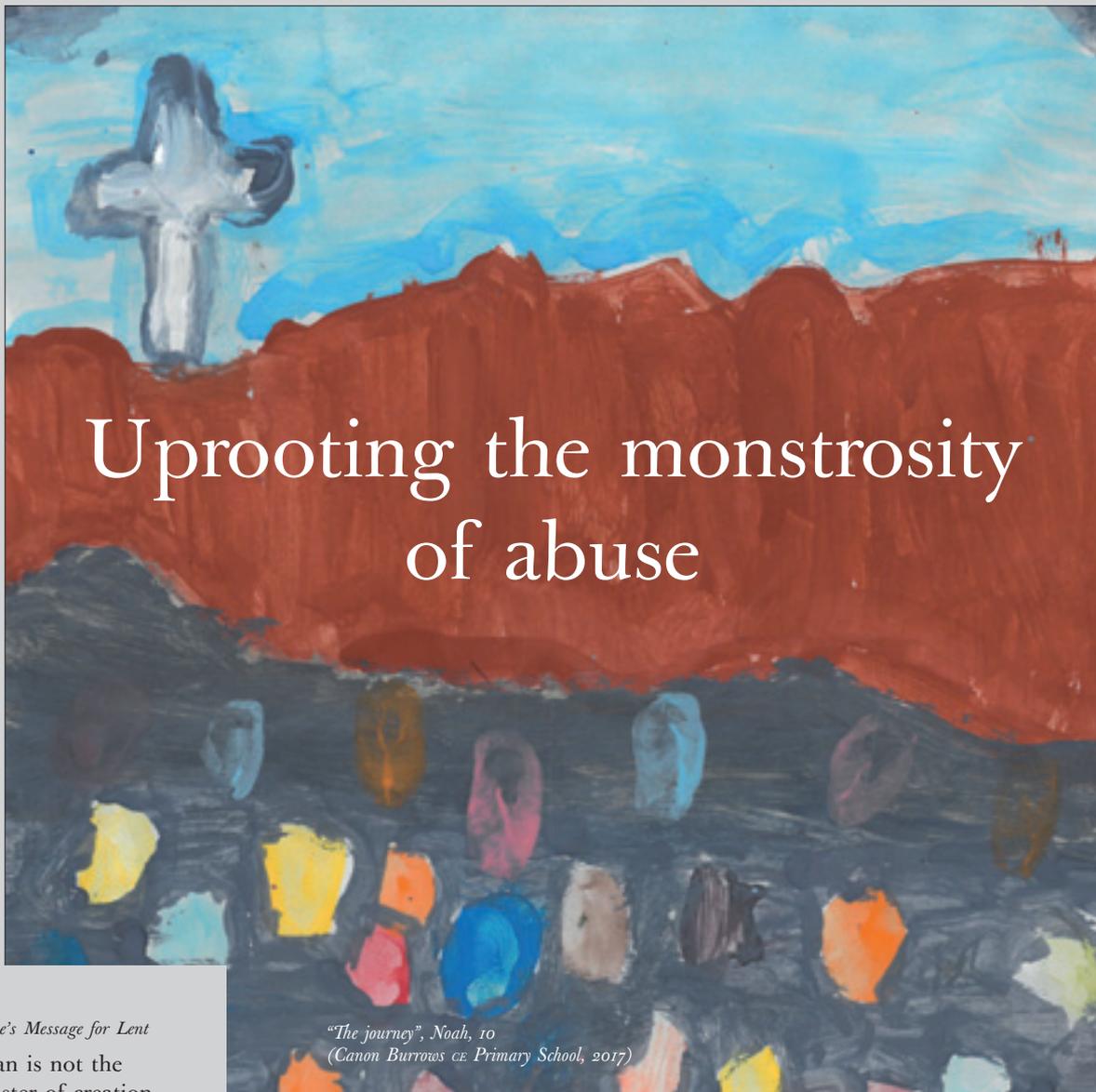
Unicuique suum Non praevalent

Fifty-second year, number 9 (2586)

Vatican City

Friday, 1 March 2019

Meeting on the Protection of Minors concludes



Uprooting the monstrosity of abuse

Pope's Message for Lent

Man is not the master of creation

In the Holy Father's Message for Lent he reminds the faithful that "the celebration of the Paschal Triduum of Christ's passion, death and resurrection ... calls us yearly to undertake a journey of preparation, in the knowledge that our being conformed to Christ ... is a priceless gift of God's mercy".

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*"The journey", Noah, 10
(Canon Burrows CE Primary School, 2017)*

The Presidents of Bishops Conferences from around the globe came together in the Vatican to participate in the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church from Thursday to Sunday, 21 to 24 February.

During the daily sessions held in the mornings and afternoons, participants listened to the testimonies of survivors of abuse, heard presentations from experts, both men and women, lay and religious, and worked together in language groups. A Pen-

itential Liturgy was celebrated after concluding the day's work on Saturday afternoon, 23 February.

On Sunday morning, 24 February, the Closing Mass was held in the Sala Regia before Pope Francis delivered his concluding remarks, and then joined the faithful who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the recitation of the Angelus.

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VATICAN BULLETIN



AUDIENCES

Monday, 25 February

Archbishop Piero Pioppo, titular Archbishop of Torcello, Apostolic Nuncio in Indonesia

Cardinal Leopoldo José Brenes Solórzano, Archbishop of Managua, Nicaragua

Members of the "Red Ecclesial Pan-Amazónica": Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, OFM, Prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy; Archbishop Pedro Ricardo Barreto Jimeno, SJ, of Huanacayo, Peru; Mr Mauricio López Oropeza

Bishop Peter of the Coptic Orthodox Church of North Carolina, USA; Bishop Barnaba El Soryany of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Italy

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of Cartagena, Spain Fr Sebastián Chico Martínez from the clergy of the said episcopal See, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Valliposita. Until now he has served as rector of the

Minor and Major Seminaries (20 Feb.).

Bishop-elect Chico Martínez, 50, was born in Cehégín, Spain. He holds a degree in technical engineering and a bachelor's degree in theology. He was ordained a priest on 7 July 2001. He has served in parish ministry and as: canon of the Cathedral and member of the College of Consultors.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Joseph Trần Xuân Tiếu of Long Xuyên, Vietnam (23 Feb.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Joseph Trần Văn Toàn as Bishop of Long Xuyên. Until now he has served as coadjutor Bishop of the said ecclesiastical circumscription (23 Feb.).

Bishop Trần Văn Toàn, 63, was born in Thái Bình, Vietnam. He was ordained a priest on 16 January 1992. He was ordained a bishop on 29 May 2014, subsequent to his appointment as Auxiliary of Long Xuyên and titular Bishop of Acalissus. On 25 August 2017 he was appointed coadjutor of Long Xuyên.

With a delegation from the United Arab Emirates



Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates, was received by the Holy Father in a private audience at the Domus Sanctae Marthae on Monday, 25 February. The Minister wished to communicate to the Pope the decisions made by the government of the United Arab Emirates to promote the application of the intentions expressed in the Document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together", signed by the Holy Father and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad al-Tayyib, in Abu Dhabi on 4 February.

VICAR APOSTOLIC

The Holy Father appointed Fr Jesús Galeote Tormo, OFM, as Vicar Apostolic of Camiri, Bolivia. Until now he has served as Apostolic Administrator *sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of the said Vicariate (22 Feb.).

Fr Tormo, 67, was born in Madrid, Spain. He made his perpetual vows for the Order of Friars Minor on 30 March 1975 and was ordained a priest on 5 September 1976. He holds a licence in moral theology and a degree in medicine and surgery. He later earned a specialization and a doctorate in missiology. He has served in parish ministry and as: head of youth pastoral ministry; professor of religion; director of the San Antonio de Lomerío Hospital, in

Bolivia; Head of the Center Kolping San Javier for the ministry to the indigenous people in Santa Cruz de la Sierra; member of the formation group of the Franciscans in Thailand. On his return to Bolivia he served as Custodian of the San Francisco de Asís Convent-Parish; director of the Ecclesiastical Documentation Centre in Tarija.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The Holy Father appointed H.B. Cardinal Louis Raphaël I Sako, Patriarch of Babylon for Chaldeans, member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (22 Feb.).

Cardinal Pell convicted on charges of abuse of minors

"The Holy See agrees with the statement issued by the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference regarding the finding of guilt in the first instance concerning Cardinal George Pell". In a statement on Tuesday, 26 February, the Holy See's interim director Alessandro Gisotti thus commented on the news that the Cardinal had been found guilty of sexual assault on two minors aged 12 and 13 in Melbourne, Victoria. The facts date back to the 1990's when Cardinal Pell was auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, of which he later became Archbishop. Although the Victorian court's verdict was handed down on 11 December of last year, it was only made public on Tuesday, the eve of the sentencing hearing which began on 27 February.

"This is painful news that, as we are well aware, has shocked many people, not only in Australia", Gisotti said, adding that as "already expressed on other occasions, we have the utmost respect for the Australian judicial authorities".

And, he continued, out "of this respect, we await the outcome of the appeals process, recalling that Cardinal Pell maintains his innocence and has the right to defend himself until the last stage of appeal".

"While waiting for the definitive judgement, we unite ourselves with the Australian bishops in praying for all victims

of abuse, and reaffirm our commitment to do everything possible so that the Church might be a safe home for all, especially for children and the most vulnerable", Gisotti said.

Meanwhile, in "order to ensure the course of justice, the Holy Father has confirmed the precautionary measures which had been imposed by the local Ordinary on Cardinal George Pell when he returned to Australia. That is, while awaiting the definitive assessment of the facts, as is the norm, Cardinal George Pell is prohibited from exercising public ministry and from having any voluntary contact whatsoever with minors", Gisotti concluded.

In a statement on Wednesday, 27 February, Gisotti confirmed that "Cardinal Pell is no longer Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy". In response to journalists' questions, the interim Director also clarified that "after the guilty verdict in the first instance concerning Cardinal Pell, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will now handle the case following the procedure and within the time established by canonical norm".

Meanwhile Cardinal Pell, who had previously been released on bail following the December verdict, is now being held in the Melbourne Assessment Prison as he awaits his sentencing hearing scheduled for 13 March.

SPECIAL ENVOY

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, as his Special Envoy to the celebrations for the Eighth Centenary of the encounter between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan Al-Malik Al-Kamel, to be held in Egypt from 1 to 3 March (23 Feb.).

NECROLOGY

Bishop Walter James Edyvean, titular Bishop of Aelia, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Boston, USA, at age 80 (2 Feb.)

Archbishop Silvestre Luís Scandian, SVD, Archbishop emeritus of Vitória, Brazil, at age 87 (16 Feb.)

Bishop Antons Justs, Bishop emeritus of Jelgava, Latvia, at age 87 (17 Feb.)

Bishop Alojzy Orszulik, SAC, Bishop emeritus of Łowicz, Poland, at age 90 (21 Feb.)

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

"God is holy, but if we, if our life is not holy, there is great inconsistency". At the General Audience on Wednesday, 27 February, the Pontiff continued his reflection on the Lord's Prayer, focusing on the phrase, "hallowed by thy name". The Audience was the year's first to be held in Saint Peter's Square, after being held in the shelter of the Paul VI Hall during the winter months. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he delivered in Italian.



Francis continues his reflections on the Lord's Prayer

Christian life reflects God's holiness

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

It seems that winter is nearly over and thus we have returned to the Square. Welcome to the Square!

