The Holy Father in Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius

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The union of the People of God

PAOLO RUFFINI

'There is an aspect of Francis' journey to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius that can be compared to all the other papal trips, without minimizing its importance in any way. Because, on the contrary, it strengthens it.

The union of the People of God awaiting the Pope is a central aspect of the Petrine Ministry that perhaps not even images can convey. An immeasurable magnitude of people (pictured in faces, in gazes, in gestures) which illustrates the anticipation, the joy and the strength of an encounter.

The miracle of a people crowded along kilometres of road, gathered in the clearings, camped outdoors amid the dust, just to see the Pope pass by, to exchange a glance with him, and so to concentrate their personal and collective history into one instant, to be seen and blessed, is the most powerful witness to what the Church is.

Hundreds of thousands of people hastened together to become one, in order to joyfully proclaim their faith and to be confirmed by the Successor of Peter.

Hundreds of thousands of people, each of whom embodies the visible presence of God who is also waiting to be seen in each of these glances.

Hundreds of thousands of people who, in their turn, give to the Successor of Peter and to the Church all the strength of the People of God.

Within this meeting of gazes, of weaknesses and faith lies the mystery of the Church that the Lord entrusted to Peter and to his Successors, and there is also the mystery of munus petrino which makes her steadfast despite the difficulties she has always met and continues to meet.

Pope Francis spoke about it during the in-flight press conference: when answering a question on the temptation of a schism, he said he was not afraid and that he trusted in prayer; when he spoke of the faith of the peoples of Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius; when he explained what made Christianity grow and spread: not proselytism but being recognized by love, by being one.

Jesus spoke about it at the Last Supper, addressing Peter in the dramatic situation of those hours.

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BULLETIN

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Mgr Paolo Borgia as titular Archbishop of Milazzo, at the same time charging him with the office of Apostolic Nuncio. Until now he has served as assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State (3 Sept.).

Archbishop-elect Borgia, 59, was born in Manfredonia, Italy. He was ordained a priest on 10 April 1984. He holds a degree in canon law. He entered the Holy See diplomatic service on 1 December 2000, and served as Papal Representative in the Central African Republic, Mexico, Israel, and Lebanon; in the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State and in the Section for General Affairs of the said Secretariat of State. He was appointed as assessor for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State on 4 March 2018.

The Holy Father appointed Mgr Antoine Camilleri, 54, as titular Archbishop of Skālholt, at the same time charging him with the office of Apostolic Nuncio. Until now he has served as Undersecretary of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State (3 Sept.).

Archbishop-elect Camilleri, 54, was born in Sléma, Malta. He was ordained a priest on 3 July 1991. He graduated in jurisprudence and canon law. He entered the Holy See diplomatic service on 9 January 1999, and served as Papal Representative in Papua New Guinea, Uganda, Cuba, and in the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State. He was appointed as Undersecretary of the Section for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State on 22 February 2015.

There is no Synod without the Holy Spirit

Pope to Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

There is no speech, because at the entrance of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, there is a beautiful article on the presence of the Holy Spirit on the Synod’s path. Because there is a danger: to think, today, that making a synodal journey or having an attitude of synodality means to sound peoples’ opinions, what this or that person thinks, and then to hold a meeting, to agree.... No, the Synod is not a Parliament! Things must be said, discussed as normal but it is not a Parliament. The Synod is not about reaching agreement as politics: I give you this, in exchange for that. No. The Synod is not about making a sociological survey as some would suppose: “Let’s see, we’ll ask a group of lay people to make an inquiry, to find out if we should change this, this and this...” You certainly need to know what your lay people are thinking, but it is not an inquiry, it is different. If there is no Holy Spirit, there is no Synod. If the Holy Spirit is not present, there is no synodality. Or rather, if there is no Church, the identity of the Church. And what is the identity of the Church? St. Paul VI said it clearly: it is the vocation of the Church to evangelize, indeed: her identity is to evangelize. Enter this Synod of yours in this spirit, with the Holy Spirit. Pray to the Spirit. Quarrel among yourselves, as much as you like,... Think of Ephesus, how they argued! But they were good.... And in the end it was the Spirit that led them to say: “Mary, Mother of God”. This is the right way. It is the Spirit. Because we do not want to become a congregational Church, but rather a synodal Church. And to progress in this direction.

Now I invite you to pray to Our Lady, all together, to receive the Blessing.

On Monday morning, 2 September, in the Consistory Hall, Pope Francis received in audience the Bishops of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address, which he delivered in Italian.

There is no speech, because at the entrance of the Synod of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, there is a beautiful article on the presence of the Holy Spirit on the Synod’s path. Because there is a danger: to think, today, that making a synodal journey or having an attitude of synodality means to sound peoples’ opinions, what this or that person thinks, and then to hold a meeting, to agree.... No, the Synod is not a Parliament! Things must be said, discussed as normal but it is not a Parliament. The Synod is not about reaching agreement as politics: I give you this, in exchange for that. No. The Synod is not about making a sociological survey as some would suppose: “Let’s see, we’ll ask a group of lay people to make an inquiry, to find out if we should change this, this and this...” You certainly need to know what your lay people are thinking, but it is not an inquiry, it is different. If there is no Holy Spirit, there is no Synod. If the Holy Spirit is not present, there is no synodality. Or rather, if there is no Church, the identity of the Church. And what is the identity of the Church? Saint Paul VI said it clearly: it is the vocation of the Church to evangelize, indeed: her identity is to evangelize. Enter this Synod of yours in this spirit, with the Holy Spirit. Pray to the Spirit. Quarrel among yourselves, as much as you like,... Think of Ephesus, how they argued! But they were good.... And in the end it was the Spirit that led them to say: “Mary, Mother of God”. This is the right way. It is the Spirit. Because we do not want to become a congregational Church, but rather a synodal Church. And to progress in this direction.

