

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH*Unicuique suum Non praevalent*

Fifty-second year, number 17 (2594)

Vatican City

Friday, 26 April 2019

Pope's sorrow and prayers for victims of massacre in Sri Lanka

Acts of terrorism are never justifiable

To remain human

*And never for a single moment
Renounce your true self.
But be alive, and only alive,
Only alive, to the end.*

(Boris Pasternak)

253 people were killed and over 500 wounded by the bombs that exploded in three churches and three hotels in three different cities on Easter Sunday. In Saint Sebastian Church alone – in Negombo, just north of the capital of Colombo – more than 100 people were killed. These are the figures, in their eloquent callousness.

The day of the most important celebration for Christians and the place of worship were transformed into a moment and place of death and terror. The paradox is atrocious: on the same day in which some men invoke God's name to pray to him and ask for peace, other men use that same name to justify their homicidal act. Is it the same God? The verb used reveals the significance of this contradiction: on the one hand "to invoke", and on the other "to use" – herein lies the difference. God is the loftiest horizon, beyond the reach of our hands, a horizon that allows the world and mankind to be seen in another light. He is not, however, an object that can be used and manipulated. The view from God's perspective creates a disarming effect; the illusion of possessing God ends

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



On Easter Sunday morning, 21 April, a series of vile terrorist attacks was carried out in three Christian churches and three hotels in Sri Lanka, killing 253 people and wounding some 500 more. (Initial reports had set the death toll at 359, a number reduced days later by the country's Health Ministry.) Apprised of the deadly massacre at the end of his *Urbi et Orbi* Message that morning, Pope Francis spoke of "the grave attacks which today, the very

day of Easter, caused grief and suffering". He expressed his "heartfelt closeness to the Christian community, struck while gathered in prayer, and to all the victims of such cruel violence", while entrusting "to the Lord those who were tragically killed", and praying "for the wounded and all those suffering from this tragic event". The Holy Father continued to express his concern at Monday's Regina Coeli and on social media in the days that followed.

Holy Week and Easter celebrations



PAGES 3-12

At the General Audience the Holy Father continues catechesis on the Lord's Prayer

The power of forgiveness

"Jesus includes the power of forgiveness in human relationships". Pope Francis emphasized this at the General Audience on Wednesday, 24 April, addressing the faithful gathered in Saint Peter's Square. Returning to the series of catecheses on the Lord's Prayer, the Pontiff focused on the phrase "as we also have forgiven our debtors", inspired by the passage from the Gospel of Matthew. The following is a translation of the Pope's catechesis, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today we shall complete the catechesis on the fifth request of the "Lord's Prayer", by focusing on the expression "as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12). We have seen that it is actually human to be debtors before God: we have received everything from him, in terms of nature and grace. Our life has not only been wanted, but has been loved by God. Truly, there is no room for presumption when we fold our hands to pray. In the Church

there is no 'self-made man', men who have created themselves. We are all debtors to God, and to all those people who have given us favourable living conditions. Our identity is built first and foremost with the good received. The first is life.

One who prays learns to say "thank you". And so often we forget to say "thank you". We are selfish. One who prays learns to say "thank you" and to ask God to be benevolent to him or her. As much as we may strive, there is always an inexhaustible debt to God which

we can never pay back: he loves us infinitely more than we love him. And then, as much as we try to live according to Christian Teaching, in our life there will always be something for which to ask forgiveness. Let us think about days spent lazily, about moments in which rancour has filled our heart, and so on. These unfortunately not rare experiences are what make us implore: "Lord, Father, forgive us our debts". Thus we ask God for forgiveness.

On close reflection, the invocation could well be limited to this first part; that would have been nice. But instead Jesus joins it to a second expression that forms one with the first. The vertical relationship with benevolence on God's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

VATICAN BULLETIN



CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of Montpellier, France, Fr Alain Guellec, Vicar General of Quimper, France, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Senez, (17 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Guellec, 58, was born in Saint-Guénolé, France. He was ordained a priest on 17 June 1990. He holds licences in English philology and in patristic theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: diocesan delegate for catechesis; diocesan delegate for the new beliefs and sects; delegate of the apostolic administrator (*sede vacante*); profes-

or of patrology at the interdiocesan seminary of Rennes, and moderator of the episcopal Curia of Quimper.

The Holy Father appointed as Auxiliary Bishop of San Juan de Cuyo, Argentina Fr Carlos María Domínguez, OAR, Provincial Prior of Santo Tomás de Villanueva, Spain, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Vita (22 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Domínguez, 53, was born in San Martín, Argentina. He was ordained a priest on 13 March 1993. He holds a licence in pastoral theology. He has served in parish ministry and as: director of a College of Augustinian Recollects; voca-

tional promoter; prior of the San Ezequiel Seminary; assessor of the commission of the pastoral ministry for youth of the Episcopal Conference of Argentina; provincial of the Order of Augustinian Recollects at the Augustinian Sagrado Corazón Seminary and College in Guadaluajara, Spain.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Théophile Kaboy Ruboneka of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (23 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Willy Ngumbi Ngengele, M. Afr., as Bishop of Goma. Until now he has served as Bishop of Kindu, Democratic Republic of Congo (23 Apr.).

Bishop Ngumbi Ngengele, 54, was born in Bujumbura, Democratic

Republic of Congo. He was ordained a priest on 1 August 1993. He was ordained a bishop on 22 July 2007, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Kindu.

VATICAN CITY STATE

The Holy Father appointed as Advisors to Vatican City State Sr Alessandra Smerilli, FMA, professor of political economy at the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences "Auxilium", and Mr Antonio Rizzi, full professor of private law at "Tor Vergata" University of Rome (17 Apr.).

NECROLOGY

Bishop Ronald Paul Herzog, Bishop emeritus of Alexandria, USA, at age 76 (12 Apr.)

Bishop Simon Kaipuram, CM, of Balasore, India, at age 65 (22 Apr.)

The power of forgiveness

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

part refracts and is called to translate into a new relationship with our brothers and sisters: a horizontal relationship. The good God invites all of us to be good. The two parts of the invocation are linked together with a stern conjunction: we ask the Lord to forgive our debts, our sins, 'as' we forgive our friends, the people who live with us, our neighbours, the people who have done something bad to us.

Every Christian knows that forgiveness of sins exists for him or her. We all know this: God forgives everything and forgives always. When Jesus describes the face of God to his disciples, he outlines it with expressions of tender mercy. He says that there is more joy in heaven for one sinner who repents than for a multitude of righteous people who need no repentance (cf. Lk 15:7, 10). Nothing in the Gospels lets one suspect that God would not forgive the sins of whoever is ready and asks to be embraced again.

But the Grace of God, so abundant, is always demanding. Those who have received much must learn to give much, and not to keep only for themselves what they have received. Those who have received much must learn to give much. It is not by chance that the Gospel of Matthew, immediately after having given the text of the "Our Father", of the seven expressions used pauses to emphasize precisely that of fraternal forgiveness: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly

Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mt 6:14-15). But this is powerful! I recall: several times I have heard people say: "I will never forgive that person! I will never forgive that person for what he did to me!". But if you do not forgive, God will not forgive you. You close the door. Let us consider whether we are able to forgive or if we do not forgive.

When I was in the other Diocese, a distressed priest told me that he had gone to administer the Last Rites to an elderly woman who was on her deathbed. The poor woman could not speak. And the priest asked her: "Madam, do you repent of your sins?". The woman said "yes"; she could not confess them, but she said yes. It is sufficient. And then again: "Do you forgive others?". And the woman said, on her deathbed: "No". The priest was upset. If you do not forgive, God will not forgive you. Let us consider, who we are here, whether we forgive or whether we are able to forgive. "Father, I cannot do it, because those people treated me so harshly". But if you cannot do it, ask the Lord to give you the strength to do so: Lord, help me to forgive.

Here again, we find the connection between love of God and love of neighbour. Love attracts love; forgiveness attracts forgiveness. Again in Matthew we find a very strong

parable dedicated to fraternal forgiveness (cf. 18:21-35). Let us listen to it.

There was a servant who had contracted an enormous debt with his king: 10,000 talents! An impossible amount to repay; I do not know how much that would be today, but hundreds of millions. However, a miracle happened, and that servant received not a deferred payment but full commutation. An un-hoped for grace! But here, immediately thereafter, that servant got angry with a fellow servant who owed him 100 denari – something minor – and, although this is an attainable sum, he would not accept excuses or pleas. Therefore, in the end, the master called for him and had him condemned. Because if you do not strive to forgive, you will not be forgiven; if you do not strive to love, neither will you be loved.