In our journey of rediscovering the "Our Father", today we shall delve deeper into the first of his seven invocations, namely, "hallowed be thy name".

There are seven requests in the "Our Father", easily divisible into two sub-groups. The first three have at the centre 'Thou/You' addressed to God the Father; the other four have at the centre 'us' and our human needs. In the first part Jesus lets us enter his wishes, everyone turning to the Father: "hallowed by *thy* name, *thy* kingdom come, *thy* will be done"; in the second it is He who enters us and becomes the interpreter of *our* needs: daily bread, forgiveness of sins, help in temptation and liberation from evil.

Herein lies the matrix of every Christian prayer – I would say of every human prayer – which is always done, on the one hand, as a *contemplation* of God, of his mystery, of his beauty and goodness, and on the other, as a sincere and courageous *request* for what we need for life, and to live properly. Thus, in its simplicity and in its essentiality, the "Our Father" teaches those who pray it not to multiply empty words, because – as Jesus himself says – "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:8).

When we speak with God, we do not do so in order to reveal what we have in our heart: he knows it much better than we do!

Although God is a mystery for us, we are not an enigma in his eyes (cf. Ps 139[138]: 1-4). God is like those mothers for whom one look suffices to thoroughly understand her children: whether they are happy or sad, whether they are sincere or are hiding something....

Thus, the first step in Christian prayer is consigning ourselves to God, to his providence. It is as if to say: 'Lord, you know everything; I do not even have to tell you about my pain; I ask only that you be here beside me: You are my hope'. It is interesting to note that, in the Sermon on the Mount, immediately after teaching the words of the "Our Father", Jesus exhorts us not to be worried or troubled about things. It seems like a contradiction: first he teaches us to ask for daily bread and then he tells us: "Do not be anxious, asking 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Mt 6:31). But the contradiction is only apparent: a Christian's request expresses trust in the Father; and it is precisely this trust that enables us to ask for what we need without worry or agitation.

This is why we pray by saying: "*Hallowed be thy name!*". In this request – the first one! "*Hallowed be thy name!*" – one feels all Jesus' admiration for the beauty and greatness of the Father, and the wish that everyone recognize and love him for what he truly is. And at the same time there is the supplication that his name be sanctified in us, in our family, in our community, in the entire world. It is God who sanctifies, who transforms us with his love, but at the same time we too, with our wit-

ness, manifest God's holiness in the world, making his name present. God is holy, but if we, if our life is not holy, there is great inconsistency! God's holiness must be reflected in our actions, in our life. 'I am Christian; God is holy, but I do many bad things': no, this is of no use. This also does harm; this scandalizes and does not help.

God's holiness is an expanding force, and we ask that the barriers in our world be quickly broken down. When Jesus begins to preach, the first to pay the consequences is precisely the evil that afflicts the world. The evil spirits curse: "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God" (Mk 1:24). Such holiness had never been seen before: not concerned with itself but radiating outward. A holiness – that of Jesus – that expands in concentric circles, as when one throws a stone into a pond. The evil one's days are numbered – evil is not eternal; evil can no longer harm us: the strong man has arrived to take possession of his house (cf. Mk 3:23-27). And this strong man is Jesus, who gives us, too, the strength to take possession of our inner house.

Prayer drives away all fears. The Father loves us; the Son lifts up his arms to support ours; the Spirit works secretly for the redemption of the world. And we? We do not waver in uncertainty; for we have one great certainty: God loves me; Jesus gave his life for me! The Spirit is within me. This is the great certainty. And the evil one? He is afraid. And this is good.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Wales, Norway and the United States of America. Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of joy and peace. God bless you!

I offer a special thought to *young people, to the elderly, to the sick and to newlyweds.*

I wish that each one's pilgrimage to the Tombs of the Holy Apostles may encourage enthusiasm to spread the perennial newness of the salvific message brought by Christ to every person, beginning with the most distant and marginalized.



MEETING ON THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN THE CHURCH

Bow (down)
to the wounds

ANDREA MONDA

When I was a boy my mother taught me to bow when the priest, raising the host, proclaimed "behold the Lamb of God", and to softly repeat "my Lord and my God", the words the Apostle Thomas spoke as his fingers reluctantly touched the wounds of the Risen Jesus.

Cardinal Tagle began with this very scene as he opened the discussion that for three days would occupy the presidents of the entire world's episcopal conferences in addressing the painful issue of the protection of minors. In his intense presentation, the Archbishop of Manila stated that no one can say "my Lord and my God", the most powerful affirmation of faith in the entire Gospel, without first having the courage to see and touch Christ's wounds. Those who, out of fear, close their eyes to the wounds cannot claim the right to be invited to proclaim the Gospel. And Christ's wounds coincide with those of mankind, with those of the little victims of violence. Without this Gospel passage which opens to the spiritual dimension, all the work of the extraordinary meeting convoked by the Pope for these three days in the Synod Hall, indeed, while leading to operational strategies and concrete practices to respond to the sex abuse crisis, it would be a grandiose but meaningless operation. In his presentation on day 2, Cardinal Cupich of Chicago reiterated effectively: "None of the structural elements we enact as a synodal Church, important as they are, can guide us forward faithfully in Christ unless we anchor all our deliberations in the piercing pain of those who have been abused and of the families who have suffered with them".

For a Catholic, *metanoia* – conversion – comes first, and then the more or less effective procedures; otherwise we fall into the dreaded risk Pope Francis spoke about a month ago in his discourse to the bishops of Central America who had gathered in Panama: the sadly widespread risk of "ecclesial functionalism and clericalism – which represent a caricature and perversion of ministry". In that 24 February address, the Pope had already focused on the theme that Cardinal Tagle developed, without naming it, in his speech: the theme of *kenosis*. Without knowledge of this concept we cannot comprehend Pope Bergoglio's vision of

Collegiality and Synodality
in facing the challenges of abuse

MAURIZIO FONTANA

The image of the *Pietà*, a mother "broken in suffering, consoling in enveloping love", stood out on day 2 of the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church.

The embrace of complete sharing consummated by Mary beneath the Cross, the icon of the loving mother Church, was the image and model of the shared synodal commitment to confront the tragedy of abuse; an embrace that must anticipate and overcome any response and action. Cardinal Cupich emphasized decisively in the second presentation of the morning session on Friday, 22 February: "None of the structural elements we enact as a synodal Church, important as they are, can guide us forward faithfully in Christ unless we anchor all our deliberations in the piercing pain of those who have been abused and of the families who have suffered with them".

The bishops and superiors who had gathered in the Vatican thus continued their intense journey. And the hope of finding concrete responses – after acknowledging the pervasive and tragic nature of the problem and after accepting responsibility – reached the essential core issue of accountability, in other words, of accepting responsibility, of identifying procedures, of constructing legal and institutional structures that guarantee fair, adequate, effective responses.

The key word, evoked several times and scattered throughout the preceding day's reflections, was "collegiality". In the first presentation, Cardinal Gracias had emphasized that no one can say: "This problem of abuse in the Church does not concern me". Collegiality is an essential context in facing the challenges of abuse: "We are each responsible for the whole church". Evil, this evil, is deeply rooted in culture – clericalism is one of its basic aspects – and the vulnerability of the individual cannot be fully overcome unless it is shared. An almost three-dimensional image of this reality was seen the day before when the assembly, gathered from around the world, listened together to the testimonies of five ab-

use survivors. No one can say: "This does not concern me".

And day 2 of the meeting also began with listening. In fact, during the opening prayer the tragic experience of a victim of abuse was read aloud: "When Jesus was about to die, his mother was with him. When I was abused by a priest my mother church left me alone...". Once again the *Pietà*: a mother's place is beneath the cross.

After the introduction by the moderator, Fr Lombardi – who on behalf of the assembly offered best wishes to the Pope for the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter – the discussion began with a presentation by Cardinal Gracias, dedicated to "Accountability in a Collegial and Synodal Church".

No bishop, the Cardinal said, should be left alone to face this challenge. Also referring to his own personal experiences, the Archbishop of Bombay addressed the topic of vulnerability, of the human difficulty to recognize and adequately deal with evil, and also of the humility that each bishop must have in order to "personally admit mistakes". This is why collegiality is needed to implement paths toward justice and healing.

Next, Cardinal Cupich focused on "four synodal principals" that "must shape every structural, legal and institutional reform designed to meet the enormous challenge" represented by the reality of sexual abuse by priests. They include radical listening, the essential involvement of lay witnesses, collegiality and accountability.

Delving even deeper into detail, the Archbishop of Chicago also offered several practical observations regarding the identification of standards for conducting investigations, and mechanisms for reporting abuse.

Meanwhile, on Thursday afternoon, the assembly had completed its work on the day's topic. Cardinal Salazar Gómez called attention to one of the pivotal words to understanding where responsibilities lie. The "deeper root" of the crisis, he noted, lies in "clericalism". It is

Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church

Truth and transparency to break the culture of silence

MAURIZIO FONTANA

Pope Francis spoke off-the-cuff during the discussion that followed the first presentation to be given by a woman at the Meeting on the Protection of Minors on Friday, 22 February. And to the Church infected by a clericalism so pervasive and demoralizing as to have been identified as one of the main causes of the tragedy of abuse, Pope Francis indicated a path: we must think of the Church "with the categories of a woman", because she "is woman, bride, mother". A mother, indeed every mother, knows how to safeguard and protect a newly blossomed life. But she is also able to remain under the cross in order to embrace and make her child's wounds her own.

It was an intense afternoon for the 190 participants in the Meeting at the Vatican. The scheduled speech was given by Linda Ghisoni, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. On the topic of accountability, the address focused on how the Church is called to the dutiful realization of the ascertained and recognized responsibilities, and she is called to do so in what is her very "nature", or in her "communal dimension". It is as the entire "People of God on their journey, that does not avoid, but faces" together "even the challenges related to the abuses occurring inside to the detriment of the young undermining and breaking this communion".

Naturally, the proper relationship between bishops and priests is fundamental, Ghisoni explained, with the former called to take on the sanctity of the latter, and with priests aware of their ministry of "dedicated service to Christ and the Church". But,

from the viewpoint of prevention and of opposing the scourge of abuse, the contribution of the laity is likewise decisive, as there must be interaction "between the various charisms and ministries", "synodality as a shared process, in which each has a different part, diversified responsibilities, but all constitute the one Church". The speaker suggested several specific practical points to implement the process of accountability: "the involvement of competent people who represent the whole People of God" and an "ordinary procedure of verification" with consultative commissions which do not signify a lack of trust in bishops or superiors,

but are an auxiliary and guarantee in the logic of "walking together".

With a final reference to the need to balance transparency and confidentiality for correct communication, she anticipated the topic of the third working day.

Another woman then left her mark on the assembly at the end of the day. She had survived long-term abuse by a priest which had begun at the age of 11. In a soft voice she bravely shared with those present the torment and lacerations that still tear at her heart today, after 40 years.

Another testimony, this time read during the opening prayer, engaged the assembly on Saturday morning, 23 February: "I

get tired and worn out, it's like they hide behind their walls, their dignity, their roles that I don't understand. It hurts because I was abused, because they don't tell the truth and because those who should be ministers of truth and light hide in darkness." A point for reflection for those who were called to address the theme of "transparency". In this regard Sr Veronica Openibo, Superior General of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, did not mince words: "How do we remove the masks that hide our sinful neglect? ... Why did we keep silent for so long? How can we turn

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Woman is the image of the Church



On Friday afternoon, 22 February, after a presentation by Dr Linda Ghisoni, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, Pope Francis responded to one of the questions from the assembly. The following is a translation of his remarks.