Now I invite you to pray to Our Lady, all together, to receive the Blessing.
The Holy Father calls for international meeting

To reinvent the global educational alliance

Pope Francis has convoked a meeting — to be held in the Vatican on 14 May 2020 of representatives of the main religions, international organizations, humanitarian institutions, and representatives of the academic, economic, political and cultural worlds, inviting them to reinvent “the global educational alliance”. The objective of the alliance is “to form mature individuals capable of overcoming division and antagonism, and to restore the fabric of relationships for the sake of a more fraternal humanity”. In his Message endorsing the event, Pope Francis encourages those in the world of education “to work together to promote, through a shared ‘educational alliance’, those forward-looking initiatives that can give direction to history and change it for the better”, and he invites “authoritative public figures in our world who are concerned for the future of our young people” to contribute to and participate in the Meeting. On Thursday morning, 12 September, the Holy See issued the Holy Father’s Message to the Holy See, the text of which is published below — along with a video message which summarizes the motivations and objectives of the Papa’s initiative.

A further step is the courage to train individuals who are ready to offer themselves in service to the community. Service is a pillar of the culture of encounter. “It means bending over those in need and stretching out a hand to them, without calculation, without fear, but with tenderness and understanding, just as Jesus knelt to wash the Apostles’ feet. Serving means working beside those in need, sharing with them first and foremost human relationships of closeness and bonds of solidarity” (Address during a visit to the “Attalli Centre”, the Jesuit Refugee Service in Rome, on 10 September 2019). In serving others, we experience that there is more joy in giving than in receiving (cf. Acts 20:35). In this regard, all institutions must be open to examining the aims and methods that determine how they carry out their educational mission.

For this reason, I look forward to meeting in Rome all of you who, in various ways and on every level, work in the field of education and of research. I encourage you to work together to promote, through a shared educational alliance, those forward-looking initiatives that can give direction to history and change it for the better. I join you in appealing to authoritative public figures in our world who are concerned for the future of our young people, and I trust that they will respond to my invitation. I also call upon you, dear young people, to take part in the meeting and to sense your real responsibility for the building of a better world. Our meeting will take place on 14 May 2020 in the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican. A number of seminars on related topics will take place in various locations and help us prepare for this event.

Let us seek solutions together, boldly undertake processes of change and look to the future with hope. I invite everyone to work for this alliance and to be committed, individually and within our communities, to nurturing dreams of a humanism rooted in solidarity and responsive both to humanity’s aspirations and to God’s plan.

I look forward to seeing you. Until then, I send you my greetings and my blessing.

From the Vatican, 12 September 2019

I wish to endorse a global event, to take place on 14 May 2020 on the theme “Reinventing the Global Educational Alliance”.

(@Pontifex)
Keep dreaming and moving forward

In Maputo the Holy Father asks young people to work together for the future
With bishops, clergy and religious, Pope Francis calls for compassion and closeness

When weariness is a healthy sign

On Thursday afternoon, 5 September, after having lunch at the mausoleum, the Pope met with representatives of the religious community of the Diocese of Xai-Xai, who came to the Cathedral of the most Holy Trinity to meet the bishops, priests, consecrated men and women and catechists of Mozambique, before ending his day with a private visit to “Matuse 25” House, which assists homeless people and is the English text of the discourse the Holy Father delivered in the Cathedral.

Dear Brother Cardinals, Bishops, Confreres in the Gospel!
Dear Priests, Men and Women Religious and Seminarians,
Dear Catechists and Pastoral Workers in Christian communities, Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good Afternoon!

I thank Dom Hilário for his words of welcome, and in turn, I greet all of you with affection and much gratitude. I know that you have made a great effort to be here. Together we want to renew our response to the call that once set our hearts on fire and that Holy Mother Church helped us to discern and confirm with a mission. Thank you for your testimonies, which spoke of the difficult times and serious challenges that you faced, conscious of your own limitations and weaknesses, yet also marvelling at God’s mercy.

I was pleased by something one of the catechists said: “We are a Church that is part of a heroic people”. A people that has experienced suffering yet keeps hope alive. With this holy pride that you take in your people, a pride that invites a renewal of faith and hope, all of us today want to renew our “yes”. How happy is Holy Mother Church to today want to renew our “yes”. How people”. A people that has experienced suffering yet keeps hope alive. With this holy pride that you take in your people, a pride that invites a renewal of faith and hope, all of us today want to renew our “yes”. How happy is Holy Mother Church to today want to renew our “yes”. How people”. A people that has experienced suffering yet keeps hope alive.

We hear about this first encounter with the mystery of the message of the angel from the evangelist Luke. From his account, we may perhaps find an answer to the question you asked today — all of you, that is, except the seminarians! [laughter] — and the incentive needed to respond with the same generosity and concern as Mary.

Saint Luke draws a parallel between the messages in the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. By contrasting them, he wants to make us see how God’s acting and our way of relating to him in the Old Testament is yielding to the new way brought to us by the Son of God made man. One way, in the Old Testament that dies out, and another, new way brought by Jesus.

Obviously, in the two Annunciations — those of John the Baptist to Zechariah and of Jesus — there is the appearance of an angel. The first takes place in the most important city of Judea – Jerusalem — not just anywhere but in the Temple and, within it, the Holy of Holies, and the announcement is made to a man and a priest. On the other hand, the announcement of the incarnation is made in Galilee, in a remote and conflict-ridden region and a little town — Nazareth. It takes place in a house, not a synagogue or a religious place, and is made to a layperson and a woman, not to a priest or a married man. The difference is great. What has changed? Everything. And in this change, we find our deepest identity.

You asked what to do about the crisis of priests’ identity, how to counteract it? In this regard, what I want to say specifically to priests is something that all of us (bishops, catechists, consecrated persons, seminarians) are called to cultivate and foster. I will speak for everyone.

