

# L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH*Unicuique suum Non praevalerunt*

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Vatican City

Friday, 12 April 2019

## Peace is a gift from the Lord

Spiritual retreat for civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan

Thanks to an initiative proposed by His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, and approved by Pope Francis, a spiritual retreat was held in the Vatican on Wednesday and Thursday, 10-11 April, with the participation of the highest civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan.

This event, both ecumenical and diplomatic at the same time, was organized by mutual agreement between the Secretariat of State and the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the goal of offering on the part of the Church a propitious occasion for reflection and prayer, as well as an occasion for encounter and reconciliation, in a spirit of respect and trust, to those who in this moment have the mission and the responsibility to work for a future of peace and prosperity for the people of South Sudan.

Representing the civil authorities in the event were the members of the Presidency of the Republic of South Sudan, who, under the *Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan*, will assume positions of great national responsibility this coming 12 May: Mr Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic, as well as four of the five designated Vice Presidents: Mr Riek Machar Teny Dhurgon, Mr James Wani Igga, Mr Taban Deng Gai and Ms Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior. Eight members of the South Sudan Council of Churches took part in the retreat, representing the ecclesiastical authorities of the country. Archbishop John Baptist

Odama of Gulu, Uganda and Fr Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, SJ, President of the Conference of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar, provided the preaching during the retreat.

At the conclusion of the retreat, the Holy Father delivered a discourse, recalling that "peace is the

first gift that the Lord brought us, and the first commitment that leaders of nations must pursue", as it is "the fundamental condition for ensuring the rights of each individual and the integral development of an entire people".

Notably, the retreat concluded on the very day that Sudanese Pres-

ident Omar al-Bashir was deposed by a military coup following days of protest. Along with members of his government, al-Bashir is accused of organizing war crimes in Darfur.

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Breaking protocol after his remarks, in a spontaneous gesture of humility Pope Francis kissed the feet of leaders from South Sudan, including President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Vice President designates Riek Machar and Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior.

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# VATICAN BULLETIN



## AUDIENCES

Thursday, 4 April

Bishop Silvio José Báez Ortega, OCD, titular Bishop of Zica, Auxiliary of Managua, Nicaragua

Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, OFM cap., Archbishop of Boston, United States of America

Cardinal Giuseppe Petrocchi, Archbishop of L'Aquila, Italy

Archbishop Renzo Fratini, titular Archbishop of Botriana, Apostolic Nuncio in Spain and in the Principality of Andorra

Br Alois, Prior of the Taizé Community

Saturday, 6 April

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

Archbishop Giacomo Morandi, titular Archbishop of Cerveteri, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith

H.E. Mr Luiz Felipe Mendonça Filho, Ambassador of Brazil, on a farewell visit

Teachers and students of the *Collegio San Carlo* of Milan

Cardinal Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

## NEW TERRITORIAL PRELATURE

The Holy Father established the Territorial Prelature of Santiago Apóstol de Huancané, Peru, with

territory taken from the Territorial Prelatures of Ayaviri and Juli, making it a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Arequipa (3 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Giovanni Cefai, MSSP, as the first Bishop of Santiago Apóstol de Huancané. Until now he has served as parish priest of San Pablo Apóstol and Regional Superior of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul in Peru (3 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Cefai, 51, was born in Zebbug, Malta. He made his solemn vows for the Missionary Society of Saint Paul in Malta on 23 October 1994 and was ordained a priest on 6 December 1997. He holds a licence in pastoral theology. He has served in parish ministry and as director of the De Piro youth centre in Malta. Following courses on culture and language he was sent to the Archdiocese of Arequipa in Peru.

## CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Fausto Gabriel Trávez Trávez, OFM, of Quito, Ecuador (5 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Alfredo José Espinoza Mateus, SDB, as Metropolitan Archbishop of Quito. Until now he has served as Bishop of Loja, Ecuador (5 Apr.).

Archbishop Espinoza Mateus, 60, was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador. He was ordained a priest on 17 December 1988. He was ordained a

bishop on 18 January 2014, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Loja.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop John Buckley of Cork and Ross, Ireland (8 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of Cork and Ross Fr Fintan Gavin from the clergy of the Archdiocese of Dublin. Until now he has served as archiepiscopal chancellor (8 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Gavin, 53, was born in Dublin. He holds a doctorate in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 7 June 1991. He has served in parish ministry and as: chaplain and teacher at Saint Gerard's School in Bray and at Killinarden Community School.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Joseph Son Sam-seok, titular Bishop of Fesseç, as Bishop of Busan, Korea. Until now he has served as Auxiliary of the said Diocese (10 Apr.).

Bishop Son Sam-seok, 63, was born in Busan, Korea. He was ordained a priest on 6 February 1982. He was ordained a bishop on 9 July 2010, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Fesseç and Auxiliary of Busan.

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Porto Alegre, Brazil Fr Darley José Kummer from the clergy of the same Archdiocese, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Elvas. Until now he has served as parish priest of São Luiz Gonzaga Parish in Canoas.

Bishop-elect Kummer, 51, was born in Roca Sales, Brazil. He holds degrees in philosophy and theology. He was ordained a priest on 13 January 1996. He has served in parish ministry and as: assessor of vocational pastoral care and youth; director of the propaedeutic course for priestly formation and rector of the Minor Seminary in Gravataí.

## VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY

The Holy Father appointed as Office Head of the Vatican Apostolic Library Ms Amalia D'Alascio, Official of the said Library (10 Apr.).

## SPECIAL ENVOY

The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apo-

stolic Signatura, as his Special Envoy to the concluding celebration of the sixth centenary of the death of Saint Vincent Ferrer, to be held in Vannes, France on Sunday, 9 June (6 Apr.).

## START OF MISSION

On 20 February, Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, titular Archbishop of Acquaviva, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Saint Lucia.

## LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 5 April, in the presence of the Holy Father, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, delivered the Fourth Lenten Sermon in the Vatican's Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

## NECROLOGY

Bishop Gabriel Piroird, Ist. del Prado, Bishop emeritus of Constantine-Hippone, Algeria, at age 86 (4 Apr.)

Bishop George Edward Rueger, titular Bishop of Maronana, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Worcester, USA, at age 89 (5 Apr.)

## Extraordinary opening of the Holy Stairs

After being closed since last summer for restoration work, the Sanctuary of the Holy Stairs (*Scala Sancta*), located near the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome, reopened to the public on Thursday, 11 April. For 60 days – until Pentecost on 6 June – pilgrims, on their knees, will be able to ascend the marble stairs in their original state, without the protective wooden encasement ordered by Pope Innocent XIII in 1723.

The extraordinary opening will be presided by Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, Vicar General of Rome. Following a conference on the restoration process undertaken, Cardinal De Donatis will offer a blessing and celebrate Mass. The restoration of the frescoes of the Holy Stairs was carried out by Vatican Museums with the support of Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums.

## Cardinal Parolin meets group working against criminalization of homosexuality

On Friday morning, 5 April, in the Vatican, Cardinal Pietro Parolin received a group of approximately 50 persons who are working in various ways against the criminalization of homosexuality. Responding to questions received from journalists, Alessandro Gisotti, ad interim Director of the Holy See Press Office, stated that "during the meeting research on the criminalization of homosexual relationships in the Caribbean was presented to the Vatican Secretary of State. Cardinal Parolin extended a brief greeting to those present, repeating the Catholic Church's position in defence of the dignity of every human person and against every form of violence". After hearing presentations by some of the meeting's participants, Cardinal Parolin assured the group that he would inform the Holy Father of the contents of the research.

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## GENERAL AUDIENCE

*"Just as we need bread, we also need forgiveness". Pope Francis shared this reminder with the faithful who braved the rain to attend the General Audience in Saint Peter's Square on Wednesday, 10 April. Continuing his teachings on the Lord's Prayer, the Pontiff commented on the passage from the Gospel of Matthew: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he shared in Italian.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

It is not a very nice day but just the same, good morning!

After asking God for our daily bread, the "Lord's Prayer" enters the sphere of our relationships with others. Jesus teaches us to ask the Father: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12). Just as we need bread, we also need forgiveness; this too, this every day.