Jesus includes the power of forgiveness in human relationships. In life not everything is resolved with justice. No. Especially where one must put a stop to evil, someone must love beyond what is due, in order to recommence a relationship of grace. Evil knows revenge, and if it is not stopped, it risks spreading, suffocating the entire world.

Jesus replaced the law of retaliation – what you have done to me, I will do to you in return – with the *law of love*: what God has done for me, I shall do for you in return! Let us consider today, in this most beautiful week of Easter, whether I

am able to forgive. And if I do not feel I can, I must ask the Lord to give me the grace to forgive, because knowing how to forgive is a grace.

God gives every Christian the grace to write a story of good in the life of his or her brothers and sisters, especially of those who have done something regrettable or wrong. With a word, an embrace, a smile, we can pass on to others the most precious thing we have received. What is the most precious thing we have received? Forgiveness, which we too must be able to give to others.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Finland, The Netherlands, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and the United States of America. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you all!

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

I invoke upon everyone the joy and hope that flow from the Easter of Christ. May you have the experience of the living Jesus, in order to receive the gift of his peace and become his witnesses in the world.

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

WEEKLY EDITION  IN ENGLISH
Unicusque suum  Non praevalentibus

Vatican City
cd.english@ossrom.va
www.osservatoreromano.va

ANDREA MONDA
Editor-in-Chief

Giuseppe Fiorentino
Assistant Editor

Editorial office
via del Pellegrino, 00120 Vatican City
telephone +39066989300, fax +390669883675

TIPOGRAFIA VATICANA EDITRICE
L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

Photo Service
photo@ossrom.va www.photo.va

Advertising Agency
Il Sole 24 Ore S.p.A.
System Comunicazione Pubblicitaria
Via Monte Rosa 91, 20149 Milano
segreteria@redirezionesystem@ilsole24ore.com

Subscription rates: Italy - Vatican: € 28,00; Europe: € 100,00 - US\$ 148,00 € 80,00; Latin America, Africa, Asia: € 100,00 - US\$ 160,00 - £ 88,00; Oceania, North America: € 162,00 - £ 130,00.
Management Office: phone +390669899480; fax +390669885164; e-mail subscriptions@ossrom.va.
For India: The weekly English Edition of L'Osservatore Romano is published and distributed in India by Camel International Publishing House, Cotton Hill, Tivandrum - 695 014, Kerala-India; phone: +9147377253; fax: +9147378899; e-mail: cip@ivd.in; kate@ivd.in; kate@ivd.in; camelpublications.com.
For North America: L'Osservatore Romano (USPS 026-610) is published fifty times per year (weekly, except third week in August and last week in December) by Our Sunday Visitor, L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46720. Periodicals Postage Pending at Huntington, IN, and additional mailing offices, USA - phone: 800-238-2440 ext. 7; fax: 866-891-7390 - e-mail: osvsales@ossrom.com.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Our Sunday Visitor, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46720

Anointed to anoint

Pope Francis celebrates Chrism Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica

"We have been anointed to anoint". Pope Francis shared this reminder with the nearly 2,000 priests who concelebrated the Chrism Mass with him in the Vatican Basilica on Thursday morning, 18 April. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily.

The Gospel of Luke, which we just heard, makes us relive the excitement of that moment when the Lord made his own the prophecy of Isaiah, as he read it solemnly in the midst of his people. The synagogue in Nazareth was filled with his relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, friends... and not only. All had their eyes fixed on him. The Church always has her eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, whom the Spirit sends to anoint God's people.

The Gospels frequently present us with this image of the Lord in the midst of a crowd, surrounded and pressed by people who approach him with their sick ones, who ask him to cast out evil spirits, who hear his teachings and accompany him on the way. "My sheep hear my

midst like a shepherd among his flock – something happens. Deep within, people feel the desire to follow Jesus, amazement wells up, discernment grows apace.

I would like to reflect with you on these three graces that characterize the relationship between Jesus and the crowd.

The grace of following

Saint Luke says that the crowds "looked for Jesus" (4:42) and "travelled with him" (14:25). They "pressed in on him" and "surrounded him" (8:42-45); they "gathered to hear him" (5:15). Their "following" is something completely unexpected, unconditional and full of affection. It contrasts with the small-mindedness of the disciples, whose attitude towards people verges on cruelty when they suggest to the Lord that he send them away, so that they can get something to eat. Here, I believe, was the beginning of clericalism: in this desire to be assured of a meal and personal comfort without any concern for the people. The Lord cut short that temptation: "You, give them something to eat!" was Jesus' response. "Take care of the people!"

The grace of amazement

The second grace that the crowd receives when it follows Jesus is that of joy-filled amazement. People were amazed by Jesus (Lk 11:14), by his miracles, but above all by his very person. People loved to meet him along the way, to receive his blessing and to bless him, like the woman in the midst of the crowd who blessed his Mother. The Lord himself was amazed by people's faith; he rejoiced and he lost no opportunity to speak about it.

The grace of discernment

The third grace that people receive is that of discernment. "The crowds found out [where Jesus had gone], and followed him" (Lk 9:11). They "were astounded by his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority" (Mt 7:28-29; cf. Lk 5:26). Christ, the Word of God come in the flesh, awakens in people this charism of discernment, which is certainly not the discernment of those who specialize in disputed questions. When the Pharisees and the teachers of the law debated with him, what people discerned was Jesus' authority, the power of his teaching to touch their hearts, and the fact that evil spirits obeyed him (leaving momentarily speechless those who tried to trap him by their questions; the people liked that; they were able to distinguish this and they liked it).



voice. I know them and they follow me" (Jn 10:27-28).

The Lord never lost that direct contact with people. Amid those crowds, he always kept the grace of closeness with the people as a whole, and with each individual. We see this throughout his public life, and so it was from the beginning: the radiance of the Child gently attracted shepherds, kings and elderly dreamers like Simeon and Anna. So it was on the cross: his Heart draws all people to himself (Jn 12:32): Veronicas, Cyreneans, thieves, centurions...

The term "crowd" is not disparaging. Perhaps to some people's ears, it can evoke a faceless, nameless throng... But in the Gospel we see that when the crowd interacts with the Lord – who stands in their

Let us take a closer look at the way the Gospel views the crowd. Luke points out four large groups who are the preferred beneficiaries of the Lord's anointing: the poor, the blind, the oppressed and captives. He speaks of them in general terms, but then we are glad to see that, in the course of the Lord's life, these anointed ones gradually take on real names and faces. When oil is applied to one part of the body, its beneficial effect is felt throughout the entire body. So too, the Lord, taking up the prophecy of Isaiah, names various "crowds" to whom the Spirit sends him, according to what we may call an "inclusive preferentiality": the grace and the charism given to one individual person or a particular group then redounds, like every action of the Spirit, to the good of all.

The poor (in Greek, *ptochoi*) are those who are bent over, like beggars who bow down and ask for alms. But poor too (*ptochē*) was that widow who anointed with her fingers the two small coins which were all she had to live on that day. *The anointing by the widow to give alms* went unnoticed by the eyes of all except Jesus, who looks kindly on her lowliness. Through her, the Lord can accomplish fully his mission of proclaiming the Gospel to the poor. Paradoxically, the disciples heard the good news that people like her exist. She – the generous woman – could not imagine that she would "make it to the Gospel", that her simple gesture would be recorded in the Gospel. Like all those men and women who are the "saints next door", she lives interiorly the joyful fact that her actions "carry weight" in the Kingdom, and are worth more than all the riches of the world.

The blind are represented by one of the most likable figures in the Gospel: Bartimaeus (cf. Mt 10:46-52), the blind beggar who regained his sight and, from that moment on, only had eyes to follow Jesus on his journey. *The anointing of the gaze!* Our gaze, to which the eyes of Jesus can restore the brightness which only gratuitous love can give, the brightness daily stolen from us by the manipulative and banal images with which the world overwhelms us.

To refer to *the oppressed* (in Greek, *tethrausmenoi*), Luke uses a word that contains the idea of "trauma". It is enough to evoke the parable – perhaps Luke's favourite – of the Good Samaritan, who anoints with oil and binds the wounds (*traumata*: Lk 10:34) of the man who had been beaten by robbers and left lying at the side of the road. *The anointing of the wounded flesh of Christ!* In that anointing we find the remedy for all those traumas that leave individuals, families and entire peoples ignored, excluded and unwanted, on the sidelines of history.

The captives are prisoners of war (in Greek, *aichmalotai*), those who had been led at the point of a spear (*aichmē*). Jesus would use the same



word in speaking of the taking of Jerusalem, his beloved city, and the deportation of its people (Lk 21:24). Our cities today are taken prisoner not so much at spear point, but by more subtle means of ideological colonization.