In the crisis of priestly identity, we perhaps need to step away from important and solemn places, and return to the places from which we were called, where it was clear that the initiative and the power was from God. None of us was called to an important post, none of us. At times, without wanting it, and with no moral fault, we get used to identifying our daily activity as priests, religious, consecrated persons, laypersons, catechists, with certain rituals, with meetings and conferences. Mary, where our presence was in those meetings, at the table or in the hall is “hierarchical”. Then we are more like Zechariah than like Mary. Yet, “I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that the priest is very little indeed the incomparable grandeur of the gift granted us for the ministry sets us among the least of men. The priest is the poorest of men — yes, the poorest of men — unless Jesus enriches him by his poverty, the most useless of servants unless Jesus calls him his friend, the most ignorant of men unless Jesus patiently teaches him as he did Peter, the frailest of Christians unless the Good Shepherd strengthens him in the midst of the flock. The frailty of the priest, the consecrated person, the catechist. No one is more ‘little’ than a priest left to his own devices, and so our prayer of protection against every snare of the Evil One is the prayer of our Mother, the prayer of a priest to a priest; a prayer that Jesus has regarded my littleness (cf. Lk 1:48)” (Homily at Chrism Mass, 11 April 2014).

Dear brothers and sisters, returning to Nazareth, to Galilee, can be the way of facing the crisis of identity Jesus calls us, after his resurrection, to return to Galilee in order to be responsible for making things happen. Mary did not hesitate or think about herself; instead, she surrendered herself; she trusted. It is a constant struggle to experience our relationship with God like Zechariah, like a doctor of the law: always complying, always judging whether the recompense is proportionate to the work done, whether it is my due if God blesses me, whether the Church is bound to recognize my virtues and my hard work. It is exhausting to attempt to experience our relationship with God like Zechariah. We should not be running for our own benefit; rather, our weariness should be related to our ability to show compassion. Am I able to feel compassion? There are tasks in which our hearts are moved and deeply touched. Brothers and sisters, the Church asks us to be compassionate. Compassionate. “We are to rejoice with couples who marry – the pastoral life; we are to laugh with the children brought to the baptismal font; we are to accompany young fiancés and families; we are to suffer with those who receive the anointing of the sick in their hospital beds; we are to mourn with those burying a loved one” (Homily at Chrism Mass, 11 April 2015).

We often spend hours and days accompanying a mother with attī, an orphaned child, a grandmother taking care of many grandchildren, or a young person who came to the city and is desperate because he or she cannot find a job... “All these are to marry — the pastoral life; we are to laugh with the children brought to the baptismal font; we are to accompany young fiancés and families; we are to suffer with those who receive the anointing of the sick in their hospital beds; we are to mourn with those burying a loved one” (Homily at Chrism Mass, 11 April 2015).
APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MOZAMBIQUE

Holy Father’s visit to Zimpeto Hospital

Restoring dignity and hope to the suffering

Pope Francis began his last day in Mozambique, Friday, 6 September, with a visit to the Zimpeto Hospital on the outskirts of Maputo. After bidding farewell at the Apostolic Nunciature where he had spent the night, he transferred to the facility in which the Sant’Egidio Community administers a healthcare programme for AIDS patients. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s discourse.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am grateful for your warm and fraternal welcome and I thank Cacilda for her kind words. Thank you too, for your lives and witness, which shows that multi-purpose health centre – Santo Egidio de Zimpeto – is a sign of the love of God, who is ever ready to bring life to the sick, puts us in contact with another part of our vulnerable world. I think of the symptoms of the suffering soul in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life… the earth herself, burdened and mutilated, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans under their load’ (Rom 8:22). I am grateful for your warm and friendly traditions are agreed. “For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace” (Christus Vivit, 115). Let us do that right now [a moment of silence].

The love of the Lord. It has to do more with raising up than knocking down, with reconciling than forbidding, with offering new chances than condemning, with the future than the past” (ibid., 116). I know that you believe in this love that makes reconciliation possible.

Thank you and, please, do not forget to pray for me. God bless you all.

Keep dreaming and moving forward

urgent value.

At the same time, it is wonderful to see how this “listening” to the most vulnerable, being “touched” by the sick, puts us in contact with another part of our vulnerable world. I think of the “symptoms” of the suffering soul in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life… the earth herself, burdened and mutilated, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she ‘groans under their load’ (Rom 8:22). I am grateful for your warm and friendly traditions are agreed. “For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace” (Christus Vivit, 115). Let us do that right now [a moment of silence].

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Keep dreaming and moving forward

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experience of difficulty or powerlessness. They are our roots. Shall we say it again? [All: The elderly are our roots] (ibid., 184). The elderly are our roots that nourish and sustain us” [All repeat].

So we deal with the problem in its entirety, restoring dignity to women and children, and helping to point them towards a better future.

In this immense enterprise, thanks to your continual “listening” too you have come to experience your limitations and overall lack of means. The programme that you have set in place, which connects you with other places in the world, is an example both of humility, in recognition of your limits, and of creativity, since you are now part of a larger network.

Sadly, however, a few months ago you suffered the collision of two cyclones, and saw the contours of the ecological disaster that we are experiencing. Many people, including a great number of young people, have already taken up the pressing challenge of protecting our common home. This is the challenge before us: to protect our common home.

Let me leave you with a final thought: God loves you, and this is something on which all our religious traditions are agreed. “For him, you have worth; you are not insignificant. You are important to him, for you are the work of his hands. Because he loves you. Try to keep still for a moment and let yourself feel his love. Try to silence all the noise within, and rest for a second in his loving embrace” (Christus Vivit, 115). Let us do that right now [a moment of silence].

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Keep dreaming and moving forward

Contd from page 4

All of these are little things, but they can give you the support you need not to give up in times of trouble but to move forward with hope, to find new ways and outlets for expressing your creativity, and to face problems together in a spirit of solidarity.

Many of you were born at a time marked by a hard-earned peace that was not always easy to achieve and took time to build. Peace is a process that you too are called to advance, by being ever ready to reach out to those experiencing hardship.

What power there is in an outstretched hand and a friendship that finds concrete expression! I think of the suffering of young people who came full of dreams to find work in the city, and who today are homeless, without family and real friends. How important it is to learn how to offer others a helping and outstretched hand! To offer others a helping hand. [All repeat.] Try to grow in friendship with those who think differently than you, so that solidarity will increase among you and become the best weapon to change the course of history. Solidarity is the best weapon to change history.