A Christian who prays asks God first of all that his *debts* be forgiven, that is, his sins, the bad things he does. This is the first truth of every prayer: even if we were perfect people, even if we were pure saints who never deviate from a virtuous life, we continue to be children who owe everything to the Father. What is the most dangerous attitude for every Christian life? It is pride. It is the attitude of those who stand before God thinking that they always have their affairs in order with him: the proud think they have everything in order. Like that Pharisee in the parable who thinks he is praying in the Temple, but in reality, he is commending himself before God: "I thank you, Lord, because I am not like the others". And the people who feel they are perfect, the people who criticize others, are proud people. None of us is perfect, no one. On the contrary, the tax collector, who was at the back of the Temple, a sinner despised by everyone, stops at the threshold of the Temple and does not feel worthy to enter and entrusts himself to God's mercy. And Jesus comments: "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Lk 18:14), that is, forgiven, saved. Why? Because he was not proud, because he recognized his limitations and his sins.

There are sins that are seen and sins that are unseen. There are glaring sins that make noise but there are also sins that are devils, that lurk in our heart without us even noticing. The worst of these is pride, which can even infect people who live a profound religious life. There was once a well-known convent of nuns, in the 1600-1700s, at the time of Jansenism. They were utterly per-

fect, and it was said of them that they were really pure like angels, but also proud like demons. It is a bad thing. Sin divides fraternity; sin makes us imagine we are better than others; sin makes us think we are comparable to God.

And instead, we are all sinners before God and we have reason to beat our breast – everyone – like the tax collector in the Temple. In his First Letter, Saint John writes: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn 1:8). If you want to deceive yourself, say that you have not sinned: this way, you are deceiving yourself.

We are debtors above all because we have received much in this life: a father and a mother, friendship, the splendours of creation... Even if we all happen to experience difficult days, we must always remember that life is a grace. It is the miracle that God drew out of nothing.

Secondly, we are debtors because, even if we are able to love, none of us is capable of doing so solely by our own strength. True love is when we can love, but through the grace of God. None

of us shines of our own light. There is what the ancient theologians called a *mysterium lunae*, not only in the identity of the Church, but also in the history of each of us. What does this *mysterium lunae* mean? That it is like the moon, which does not have its own light: it reflects the light of the sun. Nor do we have our own light. The light we have is a reflection of God's grace, of God's light. If you love, it is because someone other than yourself made you smile when you were a child, teaching you to respond with a smile. If you love it is because someone beside you has awakened you to love, making you understand that the meaning of life lies therein.

Let us try to listen to the story of some person who has made mistakes: a detainee, a convict, a drug addict ... we know many people who make mistakes in life. Notwithstanding the responsibility, which is always personal, you sometimes ask yourself who is to blame for their mistakes; whether it is just their conscience, or the history of hatred and abandonment that some carry within.

And this is the mystery of the moon: first and foremost, we love because we have been loved, we forgive because we have been forgiven. And if someone has not been illuminated by the light of the sun, he becomes icy like the ground in winter.

How can we fail to recognize in the chain of love that precedes us, also the presence of God's Providential love? None of us loves God as much as he has loved us. It is enough to place oneself before a Crucifix to understand the disproportion: he has loved us and will always love us first.

Let us therefore pray: Lord, not even the most holy in our midst cease to be in your debt. O Father, have mercy on us all!

## SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Australia, Sri Lanka and the United States of America. May the Lenten journey bring us to Easter with hearts purified and renewed by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Upon you and your families I invoke joy and peace in Christ our Redeemer!

I offer a special thought to *young people, the elderly, the sick and newlyweds*. The Lenten journey is drawing to a close. The light and comfort of the Lord's Easter are now near. Filled with joy and hope, let us prepare ourselves to make Christ's sentiments our own, and to live to the full the days of his Passion and glorification.



## We all need forgiveness

### Catechesis on the Lord's Prayer

Secretary of State to international symposium on religious freedom

## The common good of the human family under threat

*"Stand together to Defend International Religious Freedom" was the theme of an international symposium held at the US Embassy to the Holy See on Wednesday, 3 April. The many discourses given addressed the topic of the right to religious freedom, violations thereof throughout the world and the necessary means to face an issue so crucial to civil coexistence. The following is the English text of the concluding address, delivered by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin.*

A brief consideration of the numerous violations of religious liberty on the global stage and the appalling number of innocent persons that suffer persecution, because of their beliefs, including many Christians, should leave no doubt in our minds that we are dealing with an aggressive attack that strikes at the very core of the enjoyment of fundamental human rights, which are necessary for the flourishing of the human person, of society as a whole, and for the peaceful coexistence among nations.

Despite so many efforts to promote and reinforce the fundamental human right of religious freedom, we are actually witnessing a continued deterioration, we might even say an assault, of this inalienable right in many parts of the world. Religion has always been the subject of great

a useful step to address violations of religious freedom. Indeed, those involved in the area of media and social communications must bring to light those realities that threaten the common good of the human family. Crass violations of the freedom of religion should be numbered among such threats.

The second panel raises an even more difficult subject, that of international cooperation not simply "standing together" but "working together" on all levels to defend and to advance religious freedom. Regarding this aspect, the Catholic Church has been continuously pursuing all means possible to encourage mutual respect and collaboration among nations, peoples and religions to favor peaceful coexistence, to foster a social/political ambience that respects the freedom of the in-

rather than as a God-given gift, indeed a gift rooted in the transcendent dimension of human nature. Clearly, civil authorities have the obligation to protect and defend religious freedom, but not in the sense of being its author, but rather its custodian.

*Protection and limitations* are the two key elements surrounding any debate on religious freedom as a fundamental right because of its direct connection to the human person. In fact, it also serves a strategic role in evaluating and ensuring the proper attention and guarantee granted by the public authorities. This interpretation reflects the process of affirmation of human rights that has characterized the history of the last few centuries, placing the human person and his/her rights at the center of legal, political, cultural and religious actions. Indeed, religious freedom raises the question of the *indivisibility* of human rights, which has become a guiding principle and fundamental assumption of the international law of human rights.

Religious freedom is a fundamental right, which reflects the highest human dignity, the ability to seek the truth and conform to it, and recognizes in it a condition, which is indispensable to the ability to deploy all of one's own potentiality. Religious freedom is not only that of private belief or worship. It is the liberty to live, both privately and publicly, according to the ethical principles resulting from religious principles. This is a great challenge in the globalized world, where weak convictions also lower the general ethical level, and in the name of a false concept of tolerance, it ends in persecuting those who defend their faith.

Another aspect that demands our attention is to be wise in our appraisal of the challenges and threats to religious freedom. While violations of this right are carried out in a wide variety of ways, it seems that, without wanting to oversimplify the discussion, there are two conceptual forces that lead to violations of this right, both of which lend themselves to being easily politicized. On the one hand, and perhaps most obviously, there is the attitude of religious intolerance, a certain myopic approach, that considers any religion or belief outside of one's own as not merely inferior, but as something that merits being degraded or categorized as second class. This is witnessed all too often in political, social or cultural situations, for example with Christians, who are being treated as second-class citizens. On the other hand, there is a tendency to attack religious freedom from what might be called an "ideological" standpoint, one that takes, for example, the principle found in the human rights framework that considers human rights as "cross-cutting" and "transversal". Within this context, some of the so-called



"new human rights" at times tend to conflict with those universally recognized fundamental human rights, including religious freedom and the right to life. For example, the exercise of religious freedom, especially in the public square, with regard to the institution of marriage or concerning the inviolable right to all human life, often runs up against the so-called "new rights" that tend to present themselves in complete contradiction with, or encroach upon, these fundamental human rights.

Given their importance, it seems that these two conceptual forces must remain in the fore thought of our discussions. To lose sight of them would run the risk of "missing the point" of what religious freedom is really all about. Religious freedom certainly means the right to worship God, individually and in community, as our consciences dictate. But, religious liberty, by its nature, transcends places of worship and the private sphere of individuals and families. Our various religious traditions serve society primarily by the message they proclaim. They call individuals and communities to worship God, the source of all life, liberty and happiness. They remind us of the transcendent dimension of human existence and our irreducible freedom in the face of every claim to absolute power.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the Holy See will continue to be fully engaged in the promotion of religious freedom, as this fundamental right is intimately connected with the protection of conscience and the defense of the human person. One such recent example of this priority for the Church is the document on "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together" signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyib in Abu Dhabi last 4 February. While I would encourage you all to read the complete text, if you have not done so already, I would like to close by citing one of the passages, which to me seems to be at the heart of this symposium.