Listening to Dr Ghisoni, I heard the Church speaking about herself. That is, we have all spoken about the Church. In all of the interventions. But this time it was the Church herself who spoke. It is not just a question of style: the feminine genius, reflected in the Church, which is woman.

Inviting a woman to speak is not to enter into the mode of an ecclesiastical feminism, because in the end every feminism ends up being a machismo with a skirt. No. Inviting a woman to speak about the wounds of the Church is to invite the Church to speak about herself, about the wounds she has. And this I believe is the step that we must take with great determination: woman is the image of the Church that is woman, bride, mother. A style. Without this style we would speak of the People of God, but as an organization, perhaps a trade union, but not as a family born of the Mother Church.

The logic of Dr Ghisoni's thought was precisely that of a mother, and it ended with the story of what happens when a woman gives birth to a child. It is the feminine mystery of the Church that is bride and mother. It is not a question of giving more functions to women in the Church – yes, this is good, but that is not how the problem is solved – it is a question of integrating the woman as the image of the Church into our thinking... and also of thinking of the Church with the categories of a woman. Thank you for your testimony.

Testimony of a young Spanish abuse survivor

Reconciling two worlds

The following is the English text of the testimony given on Saturday afternoon, 23 February, by a young Spanish woman, a survivor of abuse.

Abuse of any kind is the worst humiliation which an individual can experience. One is confronted with the fact of having to recognise that one cannot – and may not – defend oneself against the superior strength of the offender. You cannot escape what happens, but must endure it, no matter what or how bad it is. When experiencing abuse, one would like to end it all. But this is not possible.

One wants to flee, and so it comes to pass that you are no longer yourself. One tries to flee, by effectively trying to flee oneself. Thus, with time, one becomes completely alone. You are alone, because you have retreated elsewhere, and you can't/don't want to return to yourself. The more often it happens, the less you return to yourself. You are someone else, and will always remain so. What you carry inside you is like a ghost, which others are unable to see. They will never

fully see and know you. What hurts the most is the certainty that nobody will understand you. That lives with you, for the rest of your life.

The attempts to return with the own true self and participate in the "previous" world, as it was before the abuse, are just as painful as the abuse itself. One always lives in these two worlds simultaneously. I wish that the perpetrators could understand that they create this split in the victim. For the rest of our lives.

The greater your desire and your efforts to reconcile these two worlds, the more painful the certainty that this is not possible. There is no dream without memories of what has occurred, no day without flashbacks.

I now manage to cope with this better, by learning to live with these two lives. I try to focus on the God-given right to be allowed to live. I can and should be here. This gives me courage. It's over now. I can now go on. I should continue. If I give up now or stand still, I will allow the injustice to interfere with my life. I can prevent this, by learning to control it, and by learning to speak about it.

Testimony of a European abuse survivor

Wounds can never be prescribed



Photo courtesy of the United Nations' global survey on violence against children

The following is the English text of the testimony given in the New Synod Hall on Friday evening, 22 February, by a European woman, a past sufferer of abuse.

Good evening. I wanted to tell you about when I was a child. But there's no point, because when I was 11 years old, a priest from my parish destroyed my life. Since then I, who loved colouring books and doing somersaults on the grass, have not existed.

Instead, engraved in my eyes, ears, nose, body and soul, are all the times he immobilized me, the child, with superhuman strength: I desensitized myself, I held my breath, I came out of my body, I searched desperately for a window to look out of, waiting for it all to end. I thought: "If I don't move, maybe I won't feel anything; if I don't breathe, maybe I could die".

When it did end, I would take back what was my wounded and humiliated body, and I would leave, even believing I had imagined it all. But how could I, a child, understand what had happened? I thought: "It must have been my fault!" or "Maybe I deserved this bad thing?"

These thoughts are the worst wounds that the abuse, and the abuser, insinuates into your heart, more than the wounds that lacerate your body. I felt I wasn't worth anything anymore. I felt I didn't even exist. I just wanted to die: I tried to ... but I couldn't.

The abuse went on for 5 years. No one noticed.

While I did not speak, my body did: eating disorders, various periods in hospital: everything screamed that I was sick. While I, completely alone, kept my pain to myself. They thought I was anxious about school where, suddenly, I was performing really badly.

Then, the first time I fell in love... My heart beating with emotion and struggling against the same heart that palpitated remembering the horror it had experienced; gestures of tenderness against acts of force: impossible comparisons. Awareness becomes an unbearable reality! So as not to feel the pain, the disgust, the confusion, the fear, the shame, the powerlessness, the impotence, my mind removed the facts as they happened, it numbed my body by putting emotional distance between everything I was living. And this provoked enormous damage.

When I was 26 I gave birth for the first time. Flashbacks and images brought everything back to me. My labour was interrupted, my child was in danger; breastfeeding was impossible because of the terrible memories that emerged. I thought I had gone mad. So I confided in my husband, a confidence that was used against me during our separation, when, citing the abuse I had suffered, he asked that I be denied parental authority because I was an unworthy mother. What followed was the patient listening of a dear friend, and the courage to write a letter to that priest, which concluded with the promise never again to concede to him the power of my silence.

From then, until today, I continue to go through a very difficult process of re-elaboration that has no shortcuts, that requires enormous perseverance in rebuilding my identity, dignity and faith. It is a journey undertaken mostly alone, and with the help of a specialist, if possible. Abuse causes immediate damage, but not only that: what is most difficult is dealing daily with that experience that attacks you, and presents itself in the most unexpected moments. You have to live with it ... forever! All you can do, if you can, is learn how to hurt yourself less.

Inside you, there are endless questions you will never be able to answer, because abuse makes no sense!

"Why me?" I used to ask, and not because I would have preferred it to happen to someone else, because what I suffered would be too much for anyone else! Or: "Where were you, God?"... How I cried over this question! I no longer trusted Man and God, in the good Father who protects the small and the weak. As a little girl, I was certain nothing bad could come from a man who had the "odor" of God! How could the same hands, that had dared touch me like that, offer blessing and the Eucharist? He was an adult and I was a child. He had taken advantage of his power as well as his position: a

Testimony of an Asian survivor of abuse

The bridge that made the difference

The following is the English text of the testimony given in the New Synod Hall on Thursday evening, 21 February, by a young Asian man, a prior victim of abuse.

Out came a boy,
Into a world that was new;
A challenge it was
Like for any newborn.
Who ever thought that this world
Brought him surprises and dangers unsought!
The quest for a good
Catholic formation
Made him depart
From an environment –
happy and whole;
A just cause it was,
And so with grief he bade farewell
To all that he knew:
Parents, siblings, love, care,
Protection and all.
As young as five,
To a world unknown,
Full of innocence and fears
He entered the halls that were new.
The home he missed,
Here he sought through friends,
And guardians to be his parents.
Fatal was this replacement
For their desires were strange
To him who was new.
His innocence stripped
Over and over again,
Left to fend for himself
Into this adult world,

He found no hope
And became a recluse.
It shred him apart,
As the years went by.
But none could he tell,
For fear of disgrace and shame.
From learning more of
"Christian values"
He withdrew from the world
To the safety of being quiet,
hidden within;
For secrecy was the only way out.
Many times did he question:
What was this world?
It made no sense nor gave him hope.
Once he contemplated over a bridge,
And asked himself,
"How would his way down change,
Change the order of things?"
Never was there an answer.
Who will ever know
What he went through?
Who will ever ask?
Who will ever take the responsibility
For this life that seemed lost?
Not a thing in his life
Was left untouched.
All of it was marred.
Was God ever there?
For He would be the only one
Who knows it all.
The bridge that he contemplated
Did show him a way,
a way that was different
That came to fruition, when

He strangely heard in his
noisy, troubled heart
A voice that called for a
change to be brought.
A journey he began
To fulfill what the voice said.
A journey of forgiveness,
A journey of reconciliation
A journey that accepted the
life that was
A life full of hurt, sorrow and
despair.
That new way down the
bridge
Was long and difficult.
It touched his very essence of
life.
But, a way there was, a
different one;
A way that heals, a healing
that takes time.
It softened his hardened heart
And transformed the life he
lived.
It broke the shell he lived in,
to walk free
And tell the world, "There is
a way."
That's his story.
But now, who will take the
responsibility
Of lives that are broken?
There is a way!
There is a chance!
There is hope!
There is life!
Bring back what is lost!
Show that you care!
For all that you do
Will save the many silent
cries
That wait for a saving day.

Interview with Cardinal Schönborn

The attacks against the Church are a sign of a hidden longing

ANDREA MONDA

"I am having a really beautiful experience of synodality, of walking together", Cardinal Christoph Schönborn declares, and he feels that his words could be extended to all those who are taking part in the summit convoked in the Vatican on the subject of the protection of minors. "I see that we are all here together, united, and are trying not to think that the problems apply only to others but rather that we must all proceed on a path of conversion which is the first word of the Gospel and the condition for its proclamation. It is for this

reason that I feel like saying that these four days could be an important moment of renewal of the Church through conversion".

During the three working days, a number of different parties, as well as the outside world, observed that charges are constantly being brought against the Church, representing the favourite target, as if it were the scapegoat for all the evils that afflict society today. Do you not think that this is often the sign of unjust aggression stemming from the fact that in a world fallen prey to a predominant relativism, the Church's voice, with her sound ethical structure, is outside the mainstream, goes against current trends and thus is to be opposed, attacked and discredited?

If this is true on the one hand, then on the other, the question deserves deeper examination. Personally I have a more complex vision of the problem which does not aim at an exhaustive treatment of the matter but may be a useful starting point, to enrich our reflection, to help us not to be ever on the defensive, like a besieged citadel, and to detach ourselves from the purely negative view of the world with the facile contrast between the bad world and the good Church, a poor victim. First of all, we should remember that Jesus himself told us "blessed are you when everyone speaks evil against you". Next, it should be recognized that at times we should not complain that people say evil things about us, because they are right to do so; they have good reason since the evil exists, and the abuse of minors is a very serious evil.

In the past few days the Pope has convened all the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences across the world. It is an opportunity to truly live the Church's catholicity, her universality.

That is right, here too a first reaction could lead to perceiving as unjust the attacks which

the Church as a whole has to bear because of the sins of a few. One might think: "What have I got to do with the distant Churches of Chile or of the United States?". But that is not the case. The Church, in her entirety, must always respond as a whole. This is precisely in the light of the Gospel, of the Lord's words: we are one reality, one body, this is the first attribute of the Church which is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic". We are the Body of Christ and, as the Pope wrote in his *Letter to the People of God*, if one member is persecuted we are all persecuted, and if one member has sinned the whole body sins and suffers. Let us therefore experience before the world that the Church is truly one, in goodness but also in evil.

The English writer G.K. Chesterton said that the Catholic Church permits few things but forgives everything, whereas the world permits everything but forgives nothing. There is something implacable in the attacks aimed at the Church today; might mercy have disappeared from the modern world?