The image of an outstretched hand also makes us think of the need to be committed to caring for the earth, our common home. You have indeed been blessed with stupendous natural beauty: forests and rivers, valleys and mountains and so many beautiful beaches.

You are “a sign of sharing with those in need, and you enable them to sense the active presence of a brother or a sister. The poor do not need intermediaries, but the personal involvement of all those who hear their cry. The concern of believers in their regard cannot be limited to a kind of assistance – as useful and as providential as this may be in the beginning – but requires a loving attentiveness that honours the person as such and seeks out his or her best interests” (Message for the 2008 World Day of the Poor, 18 November 2008, 3). Hearing this cry has made you realize that medical treatment, however necessary, is not enough. So you deal with the problem in its entirety, restoring dignity to women and children, and helping to point them towards a better future.

In this immense enterprise, thanks to your continual “listening” too you have come to experience your limitations and overall lack of means. The programme that you have set in place, which connects you with other places in the world, is an example both of humility, in recognition of your limits, and of creativity, since you are now part of a larger network.

The parable of the Good Samaritan ends with his bringing the wounded man to an inn and entrusting the innkeeper with part of the expenses and a promise to pay the remainder upon his return. Women like Cacilda, the approximately 100,000 children who can write a new page of history free of HIV-AIDS, and all those nameless persons who today smile because they have been cured with dignity in their dignity, are part of the payment that the Lord has left with you. Having emerged from the nightmare of suffering, and without concealing their condition, they are now a sign of hope for many persons. Their willingness to dream can serve as an inspiration to many people lying on the wayside who need a welcoming hand. For your part, you were there, to offer a helping hand. The sculptures of Makonde art, the umumae, in which various figures are represented, are little things, but they can give you the support you need not to give up in times of trouble but to move forward with hope, to find new ways and outlets for expressing your creativity, and to face problems together in a spirit of solidarity.

Many of you were born at a time marked by a hard-earned peace that was not always easy to achieve and took time to build. Peace is a process that you too are called to advance, by being ever ready to reach out to those experiencing hardship.
There is no future in hatred and violence

During Mass in the Zimpeto Stadium the Pope calls for forgiveness and peace

On Friday morning, 6 September, Pope Francis concluded his visit to Mozambique by celebrating Mass in the Zimpeto National Stadium. Upon his arrival from the nearby hospital, the Pope circled about in the popemobile among the festive faithful who packed the stadium despite the rain. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s homily.

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

We have heard a passage of the Sermon on the Plain, taken from the Gospel of Luke. After choosing his disciples and proclaiming the Beatitudes, Jesus adds: “But I say to you that listen, love your enemies” (Lk 6:27). Today, his words are also addressed to us, who hear them in this Stadium. Jesus speaks with clarity, simplicity and firmness as he traces a path, a narrow path that demands certain virtues. For Jesus is no idealist, someone who ignores reality. He is talking about specific enemies, real enemies, the kind he described in the previous Beatitude (v. 22): those who hate us, exclude us, revile us and defame us. Who hate us, exclude us, revile us and defame us. Lover us, exclude us, revile us and defame us. He is not asking us to forgive them, nor to forget. For Jesus destroys the normal reaction to injury, the desire to take revenge. The path he proposes is one that he himself already took, the path that led him to love those who betrayed him, who judged him unjudiciously, who would kill him.

It is not easy to speak of reconciliation while wounds are still open from the years of conflict, or to take a step towards forgiveness, which is not the same as ignoring pain or giving up our memories or ideals (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 100). Even so, Jesus is calling us to love and to do good. This means much more than simply ignoring the persons who harmed us, or trying to avoid encountering them. Jesus commands us to show an active, impartial and extraordinary benevolence towards those who have hurt us. Nor does Jesus stop there. He also asks us to bless them and to pray for them. In other words, to speak of them with words of blessing, with words of life not death, to speak their names not in insult or revenge, but to establish a new bond which is peace. It is a high standard that the Master sets before us!

In inviting us to do this, Jesus wants to end forever that common practice of being Christians yet living under the law of retaliation. We cannot look to the future, or build a nation, an equitable society, on the basis of violence. I cannot follow Jesus if I live my life by the rule of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth”.

No family, no group of neighbours, no ethnic group, much less a nation, has a future if the force that unites them, brings them together and resolves their conflicts while neglecting and excluding. We cannot come to terms and unite for the sake of revenge, or treating others with the same violence with which they treated us, or plotting opportunities for retaliation under apparently legal auspices. “Weapons of violence, rather than providing solutions, create new and more serious conflicts” (Evangelii Gaudium, 101). A “virtue” born of violence is always a spiritual dead-end, and its cost is extremely high. Yet another path is possible, for it is crucial not to forget that our peoples have a right to peace. You have a right to peace.

To make his commandment more concrete and applicable in daily life, Jesus proposes a first golden rule, one within the reach of all. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Lk 6:31). And he helps us realize what is most important in this way of acting towards others: to love each other, to help each other and to lend without expecting anything in return.

“Love one another”, Jesus tells us. Paul translates this as “clothe yourselves with compassion and kindness” (Col 3:12). The world disregards and continues to ignore the virtue of mercy, of compassion. It kills or abandons the handicapped and the elderly, eliminates the wounded and infirm, or shows itself more concerned with the suffering of animals. It has not practiced the goodness and kindness that lead us to consider the needs of our beloved neighbour as our own.

Overcoming times of division and violence calls not only for an act of reconciliation or peace, in the sense of an absence of conflict. It also calls for daily commitment on the part of everyone to an attentive and active concern that makes us treat others with the same mercy and goodness with which we ourselves want to be treated. An attitude of mercy and goodness above all towards those who, by their place in society, quickly encounter rejection and exclusion. An attitude not of
When weariness is a healthy sign

Israel that grasped the profound and dizzying change in God’s plan, and allowed itself to be visited. As a result, the child leaps in the womb. For a moment, in a patriarchal society, the world of men steps back and is silent, like Zechariah. Today we also heard from a catechist, a Sister from Mozambique who reminded us that nothing should make you lose your enthusiasm for evangelizing, for carrying out your baptismal mission. Your vocation is to evangelize; the vocation of the Church is to evangelize; the identity of the Church is to evangelize. Do not proselytize! Proselytism is not evangelization. It is not Christian.

