

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Vatican City

Friday, 15 March 2019

Six years since that first "Brothers and sisters, good evening!"

Francis, the world's physician



ANDREA MONDA

Six years ago, Jorge Mario Bergoglio appeared on the balcony and said "Brothers and sisters, good evening!", and nothing would ever be the same again. Normality touched ground and above all touched hearts, and softened them. People immediately understood that another, more human way of life, also of wielding power, was possible. Two verbs have already been used – *to touch* and *to soften* – without which it is difficult to understand this Pontificate. Another verb can also be useful: *to take care*. Care, not only as healing, but first and foremost as caring for, taking care of. As we reread those inaugural words, they are kind words of salutation, addressed to each and every one, not "dear brothers", but brothers and sisters: each and every one, taking care to distinguish and emphasize the gender difference. Francis and his attention to the world and to the manner of women, an exquisitely Christian manner, because "the Church is mother", as he reaffirmed in a brief unscheduled commentary during the summit on sexual abuse that he convoked and organized for the end of February 2019, a month so rich in extraordinary events (considering the meeting in Abu Dhabi with the Grand Imam Al Tayeb).

Six years filled with great, extraordinary events, but it is in the little things that, often in a hidden way, greatness shines, as Francis said, precisely on his return from Abu Dhabi: there are no small stories, stories lacking in dignity and beauty, because each day is decisive.

So let us focus on that moment on 13 March 2013, when the newly elected Pope gave his simple salutation. The smallest, most mundane and unassuming gesture which, however, reveals an abyssal gulf. Indeed, to express salutation means to show care, attention and, ultimately, love for another. In Italian it literally means to wish salvation ("*salve!*") and therefore to remind one of the priority of life, and to wish the most important thing to another, demonstrating one's own joy at meeting, gladness that the other exists, the desire to let the other live, to allow him or her go on with no aim of possession. All this is embodied in each simple greeting. We are here on this earth, brothers and sisters, and we need salvation, and this is precisely the central mystery of Catholicism, the fact that God the Father took on flesh "for us men and for our salvation".

Unfortunately, the meaning of the words was lost long ago, and the ancient "*salus*" has slipped from "salvation" into merely "health". Today's religion is "salutism" – the need for salvation is no longer felt. Francis quickly

World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Courage to take risks
for God's promise

PAGE 3

Conference 'Religions and SDGs'

The cry of the Earth
and of the poor

PAGE 4

To the Diocese of Rome

Generous service to
God's reconciliation

PAGE 6/7

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

VATICAN BULLETIN



AUDIENCES

Friday, 8 March

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

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

Delegation of the "American Jewish Committee"

Participants attending the conference on "Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals".

Saturday, 9 March

H.E. Mr Garen Nazarian, Ambassador of Armenia, for the presentation of his Letters of Credence

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

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

Mr Russell M. Nelson, President of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with his entourage

Participants in the Annual Congress of the European Cycling Union

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of

Riga, Latvia, Fr Andris Kravalis from the clergy of Riga, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Migirpa. Until now he has served as parish priest of Saint Mary Magdalene Parish in Riga and vicar general of the said archdiocese (8 Mar.)

Aircraft crashes soon after leaving Addis Ababa leaving 157 dead

Pope expresses sorrow after air disaster in Ethiopia

Pope Francis expressed his condolences and closeness to the families of the victims of the tragic crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 on Sunday, 10 March, which left 157 people dead. In a telegram, Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin wrote: "Pope Francis offers prayers for the deceased from various countries and commends their souls to the mercy of the almighty God". The Holy Father invoked "the divine blessings of consolation and strength" on all "those who mourn his tragic loss".

Though the technical reasons behind the accident are still under investigation, the pilot obtained permission to return to Addis Abeba's Bole airport after reporting "flight control problems" with the Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft shortly after takeoff. Similar circumstances were associated with a plane crash in Jakarta in October 2018 which killed 189 people. Doubts over the safety of the aircraft continued to rise earlier this week, prompting at least 50 countries to suspend flights of the Boeing 737 Max 8 and Max 9. And on Wednesday, following preliminary investigations, Boeing announced its decision to temporarily ground its entire 737 Max fleet. In a statement, the airplane manufacturer also said it was planning to release software updates for all 737 Max aircraft by next month. Meanwhile, Ethiopian Airlines has sent the "black boxes" (voice and flight data recorders) for flight 302 to France for analysis.

the archdiocese. He served as a lecturer at the Major Seminary of Riga; assistant vicar at the Cathedral of Saint James; responsible for the "Meeting of the Spouses" movement; Spiritual Father at the Major Seminary; head of the Information Centre of the Catholic Church in Latvia and coordinator of the Organization Committee of the Lay Conference.

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Đakovo-Osijek, Croatia, Msgr Ivan Čurić from the clergy of the said ecclesiastical circumscription, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Tela. Until now he has served as vicar general (11 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Čurić, 54, was born in Slovinski Brod, Croatia. He was ordained a priest on 29 June 1990. He holds a licence in philosophy. He has served in parish ministry and as: Prefect at the Major Seminary and professor of theology at Đakovo; vice-rector and then rector of the Major Seminary in Đakovo; teacher of philosophy; head of the diocesan press office; vicar forane of the Deaconate of Slavonski Brod; member of the presbyteral council and of the College of Consultors.

The Holy Father appointed Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama as coadjutor Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria. Until now he has served as Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria (11 Mar.).

Archbishop Kaigama, 60, was born in Kona, Nigeria. He was ordained a priest on 6 June 1981. He was ordained a bishop on 23 April 1995, subsequent to his appointment as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Jalingo, Nigeria. On 14 April 2000 he was appointed Archbishop of Jos.

Convicted of abuse of minors

Cardinal Pell sentenced to six years imprisonment

Australian Cardinal George Pell, 77, has been sentenced to six years in prison after being convicted in December 2018 of sexually abusing two minors when he was Archbishop of Melbourne in the late 1990s. The sentence was handed down on Wednesday, 13 March, by County Court Chief Judge Peter Kidd, over live television. Cardinal Pell will be expected to serve a minimum of 3 years and 8 months before he is eligible for parole. The five convictions against Pell carried a maximum possible sentence of 10 years each, but in explaining his decision, the judge said he took into account the Cardinal's age and health.

After the hearing Pell was returned to the Melbourne Assessment Prison, where he has been held in protective isolation as an "at-risk" prisoner since his bail was revoked on 27 February. Lawyers for Pell, who has always maintained his innocence, have filed an appeal on his behalf. The hearing is scheduled for 5 June.

Holy Father to visit Loreto on 25 March

Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People

On Monday, 25 March, Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, Pope Francis will travel to Loreto, Italy. The announcement was made on Sunday, 24 February, by the interim Director of the Holy See Press Office, Alessandro Gisotti, who stated that "The Pope intends on this occasion to offer to the Virgin Mary the Post-Synodal Exhortation of the Synod of Bishops on the theme: 'Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment', held in the Vatican from 3 to 28 October 2018".

Meanwhile, the Prefecture of the Papal Household has published the schedule for the visit. Francis will travel by helicopter from the Vatican, arriving at the John Paul II Youth Centre in the Montorso area, where he will be welcomed by Archbishop Fabio Dal Cin of Loreto; Mr Luca Ceriscioli, President of the Marches region; Mr Antonio D'Acun-

to, Prefect of Ancona; and Mr Paolo Nicoletti, Mayor of Loreto.

The Pontiff will transfer by automobile to the Loreto Shrine, where he will be met by its rector, Fr Franco Carollo; the Vicars General and the Secretary General of the Pontifical Delegation to the Shrine, respectively, Fr Andrea Principini, Fr Vincenzo Mattia and Mr Claudio Quattrini. The Holy Father will celebrate Mass in the Holy House, and thereafter will sign the Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People.

Following the Eucharist celebration the Holy Father will then greet the community of Capuchin Friars and sick people. Afterwards on the parvis of the Shrine, he will recite the Angelus with the faithful before sharing lunch with the bishops present. He will return to the Vatican by helicopter in the mid-afternoon.

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Message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations

The courage to take risks for God's promise

"The courage to take a risk for God's promise" is the theme of the 56th World Day of Prayer for Vocations which will be celebrated on 12 May, the fourth Sunday of Easter. The following is the English text of Pope Francis' Message for the occasion.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

After the lively and fruitful experience of the Synod devoted to young people last October, we recently celebrated the Thirty-fourth World Youth Day in Panama City. These two great events allowed the Church to be attentive both to the voice of the Spirit and to the life of young men and women, their questions and concerns, their problems and their hopes.

Building on what I shared with the young people in Panama, I would like to reflect, on this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, on how the Lord's call makes us *bearers of a promise* and, at the same time, asks of us the *courage to take a risk*, with him and for him. I will do this by reflecting briefly with you on these two aspects – promise and risk – as they appear in the Gospel account of the calling of the first disciples by the sea of Galilee (Mk 1:16-20).