Only *the anointing of culture*, built up by the labour and the art of our forebears, can free our cities from these new forms of slavery.

As for us, dear brother priests, we must not forget that our evangelical models are those "people", the "crowd" with its real faces, which the anointing of the Lord raises up and revives. They are the ones who complete and make real the anointing of the Spirit in ourselves; they are the ones whom we have been anointed to anoint. We have been taken from their midst, and we can fearlessly identify with these ordinary people. Each of us has our own story. A little bit of memory will do us much good. They are an image of our soul and an image of the Church. Each of them incarnates the one heart of our people.

We priests are the poor man and we would like to have the heart of the poor widow whenever we give alms, touching the hand of the beggar and looking him or her in the eye. We priests are Bartimaeus, and each morning we get up and pray: "Lord, that I may see". We priests are, in some point of our sinfulness, the man beaten by the robbers. And we want first to be in the compassionate hands of the good Samaritan, in order then to be able to show compassion to others with our own hands.

I confess to you that whenever I confirm and ordain, I like to smear with chrism the foreheads and the hands of those I anoint. In that generous anointing, we can sense that our own anointing is being renewed. I would say this: We are not distributors of bottled oil. We have been anointed to anoint. We anoint by distributing ourselves, distributing our vocation and our heart. When we anoint others, we ourselves are anointed anew by the faith and the

Brothers in service

At Mass "In Coena Domini" Pope Francis washes the feet of 12 inmates

On Holy Thursday afternoon, 18 April, Pope Francis visited a correctional facility in Velletri, a town on the outskirts of Rome, where he presided the Mass of the Lord's Supper and the traditional rite of the washing of feet, which mark the beginning of the Paschal Triduum. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's homily, which he delivered extemporaneously in Italian.



I greet everyone and I thank you for the welcome.

I received a nice letter a few days ago from some of you who are not here today, but who said such beautiful things and I thank them for what they wrote.

I am closely united with everyone in this prayer: with those who are here and with those who are not.

We heard what Jesus did. It is interesting. The Gospel says: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands"; in other words Jesus had all the power, all of it. And then he begins to perform this gesture of washing feet. It is an act that slaves did at that time, because there was no asphalt on the roads and when people arrived, their feet were dusty; when they arrived at a house for a visit or for lunch, there were slaves who washed their feet. And Jesus makes this gesture: he washes feet. He performs the act of slaves: he who was all powerful, he who was Lord, performs this act of slaves. And then he advises everyone: "You also ought to wash one another's feet". That is, serve one another, be brothers in service, not in ambition, as one who dominates others or who oppresses others, no. Be brothers in service. Do you need something, a service? I will do it for

Anointed to anoint

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

affection of our people. We anoint by dirtying our hands in touching the wounds, the sins and the worries of the people. We anoint by perfuming our hands in touching their faith, their hopes, their fidelity and the unconditional generosity of their self-giving, which many significant figures describe as superstition.

The one who learns how to anoint and to bless is thus healed of meanness, abuse and cruelty.

Let us pray, dear brothers; being with Jesus in the midst of our people is the most beautiful place to be. May the Father *renew deep within us the Spirit of holiness*; may he grant that we be one in *imploring his mercy for the people entrusted to our care and for all the world*. In this way, the multitude of the peoples, gathered in Christ, may become the one faithful people of God, which will attain its fullness in the Kingdom (cf. *Prayer of Priestly Ordination*).

you. This is fraternity. Fraternity is humble, always: it is serving. And I will make this gesture – the Church wants the Bishop to do it every year, once a year, at least on Holy Thursday – to imitate Jesus' gesture and also to do good for himself with the example, because the Bishop is not the most important one, but he should be the greatest servant. And each of us must be servants of others.

This is Jesus' rule and the rule of the Gospel: the rule of service, not of dominating, of doing harm, of humiliating others. Service! Once, when the Apostles were arguing amongst themselves, they were debating "which of us is the greatest", Jesus took a child and said: "The child. If your heart is not a childlike heart, you will not be my disciples". A childlike heart, simple, humble but a servant. And there he adds something interesting that we can connect to this gesture today. He says:

"Pay heed: those who are supposed to rule over nations, lord it over them ... but it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be a slave". We too must all be servants. It is true that there are problems in life: we argue amongst ourselves ... but this must be something that passes, something

fleeting, because in our heart there must always be this love of serving others, of being at the service of others.

And may this gesture that I will perform today help us to be greater servants to one another, better friends, more like brothers in service. With these sentiments let us continue the celebration with the washing of feet.



To remain human

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

up in division and opposition. While both spawned by fear and spawning further fear, the madness that occurred in Sri Lanka on Sunday is another step toward the contention and war between religions: just one month ago, on 15 March in Christchurch, New Zealand, 50 people died at the Al Noor Mosque and at the Linwood Islamic Centre, on the day and at the moment of Friday prayer. They are steps that lead to the annihilation of the religions themselves and of what remains of humanity. So what can be done to end this spiral of violence?

After the Regina Coeli on Monday, Pope Francis expressed his hope that everyone would "condemn these never justifiable terrorist acts, inhuman acts". A condemnation that helps us to remain human. In the wake of his predecessors the Pope has for years repeated emphatically that killing in the name of God is blasphemy; it is the greatest offense to God and a betrayal of religion itself. Being united as human beings living under the sun in condemnation of these inhuman acts is the essential knot in weaving a dialogue more essential than ever for building peace.

The dialogue is woven through concrete acts such as that of 4 February in Abu Dhabi, the joint signing of the Document on universal fraternity by the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar which invites us to recognize everyone as brothers with a common origin in God the Father and Creator of the world. It firmly emphasized that "religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions". This was followed by the

request "to stop using religions to incite hatred, violence, extremism and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism and oppression. We ask this on the basis of our common belief in God who did not create men and women to be killed or to fight one another, nor to be tortured or humiliated in their lives and circumstances. God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want His name to be used to terrorize people".

One of the lessons of Benedict XVI which calls for reflection was precisely on this "blind fanaticism", the fruit of the disconnect between religion and reason. However, the relationship between the two is essential for the mutual purification that prevents the very appearance of veneers such as fundamentalism and violence.

Lastly, another lesson which has not yet been learned is on the essence of Christianity which is not a culture and does not identify with any culture nor any particular ethnicity. The fanaticism of fundamentalism and terrorism, purporting to forget the reality of facts and the actual experience of peoples, often identifies Christianity with the West. But the Christianity/West equation does not bear out, because the heart of Christianity is the spiritual message of the Gospel which is addressed to all mankind, in the light of which the Church comes into contact with all cultures and enhances the good and human essence of every culture.

This is the Pope's "humanist" line which allows the tenuous path to peace to develop in spite of the violent reactions of fanatics, and it is on this path that the Church, the prayerful and hardworking People of God, must continue the journey.

ANDREA MONDA

Prototype of the rejected

RANIERO CANTALAMESSA

"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is 53:3). These are the prophetic words of Isaiah with which we begin the Liturgy of the Word today. The

In Saint Peter's Basilica on Good Friday afternoon, 19 April, Pope Francis presided the celebration of the Lord's Passion. The Preacher of the Papal Household delivered the homily, based on the Reading from the Gospel of John (18:1-19, 42). Published here is the English text of the homily, which was delivered in Italian.

account of the passion that follows has given a name and a face to this mysterious man of sorrows who was despised and rejected by all men: the name and the face of Jesus of Nazareth. Today we want to contemplate the Crucified One specifically in his capacity as the prototype and representative of all the rejected, the disinherited, and the "discarded" of the earth, those from whom we turn aside our faces so as not to see them.

Jesus did not begin to be that man just at his passion. Throughout his life he was part of this group. He was born in a stable "because there was no place for them in the inn" (Lk 2:7). In presenting him in the temple, his parents offered "two turtledoves or two young pigeons," the offering proscribed by the law for the poor who could not offer a lamb (cf. Lev 12:8). That was a genuine proof of poverty in Israel of that time. During his public life, he has nowhere to lay his head (cf. Mt 8:20): he is homeless.

Now we come to his passion. In the account there is a moment that we do not often focus on but that is extremely significant: Jesus in the praetorium of Pilate (cf. Mk 15:16-20). The soldiers had noticed a bramble bush in the adjacent open space; they gathered some thorny branches from it and pressed them into his head; to mock him they put a cloak on his shoulders that were still bloody from his scourging; his hands were bound with a rough rope; they placed a reed in his hands, an ironic symbol of his royalty. He is the prototype of handcuffed people, alone, at the mercy of soldiers and thugs who take out the rage and cruelty they stored up during their lives on the unfortunate poor. He was tortured!