Our vocation is to evangelize. The identity of the Church is to evangelize. Our sister here represents all those who go forth to encounter their brothers and sisters: those who, like Mary, visit others, and those who allow themselves to be visited, who allow others to change their lives by sharing with them their culture, their ways of living and expressing the faith.

The concern you expressed shows us that inculturation will always be a challenge, shutting back and forth, as it were, between those two women who were both changed by encounter and service. ‘Particular Churches should actively promote at least preliminary forms of inculturation. The ultimate aim should be that the Gospel, as preached in categories proper to each culture, will create a new synthesis with that particular culture. This is always a slow process and at times we can be overly fearful’ (Evangelii Gaudium, 193). Fear paralyzes.

The “distance” between Nazareth and Jerusalem is shortened and disappears with that “yes” spoken by Mary. Because distance, provincialism and party spirit, the constant building of walls, undermine the dynamic of the incarnation, which has broken down the wall that separated us (cf. Eph 2:14). You, at least the older ones among you, witnessed how division and conflict ended in war. You must always be ready to “visit”, to shorten distances. The Church in Mozambique is invited to be the Church of the Visitation; it can’t be part of the problem of rivalry, disrespect and party spirit, but must stand with others, but instead a door to solutions, a space where respect, interchange and dialogue are possible.

The Pope with Cardinal Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, OFM, during the meeting with consecrated men and women.

The question raised about how to react to interreligious marriages challenges this persistent tendency of ours for fragmentation, for separating rather than uniting. The same is true of relations between nations and peoples. Between North and South, between communities, priests and bishops. It represents a challenge because developing “a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter” requires “an ongoing process in which every new generation must take part: a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and willingness to achieve this”. This is the necessary condition for “progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity”, for “the development of life in society and the building of a people where differences are harmonized within a shared pursuit” (Evangelii Gaudium, 193). Just as Mary journeyed to the house of Elizabeth, we too, as a Church, have to find the road to take in the face of new problems, taking care not to remain paralyzed by the mindset of opposition, division and condemnation. Set out on that path, and seek answers to these challenges by imploring the unfailing help of the Holy Spirit. For he is the Teacher who can show us new paths to follow.

Let us, then, revive our vocation and calling in this magnificent temple dedicated to Mary. May our committed “yes” proclaim the greatness of the Lord and make the spirit of our people rejoice in God our Saviour (cf. Lk 1:46-47). May it fill with hope, peace and reconciliation this, your country, our beloved Mozambique! I ask you please to pray for me, and to invite others to do the same.

May the Lord bless you and the most holy Virgin watch over you.

Thank you.

There is no future in hatred and violence

...
The Pope arrived in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on Friday afternoon, 6 September. The following morning, Saturday, 7 September, the Pope paid a courtesy visit to President Andry Rajoelina in the Iavoloha Presidential Palace. He then met Authorities, members of the Diplomatic Corps and representatives of civil society in the nearby Ceremony Building, where he delivered his first address in the capital city. Afterwards, the Pontiff joined the President outside the meeting hall, where together they planted a baobab tree. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s address.

Deforestation is a threat to biodiversity

The Holy Father’s appeal for care of creation

Mr President,
Mr Prime Minister,
Members of the Government and the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Authorities,
Representatives of the different Religious Confessions and of Civil Society,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer a cordial greeting to the President of the Republic of Madagascar. I thank you, Mr President, for your kind invitation to visit this country, and for your words of welcome. Mr President, you spoke with passion and with love for your people. I thank you for your witness of patriotism. I likewise greet His Excellency the Prime Minister, the members of the Government and the Diplomatic Corps and the representatives of civil society. I also address a fraternal greeting to the Bishops and representatives of the Catholic Church, and to the representatives of other Christian confessions and of the different religions. I express my gratitude to all those persons and institutions who have made this visit possible, and in particular to the Malagasy people, who have welcomed us with impressive hospitality.

In the Preamble of the Constitution of your Republic, you wished to enshrine one of the fundamental values of Malagasy culture: fahaavanaona, a word that evokes the spirit of sharing, mutual help and solidarity. It also evokes the importance of family, friendship and good-will between people and with nature. It reveals the “soul” of your people, its distinctive identity that has enabled it to face with courage and self-sacrifice the various problems and hardships it faces daily. If we must recognize, esteem and appreciate this blessed land for its beauty and its priceless natural resources, we must do the same for this “soul”, which, as Father Antoine de Paloue Raharizarafy, S.J, has rightly observed, has given you the strength to keep embracing “aina”, life.

Ever since your nation recovered its independence, it has aspired to stability and peace, through a fruitful democratic alternation that shows respect for the complementarity of styles and visions. This demonstrates that “politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions” (Message for the 2019 World Day of Peace, 1 January 2019), when it is practised as a means of serving society as a whole. Clearly, political office and political responsibility represent a constant challenge for those entrusted with the mission of serving and protecting their fellow citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, and of favouring conditions for a dignified and just development involving all the actors of civil society. As Saint Paul VI noted, the development of a nation “cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be integral; it must foster the development of each person and of the whole person” (Populorum Progressio, 14).