Two pairs of brothers – Simon and Andrew, and James and John – are going about their daily tasks as fishermen. In this demanding work, they had learned the laws of nature, yet at times, when the winds were adverse and waves shook their boats, they had to defy the elements. On some days, the catch of fish amply repaid their efforts, but on others, an entire night's work was not sufficient to fill their nets, and they had to return to shore weary and disappointed.

Much of life is like that. Each of us tries to realize his or her deepest desires; we engage in activities that we hope will prove enriching, and we put out on a "sea" of possibilities in the hope of steering the right course, one that will satisfy our thirst for happiness. Sometimes we enjoy a good catch, while at others, we need courage to keep our boat from being tossed by the waves, or we are frustrated at seeing our nets come up empty.

As with every call, the Gospel speaks of an encounter. Jesus walks by, sees those fishermen, and walks up to them... The same thing happened when we met the person we wanted to marry, or when we first felt the attraction of a life of consecration: we were surprised by an encounter, and at that moment we glimpsed the promise of a joy capable of bringing fulfilment to our lives. That day, by the sea of Ga-

lilee, Jesus drew near to those fishermen, breaking through the "paralysis of routine" (*Homily for the XXII World Day for Consecrated Life*, 2 February 2018). And he immediately made them a promise: "I will make you fishers of men" (Mk 1:17).

The Lord's call is not an intrusion of God in our freedom; it is not a "cage" or a burden to be borne. On the contrary, it is the loving initiative whereby God encounters us and invites us to be part of a great undertaking. He opens before our eyes the horizon of a greater sea and an abundant catch.

God in fact desires that our lives not become banal and predictable, imprisoned by daily routine, or unresponsive before decisions that could give it meaning. The Lord does not want us to live from day to day, thinking that nothing is worth fighting for, slowly losing our desire to set out on new and exciting paths. If at times he makes us experience a "miraculous catch", it is because he wants us to discover that each of us is called – in a variety of ways – to something grand, and that our lives should not grow entangled in the nets of an ennui that dulls the heart. Every vocation is a summons not to stand on the shore, nets in hand, but to follow Jesus on the path he has marked out for us, for our own happiness and for the good of those around us.

Embracing this promise naturally demands the courage to risk making a decision. The first disciples, called by Jesus to be part of something greater, "immediately left their nets and followed him" (Mk 1:18). Responding to the Lord's call involves putting ourselves on the line and facing a great challenge. It means being ready to leave behind whatever would keep us tied to our little boat and prevent us from making a definitive choice. We are called to be bold and decisive in seeking God's plan for our lives. Gazing out at the vast "ocean" of vocation, we cannot remain content to repair our nets on the boat that gives us security, but must trust instead in the Lord's promise.

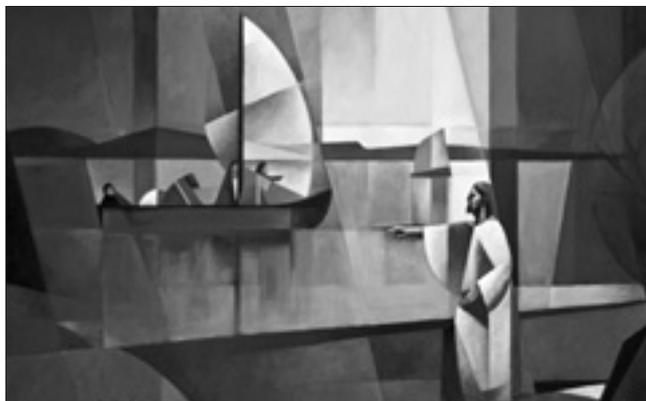
I think primarily of the call to the Christian life which all of us received at Baptism. It teaches us that our life is not a fluke but rather a gift: that of being God's beloved children, gathered in the great family of the Church. It is precisely in the ecclesial community that the Christian life is born and develops, especially through the liturgy. The liturgy introduces us to God's word and the grace of the sacraments; from an early age, we are taught the art of prayer and fraternal sharing. In the end, the Church is our mother because she brings us to new life and leads us to Christ. So we must love her, even when we see her face marred by human frailty and sin, and we must help to make her ever

more beautiful and radiant, so that she can bear witness to God's love in the world.

The Christian life thus finds expression in those decisions that, while giving a precise direction to our personal journey, also contribute to the growth of God's kingdom in our world. I think of the decision to marry in Christ and to form a family, as well as all those other vocations associated with work and professional life, with the commitment to charity and solidarity, with social and political responsibilities, and so forth. These vocations make us bearers of a promise of goodness, love and justice, not only for ourselves but also for our societies and cul-

ture, their nets and boat behind, and follow him, the Lord promises the joy of a new life that can fill our hearts and enliven our journey.

Dear friends, it is not always easy to discern our vocation and to steer our life in the right direction. For this reason, there needs to be a renewed commitment on the part of the whole Church – priests, religious, pastoral workers and educators – to provide young people in particular with opportunities for listening and discernment. There is a need for a youth ministry and a vocational promotion that can open the way to discovering God's plan, above all through prayer, meditation



Jorge Orlando Cocco Santangelo, "The call"

tures, which need courageous Christians and authentic witnesses of the kingdom of God.

In encountering the Lord, some may feel the attraction of a call to the consecrated life or to the ordained priesthood. It is a discovery that can excite and at the same time frighten us, since we feel called to become "fishers of men" in the barque of the Church by giving totally of ourselves in commitment to faithful service of the Gospel and our brothers and sisters. Such a decision carries the risk of leaving everything behind to follow the Lord, to devote ourselves completely to him, and to share in his work. Many kinds of interior resistance can stand in the way of making this decision, especially in highly secularized contexts where there no longer seems to be a place for God and for the Gospel. Places where it is easy to grow discouraged and fall into the "weariness of hope" (*Homily at Mass with Priests, Consecrated Persons and Lay Movements*, Panama, 26 January 2019).

And yet, there can be no greater joy than to risk one's life for the Lord! I would like to say this especially to you, the young. Do not be deaf to the Lord's call. If he calls you to follow this path, do not pull your oars into the boat, but trust him. Do not yield to fear, which paralyzes us before the great heights to which the Lord points us. Always remember that to those who leave

on God's word, eucharistic adoration and spiritual accompaniment.

As was made clear several times during the World Youth Day in Panama, we should always look to Mary. Also in the story of this young woman, vocation was both a promise and a risk. Her mission was not easy, yet she did not allow fear to prevail. "It was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise. I ask each one of you: Do you see yourselves as bearers of a promise? What promise do I bear within my heart to take forward? Mary's would undoubtedly be a difficult mission, but the challenges that lay ahead were no reason to say 'no'. Things would get complicated, of course, but not in the same way as happens when cowardice paralyzes us because things are not clear or sure in advance" (*Vigil with Young People*, Panama, 26 January 2019).

On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, let us join in prayer and ask the Lord to help us discover his plan of love for our lives, and to grant us the courage to walk in the path that, from the beginning, he has chosen for each of us.

From the Vatican, 31 January 2019
Memorial of Saint John Bosco

Franciscans

Pope invokes a model of sustainable development based on ecological conversion and centrality of the person

Concrete responses to the cry of the Earth and of the poor

In a discourse to participants in the International Conference "Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs), whom he received in audience on Friday morning, 8 March, in the Clementine Hall, Pope Francis called for "concrete responses to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". The following is the English text of the Holy Father's discourse.

Your Eminences, Your Excellencies,
Dear Leaders of world religious traditions,
Representatives of International Organizations,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greet all of you gathered for this International Conference on Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainability and Inclusion

When we speak of sustainability, we cannot overlook how important it is to include and to listen to all voices, especially those usually excluded from this type of discussion, such as the voices of the poor, migrants, indigenous people and the young. I am pleased to see a variety of participants at this conference bringing a wide range of voices, opinions and proposals, which can contribute to new paths of constructive development. It is important that the implementation of the sustainable development goals truly respects their original nature, which is inclusive and participatory.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, approved by more than 190 nations in September 2015, were a great step forward for global dialogue, marking a vitally "new and universal solidarity" (*Laudato Si'*, 14). Different religious traditions, including the Catholic tradition, have embraced the objectives of sustainable development because they are the result of global participatory processes that, on the one hand, reflect the values of people and, on the other, are sustained by an integral vision of development.

Integral Development

Nevertheless, proposing a dialogue on inclusive and sustainable development also requires acknowledging that "development" is a complex concept, which is often manipulated. When we speak of development we must always ask: Development of what? Development for whom? For too long the conventional idea of development has been almost entirely limited to economic growth. Indicators of national development have been based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indices. This has led the modern economic system down a dangerous path where progress is assessed only in terms of material growth, on account of which we are almost obliged to irrationally exploit the environment and our fellow human beings.