"Ecce homo!" "Here is the man!" exclaims Pilate in presenting him shortly after to the people (Jn 19:5). These are words which, after Christ, can be said of the endless host of men and women who are vilified, reduced to being objects, deprived of all human dignity. The author Primo Levi titled the account of his life in the extermination camp in Auschwitz *If This Is a Man*. On the cross Jesus of Nazareth becomes the symbol of this part of humanity that

is "humiliated and insulted". One would want to exclaim, "You who are rejected, spurned, pariahs of the whole earth: the greatest man in history was one of you! Whatever nation, race, or religion you belong to, you have the right to claim him as yours."

The African-American writer and theologian Howard Thurman – the

man Martin Luther King considered his teacher and his inspiration for the non-violent struggle for human rights – wrote a book called *Jesus and the Disinherited*.¹ In it he shows what the figure of Jesus represented

gregated worship – the only meeting they were allowed to have – would give the slaves back a sense of their dignity as children of God.

The majority of Negro Spirituals that still move the world today arose in this context.² At the time of public auction, slaves experienced the anguish of seeing wives separated from their husbands and children from their parents, being sold at times to different masters. It is easy to imagine the spirit with which they sang out in the sun or inside their huts, "Nobody knows the trouble I have seen. Nobody knows, but Jesus".

This is not the only meaning of the passion and death of Christ, and it is not even the most important. The most profound meaning is not social but spiritual and mystical. That death redeemed the world from sin; it brought the love of God to the farthest and darkest place in which humanity has been trapped in its flight from him, that is, death. This is not, as I said, the most important meaning of the cross, but it is the one that all people, believers

self to all of humanity, but through the *manner* of his Incarnation he made himself one of the poor and rejected and embraced their cause. He took it upon himself to ensure that when he solemnly affirmed that whatever we did for the hungry, the naked, the incarcerated, the outcast, we did to him, and whatever we omitted doing for them, we omitted doing to him (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

But we cannot stop here. If Jesus had only this to say to the disinherited of the world, he would only be one more among them, an example of dignity in the face of misfortune and nothing more. Then it would be a further proof against the God who allowed all of this. We know the indignant reaction of Ivan, the rebellious brother in *The Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevsky, when Aloysha, the younger brother, mentions Jesus to him: "Ah, yes, the 'only sinless One' and his blood! No, I have not forgotten about him; on the contrary, I've been wondering all the while why you hadn't brought him up for so long, because in discussions your people usually trot him out first thing".³

The Gospel does not in fact stop here. It says something else: it says that the Crucified One is risen! In him a total reversal of roles has taken place: the vanquished has become the victor; the one judged has become the judge, "the stone which was rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone" (cf. Acts 4:11). The final word is not and never will be injustice and oppression. Jesus not only restored *dignity* to the disinherited of the world, he also gave them *hope*!

In the first three centuries of the Church the celebration of Easter was not spread out over several days the way it is now: Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. Everything was concentrated in one day. Both the death and resurrection were commemorated at the Easter vigil. To be more precise, neither the death nor the resurrection were commemorated as distinct and separate events; instead what was commemorated was the *passage* of Christ from one to the other, from death to life. The word "pascha" (*pesach*) means "passage": the passage of the Jewish people from slavery to freedom, the passage of Christ from this world to the Father (cf. Jn 13:1), and the passage from sin to grace for those who believe in him.

It is the feast of the reversal directed by God and accomplished in Christ; it is the beginning and the promise of the unique turnaround that is completely just and irreversible concerning humanity's fate. We can say to the poor, the outcasts, those who are trapped in different forms of slavery still occurring in our society: Easter is your feast!

The cross also contains a message for those who are on the opposite side of this equation: the powerful, the strong, those who are comfortable in their role as "victors". And it is a message, as always, of love and salvation, not of hate or vengeance. It reminds them that in the end they are bound to the same fate as every-



Sister Mary James Ann Walsh, BVM, "Ecce Homo"

for the slaves in the south, of whom he himself was a direct descendant. When the slaves were deprived of every right and completely abject, the words of the Gospel that the minister would repeat in their se-

and non-believers, can recognize and receive.

I repeat, everyone, and not just believers. Through the *event* of the Incarnation of the Son of God he made himself man and united him-

VIA CRUCIS

With Christ and with the women on the Way of the Cross

The meditations for the 14 Stations of the Via Crucis presided by Pope Francis at the Colosseum on Good Friday evening, 19 April, were written by Sr Eugenia Bonetti, a missionary of the Consolata and president of the "Slaves no more" association. The text was also published by the LEV in various languages, accompanied by images painted by Raúl Berzosa Fernández for the Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of the Family Church in Ciudad Cayalá, Guatemala.

Introduction

Forty days have now passed since we began our Lenten journey with the imposition of ashes. Today we relived the final hours of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, to the moment when, from the Cross, he cried out "Consummatus est", "it is finished". We have gathered in this place where thousands of people once suffered martyrdom for their fidelity to Christ. We want to walk this *via dolorosa* in union with the poor, the outcast of our societies and all those who even now are enduring crucifixion as victims of our narrow-mindedness, our institutions and our laws, our blindness and selfishness, but especially our indifference and hardness of heart. We Christians too suffer from that disease. May the Cross of Christ, a means of death but also of new life, embracing heaven and earth, north and south, east and west, enlighten the consciences of citizens, of the Church, of lawmakers and of all those who call themselves followers of Christ, so that the Good News of our redemption may be made known to all.

FIRST STATION

Jesus is condemned to death

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Mt 7:21)

Lord, who could be a better disciple of yours than Mary your Mother? She accepted the Father's will even at the darkest moment in her life, and she stood by you, heartbroken. She conceived you and bore you in her womb; she held you in her arms, she showered you with her love, and she accompanied you throughout your earthly life. How could she fail to follow you on the road to Calvary and share in the most tragic and painful moment of your life and her own?

Lord, how many mothers even today share the experience of your Mother, as they weep for the fate of their daughters and sons? How

many conceive and give birth to their children, only to see them suffer and die from disease, malnutrition and lack of water, medical care and hope for the future? We pray for those who hold positions of responsibility, that they may heed the cry of the poor rising up to you from every part of our world. The plea of all those young lives condemned in different ways to death by the indifference born of selfish and discriminatory political policies. Grant that none of your children may lack employment and all that is needed for an honest and dignified life.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord help us to do your will":

- in times of difficulty and despair; in times of physical and moral suffering;
- in times of darkness and loneliness.

SECOND STATION

Jesus takes up his Cross

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Lk 9:23)

Lord Jesus, it is easy to wear a crucifix on a chain around our neck or to use it to decorate the walls of our beautiful cathedrals or homes. It is less easy to encounter and acknowledge today's newly crucified: the homeless; the young deprived of hope, without work and without prospects; the immigrants relegated to slums at the fringe of our societies after having endured untold suffering. Sadly, these camps, unsafe and insecure, are being razed to the ground along with the dreams and hopes of thousands of marginalized, exploited and forgotten women and men. How many children, too, suffer discrimination on the basis of their origin, the colour of their skin or their social status? How many mothers suffer the humiliation of seeing their children mocked and deprived of opportunities open to their schoolmates and others their age?

We thank you Lord because by your own life, you have taught us

how to show genuine and selfless love for others, especially for our enemies or simply those who are different from ourselves. Lord Jesus, how many times have we, your disciples, been ready to be identified as your followers when you performed healings and wonders, when you fed the crowd and forgave sins. Yet we have not found it so easy when you spoke about serving and forgiving others, about self-sacrifice and suffering. Grant that we may put our lives always at the service of others.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord help us to love":

- when we feel abandoned and alone;
- when it is not easy to follow in your footsteps; when serving others becomes difficult.

THIRD STATION

Jesus falls for the first time

"He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Is 53:4)

Lord Jesus, on the steep path leading to Calvary, you chose to experience our human frailty and weakness. Where would the Church be today without the presence and generosity of so many volunteers, the new Samaritans of the third millennium? One cold January night, in a street on the outskirts of Rome, three young African women, little more than girls, poorly clad, were huddled near a brazier to keep warm. Some young people passing by in a car, just for fun, threw flammable material onto the fire, burning them badly. At that very moment, one of the many street units of volunteers passed by and came to their aid. They brought them to hospital and then welcomed them into a family home. How much time will it take for those young women to be healed not only of their painful burns, but also of the pain and humiliation of finding their bodies mutilated and disfigured forever?