"We affirm also the importance of awakening religious awareness and the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings. In this way we can confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, conflicting, and also address radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions".



consideration as seen in its regulation by domestic or international legal systems. The choice of faith and the consequent adherence to a religion impacts every level of life, as well as the social and political spheres. Therefore, the choice, and the practice, of one's faith must be free of constraints and coercion. Notwithstanding the strong protection that religious freedom has within the framework of international law, including its clear presentation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as well as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, we continue to witness grave violations of this basic fundamental right that often occur with impunity and at times receiving little, if any, attention in the media.

This being said, the subject matter of the two panel discussions held this morning are quite appropriate. Raising public awareness on the reality of religious persecution, particularly via the rapid means now available with digital media, remains

dividual person's conscience and the beliefs that person holds while respecting their equal right as any other citizen, especially in those contexts in which their belief may not be that of the majority.

Indeed, in reflecting on the two main areas discussed in the panels, it becomes clear that raising awareness on the brutal reality of religious persecution in the world would be useless unless there is a serious and dedicated attempt to work together at addressing and overcoming the root causes of this issue. This is, of course, a great challenge, because in moving from "words" to "actions" one always encounters a certain number of complications.

One important aspect is that, when discussing religious freedom, we should never lose sight of the anthropological basis of this right. To do so is to run the risk of understanding religious freedom as something ancillary to the human person, as something conceded from "outside" the person, even by the State,

To participants in the Apostolic Penitentiary's Course on the Internal Forum

## The ministry of Mercy is the path to holiness

*The Sacrament of Reconciliation "is a true and proper path to holiness", Pope Francis told participants in a Course on the Internal Forum promoted by the Apostolic Penitentiary, whom he met in audience in the Paul VI Hall on Friday, 29 March. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's discourse, which he delivered in Italian.*

Dear Brothers,  
Good morning!

I welcome you during this time of Lent, on the occasion of the course on the Internal Forum, which this year is in its 30th edition.

And I would like to add – beyond the text – a word on the term "internal forum". This is not a trivial expression: it is stated seriously. The internal forum is an internal forum, and it cannot go "outside". And I say this because I have noticed that some groups in the Church, representatives, superiors – let us put it this way – blend the two things and take from the internal forum to make decisions in the external one, and vice versa. Please, this is a sin! It is a sin against the dignity of the person who trusts the priest, and who expresses his or own situation to ask for forgiveness, and then this is used to organize matters for a group or a movement, perhaps – I don't know, I am improvising – perhaps even a new congregation, I don't know. But the internal forum is an internal forum. And it is a sacred thing. I wanted to say this because I am concerned about this.

I offer a cordial greeting to Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, Major Penitentiary, and I thank him for the kind words he addressed to me. With him, I also greet the entire family of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

The importance of the "ministry of mercy" justifies, demands and almost imposes upon us an adequate formation, so that the encounter with the faithful who ask for God's forgiveness may always be a true encounter of salvation, in which the Lord's embrace may be perceived in all its strength, capable of changing, converting, healing and forgiving.

Thirty years of experience are not many for your Course on the Sacramental Internal Forum, when one considers the Church's long history and the "ancient history" of the Apostolic Penitentiary, which is the most age-old Tribunal at the service of the Pope: a tribunal of mercy! And I am very pleased that it is so.

Nevertheless, 30 years, in this time of ours, which rushes by so quickly, are a sufficient length of time to be able to reflect and take stock. Moreover, the very high number of participants – this year, more than 700! The cardinal said that he had to discontinue enrolment for logistical reasons! It seems a jest that there is no room in the Vatican! It seems a jest! It indicates how dire the need is for formation and security, with regard to matters that are so important for the very life of the Church and for the ful-

fillment of the mission that the Lord Jesus has entrusted to her.

While it is held by many that Confession, and with it the sense of sin, is in crisis – and we cannot fail to recognize a certain difficulty of contemporary man in this regard – this abundant participation of priests, newly ordained and ordinands, testifies to the continuing interest in working together to face and overcome the crisis, primarily with "weapons of faith", and by offering an ever more qualified service capable of truly manifesting the beauty of the Divine Mercy.

Jesus came to save us by revealing the merciful face of God and drawing us to him with his loving Sacrifice. Thus, we must always remember that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a true and proper path to holiness; it is the compelling sign that Jesus left to the Church so that the door of the Father's house would always remain open and thus, that men could always return to him.

Sacramental Confession is the path to holiness both for the penitent and for the confessor. And you, dear young confessors, will soon experience this.

For the penitent it is clearly the path to holiness, because, as emphasized many times during the recent Jubilee of Mercy, validly celebrated sacramental absolution restores to us baptismal innocence, full communion with God. That communion that God never interrupts toward man but from which, at times, man removes himself by misusing the wonderful gift of freedom.

"Reconciliation, sister of Baptism" is the motto chosen for this year's meeting with the priests of my diocese. The Sacrament of Penance is the "brother" of Baptism. For us priests, the fourth sacrament is the path of holiness, first of all when, like all sinners, we humbly kneel before the confessor and implore Divine Mercy for ourselves. Before going to the confessional, let us always remember – and this will help us a great deal – that first we are forgiven sinners, and only afterwards ministers of forgiveness.

Moreover – and this is one of the many gifts that Christ's preferential love holds for us – as confessors we have the privilege of continually contemplating the "miracles" of conversions. We must always recognize the powerful action of grace, which is capable of transforming a stony heart into a heart of flesh (cf. Ez 11:19), of changing a far-fled sinner into a repentant son who returns to his father's house (cf. Lk 15:11-32).

For this reason, with this Course on the Internal Forum, the Peni-

tentiary offers an important ecclesial service, favouring the necessary formation for a correct and effective celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, an indispensable prerequisite for its fruitfulness. This is because every single Confession is always a new and definitive step towards a more perfect sanctification; a tender embrace, full of mercy, which helps expand the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of love, truth and peace.

Reconciliation itself is a benefit that the wisdom of the Church has always safeguarded with all her moral and legal might, with the sacramental seal. Although it is not always understood by the modern mentality, it is indispensable for the sanctity of the sacrament and for the freedom of conscience of the penitent, who must be certain, at any time, that the sacramental conversation will remain within the secrecy of the confessional, between one's conscience that opens to grace, and God, with the necessary mediation of the priest. The sacramental seal is indispensable and no human power has jurisdiction over it, nor can lay any claim to it.

Dear young priests, future priests, dear Penitentiaries, I urge you to always listen with great generosity to the Confessions of the faithful. It requires patience, but always with an open heart, with a



Father's Spirit. I urge you to walk with them on the *path to holiness* which is the sacrament, to contemplate the "miracles" of conversion that grace works in the secret of confessionals, miracles that only you and the angels will witness. And may you sanctify yourself above all, in the humble and faithful exercise of the ministry of Reconciliation.

Thank you for your service! And remember to pray for me too. Thank you.

Pope's condolences for victims of violent storm in Nepal

### Lives and future of 19 million children at stake in Bangladesh

Upon learning the sad news of the tragic loss of life and destruction of homes caused by a storm that struck southern Nepal on Sunday, 31 March, Pope Francis shared his condolences in a telegram addressed to the Vicariate of Nepal and local civil authorities. In the message, signed by Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Pope Francis expressed his "solidarity with all affected by this disaster" and assured his prayers for the victims and for "those grieving for deceased and injured family members". The Pope also offered encouragement to "emergency personnel as they continue to aid those in need", and invoked "the divine blessings of consolation, healing and strength".

According to official sources, the recent storm injured more than 600 people and claimed the lives of at least 30 people, including children, who increasingly are falling victim to the effects of climate change. A March 2019 UNICEF report highlights that in neighbouring Bangladesh, the lives and the future of over 19 million children are threatened by floods, cyclones and other devastating environmental disasters linked to the climate change phenomenon. According to the UNICEF report, greater resources and innovative programmes are needed in order to avoid the dangerous effects of climate change on the lives of the country's younger citizens, who are already grappling with difficulties in gaining access to education and healthcare services. The report calls on the international community and other partners to support governments in implementing initiatives aimed at protecting children from the effects of climate change.

## SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Pope Francis addresses the country's civil and ecclesiastical authorities

## Peace is possible in South Sudan

In the *Domus Sanctae Marthae* on Thursday evening, 11 April, Pope Francis addressed participants in the retreat for civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan. The following is the English text of his discourse.

## Initial Greeting

I extend a cordial welcome to each of you here present: the President of the Republic and the Vice-Presidents of the future Presidency of the Republic, who in accordance with the terms of the *Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan* will assume their high national responsibilities on 12 May next. I also offer fraternal greetings to the members

heartfelt thanks and praise to God for enabling us to share these two days of grace in his holy presence, in order to implore and receive his peace.

"Peace be with you!" (*Jn* 20:19). I address you with the same encouraging and comforting words with which the risen Lord greeted his fearful and disconsolate disciples when he appeared to them in the Upper Room following his resurrection. It is extremely important for us to realize that "peace" was the very first word that the Lord spoke. Peace was his first gift to the Apostles after his sorrowful passion and his triumph over death. I offer that same greeting to you, who come from a situation of great suffering, for yourselves and your people, a people sorely tried by the consequences of conflicts. May it echo in the "upper room" of this house, like the words of the Master, and enable each of you to draw new strength to work for the desired progress of your young nation. Like the fire of Pentecost that descended on the young Christian community, may it kindle a new light of hope for all the people of South Sudan. Holding all these intentions in my heart, I renew my greeting: "Peace be with you!"

Peace is the first gift that the Lord brought us, and the first commitment that leaders of nations must pursue. Peace is the fundamental condition for ensuring the rights of each individual and the integral development of an entire people. Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sent into the world as the Prince of Peace, gave us the model to follow. Through his own sacrifice and obedience, he bestowed his peace on the world. That is why, from the moment of his birth, the choir of angels sang the heavenly hymn: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (*Lk* 2:14). What joy it would bring were all the South Sudanese people to raise with one voice the song that echoes that of the angels: "O God, we praise and glorify you for your grace on South Sudan, land of great abundance; uphold us in peace and harmony" (*first verse of the South Sudan national anthem*). How I wish that the voices of the entire human family could join that heavenly choir in singing glory to God and working for peace among all men and women!

of the South Sudan Council of Churches, who spiritually accompany the flock entrusted to them in their respective communities; I thank all of you for the good will and open heart with which you accepted my invitation to take part in this retreat in the Vatican. I would likewise offer a special greeting to the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Justin Welby, who conceived this initiative – he is a brother who is always moving forwards on the path of reconciliation – and to the former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Very Reverend John Chalmers. I join all of you in giving

## The gaze of God

2. We are all aware that this meeting is something altogether special and in some sense unique, since it is neither an ordinary bilateral or diplomatic meeting between the Pope and Heads of State, nor an ecumenical initiative involving representatives of different Christian communities. Instead, it is a spiritual retreat. The word "retreat" itself indicates a desire to step back from our usual environment or activities and to retire to a secluded place. The adjective "spiritual" suggests that this new space and experience should be marked by interior reflection, trusting prayer, deep reflection and encounters of reconciliation, so as to bear good fruits for ourselves and, as a consequence, for the communities to which we belong.

The purpose of this retreat is for us to stand together before God and to discern his will. It is to reflect on our own lives and the common mission the Lord has entrusted to us, to recognize our enormous shared responsibility for the present and future of the people of South Sudan, and to commit ourselves, reinvigorated and reconciled, to the building up of your nation. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not forget that God has entrusted to us, as political and religious leaders, the task of being guides for his people. He has entrusted much to us, and for this reason will require from us much more! He will demand an account of our service and our administration, our efforts on behalf of peace and the well-being of the members of our communities, especially the marginalized and those most in need. In other words, he will ask us to render an account not only of our own lives, but the lives of others as well (*cf. Lk* 12:48).

The cry of the poor who hunger and thirst for justice binds us in conscience and commits us in our ministry. They are the least in the eyes of the world, yet precious in God's eyes. In using the expression "God's eyes", I think of the gaze of the Lord Jesus. Every spiritual retreat, like our daily examination of conscience, should make us feel that, with our whole being, our entire history, all our virtues and even our vices, we stand before the gaze of the Lord, who is able to see the truth in us and to lead us fully to that truth. The Word of God gives us a striking example of how the encounter with the gaze of Jesus can mark the most important mo-

ments in the life of a disciple. I am speaking of the three times that the Lord gazed upon the Apostle Peter, which I would now like to recall.

The first time that Jesus gazed upon Peter was when his brother Andrew brought him to Jesus and pointed him out as the Messiah. Jesus then fixed his gaze on Simon and said to him that henceforth he would be called Peter (*cf. Jn* 1:41-42). Later, the Lord would tell him that on this "rock" he would build his Church, indicating that he was counting on Peter to carry out his plan of salvation for his people. Jesus' first gaze, then, was a gaze of "election", choosing, which awakened enthusiasm for a special mission.

The second time Jesus gazed on Peter was late at night on Holy Thursday. Peter had denied the Lord a third time. Jesus, forcibly led away by the guards, fixed his gaze on him again, which awakened in him this time a painful but salutary repentance. The Apostle went out and "wept bitterly" (*Mt* 26:75) at having betrayed the Master's call, his trust and his friendship. Jesus' second gaze, then, touched Peter's heart and brought about his conversion.

Finally, after the resurrection, on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, Jesus once more fixed his gaze on Peter and asked him three times to declare his love. He then entrusted him once again with the mission of shepherding his flock, and indicated that this mission was to culminate in the sacrifice of his life (*cf. Jn* 21:15-19).

In a real way, all of us can say that we were called to the life of faith and were chosen by God, but also by our people, to serve them

faithfully. In this service, we may well have made mistakes, some rather small, others much greater. Yet the Lord Jesus always forgives the errors of those who repent. He always renews his trust, while demanding – of us especially – total dedication to the cause of his people.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus' gaze rests, here and now, on each of us. It is very important to meet this gaze with our inner eye and to ask ourselves: How is Jesus gazing on me today? To what is he calling me? What does the Lord want me to forgive and what in my attitudes does he want me to change? What is my mission and the task that God entrusts to me for the good of his people? That people belongs to him, not to us; indeed, we ourselves are members of the people. It is simply that we have a responsibility and a particular mission: that of serving them.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus is also gazing, here and now, upon each one of us. He looks at us with love, he asks something, he forgives something and he gives us a mission. He has put great trust in us by choosing us to be his co-workers in the creation of a more just world. We can be sure that his gaze penetrates the depths of our hearts; it loves, transforms, reconciles and unites us. His kind and merciful gaze encourages us to renounce the paths that lead to sin and death, and it sustains us as we pursue the paths of peace and goodness. Here is an exercise that is beneficial, one that we can always do, even at home: consider that Jesus is gazing on me, on us and that it will be this same gaze, full of love, which will greet us on the last day of our earthly life.

## The gaze of the people

3. God's gaze is especially directed to you; it is a look that offers you peace. Yet there is another gaze directed to you: is the gaze of our people, and it expresses their ardent desire for justice, reconciliation and peace. At this moment, I want to assure all your fellow citizens of my



spiritual closeness, especially the refugees and the sick, who have remained in the country with great expectations and with bated breath, awaiting the outcome of this historic day. I am certain that they are accompanying this meeting with great hope and fervent prayer. Noah waited for the dove to bring him an olive branch to show the end of the flood and the beginning of a new era of peace between God and man (*cf. Gen* 8:11). In the same way, your people is awaiting your return to your country, the reconciliation of all its members, and a new era of peace and prosperity for all.

My thoughts turn first to all those who have lost their loved ones and their homes, to families that were separated and never reunited, to all the children and the elderly, and the women and men who have suffered terribly on account of the conflicts and violence that have spawned so much death, hunger, hurt and tears. We have clearly heard the cry of the poor and the needy; it rises up to heaven, to the very heart of God our

can only come about through reconciliation and peace.