As my predecessor Saint Paul VI rightly highlighted, to speak about human development means referring to *all* people – not just a few – and to the *whole* person – not just the material dimension (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 14). Any fruitful discussion of development, therefore, should offer viable models of social integration and ecological conversion, because we cannot develop ourselves as human beings by fomenting increased inequality and degradation of the environment.¹

Rejecting negative models, and proposing alternative ways forward, applies not only to others, but also to us. We should all commit ourselves to promoting and implementing the development goals that are supported by our deepest religious and ethical values. Human



development is not only an economic issue or one that concerns experts alone; it is ultimately a vocation, a call that requires a free and responsible answer (cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 16-17).

Goals (Dialogue and Commitments)

Solutions are what I hope will emerge from this Conference: concrete responses to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Concrete commitments to promoting real development in a sustainable way through processes open to people's participation. Concrete proposals to facilitate the development of those in need, making use of what Pope Benedict XVI recognized as "the unprecedented possibility of large-scale redistribution of wealth on a worldwide scale" (*ibid.* 42). Concrete economic policies that are focused on the person and that can promote a more humane market and society (cf. *ibid.* 45, 47). Concrete economic measures that seriously take into consideration our common home. Concrete ethical, civil and political commitments that develop *alongside* our sister earth, and never *against* her.

Everything is Connected

I am also pleased to know that the participants in this conference are willing to listen to religious voices when they discuss the implementation of the sustainable development goals. All those involved in dialogue on this complex issue are invited in some way to go beyond their areas of specialization to find a shared response to the cry of the earth and of the poor. Those of us who are religious need to open up the treasures of our best traditions in order to engage in a true and respectful dialogue on how to build the future of our planet. Religious narratives, though ancient, are usually full of symbolism and contain "a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others" (*Laudato Si'*, 70).

In this respect, the United Nations 2030 Agenda proposes integrating all the goals through the "five Ps": people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.² I know that this conference is also focusing on these "five Ps".

I welcome this unified approach to these goals, which can also help to save us from an understanding of prosperity that is based on the myth of unlimited growth and consumption (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 106), where we depend only on technological progress for sustainability. There are still people who stubbornly uphold this myth, and who tell us that social and ecological problems will solve themselves simply by the application of new technologies, without any need for ethical considerations or profound change (cf. *ibid.*, 60).

An integral approach teaches us that this is not true. While it is certainly necessary to aim for a set of development goals, this is not sufficient for a fair and sustainable world order. Economic and political objectives must be sustained by ethical objectives, which presuppose a change of attitude: what the Bible would call a change of heart. Already Saint John Paul II spoke about the need to "encourage and support the 'ecological conversion'" (*Catechesis*, 17 January 2001). Religions have a key role to play in this. For a correct shift towards a sustainable future, we must recognize "our errors, sins, faults and failures" which leads to a "heartfelt repentance and desire to change"; in this way, we will be reconciled with others, with creation and with the Creator (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 218).

If we want to provide a solid foundation for the work of the 2030 Agenda, we must reject the temptation to look for a merely technocratic response to the challenges, and be prepared to address the root causes and the long-term consequences.

Indigenous Peoples

The key principle of all religions is the love of neighbour and the care of creation. I wish to draw attention to a special group of religious persons, namely indigenous peoples. Although they represent only five per cent of the world's population, they look after about twenty-two per cent of the earth's landmass. Living in areas such as the Amazon and the Arctic, they help protect approximately eighty per cent of the planet's biodiversity. According to UNESCO, "Indigenous peoples are custodians and practitioners of unique cultures and relationships with the natural environment. They

Reiterating his call for vigilance in the face of all forms of hatred and anti-Semitism, Pope Francis addressed members of the American Jewish Committee, whom he received in audience on Friday morning, 8 March, in the Consistory Hall. The following is the English text of the Pope's discourse.

Dear friends,

I offer you a warm welcome to the Vatican. Your organization has had close contacts with the successors of Peter since the beginning of the official dialogue between the Catholic Church and Judaism. Already at the Second Vatican Council, when a new direction in our relations took place, among the Jewish observers was the distinguished Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel of the *American Jewish Committee*. Your commitment to Jewish-Catholic dialogue goes back to the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, a milestone in our journey of fraternal rediscovery. I am pleased that throughout this time we have been able to maintain good relations and enhance them further.

Cultivating good fraternal relations is a gift and at the same time a call from God. In this context, I would like to share with you an event that occurred in your part of the world. A young Catholic was sent to the front-line and experienced first-hand the horrors of the Second World War. On returning to the United States, he began to start a family. After much work, he was finally able to buy a bigger house. He bought it from a Jewish family. At the entrance was the *mezuzah* and this father did not want it removed during the renovations of the house: it had to remain exactly there, at the entrance. He passed on to his children the importance of that sign. He told them, one of whom was a priest, that this little "box" beside the door should be looked at each time when entering and leaving the house, because it held the secret for



Discourse to American Jewish Committee

No to hatred and anti-Semitism

making a family strong and making humanity a family.

Written there was what every generation must never forget: to love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (cf. *Deut* 6:4). Dear friends, we are called together to create a homely and familial environment, and to choose divine love with all our strength which will inspire respect and appreciation for the religion of others. This is no mere sentiment, it is our future.

Today, 8 March, I would also like to say a few words about the irreplaceable contribution of women in building a world that can be a home for all. Women make the world beautiful, they protect it and keep it alive. They bring the grace of renewal, the embrace of inclusion, and the courage to give of oneself. Peace, then, is born of women, it arises and is rekindled by the tenderness of mothers. Thus the dream of peace becomes a reality when we look towards women. It is not by chance that in the account of Genesis the woman comes from the side of the man while he is sleeping (cf. *Gen* 2:21). Women, that is, have their ori-

gins close to a heart and a dream. They therefore bring the dream of love into the world. If we take to heart the importance of the future, if we dream of a future peace, we need to give space to women.

At present, however, a source of great concern to me is the spread, in many places, of a climate of wickedness and fury, in which an excessive and depraved hatred is taking root. I think especially of the outbreak of anti-Semitic attacks in various countries. Today I also wish to reiterate that it is necessary to be vigilant about such a phenomenon: "History teaches us where even the slightest perceptible forms of anti-Semitism can lead: the human tragedy of the Shoah in which two-thirds of European Jewry were annihilated" (Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, *The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable*, 47). I stress that for a Christian any form of anti-Semitism is a rejection of one's own origins, a complete contradiction. We have to do as that father did, who witnessed many tragic things, yet did not tire of transmitting to his children the foundations of love and respect. And we must look at the

world with the eyes of a mother, with the gaze of peace.

In the fight against hatred and anti-Semitism, an important tool is interreligious dialogue, aimed at promoting a commitment to peace, mutual respect, the protection of life, religious freedom, and the care of creation. Jews and Christians, moreover, share a rich spiritual heritage, which allows us to do much good together. At a time when the West is exposed to a depersonalizing secularism, it falls to believers to seek out each other and to cooperate in making divine love more visible for humanity; and to carry out concrete gestures of closeness to counter the growth of indifference. In Genesis, Cain, after having killed Abel, says: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen* 4:9). Before the murder that takes life, there was the indifference that cancels out the truth: yes, Cain, you really were your brother's keeper! You, like all of us, by God's will. In a world where the distance between the many who have little and the few who have much grows every day, we are called to take care of the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, the weak, the sick, children, and the elderly.

In serving humanity, as in our dialogue, young people are waiting to be involved more fully; they want to dream and are open to discovering new ideals. I want to emphasize, therefore, the importance of the formation of future generations in Jewish-Christian dialogue. The shared commitment in the area of educating the young is also an effective means of countering violence and opening new paths of peace with all.

Dear friends, in thanking you for your visit, I extend my best wishes for your commitment to promoting dialogue, enabling a fruitful exchange between religions and cultures, which is so precious for our future, and for peace. *Shalom!*

Concrete responses to the cry of the Earth and of the poor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

embody a wide range of linguistic and cultural diversity at the heart of our shared humanity".³ I would also add that, in a strongly secularized world, such peoples remind us all of the sacredness of our earth. This means that their voice and their concerns should be at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and at the heart of the search for new paths for a sustainable future. I will also be discussing this with my brother bishops at the Synod for the Pan-Amazon Region, at the end of October this year.

Conclusions

Dear brothers and sisters, today, after three and a half years since the adoption of the sustainable development goals, we must be even more acutely aware of the importance of accelerating and adapting our actions in responding adequately to

both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 49).

The challenges are complex and have multiple causes; the response, therefore, must necessarily be complex and well-structured, respectful of the diverse cultural riches of peoples. If we are truly concerned about developing an ecology capable of repairing the damage we have done, no branch of science or form of wisdom should be overlooked, and this includes religions and the languages particular to them (cf. *ibid.* 63). Religions can help us along the path of authentic integral development, which is the new name of peace (cf. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967, 76-77).

I express my heartfelt appreciation for your efforts in caring for our common home at the service of promoting an inclusive sustainable future. I know that, at times, it can seem far too difficult a task. And yet, "Human beings, while capable

of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start" (*Laudato Si'*, 205). I encourage you to continue the fight for that change which present circumstances demand, because the injustice that brings tears to our world and to its poor is not invincible.