Chesterton's phrase is very beautiful and quite right. Yes, at times it seems as though there is little mercy. Yet it is also true that a desire – so often disappointed – for goodness, charity and mercy to exist – might be concealed behind this harshness and apparent lack of mercy. My reflection arises from several words of Benedict XVI who said repeatedly that, precisely in its criticism levelled at the Church, the secular world reveals a hidden nostalgia, a great longing for something great and pure. In the human heart there is always this longing which becomes something of a challenge to believe that Christ's Church truly represents something great and pure. Thus the criticism can also be seen as a yearning of those people who criticize us but do so because they want that greatness of the Gospel to be true, to be lived authentically. There is, as it were, anger, regret that the Gospel cannot be sullied but must inexorably exist. In this sense a text in the second chapter of the Book of Wisdom, on which Benedict XVI frequently reflected, has been of great help to me. It says: "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training". The Church is like a teacher who reproaches and thus gives rise to a harsh attack: "Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hands of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance". Thus I believe the Church today is living through a period of trial, a moment in which she is being "put to the test". In meditating on this text, Benedict XVI also understood it in this way: the world criticizes us in order to test us, to see if we are truly meek, whether the Gospel really is just and possible. Rather than complain about the mass media's harsh stance against the Church, let us therefore interpret it as a hidden longing, that the Church may truly be what Jesus wanted her to be. If we read these attacks in this light, a mixed feeling of admiration and disappointment may be detected. We must begin anew from here, endeavouring first of all to be merciful even toward those who criticize us.



Wounds can never be prescribed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

true abuse of faith!

And last but not least: "How was I to overcome my anger and not leave the Church after such an experience, especially in the face of such terrible incoherence between what my abuser preached and what he did? And what about those who, before these crimes, belittled, hid, silenced, or worse still, failed to defend the little ones, evil-mindedly limiting themselves to moving priests so they could cause harm somewhere else?" In the face of this, we innocent victims feel the pain that killed us, even more intensely: this too is an abuse of our human dignity, of our conscience, as well as of our faith!

We victims, if we can find the strength to speak out or expose, must find the courage to do so, knowing that we risk not being believed, or seeing our abuser getting away with a small canonical penalty. This

cannot and must not be the case anymore!

It took me 40 years to find the strength to speak out. I wanted to break the silence that nourishes every form of abuse; I wanted to start again from an act of truth, acknowledging that this act also offers an opportunity to the person who abused me.

I experienced the process of speaking out at a very high emotional cost: talking to six very sensitive people, but all of them men, and all of them priests, was hard. I think that the presence of a woman is a necessary and indispensable gesture in order to welcome, listen, and accompany, us victims.

Being believed, and knowing him sentenced, gave me a reality check: that part of me that always hoped the abuse never really happened, had to admit defeat, but at the same time, it received a caress: now I know I am something else. I am not

just the abuse I suffered, and the scars I carry.

The Church can be proud of being able to proceed despite the statute of limitations (a right that is denied by the Italian justice system), but not of the fact of recognizing as a mitigating factor, for the abuser, the length of time between the offense and the accusation (as in my case). Victims are not guilty of their silence! The trauma and damage they suffer are all the greater the longer the period of silence: the victim spends that time between fear, shame, denial, and a sense of helplessness. Wounds can never be prescribed. On the contrary!

Today I am here, and together with me are all the abused boys and girls, all the women and men, trying to be reborn from their wounds. But, above all, there are also those who tried and did not make it. It is from here, with them in our hearts, that we must start again, together.

Looking evil in the face

Andrea Tornielli said it in *L'Osservatore Romano* on 21 February: "Four days that will leave their mark". And so it was, to the point that it is difficult to express in a few lines the many emotions, recommendations, reflections that arose from this meeting on the theme of the protection of minors, practically an Extraordinary Synod that saw the active participation of all the presidents of the episcopal conferences around the world. Hence, first and foremost, a beautiful demonstration of the universality of the Catholic Church: universality and synodality. This element emerged immediately and whoever was in attendance in the Synod Hall during these four days could not fail to spot it: everyone different from each other, everyone joined in a spirit of openness, sharing, fraternity.

Openness also for the fact that it was not a meeting that dealt with the issue in order to close it but, rather, in order to implement a process that will create effects, produce concrete results. This newspaper will henceforth follow and document these developments because this is the promise on which the credibility of the Church is at stake, a Church that wished to mark the turning point above all in mind-set, stated in more correct terms, that wished to express, to herself and to the world, the pressing desire for conversion.

Thus, one could emphasize many moments that expressed this process of conversion, the dense reports of those who presented, the richness of the Holy Father's final discourse, the practical indications that the Holy Father himself had disseminated on the first day of the meeting (and that were eviscerated and explained during the press conferences), but perhaps among both moments what truly "left their mark" were the testimonies of victims and the Penitential Liturgy that followed on Saturday, 23 February. The latter moment made clear that it was not a working meeting to find practical solutions to a more or less thorny issue, but what was experienced was an ecclesial event in which the Church again found herself, praying together, journeying together, kneeling together.

Then, the testimonies showed the profound difference that exists between knowing something and experiencing it directly, tangibly, actually. It is one thing to know information, perhaps the statistics on the fact that cases of abuse exist in the world, and another thing to deal not with a "case", but with a person, with a face and a voice, who is before you telling his or her story. This is the experience lived repeatedly by the meeting's nearly 200 participants. And this made the event a true "encounter", something that truly changed, transformed the people who experienced it.

Looking evil in the face does not leave one indifferent, it does not allow everything to remain the same. I was about to write "evil" with a capital 'E', because the Pope's final discourse was very explicit in this regard; he spoke about Satan and quoted *The Lord of the World* by English novelist Robert Benson: "Before all this cruelty, all this idolatrous sacrifice of children to the god of power, money, pride and arrogance, empirical explanations alone are not sufficient. They fail to make us grasp the breadth and depth of this tragedy. Here once again we see the limitations of a purely positivistic approach. It can provide us with a true explanation helpful for taking necessary measures, but it is incapable of giving us a meaning. Today we need both explanation and meaning. Explanation will help us greatly in the operative sphere, but will take us only halfway. So what would be the existential 'meaning' of this criminal phenomenon? In the light of its human breadth and depth, it is none other than the present-day manifestation of the spirit of evil... Today we find ourselves before a manifestation of brazen, aggressive and destructive evil. Behind and within, there is the spirit of evil, which in its pride and in its arrogance considers itself the Lord of the world and thinks that it has triumphed".

Mankind needs "meaning". The Pope directed something of a wake-up call to a numbed Western world that has lingered in its search for explanations and for "experts" ever ready to provide them. "Experts" are not all that are needed; even more necessary are people that can look at evil and describe it. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur stated that "evil cannot be explained; it is the absence of explanations. It cannot be explained, but can be described". In these four days in the Synod Hall, a people came together. They came from all corners of the globe, listened and gave voice to those who for years have been silenced by the absurdity of the evil and by people's fear, and today were able to tell their story. It was not the defeat of evil, but the beginning of a process that will lead us to state firmly that evil can be defeated.

A.M.



Uprooting the monstrosity of abuses from the Church and from humanity

Pope's appeal at the conclusion of the Meeting

At the end of the Mass in the Sala Regia of the Apostolic Palace on Sunday morning, 24 February, the Holy Father delivered his final discourse to participants in the Meeting on the Protection of Minors. The following is the English text of his address.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I thank the Lord who has accompanied us during these days, I would like to thank all of you for the ecclesial spirit and concrete commitment that you have so generously demonstrated.

Our work has made us realize once again that the gravity of the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors is, and historically has been, a widespread phenomenon in all cultures and societies. Only in relatively recent times has it become the subject of systematic research, thanks to changes in public opinion regarding a problem that was previously considered taboo; everyone knew of its presence yet no one spoke of it. I am reminded too of the cruel religious practice, once widespread in certain cultures, of sacrificing human beings – frequently children – in pagan rites. Yet even today, the statistics available on the sexual abuse of minors drawn up by various national and international organizations and agencies (the WHO, UNICEF, INTERPOL, EUROPEOL and others) do not represent the real extent of the phenomenon, which is often underestimated, mainly because many cases of the sexual abuse of minors go unreported,¹ particularly the great number committed within families.

Rarely, in fact, do victims speak out and seek help.² Behind this reluctance there can be shame, confusion, fear of reprisal, various forms of guilt, distrust of institutions, forms of cultural and social conditioning, but also lack of information about services and facilities that can help. Anguish tragically leads to bitterness, even suicide, or at times to seek revenge by doing the same thing. The one thing certain is that millions of children in the world are victims of exploitation and of sexual abuse.

Here it would be important to cite the overall data – in my opinion still partial – on the global level,³ then from Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania, in order to give an idea of the gravity and the extent of this plague in our societies.⁴ To avoid needless quibbling, I would point out from the start that the mention of specific countries is purely for the sake of citing the statistical data provided by the aforementioned reports.

The first truth that emerges from the data at hand is that those who perpetrate abuse, that is acts of physical, sexual or emotional violence, are primarily parents, relatives, husbands of child brides, coaches and teachers. Furthermore, ac-

cording to the UNICEF data of 2017 regarding 28 countries throughout the world, 9 out of every 10 girls who have had forced sexual relations reveal that they were victims of someone they knew or who was close to their family.

According to official data of the American government, in the United States over 700,000 children each year are victims of acts of violence and mistreatment. According to the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), 1 out of every 10 children experiences sexual abuse. In Europe, 18 million children are victims of sexual abuse.⁵

If we take Italy as an example, the 2016 *Téléfono Azzurro* Report states that 68.9% of abuses take place within the home of the minor.⁶

Acts of violence take place not only in the home, but also in neighbourhoods, schools, athletic facilities⁷ and, sadly, also in church settings.

Research conducted in recent years on the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of minors also shows that the development of the web and of the communications media have contributed to a significant increase in cases of abuse and acts of violence perpetrated online. Pornography is rapidly spreading worldwide through the net. The scourge of pornography has expanded to an alarming degree, causing psychological harm and damaging relations between men and women, and between adults and children. It is a phenomenon in constant growth. Tragically, a considerable part of pornographic production has to do with minors, who are thus gravely violated in their dignity. Sadly, the studies in this field document that it is happening in ever more horrible and violent ways, even to the point of acts of abuse against minors being commissioned and viewed live over the net.⁸

Here I would mention the World Congress held in Rome on the theme of child dignity in the digital era, as well as the first Forum of the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities held on the same theme in Abu Dhabi last November.

Another scourge is *sexual tourism*. According to 2017 data provided by the World Tourism Organization, each year 3 million people throughout the world travel in order to have sexual relations with a minor.⁹ Significantly, the perpetrators of these crimes in most cases do not even realize that they are committing a criminal offence.

We are thus facing a universal problem, tragically present almost everywhere and affecting everyone. Yet we need to be clear, that while gravely affecting our societies as a whole,¹⁰ this evil is in no way less monstrous when it takes place within the Church.

The brutality of this worldwide phenomenon becomes all the more grave and scandalous in the Church, for it is utterly incompatible with her moral authority and ethical credibility. Consecrated persons, chosen by God to guide souls to salvation, let themselves be dominated by their human frailty or sickness and thus become tools of Satan. In abuse, we see the hand of the evil that does not spare even the innocence of children. No explanations suffice for these abuses involving children.

We need to recognize with humility and courage that we stand face to face with the mystery of evil, which strikes most violently against the most vulnerable, for they are an image of Jesus. For this reason, the Church has now become increasingly aware of the need not only to curb the gravest cases of abuse by disciplinary measures and civil and canonical processes, but also to decisively confront the phenomenon both inside and outside the Church. She feels called to combat this evil that strikes at the very heart of her mission, which is to preach the Gospel to the little ones and to protect them from ravenous wolves.