In this regard, I would encourage you to fight with strength and determination against all endemic forms of corruption and speculation that increase social disparity, and to confront the situations of great instability and exclusion that always create conditions of inhumane poverty. Here we see the need to establish the various structural mediations that can assure a better division of income and an integral development of all, particularly those most poor. That development cannot be limited to organized structures of social assistance, but also demands the recognition of subjects of law called to share fully in building their future (cf Evangelii Gaudium, 204-205). We have also come to realize that we cannot speak of integral development without showing consideration and care for our common home. This calls not only for finding ways to preserve natural resources, but also for seeking comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex

Video message to the people of Madagascar
To care for the common home

We must protect the beautiful things in nature but above all, we should nurture another beauty that is even more dear to Christ: holiness. Pope Francis offered this in a video message to the people of Madagascar ahead of his Apostolic Journey to their country. The following are the English subtitles to the video message that was released on Sunday, 1 September.

Dear Brother and Sisters of Madagascar,

With the grace of God, in a few days’ time I will be among you!
I wish to already send you my cordial greeting, together with thanks for all that you have done and are doing to prepare for my visit.

Above all, I thank you for your prayer, whether personal, in families, in parish communities or in hospitals and prisons. Prayer knows no boundaries, and when I am in Madagascar, even if I can visit only a few places, with prayer I will reach everyone, and I will implore God’s blessing for all.

Dear Malagasy friends, your country is famous for its natural beauty, and for this we say: “Laudato Si’!” It is our duty to look after it with care. But there is another beauty that is even more dear to Christ and to the Pope: that of His people, which is your holiness! For this reason, I will come to confirm you in faith and at the same time to draw from it.

May the Blessed Virgin obtain for us this gift.

Thank you and see you soon!
Like logs consumed by the fire of the encounter with God

Francis’ prepared reflection for his visit to the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites

Dear Mother Madeleine of the Annunciation, Dearest Sisters,

Thank you, Mother, for your warm welcome and your kind words, which echo the sentiments of the contemplative nuns of all the different monasteries of this country. I thank every one of you, dear Sisters, for leaving the cloister for a moment in order to show your communion with me and with the life and mission of the entire Church, particularly the Church in Madagascar.

I am grateful for your presence, for your fidelity and for the radiant witness to Jesus that you offer to the community. In this country, there may be poverty, but there is also great richness! For here we find a great treasure of natural, human and spiritual beauty. You too, dear Sisters, share in this beauty of Madagascar, its people and its Church, for it is the beauty of Christ that lights up your faces and your lives. Indeed, thanks to you, the Church in Madagascar is all the more beautiful in the Lord’s eyes and in the eyes of the whole world as well.

The three Psalms of today’s liturgy express the anguish of the Psalmist in a moment of trial and danger. Allow me to reflect on the first of them, taken from Psalm 119, the 19th, the lengthiest of the Psalter, since it devotes eight verses to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet. No doubt, its author was a contemplative, someone familiar with prolonged and beautiful experiences of prayer. In today’s passage, the word “consume” appears several times and, significantly, in two senses.

The one who prays is “consumed” by the desire to encounter God. You yourselves are a living testimony to this insatiable desire present in the heart of all men and women. Amid the many proposals that claim to satisfy the human heart, the one inescapable of doing so, the contemplative life is the torch that leads to the one eternal fire, “the living flame of love that wounds tenderly” (Saint John of the Cross). You are a visible sign of the goal toward which all the persons around you are often very poor, weak, troubled and hurting in a thousand ways; yet they are full of faith. In you, they instinctively recognize witnesses of God’s presence and invaluable sources of encouragement on the way to encountering Christ, thus announcing in advance the glory of heaven” (Vultum Dei Quarere, 5).

We are constantly tempted to satisfy our desire for eternity with fleeting things. We find ourselves adrift on surging seas that only end up overwhelming our lives and our spirit. For this reason, “the world needs you every bit as much as a sailor on the high seas needs a beacon to guide him to a safe haven. Be beacons to those near to you and, above all, to those far away. Be torches to guide men and women along their journey through the dark night of time. Be sentinels of the morning (cf. Is 21:11-12), heralding the dawn (cf. Lk 1:78). By your transfigured life, and with simple words pondered in silence, show us the One who is the way, and the truth and the life (cf. Jn 14:6), the Lord who alone brings us fulfillment and bestows life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). Cry out to us, as Andrew did to Simon: “We have found the Lord (cf. Jn 1:40). Like Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, announce to us: ‘I have seen the Lord!’ (Jn 20:18)” (ibid., 6).

The Psalm also speaks of another way of being “consumed”. It speaks of the malicious, who seek to ruin the just. They persecute them, set traps for them, try to bring them down. A monastery is always a space where people consumed by the pain of sorrow and sorrows of this world can come to find a hearing. May your monasteries, faithful to your charism of contemplation and your constitu- tions, also be places of welcome and listening, especially for those in greatest need. With us today are two mothers who have lost their children and who embody all the hurt and pain felt by our brothers and sisters on this island. Please be attentive to the pleas and the grief of those in Christ who, consumed by the experience of suffering, exploitation and discouragement, turn to you. Do not be like those who listen only to pass the time, to satisfy curiosity or to have something else to talk about.

You have a fundamental mission in this regard. The cloister sets you in the heart of God; his heart is thus present in the midst of your community. Your sensitivity to the heart of the Lord will enable you to hear him speaking in your brothers and sisters. The persons around you are often very poor, weak, troubled and hurting in a thousand ways; yet they are full of faith. In you, they instinctively recognize witnesses of God’s presence and invaluable sources of encouragement on the way to encountering like mothers, taking your children upon your shoulders and carrying them to the promised land. Indeed, “our prayer will be all the more pleasing to God and more effective for our growth in holiness if, through intercession, we attempt to practise the twofold commandment that Jesus left us. Intercessory prayer is an expression of our spiritual concern for others, since we are able to embrace their lives, their deepest needs and sorrows”. Of those who commit themselves generously to intercessory prayer we may apply the words of Scripture: “This is a man who loves the brethren and prays much for the people” (2 Mac 15:14) (“Gaudete et Exsultate”, 54).

Dear contemplative Sisters, what would the Church and those who live on the human peripheries of Madagascar be like without you? What would happen to all those who work in the forefront of evangelization, especially here, in very precarious, difficult and often dangerous conditions? They rely on your prayers and on the example of your lives, an inestimable gift in the sight of God, one that makes you share in the mystery of the redemption of this land and of the beloved persons who dwell in it.