¹ When, for example, due to inequalities in the distribution of power, the burden of immense debt is placed on the shoulders of the poor and poor countries, when unemployment is widespread despite the expansion of trade or when people are simply treated as a means for the growth of others, we need to question fully our key development model. In the same way, when in the name of progress we destroy the source of development – our common home – then the dominant model must be called into question. By questioning this model and re-

examining the world economy, participants in the dialogue on development will be able to find an alternative global economic and political system. However, in order for this to happen, we must address the causes of the distortion of development, which is what in recent Catholic social teaching goes by the name of "structural sins". Denouncing such sins is already a good contribution that religions make to the discussion on the world's development. Nonetheless, alongside this denunciation, we must also put forward feasible ways of conversion to people and communities.

² Cf. *United Nations, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2015.

³ UNESCO, *Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples*, 9 August 2017.

In the Basilica of Saint John Lateran on Thursday morning, 7 March, Pope Francis met with clergy of the Diocese of Rome, for the traditional yearly meeting at the beginning of Lent. Prior to the meeting, the Pope heard the confessions of several priests. Cardinal Vicar Angelo De Donatis gave an introduction. Then, speaking in Italian, Pope Francis shared a reflection, which is translated below.

Good morning to all of you.

It is always lovely to gather again each year, at the beginning of Lent, for this liturgy of the forgiveness of God. It does us good – it does me good too! – and I feel great peace at heart, now that each one of us has received God's mercy and has offered it to others, his brothers. Let us live this moment for what it truly is, as an extraordinary grace, an enduring miracle of divine tenderness, in which once again the Reconciliation of God, the sister of Baptism, moves us, cleanses us with tears, regenerates us, restores our original beauty.

This peace and this gratitude that rise up to the Lord from our heart help us to understand how the entire Church and each of her children live and grow thanks to the mercy of God. The Bride of the Lamb becomes "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph 5:27) as a gift from God; her beauty is the end point of a journey of purification and transfiguration, that is, of an *exodus* to which the Lord forever invites her: "behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her" (Hos 2:14). We must never cease placing ourselves mutually on guard against the temptation to be self-sufficient and self-satisfied, almost as if we were the People of God by our initiative or by our merit. This withdrawal into self is deplorable and will always do us harm: both self-sufficiency in deeds or the sin of the mirror, self-satisfaction: "How beautiful I am! How good I am!". We are not People of God by our initiative, by our merit; no, truly we are and will always be the fruit of the merciful action of the Lord: a proud People laid low by God's humility, a People of wretches – let us not be afraid to say this word: "I am a wretch" – enriched by God's poverty, an accused People rendered just by the One who himself becomes "a curse" for us, hung on the wood of the Cross (cf. Gal 3:13). Let us never forget it: "apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). I repeat, the Teacher told us: "apart from me you can do nothing!". And thus the perspective changes: I am not looking at my reflection in the mirror; I am not the centre of activities, much less the centre of prayer, so often... No, no. He is the centre. I am on the periphery. He is the centre. It is He who does everything, and this requires of us a holy passivity – laziness is not holy, no, that is not – but holy passivity before God, before Jesus especially: it is He who is at work.

This is why this Season of Lent is truly a grace: it allows us to recollect ourselves before God, allowing Him to be *all in all*. His love raises us from the dust (*remember that without me you are dust*, the Lord said to us yesterday). His Spirit once again blown upon our nostrils gives us the life of the risen. The hand of God that created us in the image and likeness of his Trinitarian mystery has made us manifold in unity, different but inseparable from one another. God's forgiveness, which we have celebrated today, is a power that reestablishes communion at all levels: among us presbyters in the one diocesan presbytery; with all Christians, in the one Body which is the Church; with all mankind, in the unity of the human family. The Lord presents us to each other and says to us: here is your brother, "bone of your bones, flesh of your



Pope with priests of the Diocese of Rome for the beginning of Lent

Generous service in the work of God's reconciliation

flesh" (cf. Gen 2:23), the one with whom you are called to live the "love that never ends" (1 Cor 13:8).

I have proposed the Book of Exodus as the paradigm for these seven years of the diocesan journey of pastoral conversion, which separate us from the Jubilee of 2025 (we have reached the second). The Lord acts, then as today, and transforms a "non-people" into the People of God. This is his wish and his plan for us too.

Well, what can the Lord do when he must sadly discover that Israel is a "stiff-necked people" (Ex 22:9), "set on evil" (22:22) as in the episode of the golden calf? He sets about a patient work of reconciliation, a wise pedagogy, in which he threatens and consoles, raises awareness of the consequences of the wrong done and decides to forget the sin, punishes by striking the people and healing the wounds he has inflicted. Precisely in the text of Exodus 22-34, which you will propose during Lent for the meditation of your communities, the Lord seems to have taken a radical decision: "I will not go up among you" (Ex 23:2). When the Lord withdraws, distances himself. We have experienced this, in bad moments of spiritual desolation. If some of you have not experienced these moments, I advise you to go and speak with a good confessor, with a spiritual father, because something is lacking in your life; I do not know what it is but not feeling desolate... is not normal; I would say that it is not Christian. We experience these moments. I will no longer walk ahead of you; I shall send my angel (cf. Ex 23:24) to go before you on the journey; I will not go. When the Lord leaves us on our own, without his presence, and we are in the parish, we are working and we feel equipped but without the Lord's presence, in desolation... Not only in consolation, in desolation. Think about this.

On the other hand the people, perhaps due to impatience or feeling abandoned (because Moses tarried before coming down the mountain), had set aside the prophet chosen by God and had asked Aaron to create an idol, a mute image of God that would walk ahead of them. The people

could not abide Moses' absence; they were desolate, could not wait, and immediately sought another god in order to be at ease. At times, when we do not feel desolation, it may be that we have idols. "No, I am fine with what I have arranged...". May you never experience the distress of God's abandonment. What does the Lord do when we "cut Him out" – with idols – of the life of our communities, because we are convinced of being self-sufficient? At that moment I am the idol. "No, I will make do... Thank you... Do not worry, I will manage". And we do not feel that need of the Lord; we do not feel the desolation of the Lord's absence.

But the Lord is clever! The reconciliation He wishes to offer to the people will be a lesson that the Israelites will remember forever. God always behaves like a jilted lover: if you really do not want me, then I am leaving! And He leaves us alone. It is true, we can make it alone, for a little while, six months, a year, two years, three years, even more. At a certain point this explodes. If we go forth alone, this self-sufficiency, this self-satisfaction, this solitary complaisance explodes. And it explodes badly; it explodes badly. I am thinking of the case of a really good, religious priest. I knew him well. He was brilliant. If there was a problem in some community, his superiors turned to him to resolve the problem: a college, a university. He was really good. But he was devoted to the "holy mirror"; he looked at himself a lot. And God was good to him. One day God let him feel that he was alone in life, that he had missed a great deal. And he did not dare say to the Lord: "But I arranged this, that, the other thing...". No, he immediately realized he was alone. And the greatest grace the Lord can give, I think it is the greatest grace: that man wept. The grace of tears. He wept for lost time; he wept because the holy mirror had not given him what he had expected of himself. And he started over again, humbly. When the Lord leaves, because we push Him away, we need to ask for the gift of tears, to weep for the Lord's absence. "You do not want me, so I am leaving",

the Lord says, and with time what happens is what happened to this priest.

Let us return to Exodus. The result was expected: "When the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned; and no man put on his ornaments" (33:4). It did not escape the Israelites that no punishment is as heavy as this divine decision that belies His holy name: "I am who I am" (32:14): an expression that has a concrete meaning, not abstract, perhaps translatable as "I am the One who is and will be here, beside you". When you realize that He has gone, because you have pushed Him away, it is a grace to feel this. If you do not realize it, there is suffering. The angel is not a solution; on the contrary, he would be the permanent witness to God's absence. This is why the people's reaction is sorrow. This is another dangerous thing, because there is good sorrow and bad sorrow. There one must discern, in moments of sorrow: what is this sorrow, where does it come from? And at times it is good: it comes from God, from the absence of God, as in this case; at other times it too is self-satisfaction, is it not true?

What would we feel if the Risen Lord should tell us: continue your ecclesial activities and your liturgies, but I will no longer be present and acting in your sacraments? Since, when you take your decisions, you base them on worldly and not Gospel criteria (*tamquam Deus non esset*), then I will step aside completely... Everything will be empty, devoid of meaning; there will be nothing but "dust". God's threat opens the way to the insight of what our life would be without Him, should He truly turn His Face away forever. It is death, despair, hell: apart from me you can do nothing. The Lord shows us once again, in living flesh through the unmasking of our hypocrisy, what His mercy really is. To Moses on the mountain, God reveals His Glory and His holy Name: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6). In the "game of love" played by God, made of threatened absence and of restored presence – "My presence will go with you, and I will



give you rest" (Ex 33:14) – God brings about reconciliation with his People. Israel comes out of this painful experience, which will forever mark it, with a new maturity: it is more aware of who the God is who freed it from Egypt; it clearly understands the true dangers of the journey (we might say: it is more fearful of itself than of the serpents in the desert). This is good: to be a bit fearful of ourselves, of our omnipotence, of our shrewdness, of our concealment, of our subterfuge... A bit of fear. If it were possible, to be more fearful of this than of serpents, because this is the true venom. And thus, the people are more united around Moses and the Word of God that he proclaims. The experience of sin and of God's forgiveness is what enabled Israel to become a little more the People who belong to God.