Here again I would state clearly: if in the Church there should emerge even a single case of abuse – which already in itself represents an atrocity – that case will be faced with the utmost seriousness. Brothers and sisters, in people's justified anger, the Church sees the reflection of the wrath of God, betrayed and insulted by these deceitful consecrated persons. The echo of the silent cry of the little ones who, instead of finding in them fathers and spiritual guides encountered tormentors, will shake hearts dulled by hypocrisy and by power. It is our duty to pay close heed to this silent, choked cry.

It is difficult to grasp the phenomenon of the sexual abuse of minors without considering power, since it is always the result of an abuse of power, an exploitation of the inferiority and vulnerability of the abused, which makes possible the manipulation of their conscience and of their psychological and physical weakness. The abuse of power is likewise present in the other forms of abuse affecting almost 85,000,000 children, forgotten by everyone: child soldiers, child prostitutes, starving children, children kidnapped and often victimized by the horrid commerce of human organs or enslaved, child victims of war, refugee children, aborted children and so many others.

Before all this cruelty, all this idolatrous sacrifice of children to the god of power, money, pride and arrogance, empirical explanations alone are not sufficient. They fail to make us grasp the breadth and depth of this tragedy. Here once again we see the limitations of a purely positivistic approach. It can

provide us with a true explanation helpful for taking necessary measures, but it is incapable of giving us a meaning. Today we need both explanation and meaning. Explanation will help us greatly in the operative sphere, but will take us only halfway.

So what would be the existential "meaning" of this criminal phenomenon? In the light of its human breadth and depth, it is none other than the present-day manifestation of the spirit of evil. If we fail to take account of this dimension, we will remain far from the truth and lack real solutions.

Brothers and sisters, today we find ourselves before a manifestation of brazen, aggressive and destructive evil. Behind and within, there is the spirit of evil, which in its pride and in its arrogance considers itself the Lord of the world¹¹ and thinks that it has triumphed. I would like to say this to you with the authority of a brother and a father, certainly a small and sinful one, but who is the pastor of the Church that presides in charity: in these painful cases, I see the hand of evil that does not spare even the innocence of the little ones. And this leads me to think of the example of Herod who, driven by fear of losing his power, ordered the slaughter of all the children of Bethlehem.¹² Satan is behind this.

Just as we must take every practical measure that common sense, the sciences and society offer us, neither must we lose sight of this reality; we need to take up the spiritual means that the Lord himself teaches us: humiliation, self-accusation, prayer and penance. This is the only way to overcome the spirit of evil. It is how Jesus himself overcame it:¹³

The Church's aim will thus be to hear, watch over, protect and care for abused, exploited and forgotten children, wherever they are. To achieve that goal, the Church must rise above the ideological disputes and journalistic practices that often exploit, for various interests, the very tragedy experienced by the little ones.

The time has come, then, to work together to eradicate this evil from the body of our humanity by adopting every necessary measure already in force on the international level and ecclesial levels. The time has come to find a correct equilibrium of all values in play and to provide uniform directives for the Church, avoiding the two extremes of a "justicialism" provoked by guilt for past errors and media pressure, and a *defensiveness* that fails to confront the causes and effects of these grave crimes.

In this context, I would mention the "best practices" formulated under the guidance of the World Health Organ-

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ization¹⁴ by a group of ten international bodies that developed and approved a packet of measures called INSPIRE: *Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children*.¹⁵

With the help of these guidelines, the work carried out in recent years by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and the contributions made by this Meeting, the Church, in developing her legislation, will concentrate on the following aspects:

1. *The protection of children.* The primary goal of every measure must be to protect the little ones and prevent them from falling victim to any form of psychological and physical abuse. Consequently, a change of mentality is needed to combat a defensive and reactive approach to protecting the institution and to pursue, wholeheartedly and decisively, the good of the community by giving priority to the victims of abuse in every sense. We must keep ever before us the innocent faces of the little ones, remembering the words of the Master: "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of scandals! For it is necessary that scandals come, but woe to the man by whom the scandal comes!" (*Mt 18:6-7*).

2. *Impeccable seriousness.* Here I would reaffirm that "the Church will spare no effort to do all that is necessary to bring to justice *whosoever* has committed such crimes. The Church will never seek to hush up or not take seriously any case" (*Address to the Roman Curia*, 21 December 2018). She is convinced that "the sins and crimes of consecrated persons are further tainted by infidelity and shame; they disfigure the countenance of the Church and undermine her credibility. The Church herself, with her faithful children, is also a victim of these acts of infidelity and these real sins of "peculation" (*ibid.*).

3. *Genuine purification.* Notwithstanding the measures already taken and the progress made in the area of preventing abuse, there is need for a constantly renewed commitment to the holiness of pastors, whose conformity to Christ the Good Shepherd is a right of the People of God.

The Church thus restates "her firm resolve to pursue unstintingly a path of purification, questioning how best to protect children, to avoid these tragedies, to bring healing and restoration to the victims, and to improve the training imparted in seminaries... An effort will be made to make past mistakes opportunities for eliminating this scourge, not only from the body of the Church but also from that of society" (*ibid.*). The holy fear of God leads us to accuse ourselves – as individuals and as an institution – and to make up for our failures. Self-accusation is the beginning of wisdom and bound to the holy fear of God: learning how to accuse ourselves, as individuals, as institutions, as a society. For we must not fall into the trap of blaming others, which is a step towards the "alibi" that separates us from reality.

4. *Formation.* In other words, requiring criteria for the selection and training of candidates to the priesthood that are not simply negative, concerned above all with excluding problematic personalities, but also positive, providing a balanced process of formation for suitable candidates, fostering holiness and the virtue of chastity. Saint Paul VI, in his encyclical *Sacerdotialis Caelibatus*, wrote that "the life of the celibate priest, which engages the whole man so totally and so sensitively, excludes those of insufficient physical, psychic and moral qualifications. Nor should anyone pretend that grace supplies for the defects of nature in such a man" (No. 64).

5. *Strengthening and reviewing guidelines by Episcopal Conferences.* In other words, reaffirming the need for bishops to be united in the application of parameters that serve as rules and not simply indications. *Rules, not merely parameters.* No abuse should ever be covered up (as was often the case in the past) or not taken sufficiently seriously, since the covering up of abuses favours the spread of evil and adds a further level of scandal. Also and in particular, developing new and effective approaches for prevention in all institutions and in every sphere of ecclesial activity.

6. *Accompaniment of those who have been abused.* The evil that they have experienced leaves them with indelible wounds that also manifest themselves in resentment and a tendency to self-destruction. The

Church thus has the duty to provide them with all the support they need, by availing herself of experts in this field. Listening, let me even put it this way: "wasting time" in listening. Listening heals the hurting person, and likewise heals us of our egoism, aloofness and lack of concern, of the attitude shown by the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

7. *The digital world.* The protection of minors must take into account the new forms of sexual abuse and abuse of all kinds that threaten minors in the settings in which they live and through the new devices that they use. Seminarians, priests, men and women religious, pastoral agents, indeed everyone, must be aware that the digital world and the use of its devices often has a deeper effect than we may think. Here there is a need to encourage countries and authorities to apply every measure needed to contain those websites that threaten human dignity, the dignity of women and particularly that of children. Brothers and sisters: crime does not enjoy the right to freedom. There is an absolute need to combat these abominations with utter determination, to be vigilant and to make every effort to keep the development of young people from being troubled or disrupted by an uncontrolled access to pornography, which will leave deep scars on their minds and hearts. We must ensure that young men and women, particularly seminarians and clergy, are not enslaved to addictions based on the exploitation and criminal abuse of the innocent and their pictures, and contempt for the dignity of women and of the human person. Here mention should be made of the new norms on *graviora delicta* approved by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010, which included as a new species of crime "the acquisition, possession or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors... by whatever means or using whatever technology". The text speaks of minors "under the age of fourteen". We now consider that this age limit should be raised in order to expand the protection of minors and to bring out the gravity of these deeds.

8. *Sexual tourism.* The conduct, the way of looking at others, the very heart of Jesus' disciples and servants must always acknowledge the image of God in each human creature, beginning with the most inno-

cent. It is only by drawing from this radical respect for the dignity of others that we will be able to defend them from the pervasive power of violence, exploitation, abuse and corruption, and serve them in a credible way in their integral human and spiritual growth, in the encounter with others and with God. Combatting sexual tourism demands that it be outlawed, but also that the victims of this criminal phenomenon be given support and helped to be reinserted in society. The ecclesial communities are called to strengthen their pastoral care of persons exploited by sexual tourism. Among these, those who are most vulnerable and in need of particular help are certainly women, minors and children; these last however need special forms of protection and attention. Government authorities should make this a priority and act with urgency to combat the trafficking and economic exploitation of children. To this end it is important to coordinate the efforts being made at every level of society and to cooperate closely with international organizations so as to achieve a juridical framework capable of protecting children from sexual exploitation in tourism and of ensuring the legal prosecution of offenders.¹⁶

Now, allow me to offer a heartfelt word of thanks to all those priests and to the consecrated persons who serve the Lord faithfully and totally, and who feel themselves dishonoured and discredited by the shameful conduct of some of their confreres. All of us – the Church, consecrated persons, the People of God, and even God himself – bear the effects of their infidelity. In the name of the whole Church, I thank the vast majority of priests who are not only faithful to their celibacy, but spend themselves in a ministry today made even more difficult by the scandals of few (but always too many) of their confreres. I also thank the faithful who are well aware of the goodness of their pastors and who continue to pray for them and to support them.

Finally, I would like to stress the important need to turn this evil into an opportunity for purification. Let us look to the example of Edith Stein – Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross – with the certainty that "in the darkest night, the greatest prophets and saints rise up. Still, the life-giving stream of the mystical life remains invisible. Surely, the decisive events of history of the world have been essentially influenced by souls about whom the history books remain silent. And those souls that we must thank for the decisive events in our personal lives is something that we will know only on that day when all that which is hidden will be brought to light". The holy, faithful People of God, in its daily silence, in many forms and ways continues to demonstrate and attest with "stubborn" hope that the Lord never abandons but sustains the constant and, in so many cases, painful devotion of his children. The holy and patient, faithful People of God, borne up and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, is the best face of the pro-

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phetic Church which puts her Lord at the centre in daily giving of herself. It will be precisely this holy People of God to liberate us from the plague of clericalism, which is the fertile ground for all these disgraces.

The best results and the most effective resolution that we can offer to the victims, to the People of Holy Mother Church and to the entire world, are the commitment to personal and collective conversion, the humility of learning, listening, assisting and protecting the most vulnerable.

I make a heartfelt appeal for an all-out battle against the abuse of minors both sexually and in other areas, on the part of all authorities and individuals, for we are dealing with abominable crimes that must be erased from the face of the earth: this is demanded by all the many victims hidden in families and in the various settings of our societies.

¹ Cf. MARIA ISABEL MARTÍNEZ PÉREZ, *Abusos sexuales en niños y adolescentes*, ed. Criminología y Justicia, 2012, according to which only 2% of cases are reported, especially when the abuse has taken place in the home. She sets the number of victims of paedophilia in our society at between 15% and 20%. Only 50% of children reveal the abuses they have suffered, and of these cases only 15% are actually reported. Only 5% end up going to trial.

² One out of three mentions the fact to no one (2017 data compiled by the non-profit organization THORN).