With great hope and trust, I learned last September that the highest political representatives of South Sudan had signed a peace agreement. Today, therefore, I congratulate the signatories of that document, both present and absent, without exception, beginning with the President of the Republic and the heads of political parties, for having chosen the path of dialogue, for your readiness to compromise, your determination to achieve peace, your readiness to be reconciled and your will to implement what has been agreed upon. I express my heartfelt hope that hostilities will finally cease, that the armistice will be respected – please, that the armistice be respected – that political and ethnic divisions will be surmounted, and that there will be a lasting peace for the common good of all those citizens who dream of beginning to build the nation.

The common efforts of our fellow Christians and the various ecumenical initiatives of the South Sudan Council of Churches on behalf of reconciliation and peace, and care for the poor and the marginalized, have made a significant contribution to the progress of the entire South Sudanese people. I recall with joy and gratitude my recent meeting in the Vatican with the Bishops' Conference of Sudan and South Sudan during their *Visit ad limina Apostolorum*. I was struck by their optimism grounded in a living faith and shown in tireless outreach, but also by their concern about the many political and social difficulties. Upon all the Christians of South Sudan who, in helping those in greatest need, bind up the wounds of Jesus' body. I implore God's abundant graces and assure them of a constant remembrance in my prayers. May they be peacemakers in the midst of the South Sudanese people, by their prayers and by their witness, and with the spiritual guidance and human help of every member of the people, including its leaders.

Dear brothers and sisters, peace is possible. I shall never tire of repeating this: peace is possible! Yet this great gift of God is at the same time a supreme duty on the part of those with responsibility for the people. We Christians believe and know that peace is possible, for Christ is risen. He has overcome evil with good. He has assured his disciples of the victory of peace over everything that fans the flames of war: pride, greed, the lust for power, self-interest, lies and hypocrisy (*cf. Homily at the Prayer for Peace in South Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 23 November 2017).

It is my prayerful hope that all of us will take up our lofty calling to be peacemakers, striving in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity with every member of our people, a spirit that is noble, upright, strong and courageous, to build peace through dialogue, negotiation and forgiveness. I urge you, then, to seek what unites you, beginning with the fact that you belong to one and the same people, and to overcome all that divides you. People are wearied, exhausted by past conflicts; please remember that with war, all is lost! Your people today are yearning for a better future, which

In conclusion, I renew my gratitude and appreciation to all of you, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of South Sudan, for taking part in this retreat. To all the dear South Sudanese people I express my fervent good wishes of peace and prosperity. May the Merciful God touch the heart of every man and every woman in South Sudan, fill them with his grace and blessings, and bring forth rich fruits of lasting peace, even as the waters of the Nile, flowing through your country,

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Dialogue between Pope Francis and the Collegio San Carlo community of Milan

## God does not play favourites It is mankind who establishes differences

On Saturday morning, 6 April, in the Paul VI Hall, Pope Francis met the community of the *Collegio San Carlo* of Milan as the institution celebrated its 150th anniversary. Following a greeting from the school rector, Fr Alberto Torriani, the Pontiff responded to several questions posed to him by representatives of the students, teachers and parents. The following is an abridged translation of the colloquy, which transpired in Italian.

[Adriano Tibaldi, student] *Good morning Holy Father! My name is Adriano Tibaldi. I am in my final year of the IB Diploma Programme at San Carlo: in these months I'm preparing for final exams and at the same time, I am looking into possibilities for my future: which university? Where? I come from a family with an American mother and an Italian father. In recent years at San Carlo I have been able to participate in many volunteer experiences: last year I spent a few weeks on mission in Peru with some of my classmates. I saw with my own eyes extreme poverty, children and entire families without a home. I met three girls my age who had suffered violence at the hands of their fathers or of strangers, and have become mothers. I heard stories of boys being kidnapped by their families, killed and robbed of their organs for a couple of dollars. I was very upset by that experience and I wonder: Why does God seem to play favourites? To us, to me, to my friends, he gives us a wonderful life and to others he doesn't.... In concrete terms, what can we do about this issue? We who are preparing ourselves for life, who are choosing the best universities in the world? And what can a school do? Thank you.*

Thank you. "Why does God seem to play favourites?". Yours is a good question. I knew the questions; I have them written down here, and I have some ideas to propose in response. But first and foremost, I will tell you something I did not come up with myself, something that the great Dostoyevsky asked: why do children suffer? There are questions that neither have nor will have answers, and we must get used to this. Some among you who want to have prepackaged answers are going down the wrong path, will end up making mistakes and their lives will be misguided, because prepackaged answers are useless; they are like air conditioning in a room. I tell you this to ease your heart, but your heart still asks: why, why? It seeks the answer, and there are things that have no answer. Think about children, when they start to grow and see the world and do not understand, and what people call "the why age" begins. Children either get scared or have doubts and they look to their father and mother and ask: but 'why, why?', and when the father or mother starts to explain to them,

they immediately add another 'why'; they do not listen to the response. This thing that we can all see in children, and that we too did as children, helps us understand that the real response a child is looking for with those 'whys' is not what the father or mother says, but the gaze of the father and mother. The child is deeply uncertain and needs the father and mother's gaze, and that gives him or her strength to go forward. And this is not a prepackaged response. The gaze of a man who has become a father, of a woman who has become a mother, cannot be bought in stores. It is the magnitude of fruitfulness that helps you grow and the unanswerable questions will help you grow in the meaning of the mystery. "Why does God seem to differentiate?". It is a



good question; always repeat it: but why, why? And grow with this 'why', unsatisfied, without a prepackaged answer. Do you understand this or not? Or do you need to ask "why, why?" one more time? Another thing I would like to tell you. Why does God seem to play favourites .... I will tell you one more thing: it is we who establish the differences. We are the creators of differences. Why are there so many hungry people in the world today? Why does God create this difference? No! This unjust economic system where every day, there are fewer and fewer rich people – but with a lot of money – and more and more poor people – with nothing! It is we, with an unjust economic system, who create differences, who allow children to go hungry! Someone might say to me: "Pope, I did not know you were a communist!". No! Jesus taught us this, and when we go there, before Jesus, he will tell us: thank you, because I was hungry and you gave

me to eat. And to those who, with this system, starve children and people to death, he will say: go away, because I was hungry and you did not look at me. It does us good to challenge ourselves with this "protocol" on which we will be judged: Matthew 25. We create differences. I am certain that all of you want peace. "And why are there so many wars?". For example, in Yemen, in Syria, in Afghanistan. Why? If they had no weapons, they would not wage war. But why do they wage such a cruel war? Because other countries sell weapons, with which they kill children, people. It is we who create differences. And you must state this clearly, up front, without fear. And if you young people are not able to ask these questions, to say these things, you

employment, and he won.... A large factory. But it was a factory that also built weapons, and he had to be an engineer in the weapons plant. And this young man who wanted to get married, who wanted to move forward, who was happy to get the job, said: no, I will not lend my intelligence and my hands to create things that will kill others. These are the courageous young people we need.

To sum up, we must always ask ourselves these uncomfortable questions. There are questions that will never be answered, but by asking the questions we will grow and become adults with concerned hearts. And then to be aware that it is we who create differences. And someone might say to me: "You have spoken about Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, of these wars...". Let us speak about school; in your classes, a child arrives, a boy who does not know how to play – who is it that invents and organizes *bullying*? Is it God? It is you! And every time you bully a child, one of your classmates, every time, with this act you are making a declaration of war. We all have within us the seed to destroy others. Be attentive because we always have that tendency to create differences and to enrich ourselves through the poverty of others. This came to mind to tell you. Forgive me if I was a bit passionate but this "makes my blood boil!"

[Silvia Perucca, teacher] *Good morning Holy Father. My name is Silvia and for the past 13 years, I have been teaching at the classical high school, Collegio San Carlo. We teachers at all educational levels are faced with ever-greater educational challenges on a daily basis. We live in a multiethnic and multicultural society, oriented toward the future and which constantly offers the opportunity to meet and encounter different people, tools and educational methods – just think of the technology and the opportunities it offers but also of the inevitable risks it brings with it. As educators, we wish to teach our students a way to better seize these opportunities by opening ourselves up to others without fearing possible challenges, aware that this does not mean losing our own identity, but rather enriching it. Today, therefore, we would like to ask you how we can best convey to our students the values rooted in Christian culture and at the same time how we can reconcile them with the increasingly inevitable need to educate in relationships and encounter with other cultures. Thank you.*

Thank you. I will begin with the last part of the question and then work backwards. "How can we reconcile ourselves with the increasingly inevitable need to educate in relationships and about encounter?", and "How can we better convey to our students the values rooted in Christian culture?".