We have celebrated this Penitential Liturgy and come to terms with our sins; and can say that sin is something that opens us to God's mercy, because usually sin is concealed. We hide sin not only from God, not only from our neighbour, not only from the priest, but from ourselves. The "disguise" has really made headway, as such: we are specialists at glossing over situations. "Yes, but it is not for long, it is understood...". And a little water to wash off the makeup does everyone good, so as to see that we are not so beautiful: we are ugly, also ugly in our actions. But without despair, because God is there, benevolent and merciful; he is always behind us. There is His mercy that accompanies us.

Dear brothers, this is the meaning of Lent which we will experience. In the Spiritual Exercises that you will preach to the people of your communities, in the Penitential Liturgies that you will celebrate, may you have the courage to

propose the Lord's reconciliation, to propose his impassioned and protective love.

Our role is like that of Moses': generous service in the work of God's reconciliation, "playing his game" of love. God's way of involving Moses is beautiful. He truly treats him as his friend: God prepares him before he goes down the mountain by warning him of the perversion of the people; He agrees that Moses may intercede for his brothers and sisters; He listens to Moses as he reminds Him of the vow that He, God, had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We can imagine that God smiled when Moses invited Him not to contradict himself, not to make a bad impression in the eyes of the Egyptians and not to be less than their gods, to have respect for His holy Name. God provokes him with the dialectic of responsibility: "Your people, whom you, Moses, brought out of Egypt", but Moses responds emphatically that no, the people belong to God; He is the One who brought them out of Egypt... This is a mature dialogue with the Lord. When we see that the people whom we serve in the parish, or anywhere, distance themselves, we tend to say: "They are my people; they are my people". Yes, they are your people, but vicariously. Let us say it this way: the people are His! And thus, reproaching Him: "Look at what Your people are doing". Have this dialogue with the Lord.

But God's heart rejoiced when he heard Moses' words: "if thou wilt forgive their sin – and if not, blot me ... out of thy book which thou has written" (Ex 32:32). This is one of the most beautiful actions of a priest, of the priest who goes before the Lord and stands up for his people. "They are Your people, not mine, and You must forgive them" – "No, but..." – "I am

Generous service to God's reconciliation



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

leaving! I will not speak to You any more. Blot me out". It takes "grit" to speak this way to God! But we have to speak like this, as men, not as cowards, as men! Because this means that I am aware of the place I hold in the Church, that I am not an administrator, put there to administer ordinary affairs. It means that I believe, that I have faith. Try to address God this way.

To die for the people, to share the people's destiny at whatever cost, even dying for it. Moses did not accept God's proposal; he did not accept corruption. God pretends to want to corrupt him. He did not accept. "No I will not go along with this. I am with the people. With *your* people". God's proposal was: "let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation (Ex 32:10)". – this is "corruption". Really? Is God the corrupter? He is trying to see the heart of his shepherd. Moses does not want to save himself; he is, by now, one with his brothers. If only each of us were to reach this point, if only! It is bad when a priest goes to the bishop to complain about his people: "Ah, we can't, these people do not understand anything, and so on and so forth ... it is a waste of time...". It is bad! What does that man lack? That priest lacks many things! Moses does not do this. He does not want to save himself because he is one with his brothers. Here, the Father has seen the countenance of his Son. The light of the Spirit of God has imbued Moses' face and has traced on it the likeness of the Risen Crucified One, rendering him luminous. And when we go there to fight with God – our father Abraham too had done this, that fighting with God – when we go there we show that we resemble Jesus who gives his life for his people. And the Father smiles: he will see in us the gaze of Jesus who went to his death for us, for the people of the Father, that is, us. The heart of God's friend has fully expanded, becoming large – Moses, God's friend – akin to God's heart, much larger than the human heart (cf. 1 Jn 3:18). Moses truly became the friend who speaks with God face to face (Ex 33:11). Face to face! This is when the bishop or a spiritual father asks a priest if he prays: "Yes, yes, I ... yes. I manage with the 'mother-in-law' – the 'mother-in-law' is the Breviary – I make do, I say the Lauds, then ...". No, no. If you pray, what does it mean? If you stand up for your people before God. If you go to defend your people with God. This is prayer, for a priest. It is not observing prescriptions. "Ah Father, so now we no longer use the Breviary?". No, we do use the Breviary, but with this attitude. You are there, before God, and your people are behind you. And Moses is also the custodian of the Glory of God, of the secrets of

God. He contemplated God's Glory. He contemplated the Glory from behind His back; he heard His true Name on the mountain; he understood His Paternal Love.

Dear brothers, ours is an enormous privilege! God knows our "shameful nakedness". I was really struck when I saw the original [Virgin] Odigitria of Bari: not as she is now, dressed somewhat in the garb that Oriental Christians place on the icon. It is Our Lady with the *naked* child. I was really pleased that the Bishop of Bari gave me one of these; he gave it to me as a gift, and I placed it there, in front of my door. And I like it – I say this to share an experience – in the morning, when I get up, when I pass before it, I like to ask Our Lady to safeguard my nakedness: "Mother you know all my nakedness". This is a great thing: to ask the Lord – in my nakedness – to ask that my nakedness be safeguarded. She knows all of it. God knows our "shameful nakedness", yet He never tires of using us to offer reconciliation to mankind. We are the poorest, sinners, yet God takes us to intercede for our brothers and sisters and to dispense regenerative salvation to mankind, through our not-at-all innocent hands.

Sin disfigures, and we have a painful, humiliating experience of it when we ourselves or one of our brother priests or bishops falls into the bottomless pit of vice, of corruption, or even worse, of crimes that ruin the lives of others. I would like to share with you the pain and the unbearable suffering that the scandals – which fill newspapers throughout the world – cause in us and in the entire ecclesial body. It is evident that the true meaning of what is happening is to be found in the spirit of evil, in the Enemy, who acts with the pretense of being master of the world, as I said in the eucharistic liturgy at the end of the Meeting on the Protection of Minors in the Church (24 February 2019). Yet, let us not be disheartened! The Lord is purifying his Bride and is converting all of us to Him. He is making us experience the trial so that we may understand that without Him we are dust. He is saving us from hypocrisy, from the spirituality of appearances. He is blowing his Spirit to restore beauty to his Bride, caught in the act of adultery. It will do us good today to take up chapter 16 of Ezekiel. This is the history of the Church. This is my history, each one of us can say. And in the end, but through shame, you will continue to be shepherds. Our humble repentance, which remains silent amid tears before the monstrosity of the sin and the unfathomable greatness of God's forgiveness; this, this humble repentance is the beginning of our holiness.

Do not be afraid to stake your life at the service of reconciliation between God and mankind:

we have been given no secret greatness other than this, that of giving our life so that mankind may know His love. A priest's life is often marked by misunderstandings, silent suffering, at times persecution. And also sins that He alone knows. The laceration among brothers of our community, the non-reception of the Gospel Word, contempt for the poor, resentment fuelled by reconciliations that have never come to pass, the scandal caused by the shameful behaviour of some confreres: all this can leave us sleepless and powerless. However, let us believe in the patient guidance of God, who does things in his time; let us widen our heart and place ourselves at the service of the Word of reconciliation.

Let us propose to our communities what we have experienced in this Cathedral today. In the Penitential Liturgies that we will celebrate in parishes and prefectures, in this Lenten Season, each person will ask God and our brothers and sisters for forgiveness of the sins that have undermined the ecclesial community and smothered missionary dynamism. With humility – which is a characteristic proper to God's heart, but which requires so much effort to make our own – let us confess to one another that we need God to reshape our life.

May you be the first to ask forgiveness of your brothers. Self-blame "is the beginning of wisdom and bound to the holy fear of God" (*ibid.*). It would be a good sign if, as we have done today, each of you would go to confess to a confrere, also in the Penitential Liturgies in the parish, before the eyes of the faithful. We will have a luminous face, like Moses, if, with emotion in our eyes, we speak to others of the mercy that has been applied to us. It is the way; there is no other. In this way, if the miracle of reconciliation of our communities occurs, we will see the demon of pride fall as a flash of lightening from heaven. We will feel we are a little more the People who belong to the Lord, whom God walks among. This is the way.

And I wish you a good Lenten Season!

Now I would like to add something that I was asked to do. One of the tangible ways to live a Lenten Season of charity and to contribute generously to the "As it is in heaven, likewise on the journey" campaign, with which our diocesan *Caritas* intends to respond to all forms of poverty, by welcoming and supporting those in need. I know that every year you respond generously to this appeal, but this year I ask you for a greater commitment so that the whole community and all the communities may truly be involved in the first person.