³ *On the global level:* in 2017 the World Health Organization estimated that up to 1 billion minors between 2 and 17 years of age have experienced acts of violence or physical, emotional or sexual neglect. Sexual abuse (ranging from groping to rape), according to some 2014 UNICEF estimates, would affect 120 million girls, who are the greatest number of victims. In 2017, UNICEF reported that in 38 of the world's low to middle income countries, almost 17 million adult women admitted having had a forced sexual relation in childhood.

Europe: in 2013, the World Health Organization estimated over 18 million cases of abuse. Of these, 13.4% were girls, while 5.7% were boys. According to UNICEF, in 28 European countries, about 2.5 million young women reported having experienced sexual abuse with or without physical contact prior to 15 years of age (data released in 2017). In addition, 44 million (equivalent to 22.9%) were victims of physical violence, while 55 million (29.6%) were victims of psychological violence. Not only this: in 2017, the INTERPOL Report on the sexual exploitation of minors led to the identification of 14,289 victims in 54 European countries. With regard to Italy, in 2017 CESVI estimated that 6 million children experienced mistreatment. Furthermore, according to data provided by *Telefono Azzurro*, in the calendar year 2017, 98 cases of sexual abuse and pedophilia were handled by the *Servizio 114 Emergenza Infanzia*, equivalent to about 7.5% of the total

cases handled by that service. 65% of the minors seeking help were female victims and over 40% were under 11 years of age.

Asia: in India, in the decade 2001-2011, the Asian Centre for Human Rights reported a total of 48,338 cases of the rape of minors, with an increase equivalent to 336% over that period: the 2,113 cases in 2001 rose to 7,112 cases in 2011.

The Americas: in the United States, official government data state that more than 700,000 children each year are victims of violence and mistreatment. According to the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), 1 out of every 10 children experiences sexual abuse.

Africa: in South Africa, the results of a study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention of the University of Cape Town showed in 2016 that 1 out of 3 South African young people, male or female, risks being sexually abused before the age of 17. According to the study, the first of its kind on a national scale in South Africa, 784,967 young people between 15 and 17 years of age have already experienced sexual abuse. The victims in this case are for the most part male youths. Not even a third of them reported the violence to the authorities. In other African countries, cases of sexual abuse of minors are part of the wider context of acts of violence linked to the conflicts affecting the continent and are thus difficult to quantify. The phenomenon is also closely linked to the widespread practice of underage marriages in various African nations, as elsewhere.

Oceania: in Australia, according to data issued by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) in February 2018 and covering the years 2015-2017, one out of six women (16%, i.e., 1.5 million) reported experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse prior to 15 years of age, and one out of nine men (11%, i.e., 992,000) reported having experienced this abuse when they were children. Also, in 2015-2016, around 450,000 children were the object of child protection measures, and 55,600 minors were removed from their homes in order to remedy abuses they had suffered and to prevent others. Finally, one must not forget the risks to which native minors are exposed: again, according to AIHW, in 2015-2016 indigenous children had a seven times greater probability of being abused or abandoned as compared with their non-indigenous contemporaries (cf. <http://www.pbc2019.org/protection-of-minors/child-abuse-on-the-global-level>).

⁴ The data provided refer to sample countries selected on the basis of the reliability of available sources. The studies released by UNICEF on 30 countries confirm this fact: a small percentage of victims stated that they had asked for help.

⁵ Cf. https://www.repubblica.it/salute/prevenzione/2016/05/12/news/maltrattamenti_sui_minori_tutti_gli_abusi_139630223.

⁶ Specifically, those allegedly responsible for the difficulties experienced by a minor are, in 73.7% of the cases a parent (the mother in 44.2% and the father in 29.5%), a relative (3.3%), a friend (3.2%), an acquaintance (3%), a teacher (2.5%). The data show that only in a small percentage of cases (2.2%) is the person responsible an adult stranger. Cf. *ibid.*

⁷ A 2011 English study carried out by the *National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children* (NSPCC) found that 29% of those interviewed reported that they had experienced sexual molestation (physical and verbal) in sports centres.

⁸ According to the 2017 data of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), every 7 minutes a web page sends pictures of sexually abused children. In 2017, 78,589 URLs were found to contain images of sexual abuse concentrated particularly in the Low

27/turismo-sessuale-minorile-nel-mondo-italia-ecpat).

¹⁰ "For if this grave tragedy has involved some consecrated ministers, we may ask how deeply rooted it may be in our societies and in our families" (*Address to the Roman Curia*, 21 December 2018).

¹¹ Cf. R.H. BENSON, *The Lord of the World*, Dodd, Mead and Company, London, 1907.

¹² "Quare times, Herodes, quia audis Regem natum? Non venit ille ut te excludat, sed ut diabolum vincat. Sed tu haec non intelligens turbaris et saevis; et ut perdas unum quem quaeris, per totinfantium mortes efficeris crudelis... Necas parvulos corpore quia te necat timor in corde (SAINT QUODVULTDEUS, *Sermo 2 de Symbolo: PL 40, 655*).

¹³ "Quemadmodum enim ille, effusus in scientiae lignum veneno suo, naturam gusto corruperat, sic et ipse dominicum carnem vorandam praesumens, deitatis in ea virtute corruptus interituque sublatus est" (SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Centuria 1, 8-3: PG 90, 1182-1186*).

¹⁴ (CDC: United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child; End Violence Against Children: The Global Partnership; PAHO: Pan American Health Organization; PEPFAR: President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief; TFG: Together for Girls; UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund; UNODC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; USAID: United States Agency for International Development; WHO: World Health Organization).

¹⁵ Each letter of the word INSPIRE represents one of the strategies, and for the most part has shown to be preventively effectual against various types of violence, in addition to having benefits in areas such as mental health, education and the reduction of crime. The seven strategies are the following: *Implementation and Enforcement of Laws* (for example, avoiding violent discipline and limiting access to alcohol and firearms); *Norms and Values* that need changing (for example, those that condone sexual abuse against girls or aggressive behaviour among boys); *Safe Environments* (for example, identifying neighbourhood violence "hotspots" and dealing with local causes through policies that resolve problems and through other interventions); *Parent and Caregiver Support* (for example, by providing formation to parents for their children, and to new parents); *Income and Economic Strengthening* (such as microcredit and formation concerning equity in general); *Response and Support Services* (for example, ensuring that children exposed to violence can have access to effective emergency care and can receive adequate psychosocial support); *Education and Life Skills* (for example, ensuring that children attend school and equipping them with social skills).

¹⁶ Cf. *Final Document of the VI World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism*, 27 July 2004.



Countries, followed by the United States, Canada, France and Russia. 55% of the victims were under 10 years of age, 86% were girls, 7% boys and 5% both.

⁹ The most frequented destinations are Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, as well as Thailand and Cambodia. These have recently been joined by some countries of Africa and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, the six countries from which the perpetrators of abuse mostly come are France, Germany, the United Kingdom, China, Japan and Italy. Not to be overlooked is the growing number of women who travel to developing countries in search of paid sex with minors: in total, they represent 10% of sexual tourists worldwide. Furthermore, according to a study by *EXPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism)* International, between 2015 and 2016, 35% of paedophile sexual tourists were regular clients, while 65% were occasional clients (cf. <https://www.osservatoriodiriti.it/2018/03/>



Homily of the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

A Copernican Revolution

On Sunday morning, 24 February, Pope Francis presided at Holy Mass in the Sala Regia of the Apostolic Palace, marking the conclusion of the Meeting on the Protection of Minors. The following is the text of the homily, which was delivered in English by Archbishop Mark Benedict Coleridge, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

In the Gospel just proclaimed, one voice alone is heard, the voice of Jesus. Earlier we heard the voice of Paul and at the end of Mass we will hear the voice of Peter, but in the Gospel there is only the voice of Jesus. It is good that, after all our words, there are now only the words of Christ: Jesus alone remains, as on the mount of the Transfiguration (cf. Lk 9:36).

He speaks to us of power, and he does so in this splendid Sala Regia which also speaks of power. Here are images of battles,

“For us, the Copernican revolution is the discovery that those who have been abused do not revolve around the Church but the Church around them. In discovering this, we can begin to see with their eyes and to hear with their ears...”

of a religious massacre, of struggles between emperors and popes. This is a place where earthly and heavenly powers meet, touched at times by infernal powers as well. In this Sala Regia the word of God invites us to contemplate power, as we have done through these days together. Between meeting, Sala and Scripture therefore we have a fine harmony of voices.

Standing over the sleeping Saul, David appears a powerful figure, as Abishai sees only too well: “Today God has put the enemy into your hands. So let me nail him to the ground with the spear”. But David retorts: “Don’t kill him! Who has ever laid a hand on the Lord’s consecrated one and gone unpunished?” David chooses to use power not to destroy but to save the king, the Lord’s consecrated one.

The pastors of the Church, like David, have received a gift of power – power however to serve, to create; a power that is with and for but not over; a power, as St Paul says, “which the Lord gave for build-

ing you up, not for destroying you” (2 Cor 10:8). Power is dangerous, because it can destroy; and in these days we have pondered how in the Church power can turn destructive when separated from service, when it is not a way of loving, when it becomes power over.

A host of the Lord’s consecrated ones have been placed in our hands – and by the Lord himself. Yet we can use this power not to create but to destroy, and even in the end to kill. In sexual abuse, the powerful lay hands on the Lord’s consecrated ones, even the weakest and most vulnerable of them. They say yes to the urging of Abishai; they seize the spear.

In abuse and its concealment, the powerful show themselves not men of heaven but men of earth, in the words of Paul we have heard. In the Gospel, the Lord commands: “Love your enemies”. But who is the enemy? Certainly not those who have challenged the Church to see abuse and its concealment for what they really are, above all the victims and survivors who have led us to the painful truth by telling their stories with such courage. At times, however, we have seen victims and survivors as the enemy, but we have not loved them, we have not blessed them. In that sense, we have been our own worst enemy.

The Lord urges us to “be merciful as your Father is merciful”. Yet, for all that we desire a truly safe Church and for all that we have done to ensure it, we have not always chosen the mercy of the man of heaven. We have preferred instead the indifference of the man of earth and the desire to protect the Church’s reputation and even our own. We have shown too little mercy, and therefore we will receive the same, because the measure we give will be the measure we receive in return. We will not go unpunished, as David says, and we have already known punishment.

The man of earth must die so that the man of heaven can be born; the old Adam must give way to the new Adam. This will require a true conversion, without which we will remain on the level of “mere administration” – as the Holy Father writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* – “mere administration”

which leaves untouched the heart of the abuse crisis (25).

This conversion alone will enable us to see that the wounds of those who have been abused are our wounds, that their fate is ours, that they are not our enemies but bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh (cf. Gen 2:23). They are us, and we are them.

This conversion is in fact a Copernican revolution. Copernicus proved that the sun does not revolve around the earth but the earth around the sun. For us, the Copernican revolution is the discovery that those who have been abused do not revolve around the Church but the Church around them. In discovering this, we can begin to see with their eyes and to hear with their ears; and once we do that, the world and the Church begin to look quite different. This is the necessary conversion, the true revolution and the great grace which can open for the Church a new season of mission.

Lord, when did we see you abused and did not come to help you? But he will reply: In truth I say to you, as often as you failed to do this to one of these the least of my brothers and sisters, you failed to do it to me (cf. Mt 25:44-45). In them, the least of the brothers and sisters, victims and survivors, we encounter Christ crucified, the powerless one from whom there flows the power of the Almighty, the powerless one around whom the Church revolves forever, the powerless one whose scars shine like the sun.