The key word here is *rooted*. And to have those roots, it takes two things: consistency, that is, soil – a tree has roots because it has soil – and memory. According to analysts, scholars – following the school of Bauman – the bad thing today is *liquidity*. Bauman's last book is called “*Nati liquidi*” (“Born liquid”), and it says that you young people were born liquid, without substance. But German tradition – and this is a curiosity – rather than saying “born liquid”, says “uprooted”. Liquidity is created when you are incapable of finding your identity, that is, your roots, because you are incapable of going further with memory, and to confront your history, the history of your people, the history of humanity, the history of Christianity: those are the values! This does not mean that I must close off the present and wrap myself up in the past and stay there out of fear. No: this is cowardice.... But you must go to the roots, take the fluid from the roots and bring them forth with growth. Youth cannot move forward if it is not rooted. Values are roots, but with this you must grow. Water those roots with your work, challenging it with reality, but grow with the memory of your roots. For this I strongly advise you to speak with the elderly: I defend my age group, but we must speak with the elderly, because they are the memory of the people, of the family, of history. “Yes, but I speak with dad and mom”. This is good, but the intermediate generation is not very capable – today – of passing on values, roots, like the elderly. I remember in the other diocese, when several times I said to the young people: “Shall we go do something? Shall we go to this rest home and play the guitar to help the elderly?”. “Father, how boring. Let us go for a little while...”. The young people went there, began with the guitar, and the elderly who had been sleeping began to wake up, to ask questions: the young people to the elderly, the elderly to the young people. In the end they did not want to leave. But what was the allure of the elderly? The roots! Because the elderly brought to life the values of their history, of their personality, values that are a pledge to go forward. This is why root values are important – I am using your word: it is really important.

Then, a second thing is one's identity. We cannot create a culture of dialogue if we do not have identity, because the dialogue would be like water that ebbs away. With my identity I dialogue with you who

have your identity, and we both move forward. But it is important to be aware of *my* identity and to know who *I* am and that I am different from others. There are people who do not know what their identity is and live *à la mode*; they have no inner light: they live off fireworks that last five minutes and then go out. To know one's identity. This is very important. Why did you have this or the other reaction? “Because this is how I am...”: to know your identity, your history, your membership in a people. We are not mushrooms born alone. We are people born into a family, a people, and many times, this liquid culture makes us forget that we belong to a people. One criticism I will make is the lack of patriotism. Patriotism is not just going to sing the national anthem or to pay homage to the flag: patriotism is belonging to a land, to a history, to a culture ... and this is identity. Identity means membership. One cannot have identity without membership. If I want to know who I am, I must ask myself the question: “To whom do I belong?”.

And the third thing: at the beginning you spoke about a multiethnic and multicultural society. Let us thank God for this! Let us thank God, because dialogue among cultures, among people, among ethnicities is a richness.... Once I heard a man, a father of a family, who was happy when his children played with other people's children, of another culture ... people whom perhaps we underestimate and also scorn, but why? Perhaps your children will not grow up sheerly in your race? “Father, what is more pure than distilled water?” – a man once said to me. “But to me ... I do not taste the flavour of distilled water ... it does not help to quench my thirst”. The water of life, of this multiethnicity, of this multiculturalism. Do not be afraid. And I am touching a wound here: do not be afraid of *migrants*. Migrants are those who always bring us richness. Even Europe was made by migrants! Barbarians, Celts ... all these who came from the North and brought cultures; this is how Europe expanded, with the juxtaposition of cultures. But today, pay attention to this: today there is the temptation to build a culture of walls, to raise walls, walls in the heart, walls on the land in order to impede this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And those who raise a wall, who build a wall, will end up a slave within the walls he has built, without horizons. Because he lacks this otherness. “But Father, do we

have to welcome all migrants?”. The heart open to welcome, first and foremost. If I have a racist heart, I must really examine why and convert. Second: migrants must be *received, accompanied, integrated*; so they may receive our values and we may know theirs, the exchange of values. But in order to integrate, government leaders must do the math: “But my country has the capacity to integrate only this”. Dialogue with other countries and try to find solutions together. This is the beauty of human generosity: to welcome in order to become richer. Richer in culture, richer in growth. But building walls is not helpful.

A short time ago I quoted that beautiful phrase of Ivo Andrić in the novel “*The Bridge on the Drina*”, when he speaks of bridges and says that bridges are something so indescribable and so great that they are angels, they are not human things. He says this: “The bridge was made by God from angels' wings so that men can communicate”. The greatness of building bridges with people is for communication, and we grow with communication. Instead, closing off within ourselves leads us to be non-communicators, to be “distilled water”, without strength. This is why I tell you: “teach young people, help young people to grow in culture and in encounter, to be capable of encountering different people, differences, and to grow with differences: this is how we grow, with comparison, with good comparison.”.

There is another thing underlying what you are saying: today in this western world of ours another culture has really grown: the culture of indifference. The indifference that comes from relativism: mine is mine, period; and from the abolishment of all certainty. The culture of indifference is a non-creative culture, which does not allow you to grow; however culture must always be interested in the values, in the histories of others. And this culture of indifference tends to extinguish the person as an autonomous, thinking being, so as to dominate and drown him. Be attentive to this culture of indifference. Integralism, fundamentalism, and the sectarian spirit derive from this. This, more or less, we must consider: an open culture that permits us to look at a foreigner, a migrant, a member of another culture as a person to be *listened to*, considered and appreciated. Thank you.

[Giulia Missaglia, special education teacher] Good morning, Holy Father! My name is Giulia. I am a former student and for five years I have been a high school teacher at the Collegio San Carlo. In my years of training I met people who were able to guide me and support me on a journey of free personal and emotional growth. The vocation for teaching arose in me thanks to the passion I saw in the eyes of the educators who accompanied me on this journey. My greatest desire is one day to also be able to be for my children, what [teachers] have represented for me. Today at school I am also the special education teacher for Stella, a sweet girl who is now here with us. In my direct experience with her I have

been able to meet the fragility and vulnerability of a certainly more “uphill” life than that of other people, but of great strength, courage and dignity, which inspires in those around her respect and admiration and, hopefully, ever greater inclusion. Unfortunately, not all of this always happens; in a society like the present one, where there is increasingly less time, where it is accelerated, convoluted, I believe the task of us educators is above all that of helping young people to still recognize the value of meeting with others, of welcoming those who, for whatever reason, are different from us, but as such, are a resource for us, a source from which to draw. In order to do this I think it is essential to transmit the value of time to young people. Encounter, in order to be authentic and sincere, requires it, demands it, just as it requires caretaking, protection, “support” and also effort, because above all it challenges us and demands that we allow ourselves to be challenged. We ask you Holy Father, how can we educators be an example to our students and witnesses to this noble but equally difficult task? Thank you.

Thank you! The key phrase is “witness and support”. One cannot give support without – I will use an Argentinian expression – “*putting all the meat on the grill*”. If you want to support someone, not only must you give it your all; even more: you must put everything on the line! This is witness. And there, with witness, one supports, one gives support, true witness. I spoke of distilled water; I will also say: a true educator cannot be “distilled”, something created in a laboratory. A teacher must be challenged by life and also – I will say something else that is used as an expression here in Italy too – “*get your hands dirty*”, “*roll up your sleeves*” with reality. Witness is not being afraid of reality: put everything on the line! This is important. And then support. With this witness you will not just give advice and then go home. Stella – for example – or many young people will feel that behind the words, behind the advice, there is something else first: there is the support of witness. I say to the educator who is not able to bear witness: “Either convert or choose another career, more scientific, more in the laboratory”. But to teach without witness does not work, and to educate with a poor witness is bad, because it does a lot of harm.