Before concluding the meeting, the Pope gave those present a booklet entitled "La riconciliazione, sorella del battesimo", ["Reconciliation, the 'sister of Baptism'"], a publication of the Diocese of Rome which compiles several texts for the Office of the Daily Readings for Lent, taken from a book by the same name written by Bishop Gianmarco Busca of Mantua. "It is the booklet", Cardinal De Donatis explained, "that will accompany us during Lent, as the second Reading, as we did last year: the same size as the Breviary, thus it will be helpful to have at hand. Therefore the prefects are distributing these texts to everyone, and perhaps you can also take some for those who are not present". Then, addressing the Pope, the Cardinal continued: "On everyone's behalf, I would like to express truly heartfelt gratitude to you, for coming here today, as every year. What I can say on behalf of everyone, in addition to 'thank you', is that we continue to support you with our daily prayers". The Pontiff responded:

I need this, I am in need of prayer. Pray for me. One of the things I like the most about this [booklet] is the richness of the Fathers: turn to the Fathers. A short time ago in a parish of Rome, a book – "*Bisogno di paternità*" ["A need for paternity"], I think it is called – was launched, containing texts of all the Fathers according to various themes: virtues, the Church... Turning to the Fathers helps us a great deal because it is greatly rewarding. Thank you.

Pope cautions representatives of African and European cycling federations

Doping and corruption taint sports

Sports must not be tainted by "doping, dishonesty, disrespect for oneself and one's opponents, and corruption". Pope Francis offered this advice to participants in the annual Congress of the European Cycling Union and the African Cycling Confederation, whom he received in audience on Saturday morning, 9 March, in the Clementine Hall. The following is the English text of his discourse.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

I am pleased to welcome the participants in the Annual Congress of the European Cycling Union, which on this occasion is also hosting the Assembly of the African Cycling Confederation. I especially greet the President of the International Cycling Union, Mr David Lappartient, and thank him for his words.

The relationship between the Church and sport has a long history, which has become ever stronger over time. Sport can be a great help to the human development of all, encouraging them to give of their best, as they seek to attain a certain goal. This is because sport teaches perseverance, sacrifice, and self-denial. We can think, for example, of the long and demanding training or the observance of a strict discipline of life. The practice of a sport also teaches us not to be discouraged and to start again with determination after a defeat or injury. Sport often becomes an opportunity to express with enthusiasm the joy of liv-



ing and the true satisfaction of having crossed the finishing line.

Cycling, in particular, is one of the sports that places emphasis on some of the virtues, such as *patience* in effort, on long and difficult climbs; *courage*, in trying to break away or making a sprint; *integrity*, in respecting the rules; *altruism* and *team spirit*. Indeed, if we consider road cycling – one of its most common forms – we can see how the whole team works together during the races: the support riders, the sprinters, the climbers. They often have to sacrifice themselves for the leader, and when a teammate experiences difficulty it is the other teammates who show support and accompaniment. In life too, it is necessary to cultivate a spirit of selfless-

ness, generosity and community in order to help those who have fallen behind and who need help to achieve a certain goal.

Many cyclists have been examples, in sport and in life, for their integrity and consistency, giving of their best in cycling. In their careers they have known how to combine strength of mind and determination to achieve victory, but also solidarity and joy of living in bearing witness to having discovered the potential of the human being, created in the image and likeness of God, and the beauty of living in communion with others and with creation. Athletes have this extraordinary opportunity to communicate to everyone, especially young people, the positive values of life and the desire to devote it

to the pursuit of high and noble goals.

This helps us understand the importance, for anyone who practices a sport – from occasional participants, to amateurs or professionals – of always being able to practice it at the service of the growth and integral development of the person. When the opposite takes place and sport becomes an end in itself, and the person an instrument at the service of other interests such as prestige and profit, then distortions appear that taint it. I am thinking of doping, dishonesty, disrespect for oneself and one's opponents, and corruption.

I would also like to say a word about new developments in the field of cycling, which are spreading among the younger generations and which, like all new developments, can arouse resistance and represent a challenge for more traditional disciplines. The commitment that the Church has undertaken to listen to young people, to take to heart their expectations, and their ways of expressing their desire to live and fulfill themselves is also beneficial for you. It is necessary to accompany new generations without losing sight of the healthy traditions and popular culture that, in many countries of the world, accompany cycling and its champions.

I wish you a fruitful meeting during these days, and in asking you to pray for me, I impart to all of you my heartfelt blessing.

To delegation of Apostoliki Diakonia of the Greek Church

Catholics and Orthodox together to support the family

Catholics and Orthodox must "cooperate in promoting, in various settings, both national and international, activities and initiatives having to do with families and family values". Pope Francis said this to a delegation from Apostoliki Diakonia and the Centre for the Family of the Orthodox Archdiocese of Athens, whom he received in audience on Monday morning, 25 February, in the Hall of Popes. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's remarks.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with particular joy that I welcome you and thank you for your visit. I am especially grateful to Bishop Agathangelos. Before all else, I ask you a favour: that on your return to Athens you convey my cordial and fraternal good wishes to His Beatitude Hieronymos II, who a few days ago, on 16 February, celebrated the eleventh anniversary of his enthronement. I ask the Father who is the giver of every good gift (cf. *Jas* 1:17) to grant him health, peace and spiritual joy. I pray too that, through the intercession of the Apostle Paul who preached the Gospel in Greece and crowned his witness by martyrdom here in Rome, he may abundantly bless the beloved Greek people.

Cooperation between *Apostoliki Diakonia* and the Council for Promoting Christian Unity has been taking place for over fifteen years and has resulted in a number of

praiseworthy cultural and educational projects. It is a fine example of how fruitful it can be when Catholics and Orthodox work together. In these years, both the organizers of these initiatives and those who have benefited from them, chiefly the young students of our Churches, have realized that what we have in common is much greater than what keeps us apart. Working together helps us to see one another as brothers and sisters. Our young people teach us not to remain prisoners of our differences, but to grow in the desire to journey together and to dream of surmounting the difficulties standing in the way of full communion. It is up to us to continue to advance together, to work together and to see ourselves once more as brothers and sisters. At every step, and in all we do, we can glimpse, with God's help, his loving presence that leads us to ever deeper communion. I would like, then, to



join with you in imploring the grace to make this journey. And to do so, not as individuals going their separate ways and working for their own goals, as if others were simply set at our side by history, but rather as brothers and sisters whom God's providence has made us encounter as we journey together towards the one Lord, bearing one another's burdens and rejoicing in each other's progress. I thank *Apostoliki Diakonia* for the steps already taken on this journey, and I assure you of the sup-

port of the Catholic Church for its continuation.

The pastoral care of the family is another fruitful field for cooperation between Orthodox and Catholics, one that needs to be cultivated with passion and urgency. In our time, marked by swift social changes that have resulted in an increased inner fragility, Christian families in a variety of geographic and cultural settings face many similar challenges. We are called to remain close to them and to help families rediscover the gift of marriage and the beauty of preserving a love renewed daily by patient and generous sharing and the quiet power of prayer. We are also called to be present wherever family life does not correspond to the fullness of the evangelical ideal, or is not lived in peace and joy (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 5). Together, then, while respecting our different spiritual traditions, we can actively cooperate in promoting, in various settings, both national and international, activities and initiatives having to do with families and family values.

Once more, I thank you for your visit, and I ask the Lord to grant you his abundant blessings. I ask you, please, to save a place for me in your prayers. Thank you.

Francis, the world's physician

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and implicitly hinted at it in his intense Ash Wednesday homily: "We should ask ourselves: On the journey of life, do I seek the way forward? Or am I satisfied with living in the moment and thinking only of feeling good, solving some problems and having fun? What is the path? Is it the search for health, which many today say comes first but which eventually passes? Could it be possessions and wellbeing? But we are not in the world for this".

Health "comes first", one says automatically; however, the Pope came to take us off "auto-pilot", to soften the mostly mental and ideological ties that prevent us from walking more naturally and perhaps with our head held high, as men and women. He came to tell us what truly "comes first" (which, for Christians, is a Person). And in this way, by touching us, softening us and caring for us, he is restoring us to the normal course of the human journey. These six years of Francis have been a great exercise of restoration, with all the effort and resistance proper to every restorative journey. How of-



ten during his catecheses has the Pope asked us, as an exercise, to repeat a phrase, a gesture, all together, precisely to fix in our minds and in practice that "procedure" offered patiently by him and through his wisdom, recommended to everyone by him, the elderly but vigorous "physical therapist"?