In these days we have been on Calvary – yes, even in the Vatican and in the Sala Regia we are on the dark mountain. In listening to survivors, we have heard Christ crying out in the darkness (cf. Mk 15:34). But here hope is born from his wounded heart, and hope becomes prayer, as the universal Church gathers around us in this upper room: may the darkness of Calvary lead the Church throughout the world to the light of Easter, to the Lamb who is our sun (cf. Rev 21:23).

In the end, there remains only the voice of the Risen Lord, urging us not to stand gazing at the empty tomb, wondering in our perplexity what to do next. Nor can we stay in the upper room where he says, “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19). He breathes on us (cf. Jn 20:22) and the fire of a new Pentecost

At the Angelus an appeal for abuse sufferers

Lack of attention to victims is unjustifiable

"The issue of the sexual abuse of minors" by members of the clergy has caused a serious scandal, "both for the tragic suffering of the victims and due to the unjustifiable lack of attention given to them and to covering for the guilty by people with responsibility". Pope Francis shared this observation at the Angelus with the faithful who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square on Sunday, 24 February, after he spoke on the day's reading on "love for enemies". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he shared in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

This Sunday's Gospel passage (cf. Lk 6:27-38) concerns a central point that characterizes Christian life: *love for enemies*. Jesus' words are clear: "I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (vv. 27-38). And this is not *optional*, it is a command. It is not for everyone, but for the disciples, whom Jesus calls "you that hear". He is well aware that loving enemies exceeds our possibilities, but this is why he became man: not to leave us as we are, but to transform us into men and women capable of a greater love, that of his Father and ours. This is the love that Jesus gives to those who "hear him". Thus it becomes possible! With him, thanks to his love, to his Spirit, we are able to love even those who do not love us, even those who do us harm.

In this way, Jesus wants God's love to triumph over hatred and rancour in every heart. The logic of love, which culminates in Christ's Cross, is a Christian's badge and induces us to meet everyone with the heart of brothers and sisters. But how is it possible to overcome human instinct and the worldly law of retaliation? Jesus provides the answer in the same Gospel passage: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (v. 36). Those who hear Jesus, who make an effort to follow him even at a cost, become children of God, and begin to truly resemble the Father who is in heaven. We become capable of things we never thought we could say or do, and of which we would have been rather ashamed, but which now give us joy and peace instead. We no longer need to be violent, with words and gestures: we discover that we are capable of tenderness and goodness; and we sense that all of this comes not from ourselves but from him! And thus we do not brag about it but are grateful for it.

There is nothing greater and more fruitful than love: it bestows all dignity to the person, while, on the contrary, hatred and ven-

geance decrease it, marring the beauty of the creature made in God's image.

This command, to respond to insult and wrongdoing with love, has created a new culture in the world: "a culture of mercy" – we need to learn this well! And properly practice this culture of mercy – which "can set in motion a real cultural revolution" (Apostolic Letter *Misericordia et Misera*, 20). It is the revolution of love, in which the protagonists are the martyrs of all times. And Jesus assures us that our behaviour, inspired by love for those who do us harm, will not be in vain. He tells us: "forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you" (vv. 37-38). This is beautiful. God will give us something beautiful if we are generous, merciful. We must forgive because God has forgiven us and always forgives us. If we do not forgive completely, we cannot expect to be forgiven completely. However, if our hearts are open to mercy, if we seal forgiveness with a brotherly embrace and secure the bonds of communion, we proclaim to the world that it is possible to overcome evil with good. At times it is easier for us to remember the harm they have done to us and not the good things; to the point that there are people who have this habit and it becomes a sickness. They are "collectors of injustice": they only remember the bad things done. And this is not a path. We must do the opposite, Jesus says. Remember the good things, and when someone comes with some gossip, and speaks ill of another, say: "Yes, perhaps ... but he has this good quality...". Turn the discussion around. This is the revolution of mercy.

May the Virgin Mary help us to let our heart be touched by this holy word of Jesus, burning like fire, that it may transform us and make us able to do good without reciprocation, *doing good without reciprocation*, witnessing everywhere to the victory of love.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, this morning a very important Meeting on the theme of the protection of minors concluded here in the Vatican. Patriarchs, Presidents of all Episcopal Conferences, Heads of the Catholic Oriental Churches, Representatives of men and women Superiors of religious Congregations and many of my Collaborators in the Roman Curia, came together. As you know, the issue of the sexual abuse of minors by members of the clergy has for some time given rise to a serious scandal in the



Church and in public opinion, both for the tragic suffering of the victims and due to the unjustifiable lack of attention given to them and to covering for the guilty by people with responsibility in the Church.

Since it is a widespread problem on every Continent, I wanted us, we Pastors of the Catholic communities throughout the world, to address it together, in a co-responsible and collegial manner. We listened to the voices of the victims; we prayed and asked forgiveness from God and from the people who have been harmed; we acknowledged our responsibilities, our duty to do justice in truth, to radically reject all forms of abuse of power, of conscience and of a sexual nature.

We wish that all the Church's activities and places may always be safe places for minors; that all possible measures may be taken so that similar crimes may not be repeated; that the Church may return to being absolutely credible and trustworthy in her mission of service and education for the little ones, according to Jesus' teaching.

In this way we will know how to cooperate wholeheartedly and effectively, together with all people of good will and the positive forces of society, in all countries on the international level, so that the extremely grave scourge of violence against hundreds of millions of minors, boys and girls, young women and young men, may be thoroughly confronted, in all its forms, throughout the world.

I address a cordial greeting to all of you, pilgrims from Rome, from Italy and from different countries.

I greet the faithful from the Diocese of Seville, those from Trieste, Agropoli and Venegono Inferiore.

I greet the group that has come on the occasion of "Rare Disease Day", and I hope that patients and their families may be appropriately supported in their difficult journey, at both the medical and legislative levels.

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



Final briefing on the Meeting

Now a new journey begins

MARCO BELLIZI

The Church is listening and asking for everyone's cooperation, in the awareness of having just begun a long, tortuous journey; one which will unfold, mindful of a very clear message: silence no more! The final briefing of the Meeting on the Protection of Minors was a kind of "so long, see you again soon", a re-cap of the four intense days, but also a promise.

Held at the Augustinianum on Sunday afternoon, 24 February, the briefing included remarks by Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop Charles J. Scicluna, journalist Valentina Alazraki, Fr Federico Lombardi, moderator of the Meeting, Fr Hans Zollner, and Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication. Before taking his leave of the journalists who had been reporting on the meeting, interim Director of the Holy See Press Office, Alessandro Gisotti, wished to share his own personal experience of listening and conversion. As a father, he said, he would never forget the listening and the testimony of survivors.

Fr Lombardi announced several concrete measures (to which we will refer elsewhere) which will be adopted in the short term and also highlighted how the Holy Father's discourse offered a profound, spiritual, theological reading of the battle against evil and its manifestation in the world. Ruffini thanked the media for their work even when "uncomfortable for us" because it spurs the Church to be uncomfortable and true. These days he said, leave us with an awareness of the boundary between service and power, of the fact that no one is perfect and that it is dangerous to pretend to be so, that in the Church this leads to clericalism and in journalism can lead to its very degeneration. Truth is a point of arrival that requires courage and that allows neither privilege nor prejudice but rather demands the acknowledgement that there can be no truth if "everyone talks and no one listens".

Cardinal Gracias described the meeting as "timely, useful, and necessary" to tackle this problem which is a priority for the Church and is now shared by all. There is both an acknowledgement that it is a very grave problem, he stressed, and a commitment to face it, even if we have to wait to see what concrete steps are to be taken to ensure the complete eradication of all abuse. Although all the reports were excellent, he said, he most appreciated those delivered by the women, because they offered a "different point of view".

One of the women to address the meeting was Mexican journalist Valentina Alazraki

who had been assigned the topic of transparency. She stressed that she had been given full freedom to write what she wished and that her text had not been corrected, "not even a comma". It is evident, she said, that we are facing a grave problem and understandably the bishops feel cornered as journalists put a lot of pressure on them. However she added, it is possible to achieve a sort of alliance between journalists and the Church if everyone works together.

It is generally understood that a point of no return has been reached. Archbishop Scicluna said that one of the most striking things about the meeting was the Pope's discourse at the Meeting's conclusion in which he of course stressed the gravity of the crime of abuse against minors, but equally the crime of covering it up. And there is no turning back. In the final analysis, Scicluna noted, the most important thing to achieve is a change of hearts. Describing the meeting as a very brief pilgrimage, he stressed that this change in attitude comes from listening to the victims, and women in particular. The Church is mother and bride and as such, the voice of women is essential, he stressed.

And with regard to communications, he thanked journalists because he said, as a Church there are internal but also external communication problems.

Fr Zollner spoke of a "quantitative and qualitative leap" in a journey that will continue for decades. We have come a long way, he said, adding that he believed many people had undergone a transformation, through prayer and sharing. But the most important moment, he observed, had been the bishops' listening to the victims in their dioceses. But this takes time, because the Church is like a very large ship, he said, and it takes a great deal of energy to change course.

The final questions from journalists at the briefing focused on practical issues. In responding to one of these, Archbishop Scicluna explained that with regard to the consequences for priestly ministry, in cases where there has already been a civil judgment, this should be followed by a canonical trial which, in some States, is not possible to conduct contemporaneously. However, he added, bishops will not take into consideration only the trial or conviction. Removal from priestly



The Holy Father with journalist Valentina Alazraki

ministry even before a conviction should not be seen as a punishment but rather as a form of protection. With regard to Pontifical secrecy, it is guarantor of Church freedom but it is not necessary in cases of sexual abuse, he said, as it is not an absolute value and, amid legitimate expectations, the issue could be studied further. Understanding the frustration, he pointed to the fact that the Pope had given participants 21 points for reflection and many others had been developed by a language group. All this material needs to be collated. What is important, the Archbishop stressed, is to provide guidelines which in the past were not available to bishops, some of whom truly had no idea what to do.

Bow (down) to the wounds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the Church which is also essential to understanding what is taking place during these three days in the Synod Hall.

Let us listen again to the words of the Panama discourse: "In the Church, ... Christ lives among us, and so she must be humble and poor, since an aloof, prideful and self-sufficient Church is not the Church of *kenosis*.... It is important, brothers, that we not be afraid to draw near and touch the wounds of our people, which are our wounds too, and to do this in the same way that the Lord himself does. A pastor cannot stand aloof from the sufferings of his people; we can even say that the heart of a pastor is measured by his ability to be moved by the many lives that are hurting or threatened". *Kenosis* is a term that, in theology is used to indicate the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, of the God who 'humbles' himself by becoming man, taking on human nature. That is what the Church faithful to Christ must do: humble herself. To do so always and especially today in facing the abused minors who, with their wounds, plead for justice. This is why the most important aspect of my mother's teaching lies not in repeating the words of Thomas, but in offering that small bow before the Body of Christ.

Collegiality and Synodality

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

not easy to oppose it because, he explained, "it is a mentality that has permeated our Church throughout the ages". However, "it is necessary to unmask the underlying clericalism and bring about a change of mentality". Refusing to take the easy way out, the Cardinal acknowledged "that the damage is not done by outsiders but that the first enemies are within us, among us bishops and priests and consecrated persons who have not lived up to our vocation.

We have to recognize that the enemy is within".