Lord, we thank you for all those new Samaritans of the third millennium who, today too, can be found on our streets, stooping with love and compassion over the many physical and spiritual wounds of those who live every night in fear and the terror of darkness, loneliness and indifference. Sadly, Lord, often today we are no longer able to see those in need, those hurt and humiliated. We are quick to demand respect

for our rights and interests, but we forget those of the poor and the last in line. Lord grant us the grace to overcome our blindness to their tears, their sufferings and their cry of pain, so that through them we can encounter you.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord help us to love":

- when it is challenging to be a Samaritan;
- when we find it hard to forgive; when we do not want to see the sufferings of others.

FOURTH STATION

Jesus meets his Mother

"And a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." (Lk 2:35)

Mary, when you presented the infant Jesus in the Temple for the rite of purification, the aged Simeon predicted that a sword would pierce your heart. Now it is time to renew your "fiat"; your acceptance of the Father's will, even though the experience of accompanying your child, treated as a criminal, to his execution causes you heartrending pain. Lord, have mercy on the many, all too many, mothers who have allowed their young children to depart for Europe in the hope of helping their poverty-stricken families, only to meet with humiliation, contempt and at times even death. Like young Tina, a mere twenty years

old, brutally killed on the street, leaving behind a child just a few months old.

Mary, at this very moment, you experience the same tragedy as all those mothers who suffer for their children who set out for other countries with the hopes of a better future for themselves and their families, but sadly find humiliation, contempt, violence, indifference, loneliness and even death. Give them strength and courage.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, grant that we may always give support and comfort, and be present to offer help":

- to console mothers who weep for the fate of their children;
- to those who have lost all hope in life; to those who daily experience violence and contempt.

FIFTH STATION

Simon the Cyrenean helps Jesus to carry the Cross

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2)

Lord Jesus, on the way to Calvary you were crushed by the weight of carrying that rough wooden Cross. In vain, you hoped for a sign of help from a friend, from one of your disciples, from one of the many persons whose sufferings you relieved. Sadly, only a stranger, Simon of Cyrene, out of obligation, came to your aid. Where are the new Cyreneans of the third millennium? Where do we find them today? I think of the experience of a group of religious women of different nationalities, places of origin and communities with whom, for more than seventeen years, every Saturday, we visit a centre for undocumented immigrant women. Women, often young, anxiously waiting to know



their fate, whether it be expulsion or the chance to remain. How much suffering we see, yet at the same time how much joy when these women find Sisters from their own country, who speak their language, dry their tears, share moments of prayer and celebration, and make easier the long months spent behind iron bars and on cement pavements.

For all the Cyreneans of our history, that they may never falter in their desire to welcome you in the least of our brothers and sisters, in the knowledge that in welcoming the poorest members of our society, we welcome you. May these Samaritans speak out on behalf of those who have no voice.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, help us to carry our cross":

- when we are tired and disheartened;
- when we feel the burden of our weaknesses; when you ask us to share the sufferings of others.

SIXTH STATION

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

"As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt 25:40)

Let us think of all those children in various parts of the world who cannot go to school but are instead exploited in mines, fields and fisheries, bought and sold by human traffickers for organ har-

vesting, used and abused on our streets by many, including Christians, who have lost the sense of their own and others' sacredness. Like the young girl with a slim body we met one evening in Rome while men in luxury cars lined up to exploit her. She might have been the age of their own children. What kind of imbalance can this violence create in the lives of all those young women who experience only the oppression, arrogance and indifference of those who, night and day, seek them out, use them and exploit them, only to cast them back onto the street again, as prey for the next trader in human lives?

Lord Jesus, cleanse our eyes so that we can see your face in our brothers and sisters, especially in all those children who, in many parts of the world, are living in poverty and squalor. Children deprived of their right to a happy childhood, education and innocence. Little ones used as cheap goods, bought and sold at will. Lord, we ask you to have mercy and compassion on this sick world. Help us rediscover the beauty of our dignity, and that of others, as human beings created in your image and likeness.

Let us pray together, and say: "Lord, help us to see":

- the faces of innocent children who ask for our help;
- social injustices; people's inherent dignity that is violated.

SEVENTH STATION

Jesus falls for the second time

"When he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly." (1 Pet 2:23)

What a thirst for vengeance we see all around us! Our societies today have lost the great value of forgiveness, a gift second to none, a cure for wounds, the basis of peace and human coexistence. In a society where forgiveness is seen as weakness, you, Lord, ask us not to stop at appearances. Not with words, but by your example. To those who tortured you, you asked: "Why do you persecute me?" For you knew very well that true justice can never be based on hatred and revenge. Make us capable of asking for, and granting forgiveness.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). Lord, you too bore the burden of condemnation and suffering inflicted by persons who had met you, listened to you, and followed you. In the certainty that the Father had not abandoned you, you found the strength to accept his will by offering forgiveness, love and hope to those who today, like you, walk the same path of ridicule, contempt, mockery, abandonment, betrayal and loneliness.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, help us to give comfort":

- to those who feel offended and insulted;
- to those who feel betrayed and humiliated; to those who feel judged and condemned.

EIGHTH STATION

Jesus meets the women

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." (Lk 23:28)

The social, economic and political situation of migrants and the victims of human trafficking challenges and disturbs us. We must have the courage, as Pope Francis firmly maintains, to denounce human trafficking as a crime against humanity. All of us, and Christians in particular, must come to realize that we are all responsible for the problem, and that all of us can and must be part of the solution. All of us, but above all we women, are challenged to be courageous. Courageous in knowing how to see and take action, as individuals and as a community. Only by being united in our prayer can we make it a great treasure, capable of changing people's approach and alleviating

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



Meditations for the Via Crucis

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

humanity's sufferings. The poor, the foreigner, the other, must not be seen as an enemy to be rejected and resisted, but as a brother or a sister to be welcomed and assisted. They are not a problem, but a precious resource for our fortified citadels, where prosperity and consumption fail to alleviate our growing weariness and fatigue.

Lord, teach us to see with your eyes, with that welcoming and merciful gaze with which you see our limitations and our fears. Help us to imitate you in how we regard different ideas, behaviours and points of view. Help us to realize that we are part of the same human family, and to find bold new ways of accepting diversity and working together to build communities, families, parishes and civil society.

Let us pray together and say: "Help us to share in the suffering of others":

- those grieving the death of loved ones;
- those who find it hard to ask for help and comfort;
- those who have experienced oppression and violence.

NINTH STATION

Jesus falls for the third time

"He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter". (Is 53:7)

Lord, you fell a third time, exhausted and humiliated, beneath the weight of your Cross. Like all those girls forced onto the streets by groups of traffickers in human slavery. Like you, they cannot hold up under the exhaustion and humiliation of seeing their young bodies manipulated, abused and ruined, together with their hope and dreams. Those young women feel divided in two: sought out and used, while at the same time rejected and condemned by a society that conveniently ignores this kind of exploitation, the fruit of its throwaway culture. On one of many nights spent on the streets of Rome, I looked for a young woman recently arrived in Italy. Not seeing her in her group, I kept calling out her name: "Mercy!" In the darkness, I caught sight of her curled up and half asleep at the edge of the street. When she heard me calling, she awoke and said she couldn't go on. "I can't take it any more", she kept repeating. I thought of her mother. If she knew what had happened to her daughter, she would burst into tears.

Lord, how many times have you asked us this disturbing question: "Where is your brother? Where is your sister?" How many times have you reminded us that their heart-breaking cry rises up to you? Help us to share the sufferings of all those treated as refuse. It is all too easy to condemn people and difficult situations that offend our false sense of decency. It is less easy to accept our responsibilities as individuals, as governments, and as Christian communities.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, give us the strength and courage to repudiate":

- the exploitation and humiliation faced by many young people;
- the indifference and silence of many Christians;
- unjust laws lacking in humanity and solidarity.

TENTH STATION

Jesus is stripped of his garments

"Put on then compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience". (Col 3:12)

Money, comfort, power. These are the idols of every age. Especially our own, which can boast of enormous progress in the acknowledgment of individual rights. Everything can be bought, including the body of minors, stripped of their dignity and hope for the future. We have forgotten the centrality of the human being, the dignity, beauty and strength of each man and woman. Even as the world is building walls and barriers, we want to recognize and thank all those who in various ways during these past months have risked their own lives, especially in the Mediterranean, to save the lives of so many families in search of safety and opportunity. Human beings fleeing poverty, dictatorships, corruption and slavery.

Lord, help us to rediscover the beauty and richness present in every person and people as your unique gift, to be placed at the service of society as a whole and not used for our personal profit or gain. Grant, Jesus, that your example and your teaching on mercy and forgiveness, on humility and patience, may make us a little more human, and thus, more Christian.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, give us merciful hearts":

- when faced with lust for pleasure, power and money;
- when faced with injustices inflicted on the poor and the weak;
- when faced with the illusions born of self-interest.