Thus, if one looks at the Pope one can see the silhouette of a physician, a parish priest, one who takes care of the souls and bodies of the sheep who have been entrusted to him, mingling with them until taking on the smell of the flock. Francis goes out and travels the entire world armed only with that briefcase he carries with him, and he seems just like a doctor who makes house calls in order to give you the care that you need. And he is not just any doctor, nor a specialist with expertise in only one field of medicine, no; Francis is a family doctor. He visits you and knows how to take care of you because he knows you, knows your history; he saw you born and knows the network of relationships that have made you who you are, because he is a man of the Church, that Church which, according to the expression of his beloved Pope Montini, is an "expert in humanity". And you open yourself to him, because he is "your" doctor, your family doctor, part of the household. You trust him; he knows where to look, which part of the body to touch in order to understand in just minutes what malady ails you, and to prescribe a treatment, to recommend an antidote because we are

not talking about an indulgent doctor, a "moneygrubber", but a good, conscientious physician, ready to prescribe remedies that are even bitter and challenging if necessary (and how many protests there are against this good doctor!). And today an "elephant-sized" cure is needed.

In addition to the three verbs there is an adjective that encapsulates the sense of this pontificate: urgent. Francis never stops; he is constantly hastening to the bedside of a gravely ill world. And he is impartial toward the sick; he knows that the whole world is in turmoil, and that he is the head of the Church, this great field hospital that cannot take any days off. The treatment must be

ready and immediate; an operation must be done before gangrene sets in. By now his procedure is known: upon his arrival he checks the patient's pulse. If disease has attacked the heart, he palpates the wrist: despite the apparent distance, this is how to check the circulation and thus the heart: one does not go to the centre but to the periphery. Indeed, he has explained to us that the periphery is the centre, that one must begin from there. After the examination there is a diagnosis: cardiosclerosis, a buildup in the circulatory passages; there is a malignant disease – the evil One – which must be fought and eradicated. And after the diagnosis: the treatment.

In this dramatic scenario, this minor parish priest (perhaps a country curate, as Bernanos wished) knows what is needed – here he encourages prayer and above all an invincible drug: mercy. Mercy is the word that these six years of his pontificate have conveyed to us: a great, incandescent word which we must still learn to handle but which, under the care of Francis – the world's physician – we can assimilate and above all restore, for a healthier, more natural, more human circulation.

ANDREA MONDA

With the new Ambassador of Armenia

On Saturday, 9 March, the Holy Father received in audience H.E. Mr Garen Nazarian, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia, for the presentation of the Letters by which he is accredited to the Holy See.



H.E. Mr Garen Nazarian was born in Armenia in 1966. He is married and has two children.

He holds a degree in Oriental Studies and a diploma in International Politics from the diplomatic academy in Moscow. He entered the diplomatic service in 1991, and has served as: political official and, subsequently, head of the Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1991-1996); Ambassador, Permanent Representation at the United Nations in Geneva (1996-2002); advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs: USA-Armenia task force (2001-2005); Ambassador of Armenia to the Islamic Republic of Iran in Tehran (2005-2009); Ambassador, Permanent Representation at the United Nations in New York (2009-2014); deputy Foreign Minister (2014-2018).

Following conviction for failing to report abuses

Cardinal Barbarin announces his resignation

Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Archbishop of Lyon, France, announced his decision to present his resignation to Pope Francis following his conviction and a six-month suspended prison sentence handed down by a French court on Thursday, 7 March. The Lyon tribunal found the Cardinal guilty "of non-denunciation of ill-treatment" of a minor by a priest of the Archdiocese between 2014 and 2015.

Shortly after the verdict, the Cardinal released a brief statement taking note of the court's ruling, and he reiterated his "compassion" for the victims. He announced that he would personally present his resignation to the Holy Father. The trial concerned the case of Bernard Preynat, a priest who had allegedly abused dozens of children during the 1970's and 80's, when he was a Scout chaplain. Cardinal Barbarin was not present for the reading of the verdict, but his legal counsel indicated that he will appeal the conviction.

Prayer Intention for March

For persecuted Christian communities

"It might be hard for us to believe, but there are more martyrs today than in the first centuries". This concern permeates the video for Pope Francis' prayer intention for the month of March: that "Christian communities, especially those who are persecuted, feel that they are close to Christ and have their rights respected".

In the video published by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, available at www.thepopevideo.org, the Holy Father explains: "they are persecuted because they speak the truth and proclaim Jesus Christ to this society". As the images scroll by

offering scenes from various parts of the world, we see a young man kiss a Rosary discovered among debris following an attack on a church. "This happens particularly where religious freedom is not yet guaranteed", Francis continues, as dramatic scenes unfold of a church where the faithful are picking up the pieces in the aftermath of an apparent terrorist attack. We see armed soldiers guarding a religious procession; a family secretly praying in their home; a man ringing a church bell that has been ripped from the belfry.

Sadly, persecution also occurs "in countries where, in theory and on

paper, they protect freedom and human rights", the Pope observes before calling for prayers for the month's intention. And here, the images of destruction give way to scenes of hope: a group of faithful removing the police barriers and tape that had cordoned off a vandalized church. Cleaning up the wreckage, they bring to light a fallen cross and icon and throw open the church doors to receive the community once again.

Translated into nine languages, the video was produced for the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network by La Machi agency in collaboration with Vatican Media which recorded it.

Spiritual Exercises of the Holy Father and the Roman Curia

On Sunday afternoon, 10 March, the Holy Father and members of the Roman Curia began their yearly Lenten week of Spiritual Exercises in Ariccia, a town on the outskirts of Rome. Abbot Bernardo Francesco Maria Gianni, OSB Oliv., of San Miniato al Monte, led this year's retreat, on the theme: "The City of Ardent Desires: For Paschal Looks and Gestures in the Life of the World".

In his introduction to the spiritual retreat, which ended on Friday, 15 March, he invited all those present to visit the hill located east of Florence where the Armenian martyr Miniato has been venerated for centuries, because it offers a true glimpse of grace, gratitude and mystery. Abbot Gianni explained that under its former mayor, Giorgio La Pira, Florence had been an "open, welcoming and fraternal" city, so much so that it could be compared to the Jerusalem "so beloved and favoured by the Lord, the Jerusalem loved by the prophets, the heavenly Jerusalem so long awaited, desired and contemplated by the visionary of the Apocalypse". The Abbot expressed the hope that, with the Church's love and her holiness, this city, along with other cities around the world will return to lighting the flame of love so as to be "a garden of beauty, peace, justice, measure and harmony". In order to do so, he added, we must learn to recognize the clues "that the Lord never tires of leaving us in his passage through our history". This is particularly important in our days when "the universal breath of fraternity appears very weakened". After all, he pointed out, "the strength of fraternity is the new frontier of Christianity".

Our humanism stems from Jesus who heals our humanity, the Benedictine monk continued. We should allow ourselves to be gazed upon by him in order to learn and to imitate the Lord's gaze.

On Monday morning, 11 March, for his first meditation, Abbot Gianni returned to the idea of the "city", referring to Isaiah and Jeremiah and the dream they shared with God, that "of a city with a vocation for welcoming and universal fraternity"; its true vocation as a mysterious and authentic experience of grace and love that brings people together as citizens sharing the same hopes. This vision of cities currently "appears hidden under the ashes, which as a Church impassioned by love of Christ, we want to disperse, so that the Paschal flame may ignite, announcing life and hope to a world that is often condemned for its desperate resignation to the seemingly invincible darkness". The dream for all cities is a dream for "the permanent design that the Holy Spirit seeks to enact in the history of mankind throughout the generations and centuries", Abbot Gianni explained. As a Church, he continued, we should try to ensure that God's attempt to enact this dream is carried out "unreservedly". In short this means to "disperse through our witness the ashes that blanket the city and re-ignite the fire that animates each person".

For his second meditation on Monday afternoon, Abbot Gianni reflected on the shameful state of cities today, marred by indifference. Yet change is possible, he affirmed. It is possible, to start over and to rebuild. On the one hand, there is the burning flame of God's charisms, the Abbot noted, and on the other, there is "tepidity", the "great presumption" of those who think "I do not need anything". However, in order for the Holy Spirit to transform mankind's weaknesses, "there is a fundamental premise: we must distance ourselves from the presumption of not needing anything". Like Nicodemus in his nighttime dialogue with Jesus, men and women must become convinced that they are capable of rebirth.

We are called to a renewal of faith "because we are not so arrogant as to consider ourselves

relieved from the fundamental issue: Lord, increase our faith. This is why we are here". Faith can ignite "that flame whose light restores our reality to the fullness of truth". This reality is not yet sealed, the Abbot explained, and each person can experience a "second creation". The world is capable of change thanks to a humanism "rooted in an experience of love, which challenges us" and arouses our sense of responsibility. We should entrust this perspective especially to young people, in order to restore their understanding "of what human life is in the exercise of responsibility, of freedom, of this dynamic which, I would like to say, is one in keeping with the joy of growing in responsibility, of rediscovering ourselves as children of a trustworthy father".

In order to achieve this, Abbot Gianni said, we must "promote actions that create new dynamics in society". At times he wonders "who in the current world is truly worried about generating processes that build a People". And this concerns not only "us as the Church, the People of God, but also extends to those who are in positions of responsibility in the cities of the men and women of our time". A sense of *civitas* must be achieved while the concern for immediate results which produce quick and easy but ephemeral political gain must be challenged because it fails to encourage human fulfillment. However, this can only happen "in a horizon of Paschal faith". God wants us to be able to dream as He does and with Him as we journey [...] dreaming of a different world", Abbot Gianni concluded.