In clericalism one finds all the many ways in which the Church has looked away, underestimated, denied, covered up. The Colombian Cardinal analyzed the responsibilities of a bishop as a pastor and as a member of a college, but also to those priests and consecrated persons and, last but not least, to the People of God. All situations that must never, in any way, be minimized: indeed, to do so would be "a monstrous distortion of the priestly min-

istry". Moreover, he added, "there is no possible justification for not denouncing, not unmasking, not courageously and forcefully confronting any abuse that presents itself within our Church". For this very reason the Cardinal emphasized the importance of the media and its constant pressure regarding this crisis: "Even if it were to involve a single case of abuse", it is essential to "unmask these predators".

M.F.

A.M.



The final declaration of the Meeting's moderator

Concrete initiatives

FEDERICO LOMBARDI, SJ

We have heard the voices of the victims of the terrible crimes of sexual abuse against minors committed by members of the clergy. We sincerely ask them for forgiveness, as we do also of all our brothers and sisters, for what we did wrong and for what we failed to do.

We will return to our dioceses and communities in various parts of the world with a deeper understanding of this terrible scandal and the wounds it has inflicted on the victims and on the entire people of God. We recall what St John Paul II said already in 2002, words that are still very current and express our commitment: "People need to know that there is no place in the priesthood and reli-

gious life for those who would harm the young". We absolutely want all pastoral activities of the Catholic Church wherever they take place to be completely safe for minors out of respect for their dignity and their human and spiritual growth.

Responsibility, accountability, transparency are the words that have resonated during these days in which we have prayed, reflected and shared our experiences under the guidance of the Holy Father Francis, and that we are committed to transforming into concrete action. The collegial spirit and synodal journey of the ecclesial community will give us the support and encouragement needed to continue to overcome the tendency to hide things and to favor the institution over the persons it must

serve. In this way, we can achieve the spiritual and structural renewal necessary to root out from the Church every form of abuse, not only sexual, but also of power and conscience.

We are confident that from this Meeting concrete initiatives will soon follow. Among them:

A new Motu Proprio from the Pope "on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons", to strengthen prevention and the fight against abuse on the part of the Roman Curia and Vatican City State. This Document will accompany a new law of Vatican City State and guidelines for the Vicariate of Vatican City on the same subject.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will publish a *Vademecum* that will help bishops around the world to clearly understand their duties and tasks.

In addition, in a spirit of communion with the universal Church, the Pope expressed the intention to facilitate the creation of task forces of competent persons to help episcopal conferences and dioceses that find it difficult to confront the problems and carry out initiatives for the protection of minors.

On Monday, 25 February, the Organizing Committee will meet with the heads of the Roman Curia who participated in this Meeting in order to now ascertain the necessary follow-up work on the objectives and the ideas proposed during these days, as desired by the Holy Father.

These first steps are encouraging signs that will accompany us in our mission of preaching the Gospel and of serving all children throughout the world, in mutual solidarity with all people of goodwill who want to abolish every form of violence and abuse against minors.

A Copernican Revolution

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

touches us (cf. Acts 2:2). He who is peace throws open the doors of the upper room and the doors of our heart. From fear is born an apostolic boldness, from deep discouragement the joy of the Gospel.

A mission stretches before us – a mission demanding not just words but real concrete action. We will do all we can to bring justice and healing to survivors of abuse; we will listen to them, believe them and walk with them; we will ensure that those who have abused are never again able to offend; we will call to account those who have concealed abuse; we will strengthen the processes of recruitment and formation of Church leaders; we will educate all our people in what safeguarding requires; we will do all in our power to make sure that the horrors of the past are not repeated and that the Church is a safe place for all, a loving mother especially for the young and

the vulnerable; we will not act alone but will work with all concerned for the good of the young and the vulnerable; we will continue to deepen our understanding of abuse and its effects, of why it has happened in the Church and what must be done to eradicate it. All of this will take time, but we do not have forever and we dare not fail.

If we can do this and more, we will not only know the peace of the Risen Lord but we will become his peace in a mission to the ends of the earth. Yet we will become the peace only if we become the sacrifice. To this we say yes with one voice as at the altar we plunge our failures and betrayals, all our faith, our hope, our love into the one sacrifice of Jesus, Victim and Victor, who "will wipe away the tears from every eye, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning or weeping or pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4).

Truth and transparency to break the culture of silence

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this around for a time to evangelise, catechise and educate all the members of the Church, including clergy and religious?"

While taking into account the differences and conditioning of the various cultures in the world, the Nigerian Sister asked that the sexual abuse of minors be addressed "more directly, transparently and courageously". The first step is to admit the violations: "Let us not hide such events anymore because of the fear of making mistakes.... Our credibility is at stake". We need to "build more effective and efficient processes", she said, to ensure direct contact with victims, train sensitive people capable of listening and providing support. It is essential to implement a wide-ranging process of education: in families, in communities, in seminaries, but also through various means of communication and social media. She concluded with a hopeful message to those present: "I hope and pray that at the end of this conference we will choose deliberately to break any culture of silence and secrecy among us, to allow more light into our Church".

Cardinal Marx then highlighted transparency, which, he said, prevents the

Church's earthly activities and administration from becoming opportunities for the "abuse of power", as has happened with regard to children. Transparency, the Cardinal said, "means that actions, decisions, processes, procedures, etc. are understandable and traceable. I believe", he continued, "that traceability and transparency are inextricably linked".

With regard to the specific theme of the battle against abuse and the protection of minors, the German Cardinal suggested several measures: defining the goal and the limits of pontifical secrecy; establishing transparent procedural norms and rules for ecclesiastical processes; publicly announcing statistics on the number of cases, and details thereof, as far as possible. And doing so with the awareness that "it is not transparency which damages the Church, but rather the acts of abuse committed, the lack of transparency, or the ensuing cover-up".

On Saturday afternoon, – after the third scheduled report, by journalist Valentina Alazraki – the bishops and superiors general, along with Pope Francis, took part in a Penitential Liturgy in the Sala Regia.

M.F.

MESSAGE FOR LENT

"Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures". Pope Francis emphasised this in his 2019 Message for Lent, which focuses on a passage from a letter by Saint Paul to the Romans. The following is the English text of his Message.

Man is not the master of creation



"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Each year, through Mother Church, God "gives us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed... as we recall the great events that gave us new life in Christ" (*Preface of Lent 1*). We can thus journey from Easter to Easter towards the fulfilment of the salvation we have already received as a result of Christ's paschal mystery – "for in hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24). This mystery of salvation, already at work in us during our earthly lives, is a dynamic process that also embraces history and all of creation. As Saint Paul says, "the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Rom 8:19). In this perspective, I would like to offer a few reflections to accompany our journey of conversion this coming Lent.

1. The redemption of creation

The celebration of the Paschal Triduum of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, the culmination of the liturgical year, calls us yearly to undertake a journey of preparation, in the knowledge that our being conformed to Christ (cf. Rom 8:29) is a priceless gift of God's mercy.

When we live as children of God, redeemed, led by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 8:14) and capable of acknowledging and obeying God's law, beginning

with the law written on our hearts and in nature, *we also benefit creation* by cooperating in its redemption. That is why Saint Paul says that creation eagerly longs for the revelation of the children of God; in other words, that all those who enjoy the grace of Jesus' paschal mystery may experience its fulfilment in the redemption of the human body itself. When the love of Christ transfigures the lives of the saints in spirit, body and soul, they give praise to God. Through prayer, contemplation and art, they also include other creatures in that praise, as we see admirably expressed in the "Canticle of the Creatures" by Saint Francis of Assisi (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 87). Yet in this world, the harmony generated by redemption is constantly threatened by the negative power of sin and death.

2. The destructive power of sin

Indeed, when we fail to live as children of God, we often behave in a destructive way towards our neighbours and other creatures – and ourselves as well – since we begin to think more or less consciously that we can use them as we will. Intemperance then takes the upper hand: we start to live a life that exceeds those limits imposed by our human condition and nature itself. We yield to those untrammelled desires that the Book of Wisdom sees as typical of the ungodly, those who act without thought for God or hope for the future (cf. 2:1-11). Unless we tend constantly towards Easter, towards the horizon of the Resurrection, the mentality expressed in the slogans "I want it all and I want it now!" and "Too much is never enough", gains the upper hand.

The root of all evil, as we know, is sin, which from its first appearance has disrupted our communion with God, with others and with creation itself, to which we are linked in a particular way by our body. This rupture of communion with God likewise undermines our harmonious relationship with the environment in which we are called to live, so that the garden has become a wilderness

(cf. Gen 3:17-18). Sin leads man to consider himself the god of creation, to see himself as its absolute master and to use it, not for the purpose willed by the Creator but for his own interests, to the detriment of other creatures.

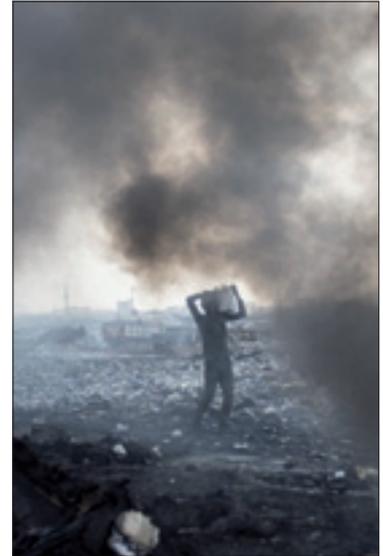
Once God's law, the law of love, is forsaken, then the law of the strong over the weak takes over. The sin that lurks in the human heart (cf. Mk 7:20-23) takes the shape of greed and unbridled pursuit of comfort, lack of concern for the good of others and even of oneself. It leads to the exploitation of creation, both persons and the environment, due to that insatiable covetousness which sees every desire as a right and sooner or later destroys all those in its grip.

3. The healing power of repentance and forgiveness

Creation urgently needs the revelation of the children of God, who have been made "a new creation". For "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17). Indeed, by virtue of their being revealed, *creation itself can celebrate a Pasch*, opening itself to a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Rev 21:1). The path to Easter demands that we renew our faces and hearts as Christians through repentance, conversion and forgiveness, so as to live fully the abundant grace of the paschal mystery.

This "eager longing", this expectation of all creation, will be fulfilled in the revelation of the children of God, that is, when Christians and all people enter decisively into the "travail" that conversion entails. All creation is called, with us, to go forth "from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). Lent is a sacramental sign of this conversion. It invites Christians to embody the paschal mystery more deeply and concretely in their personal, family and social lives, above all by fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

Fasting, that is, learning to change our attitude towards



Aghobgloshie dumpsite in Accra, Ghana (AFP)

others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to "devour" everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts. *Prayer*, which teaches us to abandon idolatry and the self-sufficiency of our ego, and to acknowledge our need of the Lord and his mercy. *Almsgiving*, whereby we escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves in the illusory belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us. And thus to rediscover the joy of God's plan for creation and for each of us, which is to love him, our brothers and sisters, and the entire world, and to find in this love our true happiness.

Dear brothers and sisters, the "lenten" period of forty days spent by the Son of God in the *desert* of creation had the goal of making it once more that *garden* of communion with God that it was before original sin (cf. Mk 1:12-13; Ls 5:3). May our Lent this year be a journey along that same path, bringing the hope of Christ also to creation, so that it may be "set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom 8:21). Let us not allow this season of grace to pass in vain! Let us ask God to help us set out on a path of true conversion. Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption, and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them. In this way, by concretely welcoming Christ's victory over sin and death into our lives, we will also radiate its transforming power to all of creation.

From the Vatican
4 October 2018
Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi

Franciscans