Then another thing. Support also calls for “loving kindness”. One cannot educate without love. You cannot teach words without gestures, and the first gesture is the caress: to caress hearts, caress souls. And what is the language of the caress? Persuasion. One teaches with the patience of persuasion. Witness, loving kindness, caresses, persuasion. Now you understand what it means to “*put all the meat on the grill*”.

Then a little thing, which perhaps will help you to not confuse, thinking about education. To educate is to introduce to life, and the greatness of life is putting methods into action. May you teach young people to put methods into action and not to take up space! People who are

Holy Father's Prayer Intentions for the Year 2020

# Entrusted to the Worldwide Prayer Network

*The following is the English text of the intentions Pope Francis entrusted to the Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostolate of Prayer) for the year 2020. Throughout the year, each month is dedicated to an intention for evangelization or to a universal intention.*



## JANUARY

Prayer intention for evangelization – *Promotion of World Peace*

We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

## FEBRUARY

Universal prayer intention – *Listen to the Migrants' Cries*

We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sis-

ters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.

## MARCH

Prayer intention for evangelization – *Catholics in China*

We pray that the Church in China may persevere in its faithfulness to the Gospel and grow in unity.

## APRIL

Universal prayer intention – *Freedom from Addiction*

We pray that those suffering from addiction may be helped and accompanied.

## MAY

Prayer intention for evangelization – *For Deacons*

We pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

## JUNE

Prayer intention for evangelization – *The Way of the Heart*

We pray that all those who suffer may find their way in life, allowing themselves to be touched by the Heart of Jesus.

## JULY

Universal prayer intention – *Our Families*

We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

## AUGUST

Universal prayer intention – *The Maritime World*

We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.

## SEPTEMBER

Universal prayer intention – *Respect for the Planet's Resources*

We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

## OCTOBER

Prayer intention for evangelization – *The Laity's Mission in the Church*

We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

## NOVEMBER

Universal prayer intention – *Artificial Intelligence*

We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

## DECEMBER

Prayer intention for evangelization – *For a life of prayer*

We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ may be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

Vatican, 15 January 2019

*Francis*

## To the Collegio San Carlo community of Milan

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taught to take up space end up only competing to get a place. Those who are taught to put methods into action play for time, not just for the moment, not for space. Time is superior to space. May you play for time, put methods into action. These are the things that come to mind to tell you: support, closeness, witness, loving kindness, and putting methods into practice, teaching how to put methods into action.

[Marta Bucci, Parent – school board president] Your Holiness, we have had the grace to become parents; we have been entrusted with precious lives to protect and love and we thank the Lord for this every day, even if it is not always easy. We want to ask you, as parents, for help on this day of celebration: we want to ask you for three words. A word for our little ones, for when in the evening we hug them tight, trying to make their fears disappear, for when they feel helpless and frightened because the world outside, growing, becomes bigger and bigger, for when they ask to be reassured and comforted because they are learning that everything does not always end well. A word for our young boys and girls, for when we see them waking up, smiling and melancholy, strong and weak at the same

time, for when in their tiring navigation through many emotions, they ask us to help them really understand who they are, for when they would rather not turn away but feel that their heart is not yet so strong, for when they would like to look up to the heavens but are not sure that they too have wings. But above all a word for us parents, for when we will have to let them journey alone in the world, to be able to stay one step behind, to be able to understand their choices even if they will be different from those imagined, to remind us that those talents that we have lovingly safeguarded are not ours, but belong to our children and to all humanity, to be able to instill in them that courage that we have sometimes lacked, to be able to overcome our resignation and encourage them to believe that the world can still change.

Thank you. Three words. It is not easy. You used a very beautiful word: "hug". And with the littlest ones, closeness. Remember what I said before about 'why'. They are closer to the 'why age'; they have somewhat outgrown it but they need the closeness of the gaze. To embrace means closeness. Closeness with the little ones. Because they also need a closer guide, so they do not fall down, at least so they do not slip, things that happen when people walk. For young people I

will say the opposite: encourage them to go forward, to walk, not alone, always as a group. And in the same way as with the little ones: with closeness you will try to keep them from falling down; with young people, let them fall, so they may learn, but so they may know that falling is not a failure. It is a test in life. But then speak, help them to pick themselves up. There is an alpine song which, to me, says a lot. You who are from those parts, perhaps you know it: "In the art of climbing the important thing is not avoiding the fall but not staying down". Teach this gesture. Consider that it is acceptable to look down on a person only to help him get up! Otherwise looking down on a person from above is never acceptable, never! But at that moment it is acceptable. You young people, go forward, not alone, but as a group. There is a famous expression: "If you want to hurry up to arrive first, you go alone. But if you want to go safely, you go as a group". Always the community, always the group, friends, so they may support one another. And about falling down: what I have already said. Then for you parents, there is an expression that psychologists use often and that I like very much, and also for you educators, the experience that teach-

ers have the last day, when they leave definitively: "empty nest syndrome", as psychologists call it when one at home gets married, the other one gets married and the couple ends up alone, as at the beginning of life but alone, the "empty nest". You parents and teachers, do not be afraid of solitude! It is a fruitful solitude. And think about the many sons and daughters who are growing up and are building other nests, cultural, scientific, of political, social communion. With the little ones, closeness, to help them walk, so they do not fall down; with young people, encourage them to go forward and if they fall, to pick themselves up, or help them get up, always remembering that it is the only acceptable way to look down on someone from above; and you [parents], with that nostalgic but beautiful heartache for the "empty nest": take strength to go forward, because the family nest will be filled again with grandchildren; and with you teachers, it will be filled with others who come. Thank you very much for what you do. Now I invite you to pray together for one another and also pray for me, because work always has difficulties, each person has his or her own.

Let us pray for one another.  
[Hail Mary...]

To Custodian of the Sacred Convent of Franciscan Friars in Assisi on the King of Jordan receiving the "Lamp of Peace"

## A sign of hope for the Middle East

TRACEY MCCLURE

"The hope is that we can open our hearts, perhaps, more than our minds". Fr Mauro Gambetti, Custodian of the Sacred Convent of Franciscan Friars in Assisi, Italy, expressed this wish amid renewed tension in the Middle East and ahead of Pope Francis' 30-31 March visit to Morocco. In an international award ceremony in Assisi on Friday, 29 March, Fr Gambetti honoured King Abdullah II of Jordan with the "Lamp of Peace" of Saint Francis. The Franciscan priest told *L'Osservatore Romano* that the King had earned this recognition for his generous reception of millions of refugees, and his commitment to human rights, interreligious harmony and freedom of worship. Attended by, among others, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, the awards ceremony highlighted dialogue between peoples and religions.

*Assisi is traditionally a place of dialogue among peoples and religions. In this context, what importance does this award have in the year in which we celebrate the eighth centenary of the meeting between Francis and the Sultan al-Malik-al-Kamil?*

I believe the importance is linked to the historical moment we are experiencing. This offer of peace becomes a sort of memorial of that encounter between Francis and the Sultan, refashioning it in a very positive light, to try to build bridges, to try to experience the proximity that can redirect life, reorient choices, overcoming differences, going towards a future where dreams of peace and communion can also be shared.

*What does the "Lamp of Peace" symbolize?*

The Lamp of Peace is a reminder of that lamp that is always lit on the



tomb of Saint Francis, patron saint of Italy, and every year the ritual of lighting this lamp is repeated on the occasion of its feast, with the pilgrimage of an Italian region that brings the oil to keep this flame alive on behalf of all the municipalities of Italy, so as to nurture prayer, also to nurture the faith that animates our people. A faith that is rooted in the history of Christianity and that continues to look towards the future with hope, the hope that it will be a bright future, a future full of harmony, full of serenity and full of joy for all. The lamp of peace somewhat evokes all these meanings, that is, it aims to be a prayer of thanksgiving raised to God for what he gives us, in particular for the gift of meeting each other, meeting as brothers and sisters, and as a sign of hope and thus, encouragement towards communion, towards unity.

*Is it significant – or was it a coincidence – that the awarding of the prize takes place on the eve of the Pope's trip to Abu Dhabi where, together with the*

*Great Imam of Al-Azhar, he signed an important document on fraternity?*

They are those fortuitous and at the same time, providential coincidences. We didn't plan it with the knowledge of these other events, but in the end we found ourselves seeing the very same values sprout up, the same meanings that we too try to promote. Then, to see them sprout thanks to the Pontiff, can only make us happy. Indeed, we feel affirmed by him and we support him in every way, as far as we can, so that this work

that he is also doing with regards to interreligious dialogue, may bear full fruit for the Church and for humanity.