On Tuesday morning, in his third meditation, Abbot Gianni reflected on the tragic mafia bombings in Florence in 1993 and the "infamy, bloodshed and indifference" that are "three signs of the evil and that mystery of hostility that is at work in our history". He paused on the subject of indifference, which, he said, is foreign to charity and "many times paralyzes our hearts in a subtle way, making our gaze no longer engendered by love but rendered lacklustre and cloudy by one of the illnesses of our times: self preservation". It is as if we were wearing a shield "to protect ourselves from others and from the responsibility that the problems of our times demand, in light of the evangelical passion that the Lord wants to ignite within our hearts through the strength of his Holy Spirit".

Attention then turned to the duty toward the new generations and the commitment "to leave them a better future than the present we are living, entrusting it to them with a spirit that is radically antithetical to indifference but rather moved by ardent participation". In this way, they can continue to live in a world that welcomes their dreams, he observed.

The Benedictine monk suggested we look to reality with the belief that with Christ, "the world is not as it appears but rather is more than this". We should look at reality without "dreaming of ideal cities or utopias of any kind", because "utopia is not an authentically evangelical perspective". Indeed, the "heavenly Jerusalem is not a utopia", he pointed out. Rather, "it is the content of a true promise that the Lord made to the Church". Thus, we must "measure ourselves against reality" and, with this style, "look to the wounds of the cities of the entire world, including the most complex ones and those most marked by injustice", always however, keeping our gaze on reality.

Recalling Pope Francis' call to "preserve the memory of the history of the Church", Abbot Gianni invoked a "choral dimension in opposition to all individualism". The Church has a "radically fraternal nature", but from there, he said, we must "go back in history for a mission that is only possible with a holiness that springs forth suddenly like the invention by which the

Holy Spirit gives us the charisms for a here-and-now holiness, in order to open our eyes to reality, revealing truth and beauty".

Our world is highly focused on appearances, and among young people beauty is the only acceptable measure of acceptance", the Lenten preacher said. Our pastoral work should evoke this dimension, "profoundly rooting it in the loving breath that man alone cannot give himself". This is the type of beauty which comes from God's love, necessary for true renewal. The Abbot concluded the morning's meditation with a call to live in "heartfelt witness to beauty and hope which the Church today can offer as a service to the entire world".

On Tuesday afternoon, the fourth meditation focused on the importance of taking stock of the present, not simply to criticize and condemn, but also to face the great challenges that "our ecclesiastic actions intend to take on, in light of the Holy Spirit, in order to restore to the men and women of our time, the awareness of a grateful and diligent memory that is alive and creative and open to the force and the dynamic of hope". We are experiencing "a true dictatorship" of the uncertainty of the present, the Abbot continued, which "confirms an illness



of contemporary man" who has succumbed to a "dominating technological pragmatism and thus, tempted to subordinate the fruitful labour of memory and hope to the perception of immediacy".

Abbot Gianni then addressed the topic of monasteries saying that it is a mistake for them to see themselves "as a space that is removed from the concept of the labour of history", a labour, he stressed, "with which we are called to edify a city that is a credible reflection of the heavenly Jerusalem". This is far removed from a "spirituality that proposes an escape into a sort of cloud of unawareness". In this light, memory can truly curb this profound temptation. Citing Pope Francis' desire for a "restless Church", the Abbot called for defeating fear and pessimism by "projecting toward hope. Together, let us try new avenues of faithfulness to the Lord, enriched by the lifeblood that comes to us through tradition, but without fear", and keeping in mind that no exercise of this memory and hope can exist without holiness.

Abbot Gianni concluded the afternoon meditation with a comment on today's nostalgia for "so-called vintage" items which, above all, expresses the need "especially of new generations to seek refuge in objects, fashion and music" from the past. This, he explained, indicates their fear of the future and of the present which challenge them to confront the uncomfortable need to assume responsibility in their lives.

ANGELUS

“One does not dialogue with the devil; one must not discuss, one only responds to him with the Word of God”. Pope Francis emphasized this at the Angelus on Sunday, 10 March, during his reflection on the Gospel passage which recounts the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the desert. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s reflection, which he shared in Italian.

*J. Kirk Richards,
“Temptation” (detail)*

Francis recalls the temptation in the desert

One does not dialogue with the devil

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

The Gospel passage for this first Sunday of Lent (cf. Lk 4:1-13) recounts the experience of the temptation of Jesus in the desert. After fasting for 40 days, Jesus is tempted three times by the devil. First he invites Him to change stone into bread (v. 3); then, from above, he shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and the prospect of becoming a powerful and glorious messiah (vv. 5-6); lastly he takes Him to the pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem and invites Him to throw himself down, so as to manifest His divine power in a spectacular way (vv. 9-11). The three temptations point to three paths that the world always offers, promising great success, three paths to mislead us: *greed for possession* – to have, have – , *human vainglory* and *the exploitation of God*. These are three paths that will lead us to ruin.

The first, the path of *greed for possession*. This is always the devil’s insidious logic. He begins from the natural and legitimate need for nourishment, life, fulfilment, happiness, in order to encourage us to believe that all this is possible without God, or rather, even despite Him. But Jesus counters, stating: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’” (v. 4). Recalling the long journey of the chosen people through the desert, Jesus affirms his desire to fully entrust himself to the providence of the Father, who always takes care of his children.

The second temptation: the path of *human vainglory*. The devil says: “If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours” (v. 7). One can lose all personal dignity if one allows oneself to be corrupted by the idols of money, success and power, in order to achieve one’s own self-affirmation. And one tastes the euphoria of a fleeting joy. And this also leads us to be ‘peacocks’, to vanity, but this vanishes. For this reason Jesus responds: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve” (v. 8).

And then the third temptation: *exploiting God* to one’s own advantage. In response to the devil – who, citing Scripture, invites Him to seek a conspicuous miracle from God – Jesus again opposes with the firm decision to remain humble, to remain confident before the Father: “It is said, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God’” (v. 12). Thus, he rejects perhaps the most subtle temptation: that of wanting to ‘pull God to our side’, asking him for graces which in reality serve and will serve to satisfy our pride.

These are the paths that are set before us, with the illusion that in this way one can obtain success and happiness. But in reality, they are completely extraneous to God’s mode of action; rather, in fact they distance us from God, because they are the works of Satan. Jesus, personally facing these trials, overcomes temptation three times in order to fully adhere to the Father’s plan. And he reveals the remedies to us: interior life, faith in God, the certainty

of his love – the certainty that God loves us, that he is Father, and with this certainty we will overcome every temptation.

But there is one thing to which I would like to draw your attention, something interesting. In responding to the tempter, Jesus *does not enter a discussion*, but responds to the three challenges with only the Word of God. This teaches us that one does not dialogue with the devil; one must not discuss, one only responds to him with the Word of God.

Therefore, let us benefit from Lent as a privileged time to purify ourselves, to feel God’s comforting presence in our life.

May the maternal intercession of the Virgin Mary, icon of faithfulness to God, sustain us in our journey, helping us to always reject evil and welcome good.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday in Oviedo, Spain, the seminarians Angelo Cuartas and eight companions were proclaimed Blessed. They were killed in hatred of the faith in a time of religious persecution. These young aspirants to the priesthood loved the Lord so much as to follow him on the way of the Cross. May their heroic witness help seminarians, priests and bishops to remain clear and generous, in order to faithfully serve the Lord and the holy People of God.

I offer a cordial greeting to families, parish groups, associations and to all pilgrims from Italy and from many countries. I greet the students from Castro Urdiales, Spain, and the faithful from Warsaw; as well as those from Castellammare di Stabia and Porcia. I greet the *Piccoli cantori* of Pura, Switzerland, the young people from the diaconate of Baggio, Milan, those from the Profession of Faith in Samarate, the confirmands from Bondone and Paullo, the young people from Verona and the students from the Emiliani School of the Somaschi Fathers in Genoa.

I hope for everyone that the Lenten journey, just recently begun, may be rich with fruit; and I ask you to remember me and my collaborators of the Roman Curia in your prayers, as this evening we shall begin a week of Spiritual Exercises.

Happy Sunday! Enjoy your lunch! *Ar-rivederci!*

Pope to visit Morocco

The cross and the crescent

At the invitation of King Mohammed VI and of the Bishops of Morocco, Pope Francis will visit the cities of Rabat and Casablanca on 30 and 31 March. In his 7 January address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, the Pontiff described the occasions of this visit and his recent journey to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February) as “two important opportunities to advance interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding between the followers of both religions, in this year that marks the 800th anniversary of the historic meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil”.

The logo chosen for the journey speaks through symbolic imagery: the Christian cross and the Islamic crescent-moon are joined in an illustration that highlights the colours of each country: green and red for Morocco, yellow and white for the Holy See. The motto selected for the journey is “Servant of hope”.