For I have become like a wine skin in the smoke”, says the Psalm (19:8), reminding us of how much time passes when we experience this two- fold way of being consumed by God and by the difficulties of the world. At times, almost impercep- tibly, we can fall into “listlessness, mere routine, lack of enthusiasm and paralyzing lethargy” (Vultum Dei Quarere, 11). It makes no difference how old you are, or how difficult it is to walk or to arrive on time for prayers… We are not wineskins drying next to the smoke, but logs burning until they are consumed in the fire which is Jesus. For he never fails us, he covers our every debt. “Thank you for this time we have spent together. I entrust myself to your prayers. To you I entrust all the intentions I carry in my heart during this visit to Madagascar. Let us pray together that the spirit of the Gospel may spring up in the hearts of all your people.”
The following is the English text of the extemporary reflection that Pope Francis shared at the Monastery of the Discalced Carmelites in Antananarivo on 7 September.

You will be given a copy of the text I prepared, so that you can read and ponder it quietly. But right now I would like to speak to you from the heart.

The reading from the First Book of Kings (2:28-3) was addressed to Joseph. It begins with an appeal to be courageous: “Be strong, and show yourself a man!” Courageous. To follow the Lord, you need courage, a bit of courage. It is true that the Lord does the heavy work, yet courage is needed to let him do it. I recall something that has helped me greatly in my life as a priest and as a bishop. Late one evening, two nuns, one very young and the other very old, were walking from the chapel, where they had just prayed very fervently in the refectory. The old nun had difficulty walking and the young nun tried to help her sit down, but the old nun was irritable. She said: “Don’t touch me! Don’t make me fall!” God knows, maybe sickness made her a bit irascible. Smiling, the young nun accompanied her. Eventually they arrived in the refectory and the young nun tried to help her sit down, and the old nun said: “Stop it, you’re hurting me here...”, but in the end, she sat down. A young person experiencing all this surely would have loved to send her packing! But that young woman smiled, took a piece of bread, prepared it and gave it to her. This is not some edifying story; it happened. The old nun was called Sister Saint Pierre, and the young nun, very kind and thoughtful.

The tempter does not want to be courageous: “Be strong, and show yourself a man!” Pope Francis said: “Stop it, you’re hurting me.” Sister Saint Pierre, and the young nun, very kind and thoughtful.

That young sister who guides the Pope

The Pope’s words to contemplative nuns

The Church in Madagascar

A prophetic presence

Ahead of the Pope’s arrival, the Cardinal Archbishop of Tomaña, Mgr. Désiré Tsarahazana, reflected on the importance of the papal visit.

Désiré Tsarahazana

It is an immense joy to welcome the holy Father in our country! My country, whose very existence is unknown to many in the world, is flourishing at last. Our Madagascar is among the poorest nations in the world, but paradoxically it is very rich. There is mining, the sea is teeming with fish, nature is lush everywhere. Madagascar is the world’s leading producer of vanilla. But it is the human capital that makes this extraordinary island unique.

Our mother Church is present and reaches all the different parts of the country, even the most remote, through her representatives and, above all, through catechists and dedicated lay people. Not only for young people but also for society as a whole, the Church is an institution that enjoys great credibility, because people see, in each of her members, someone who is concerned about their lives. Priests and bishops constantly seek the common good of the country, and this is expressed by our credibility. But there is much to do. Sadly my fellow citizens are becoming less and less in the country there are problems to be solved, such as insecurity both in rural areas and in the capital.

The Church, through the Episcopal Conference, continues to condemn the anomalies that cause people to suffer, and she encourages people to assume their responsibilities. She encourages all Christians to experience faith in an authentic way.

Unfortunately, there is also much to do to fight corruption and a justice system that does not function properly. The Scriptures teach us, arises from social disorder, from injustice and from abuse of power, said by those who, availed of many means, tend to exploit others. To counter this, the Church insists on the commitment of the Covenant, in order to lead hearts to the path of life, and condemns all that creates oppression and exploitation and harms the dignity of the human being. It is not acceptable with the Christian faith to oppress the least in order to enrich only oneself. We need capable leaders and motivated people who can help our country to develop in the best way.

The Church is doing her part.
APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR

Deforestation is a threat to biodiversity

Crisis which is both social and environmental (Lausado N., 139).

Your lovely island of Madagascar is rich in plant and animal biodiversity, yet this treasure is especially threatened by excessive deforestation, from which some profit. The determination of that biodiversity compromises the future of the country and of the earth, our common home. As you know, the last forests are menaced by forest fires, poaching, the unrestricted cutting down of valuable woodlands. Plant and animal biodiversity is endangered by contraband and illegal exportation. It is also true, however, that, for the peoples concerned, a number of activities harmful to the environment at present ensure their survival. So it is important to create jobs and activities that generate income, while protecting the environment and helping people to emerge from poverty. In a word, there can be no true ecological approach or effective efforts to safeguard the environment without the attainment of a social justice capable of respecting the right to the common designation of earth’s goods, not only of present generations, but also of those yet to come.

In this regard, it is incumbent on all to be involved, including the international community, many of whose members are present here today. It must be admitted that the aid provided by international organizations for the development of the country is great, and shows Madagascar’s openness to the larger world. Yet that openness can risk turning into a presumptive “universal culture” that severs, submerges and suppresses the cultural patrimony of individual peoples. An economic globalization, whose limitations are increasingly evident, should not lead to cultural uniformity. If we participate in a process respectful of local values and ways of life and of the expectations of citizens, we will ensure that the aid furnished by the international community will not be the sole guarantee of a country’s development. The people itself will progressively take charge and become the artisan of its own future.