*This year, the Lamp of Peace was awarded to the King of Jordan, who has been very committed to peace and fraternity, and also to welcoming millions of refugees, despite the economic and social problems that this entails. Specifically, what are the reasons for the award?*

They are precisely the ones you mentioned. Certainly, the reception Jordan has been offering to millions of refugees, not only in the last few years, but also in the last decades. Alongside this, there is King Abdullah's commitment to the promotion of human rights, to interreligious harmony. He also works from within for education reform, for the protection of freedom of worship. In short, there are a whole series of government actions that we consider enlightened and enlightening. In a way, the wish to honour him and in some way also to thank him, came to us almost spontaneously.

*Christians are well received in Jordan....*

That is true. There are many testimonies to this from Christians in Jordan; not only to the protection of their freedom, but I would also say, in connection with respect and also with the appreciation of the differences that clearly exist between the Christian and Islamic worlds. However, the King is truly exemplary in his actions. For example, one of the things he did was to work towards the protection of places of worship: both Muslim and Christian places, sacred places. One of the actions he took was to restore, to create a park in the place where the Baptism of Jesus took place, in the Jordan Valley, north of the Dead Sea, a place which, following these interventions, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

*King Abdullah II is not the first leader of the Middle East to be honoured with this award. In the past, Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas also received it. In these days of renewed tensions in the Holy Land, what message do you hope it will bring to the region?*

The hope is that we can open our hearts, perhaps, more than our minds. In a sense, minds may take longer to open up, but it is the hearts that I truly hope will feel a shudder, a shudder of openness, an attitude of openness toward others. Thinking – indeed desiring – to promote love, to promote the good beyond each one's beliefs. We hope that there may be a spark of that love that ignites hearts, ignites the desire to meet each other precisely beyond the barriers, surmounting the fences, meeting each other a little farther afield, where perhaps we could also try to reason, try to understand each other reciprocally and also to make some choices for each others' good, for the good of all.

## Peace is possible in South Sudan

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bring life and abundant growth. Finally, I confirm my desire and hope that soon, by God's grace, I will be able to visit your beloved nation, together with my dear brothers here present: the Archbishop of Canterbury and the former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

*A final prayer*

4. I would like to conclude this meditation with a prayer, following the invitation of Saint Paul. The Apostle wrote: "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and

all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Tim 2:1-2).

Holy Father, God of infinite goodness, you call us to be renewed in your Spirit, and you show your power above all in the grace of forgiveness. We recognize your fatherly love when, in a world torn by dissonance and discord, you touch human hearts and open them to reconciliation. How often have men and women broken your covenant! Yet, instead of abandoning them, you renewed your bond with them through Jesus, your Son and our Redeemer: a bond so firm that it can never be broken.

We ask you, then, to touch with the power of the Spirit the depths of every human heart, so that enemies will be open to dialogue, adversaries will join hands and peoples will meet in harmony. By your gift, Father, may the whole-hearted search for peace resolve disputes, may love conquer hatred and may revenge be disarmed by forgiveness, so that, relying solely on your mercy, we may find our way back to you. Make us open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, so that we may live a new life in Christ, in everlasting praise of your name and in the service of our brothers and sisters (cf. *Prefaces of Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation I and II*). Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters, may peace be with us, and may it dwell in our hearts forever!

And to you three, who have signed the peace Agreement, I ask, as a brother: remain in peace. I ask you this wholeheartedly. Let us go forwards. There will be many problems, but do not be fearful, go forwards, solve the problems. You have begun a process: may it finish well. There will be disagreements between you both, yes. These also should remain in the office, but before the people, hands united. In this way, as ordinary citizens you will become Fathers of the Nation. Allow me to ask you this from the heart and with my deepest sentiments.

## ANGELUS

*The Gospel episode of the adulteress invites each one of us "to be aware that we are sinners, and to let fall from our hands the stones of denigration, of condemnation, of gossip, which at times we would like to cast at others". Pope Francis emphasized this on Sunday, 7 April, as he addressed the faithful who had gathered for the Angelus in Saint Peter's Square. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he shared in Italian.*



# Let us drop the stones of denigration

The Pope speaks about the adulterous woman

Dear Brothers and Sisters,  
Good morning!

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, the liturgy presents us the episode of the adulterous woman (cf. Jn 8:1-11). In it, there are two contrasting attitudes: that of the scribes and the Pharisees on the one hand, and that of Jesus on the other. The former want to condemn the woman because they feel they are the guardians of the Law and of its faithful implementation. Jesus, on the other hand, wants to save her because he personifies God's mercy which redeems by forgiving and renews by reconciling.

Let us thus look at the event. While Jesus is teaching in the Temple, the scribes and the Pharisees bring him a woman who has been caught in adultery. They place her in the middle and ask Jesus if he should stone her as the Law of Moses prescribes. The Evangelist explains that they asked the question in order "to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him" (v. 6). One might think that this was their purpose: behold the iniquity of these people – a 'no' to the stoning would have been a pretext to accuse Jesus of disobeying the Law; a 'yes' instead, to report him to the Roman Authority which had reserved such sentences to itself and did not permit lynching by the people. And Jesus must respond.

Jesus' interrogators are confined to narrow legalism and want to oblige the Son of God to conform to their perspective of judgment and condemnation. However, he did not come into the world to judge and condemn, but rather to save

and offer people a new life. And how does Jesus react to this test? First of all, he remains silent for some time and then he bends down to write on the ground with his finger, almost as if to remind them that the only Legislator and Judge is God who had inscribed the Law on stone. And then he says: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). In this way, Jesus appeals to the conscience of those men: they felt they were the 'champions of justice', but he reminds them of their own condition as sinners, due to which they cannot claim the right to life or death over one of their fellow human beings. At that point, one after the other, beginning with the eldest – that is, those who were more fully aware of their own failings – they all went away, and desisted from stoning the woman. This episode also invites each of us to be aware that we are sinners, and to let fall from our hands the stones of denigration, of condemnation, of gossip, which at times we would like to

cast at others. When we speak ill of others, we are throwing stones, we are like these people.

And in the end only Jesus and the woman are left there in the middle: "misery with mercy", as Saint Augustine says (*In Joh* 33:5). Jesus is the only one without fault, the only one who could throw a stone at her, but he does not do so, because God "does not want the death of the wicked but that the wicked convert and live" (cf. Ez 33:11). And Jesus sends the woman on her way with these wonderful words: "Go and do not sin again" (Jn 8:11). And thus Jesus opens a new path to her, created by mercy, a path that requires her commitment not to sin again. It is an invitation that applies to each one of us. When Jesus forgives us, he always opens a new path on which to go forward. In this Lenten Season, we are called to recognize ourselves as sinners and to ask God for forgiveness. And, in its turn, while forgiveness reconciles us and gives us peace, it lets us start again, renewed. Every

true conversion is oriented toward a new future, a new life, a beautiful life, a life free from sin, a generous life. Let us not be afraid to ask Jesus for forgiveness because he opens the door to this new life for us. May the Virgin Mary help us to bear witness to all of the merciful love of God, who through Jesus, forgives us and renders our lives new, by always offering us new possibilities.

*After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:*

Dear brothers and sisters, I offer a cordial greeting to all of you present, the faithful from Rome and from many parts of the world. Today, there are many school students here!

I greet the Spanish students from La Coruña and from Albacete; those from Telfs, Austria and from Colmar, France.

I greet the students from Bologna, Nicosia and Genoa, as well as those from the La Salle schools in Turin and Vercelli who are commemorating the third centenary of the death of Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle.

I offer a special thought to the confirmands from Settignano, Scandicci and those from the Diocese of Saluzzo, accompanied by their Bishop, Cristiano Bodo. May you be courageous witnesses to Christ and the Gospel! With Confirmation, we must always grow in courage. May you always be courageous! I greet the 14-year-olds from the *Romana Vittoria* Deanery of Milan, and the faithful from Pescara, Naples and Terni.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.



Nicolas Poussin  
"Christ and the Woman taken in Adultery"