ELEVENTH STATION

Jesus is nailed to the Cross

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". (Lk 23:34)

Our society proclaims equal rights and dignity for all human beings. Yet it practises and tolerates inequality. It even accepts extreme forms of inequality. Men, women and children are bought and sold like slaves by the new traders in human lives. The victims of trafficking are then exploited by others. And in the end, they are cast aside, discarded as worthless goods. How many people are growing rich by devouring the flesh and blood of the poor?

Lord, how many men and women even today are nailed to a cross, victims of brutal exploitation, stripped of dignity, freedom and hope for the future! Their cry for help challenges us as individuals, as governments, as society and as Church. How is it possible that we continue to crucify you by our complicity in the traf-

ficking of human beings? Give us eyes to see and a heart to feel the suffering of all those who today too are nailed to a cross by our systems of life and consumption.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, have mercy":

- on those newly crucified throughout today's world;
- on those in society who enact laws and exercise power;
- on those unable to forgive and unable to love.

TWELFTH STATION

Jesus dies on the Cross

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". (Mk 15:34)

On the Cross, Lord, you too bore the weight of scorn, mockery, insults, violence, abandonment and indifference. Only Mary, your Mother, and a few other women stayed with you as witnesses to your suffering and death. May their example inspire in us a commitment to stand by all those dying today on Calvaries throughout the world: in transit camps, on boats denied entry to safe ports, in shelters, hot spots and camps for seasonal workers, amid protracted negotiations about their final destination.

Lord, we implore you: help us to be true neighbours to those newly crucified and despairing in today's world. Teach us to wipe away their tears, to comfort them, even as you were consoled by the presence of Mary and the other women beneath your Cross.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord help us to give freely of ourselves":

- to all those suffering from injustice, hatred and vengeance;
- to all those unjustly slandered and condemned;
- to all those who feel alone, abandoned and humiliated.

THIRTEENTH STATION

Jesus is taken down from the Cross

"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit". (Jn 12:24)

In this era of news flashes, who remembers those twenty-six young Nigerian women who drowned and whose funerals were held in Salerno? Their Calvary was lengthy and difficult. First the crossing of the Sahara desert, crammed in ramshackle buses. Then their forced stay in frightful detention centres in Libya. Finally the leap into the sea, where they met death at the gates of the "promised land". Two of them were bearing in their womb the gift of a new life, children who would never see the light of day. Yet their death, like that of Jesus taken down from the Cross, was not in vain. We entrust all these lives to the mercy of God our Father and the Father of all, especially the poor, the desperate and the abused.

Lord, at this hour, we hear once more the cry of Pope Francis at

Lampedusa, the site of his first apostolic journey: "Has anyone wept?" And now after countless shipwrecks, we continue to cry out: "Has anyone wept?" Has anyone wept, we wonder, before those twenty-six coffins lined up and covered with white roses? Only five of those women have been identified. Nameless or not, all of them are our daughters and sisters. All deserve respect and remembrance. They appeal to us – our institutions, our authorities and each of us – to accept responsibility for our silence and indifference.

Let us pray together and say: "Lord, may we join in weeping":

- at the sufferings of others;
- at all those nameless coffins;
- at the tears of so many mothers.

FOURTEENTH STATION

Jesus is laid in the tomb

"It is finished". (Jn 19:30)

The desert and the seas have become the new cemeteries of our world. These deaths leave us speechless. Yet responsibility has to be taken. People let their brothers and sisters die: men, women, children that we could not, or would not, save. While governments, closed off in their palaces of power, debate, the Sahara is filled with the bones of men and women who could not survive exhaustion, hunger and thirst. How much pain is involved in these new exoduses! How much cruelty is inflicted on those fleeing their homelands: in their desperate journeys, in the extortion and tortures they endure, in the sea that becomes a watery grave.

Lord, make us realize that we are all children of one Father. May the death of your Son Jesus grant to the leaders of nations and lawmakers consciousness of the role they must play in the defence of every person created in your image and likeness.

Conclusion

We would like to recount the story of Favour, a nine-month-old baby, who left Nigeria together with her young parents who sought a better future in Europe. During the long and dangerous journey in the Mediterranean, her father and mother died along with hundreds of other people who had relied on unscrupulous traffickers to come to the promised land. Only Favour survived; like Moses, she was saved from the waters. May her life become a light of hope on the path towards a more fraternal humanity.

At the conclusion of your way of the Cross, we ask you, Lord, to teach us to keep watch, together with your Mother and the women who stood by you on Calvary, in expectation of your resurrection. May it be a beacon of hope, joy, new life, fraternity, acceptance and communion among peoples, religions and systems of law. So that all the sons and daughters of man will be truly recognized in their dignity as sons and daughters of God, and never again treated as slaves.

Pope Francis' prayer at the Colosseum

All the crosses of the world

On Good Friday evening, 19 April, after leading the Via Crucis at the Colosseum, Pope Francis offered in Italian the prayer translated below.

Lord Jesus, help us to see in your Cross all the crosses of the world:

the cross of people hungry for bread and for love;

the cross of people alone and abandoned even by their children and kin;

the cross of people thirsty for justice and for peace;

the cross of people who lack the comfort of faith;

the cross of the elderly who struggle under the weight of years and of loneliness;

the cross of migrants who find doors closed in fear and hearts armoured by political calculations;

the cross of little ones, wounded in their innocence and their purity;

the cross of humanity that wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and in the obscurity of temporary culture;

the cross of families split by betrayal, by the seductions of the evil one or by homicidal levity and selfishness;

the cross of consecrated people who tirelessly seek to bring your light into the world and feel rejected, derided and humiliated;

the cross of consecrated people who, along the way, have forgotten their first love;

the cross of your children who, while believing in you and seeking to live according to your word, find themselves

marginalized and rejected even by their families and their peers;

the cross of our weaknesses, of our hypocrisy, of our betrayals, of our sins and of our many broken promises;

the cross of your Church that, faithful to your Gospel, struggles to spread your love even among the baptized themselves;

the cross of the Church, your Bride, that feels constantly assailed from within and without;

the cross of our common home that is gravely withering before our selfish eyes, blinded by greed and by power.

Lord Jesus, revive in us the hope of resurrection and of your definitive victory over all evil and all death. Amen!



Prototype of the rejected

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

one else: whether weak or strong, defenseless or tyrannical, all are subjected to the same laws and to the same human limitations. Death, like the sword of Damocles, hangs over everyone's head by a thread. It warns against the worst evil for a human being, the illusion of omnipotence. We do not need to go back too far in time; it is enough to remember recent history to be aware of how frequent this danger is and how it leads individuals and nations to catastrophe.

Scripture has words of eternal wisdom for those who dominate the world's stage: "Learn, O judges of the ends of the earth... Mighty men will be mightily tested" (Wis 6:1, 6).

"Man cannot abide in his pomp, he is like the beasts that perish" (Ps 49:20).

"For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?" (Lk 9:25).

The Church has received the mandate from its founder to stand with

the poor and the weak, to be the voice for those who have no voice, and, thanks be to God, that is what she does, especially in her Chief Shepherd.

The second historical task that religions need to take on together today, besides promoting peace, is not to remain silent in the face of the situation that is there for everyone to see. A few privileged people possess more goods than they could ever consume, while for entire cen-



tures countless masses of poor people have lived without having a piece of bread or a sip of water to give their children. No religion can remain indifferent to this because the God of all the religions is not indifferent to all of this.

Let us return to the prophecy of Isaiah that we started with. It begins with a description of the humiliation of the Servant of God, but it concludes with a description of his final exaltation. God is the one speaking:

"He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied.... Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Is 53:11-12).

In two days, with the announcement of Jesus' resurrection, the liturgy will give a name and a face to this victor. Let us keep watch and meditate in expectation.

¹ See Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

² See Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1975).

³ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 246.

Easter Vigil in the Vatican Basilica

Feast of tombstones rolled aside

On Saturday evening, 20 April, Pope Francis presided the Easter Vigil Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica. The following is the English text of his homily.

1. The women bring spices to the tomb, but they fear that their journey is in vain, since a large stone bars the entrance to the sepulcher. The journey of those women is also our own journey; it resembles the journey of salvation that we have made this evening. At times, it seems that everything comes up against a stone: the beauty of creation against the tragedy of sin; liberation from slavery against infidelity to the covenant; the promises of the prophets against the listless indifference of the people. So too, in the history of the Church and in our own personal history. It seems that the steps we take never take us to the goal. We can be tempted to think that dashed hope is the bleak law of life.

Today however we see that our journey is not in vain; it does not come up against a tombstone. A single phrase astounds the woman and changes history: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Lk 24:5). Why do you think that everything is hopeless, that no one can take away your own tombstones? Why do you give into resignation or failure? Easter, brothers and sisters, is the feast of tombstones taken away, rocks rolled aside. God takes away even the hardest stones against which our hopes and expectations crash: death, sin, fear, worldliness. Human history does not end before a tombstone, because today it encounters the "living stone" (cf. 1 Pet 2:4), the risen Jesus. We, as Church, are built on him, and even when we grow disheartened and tempted to judge everything in the light of our failures, he comes to make all things new, to overturn our every disappointment. Each of us is called tonight to rediscover in the Risen Christ the one who rolls back from our heart the heaviest of stones. So let us first ask: What is the stone that I need to remove, what is the name of this stone?

Often what blocks hope is the stone of discouragement. Once we start thinking that everything is going badly and that things can't get worse, we lose heart and come to believe that death is stronger than life. We become cynical, negative and despondent. Stone upon stone, we build within ourselves a monument to our own dissatisfaction: the sepulcher of hope. Life becomes a succession of complaints and we grow sick in spirit. A kind of tomb psychology takes over: everything ends there, with no hope of emerging alive. But at that moment, we hear once more the insistent question of Easter: Why do you seek the living

among the dead? The Lord is not to be found in resignation. He is risen; he is not there. Don't seek him where you will never find him: he is not the God of the dead but of the living (cf. Mk 22:32). Do not bury hope!

There is another stone that often seals the heart shut: the stone of sin. Sin seduces; it promises things easy and quick, prosperity and success, but then leaves behind only solitude and death. Sin is looking for life among the dead, for the meaning of life in things that pass away. Why do you seek the living among the dead? Why not make up your mind to abandon that sin which, like a stone before the entrance to your heart, keeps God's light from entering in? Why not prefer Jesus, the true light (cf. Jn 1:9), to the glitter of wealth, career, pride and pleasure? Why not tell the empty things of this world that you no longer live for them, but for the Lord of life?

2. Let us return to the women who went to Jesus' tomb. They halted in amazement before the stone that was taken away. Seeing the angels, they stood there, the Gospel tells us, "frightened, and bowed their faces to the ground" (Lk 24:5). They did not have the courage to look up. And how often do we do the same thing? We prefer to remain huddled within our shortcomings, cowering in our fears. It is odd, but why do we do this? Not infrequently because, glum and closed up within ourselves, we feel in control, for it is easier to remain alone in the darkness of our heart than to open ourselves to the Lord. Yet only he can raise us up. A poet once wrote: "We never know how high we are. Till we are called to rise" (E. Dickinson). The Lord calls us to get up, to rise at his word, to look up and to realize that we were made for heaven, not for earth, for the heights of life and not for the depths of death: Why do you seek the living among the dead?

God asks us to view life as he views it, for in each of us he never ceases to see an irrepressible kernel of beauty. In sin, he sees sons and daughters to be restored; in death, brothers and sisters to be reborn; in desolation, hearts to be revived. Do not fear, then: the Lord loves your life, even when you are afraid to look at it and take it in hand. In Easter he shows you how much he loves that life: even to the point of living it completely, experiencing anguish, abandonment, death and hell, in order to emerge triumphant to tell you: "You are not alone; put your trust in me!"

Jesus is a specialist at turning our deaths into life, our mourning into dancing (cf. Ps 30:11). With him, we too can experience a Pasch, that is, a Passover –

from self-centredness to communion, from desolation to consolation, from fear to confidence. Let us not keep our faces bowed to the ground in fear, but raise our eyes to the risen Jesus. His gaze fills us with hope, for it tells us that we are loved unfailingly, and that however much we make a mess of things, his love remains unchanged. This is the one, non-negotiable certitude we have in life: his love does not change. Let us ask ourselves: In my life, where am I looking? Am I gazing at graveyards, or looking for the Living One?

3. Why do you seek the living among the dead? The women hear the words of the angels, who go on to say: "Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee" (Lk 24:6). Those women had lost hope, because they could not recall the words of Jesus, his call that took place in Galilee. Having lost the living memory of Jesus, they kept looking at the tomb. Faith always needs to go back to Galilee, to reawaken its first love for Jesus and his call: to remember him, to turn back to him with all our mind and all our heart. To return to a lively love of the Lord is essential. Otherwise, ours is a "museum" faith, not an Easter faith. Jesus is not a personage from the past; he is a person living today. We do not know him from history books; we encounter him in life. Today, let us remember how Jesus first called us, how he overcame our darkness, our resistance, our sins, and how he touched our hearts with his word.

Brothers and sisters, let us return to Galilee.

The women, remembering Jesus, left the tomb. Easter teaches us that believers do not linger at graveyards, for they are called to go forth to meet the Living One. Let us ask ourselves: In my life, where am I going? Sometimes we go only in the direction of our problems, of which there are plenty, and go to the Lord only for help. But then, it is our own needs, not Jesus, to guide our steps. We keep seeking the Living One among the dead. Or again, how many times, once we have encountered the Lord, do we return to the dead, digging up regrets, reproaches, hurts and dissatisfactions, without letting the Risen One change us?

Dear brothers and sisters: let us put the Living One at the centre of our lives. Let us ask for the grace not to be carried by the current, the sea of our problems; the grace not to run aground on the shoals of sin or crash on the reefs of discouragement and fear. Let us seek him, let us allow ourselves to be sought out by him, let us seek him in all things and above all things. And with him, we will rise again.



During the Vigil Mass, in the Liturgy of Baptism, the Pope administered the three Sacraments of Christian initiation to a group of eight adults from Italy, Peru, Albania, Ecuador and Indonesia.

After celebrating Mass on Easter Sunday, 21 April, Pope Francis appeared at the central loggia of Saint Peter's Basilica to offer his Message to the City and the World. The following is the English text of the Message.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Happy Easter!

Today the Church renews the proclamation made by the first disciples: "Jesus is risen!" And from mouth to mouth, from heart to heart, there resounds a call to praise: "Alleluia, Alleluia!" On this morning of Easter, the perennial youth of the Church and of humanity as a whole, I would like to address each of you in the opening words of my recent Apostolic Exhortation devoted especially to young people:

"Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world. Everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive! He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Risen One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again. When you feel you are growing old out of sorrow, resentment or fear, doubt or failure, he will always be there to restore your strength and your hope" (*Christus Vivit*, 1-2).

Dear brothers and sisters, this message is also addressed to every



'Urbi et Orbi' Message

End the roar of arms

person in the world. The resurrection of Christ is the principle of new life for every man and every woman, for true renewal always begins from the heart, from the conscience. Yet Easter is also the beginning of the new world, set free from the slavery of sin and death: the world open at last to the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love, peace and fraternity.

Christ is alive and he remains with us. Risen, he shows us the light of his face, and he does not abandon all those experiencing hardship, pain and sorrow. May he, the Living One, be hope for the beloved Syrian people, victims of an ongoing conflict to which we risk becoming ever more resigned and even indifferent. Now is instead the time for a renewed commitment for a political solution

able to respond to people's legitimate hopes for freedom, peace and justice, confront the humanitarian crisis and favour the secure re-entry of the homeless, along with all those who have taken refuge in neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon and Jordan.

Easter makes us keep our eyes fixed on the Middle East, torn by continuing divisions and tensions. May the Christians of the region patiently persevere in their witness to the Risen Lord and to the victory of life over death. I think in particular of the people of Yemen, especially the children, exhausted by hunger and war. May the light of Easter illumine all government leaders and peoples in the Middle East, beginning with Israelis and Palestinians, and spur them to alleviate such great suffering and to pursue a future of peace and stability.

May conflict and bloodshed cease in Libya, where defenceless people are once more dying in recent weeks and many families have been forced to abandon their homes. I urge the parties involved to choose dialogue over force and to avoid reopening wounds left by a decade of conflicts and political instability.

May the Living Christ grant his peace to the entire beloved African continent, still rife with social tensions, conflicts and at times violent forms of extremism that leave in their wake insecurity, destruction and death, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. I think too of Sudan, presently experiencing a moment of political uncertainty; it is my hope that all voices will be heard, and that everyone will work to enable the country to find the freedom, development and well-being to which it has long aspired.

May the Risen Lord accompany the efforts of the civil and religious authorities of South Sudan, sustained by the fruits of the spiritual retreat held several days ago here in the Vatican. May a new page open in the history of that country, in which all political, social and religious components actively com-

mit themselves to the pursuit of the common good and the reconciliation of the nation.

May this Easter bring comfort to the people of the eastern regions of Ukraine, who suffer from the continuing conflict. May the Lord encourage initiatives of humanitarian aid and those aimed at pursuing a lasting peace.

May the joy of the resurrection fill the hearts of those who on the American continent are experiencing the effects of difficult political and economic situations. I think in particular of the Venezuelan people, of all those who lack the minimal conditions for leading a dignified and secure life due to a crisis that endures and worsens. May the Lord grant that all those with political responsibilities may work to end social injustices, abuses and acts of violence, and take the concrete steps needed to heal divisions and offer the population the help they need.

May the Risen Lord shed his light on the efforts made in Nicaragua to find as rapidly as possible a peaceful negotiated solution for the benefit of the entire Nicaraguan people.

Before the many sufferings of our time, may the Lord of life not find us cold and indifferent. May he make us builders of bridges, not walls. May the One who gives us his peace end the roar of arms, both in areas of conflict and in our cities, and inspire the leaders of nations to work for an end to the arms race and the troubling spread of weaponry, especially in the economically more advanced countries. May the Risen Christ, who flung open the doors of the tomb, open our hearts to the needs of the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, the poor, the unemployed, the marginalized, and all those who knock at our door in search of bread, refuge, and the recognition of their dignity.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christ is alive! He is hope and youth for each of us and for the entire world. May we let ourselves be renewed by him! Happy Easter!

Pope's sorrow at the attacks in Sri Lanka

After expressing the Urbi et Orbi Message and imparting the Blessing, the Pontiff offered his Easter greeting to the many faithful present, and recalled the grave attacks committed that morning in Sri Lanka. The following is a translation of his extemporaneous remarks.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It is with sorrow and heartache that I received the news of the grave attacks that today, the very day of Easter, have brought grief and sorrow to several churches and other gathering places in Sri Lanka. I wish to show my heartfelt closeness to the Christian community, struck while gathered in prayer, and to all the victims of such cruel violence. I entrust to the Lord those who were tragically killed and I pray for the wounded and all those suffering from this tragic event.

I renew my Easter greetings to all of you, who come from Italy and from various countries, as well as those joining us through television, radio and other means of communication. On this subject, I would like to recall that 70 years ago, on Easter Sunday 1949, a Pope spoke for the first time on television. The Venerable Pius XII addressed French television viewers, emphasizing that the gaze of the Successor of Peter and of the faithful could also meet via a new means of communication. This anniversary provides me the opportunity to encourage Christian communities to use all the tools that technology makes available to proclaim the Good News of the Risen Christ, in order to communicate with each other rather than just contact each other.

Enlightened by the Light of Easter, let us bring the essence of the Risen Christ to the loneliness, the misery, the pain of so many of our brothers and sisters, overturning the stone of indifference. In this Square, the joy of the Resurrection is symbolized by the flowers which, this year too, come from the Netherlands, whereas those in Saint Peter's Basilica are from Slovenia. A great, special thanks to the donors of these splendid floral gifts.

And do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your Easter lunch! *Arrivederci!*

REGINA COELI

"Terrorist acts, inhuman acts" are "never justifiable". With this reminder, Pope Francis continued to condemn Sunday's deadly attacks in Sri Lanka, as he addressed the faithful who had gathered in Saint Peter's Square to recite the Regina Coeli on Monday, 22 April. His meditation was focused on the day's reading from the Gospel of Matthew (28:8-15). The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection, which he shared in Italian.



Holy Father again condemns attacks in Sri Lanka

Acts of terrorism are never justifiable

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

Today and throughout this entire week the paschal joy of Jesus' Resurrection, the incredible event which we commemorated yesterday, continues in the liturgy and also in life. During the Easter Vigil the words spoken by the Angels beside Jesus' empty tomb resonate. They asked the women who had gone to the sepulchre at the dawn of the first day after the Sabbath: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Lk 24:5-6). Christ's Resurrection is the most unsettling event in the history of mankind, which attests the victory of God's love over sin and over death, and gives a rock solid foundation to our life's hope. What was humanly unthinkable has happened: "Jesus of Nazareth ... God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death" (Acts 2:22-24).

On this "Monday of the Angel", the liturgy, with the Gospel of Matthew (cf. 28:8-15), takes us back to Jesus' empty tomb. It will do us good to go in thought to Jesus' empty tomb. The women, filled with fear and joy, depart quickly to go and bring the news to the disciples that the tomb is empty; and at that moment Jesus appears before them. "They came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him" (v. 9). They touched him: it was not a ghost; it was Jesus, alive, in the flesh. It was him. Jesus drives fear from their hearts and encourages them even more to announce to the brethren what has happened. All the Gospels place emphasis on the role of women, Mary Magdalen and the others, as the first witnesses of the Resurrection. The men, fearful, were locked in the Upper Room. Peter and John, informed by Mary Magdalen, make only a quick remark in which they state that the tomb is open and empty. But it was the women who were first to encounter the Risen One

and to bear the message that he is alive.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, the words Jesus addressed to the women resonate for us too: "Do not be afraid; go and tell..." (v. 10). After the rites of the Easter Triduum, which have allowed us to relive the mystery of the death and Resurrection of our Lord, with the eyes of faith we now contemplate him Risen and alive. We too are called to encounter him personally and to become his proclaimers and witnesses.

With the ancient liturgical Easter Sequence, in these days we repeat: "Christ, my hope, is ris-

en!". And in Him, we too have risen, passing from death to life, from the slavery of sin to the freedom of love. Thus, let us allow ourselves to be touched by the consoling message of Easter and embraced by its glorious light, which dispels the darkness of fear and sorrow. The Risen Jesus walks beside us. He reveals himself to those who invoke him and love him. First in prayer, but also in the simple joys lived with faith and gratitude. We can also feel him present in moments of sharing warmth, welcome, friendship, and the contemplation of nature. May this day of celebration, in which it is customary to

enjoy some leisure and gratuitousness, help us to experience Jesus' presence.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary that our hands may be filled with the gifts of the peace and serenity of the Risen One, so as to share them with our brothers and sisters, especially those who have greater need of comfort and hope.

After reciting the Regina Coeli, the Holy Father added:

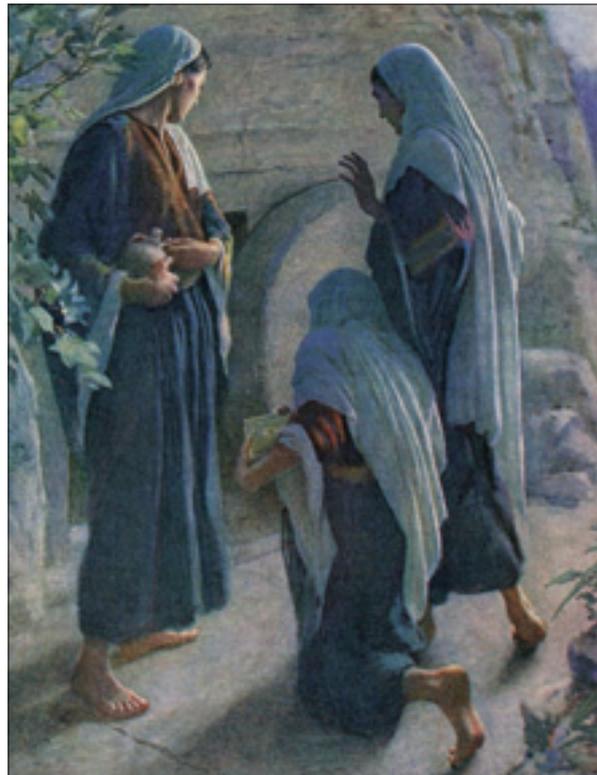
Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to again express my spiritual and paternal closeness to the people of Sri Lanka. I am very close to my dear brother, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith Patabendige Don, and to the entire Church of the Archdiocese of Colombo. I pray for the countless victims and wounded, and I ask everyone not to hesitate to offer all the help necessary to this dear nation. I likewise hope that everyone will condemn these never justifiable terrorist acts, inhuman acts. Let us pray to Our Lady...

[Hail Mary]

In the paschal climate that characterizes this day, I affectionately greet all of you, families, parish groups, associations and individual pilgrims, from Italy and from different parts of the world.

I hope each one will spend with faith these days of the Octave of Easter, in which the memory of Christ's Resurrection continues. May you seize every good opportunity to be witnesses to the joy and peace of the Risen Lord.

Happy and Holy Easter to all! Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*



*Harold Copping
"The women at the Sepulchre"*