That is why we should show particular attention and respect for local civil society, local people. In supporting its initiatives and its actions, the voice of those who have no voice will come to be heard, together with

The That young sister who guides the Pope

to the Prioress if she snarls at me every time I go to her! Yes, but the Prioress is Jesus. – But, Father, the Prioress is not a good person, she’s bad”. Let the Lord decide that; for you, the Prioress is Jesus. – “But the Prioress is a hit old, things are not working well...”. Let the chapter decide; if you want to bring this forward, say it at the chapter, but you have to report to the Prioress, because she is Jesus. There should always be transparency of the heart! You always win by speaking up.

So then, Therese, who knew that the Prioress did not like her that much, would go to her anyway. Well, we have to realize that not all Prioresses get the Nobel Prize for sympathy! But they are Jesus. The path of obedience is one that submits you to love, that makes us submissive to love.

Then, Therese got sick. She fell ill and little by little she thought she was losing her faith. The poor thing, who in her life knew how to deal with the “polite” devils, was, at the time of her death, at a loss; she couldn’t cope with the devil that was besetting her. She would say: “I can see him circling around me”. The darkness of the last days and months of life. When it comes to temptation and spiritual warfare, charity does not go into retirement: you have to keep fighting to the end. To the very end. Even when you are surrounded by darkness. Therese thought she had lost her faith! So she called for the nuns to sprinkle holy water on her bed and to bring blessed candles... In the monastery, the battle continues to the end. But it is a beautiful battle, for in this cruel but magnificent battle, when it is real, peace is never lost.

I’m sure you are going say: “This Pope is a bit folksy” instead of talking theology, he talked to us like children. Would that you were all children, at least in spirit. With this aspect of being a child that the Lord loves so dearly!

I would like to finish the story of Therese and that old woman. That same Therese now accompanies an old man. I would like to give a testimony about this, because she has accompanied me at every step of the way. She taught me how to walk. Sometimes I am a little irritable and I send her away, as Mother Saint Pierre did. Sometimes I listen to her; sometimes my troubles keep me from listening carefully. But she is a faithful friend. That is why I didn’t want to talk to you in the abstract; I wanted to share with you my experience with a saint, and in doing so, to tell you about what a saint can do and about the path to becoming saints.

Be strong! And keep going!
The need for closeness to the poor and the little ones

Thank you, Your Grace, for your words of welcome in the name of all your confreres. I appreciate your desire to show how the mission that we have undertaken is carried out amid contradictions: a rich land with widespread poverty, an ancestral culture and wisdom that respect the life and dignity of the human person, but also the presence of inequality and corruption. The task of the shepherd in such circumstances is not easy. So too, faced with inequalities, the shepherd risks wanders away and leaving the others. And the same with corruption. I do not say that the shepherd becomes a corrupt man, but there is the danger ... I will carry out this work, and that other one ... and in doing so become a businessman; or make that exchange, that other one, that other ... and in the end, that good shepherd is stained with corruption. It happens, it happens. In the world, it happens. Keep your eyes open!

"Sower of peace and hope". The theme chosen for my Visit can serve as an echo of the message with which we have been entrusted. In effect, we are sowders, and those who sow always hope: we do our best in sowing on our own efforts and personal commitment, but also knowing that many other factors combine to make the seed take root, grow and finally give abundant grain. The sower may be weary and concerned, but he does not give up. This word must always accompany us, both in the active and in the contemplative life, as we have seen today [in the meeting with the cloistered nuns]: may you be courageous, be a courageous man. The sower may be weary and concerned, but he does not give up and stop sowing, much less burn his field when things do not turn out well ... He knows how to wait, he trusts, he realizes the limitations of his sowing. But he never stops loving the field entrusted to his care. Even if he is tempted, he does not abandon it or leave it to another.

The sower knows his land, he "touches" it, "feels" it and prepares it to produce its best. We bishops, like the sower, are called to spread seeds of faith and hope on this earth. To do so, we need to develop that "sense of smell" that can enable us to recognize more clearly whatever compromises, hindrances or damages the sowing. This is the "shepherd's intuition". The shepherd can be very intelligent, can have academic qualifications, may have participated in many international congresses, know everything, studied everything, and even be a good person, a good person, but if he lacks the intuition, he will never be a good shepherd.

The intuition for this reason, "the Church's pastors, taking into account the contributions of the different sciences, have the right to offer opinions on all that affects people's lives, since the task of evangelization implies and demands the integral promotion of each human being. It is not possible to claim that religion should be restricted to the private sphere and that it exists only to prepare souls for heaven. This is the duty to protect and remain close to those you are conscious of your responsibility to protect the dignity of your brothers and sisters who strive to build a nation of greater solidarity and prosperity, endowed with solid and stable institutions. Can a pastor worthy of that name remain indifferent before the challenges facing his fellow citizens of all social categories, regardless of their religious affiliation? Can a pastor with the heart of Jesus be indifferent to lives entrusted to his care?"

A prudent and independent cooperation between the Church and the state remains a constant challenge, for there is always a danger of collusion, especially if we end up losing the "last of the Gospel". The prophetic dimension of the Church's mission calls, always and everywhere, for a discernment that, in general, is not easy. In this regard, fr. Gianfranco Giumarra in the proceedings of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, at the meeting on "the freedom of the Church and the Catholic in the secular order and the participation in culture", 6, 10, 2013, the ambassadors of the Church.

The need for closeness to the poor and the little ones

The need for closeness to the poor and the little ones
Closeness to the poor and the little ones

This effort must also extend to the vast world of the lay faithful. They too are sent out to the harvest, called to cast their nets and direct time to their own apostolate, which "in all its many aspects, is exercised both in the Church and in the world." (Apostolic Actonis, 9). In all its breadth, its problems and its varied situations, the world is the specific area of the apostolate where they are called, with generosity and a sense of responsibility, to bring the laity of the Gospel. For this reason, I express my appreciation for all those initiatives that you have undertaken as pastors to provide training for lay men and women — thank you for this — and not to leave them alone in their mission to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In this way they will be able to contribute to the transformation of society and the life of the Church in Madagascar. And please, make sure you do not clericalize the laity. Lay faithful are lay faithful. I heard, in my previous Diocesan Vocations proposals like this: 'My Lord Bishop, I have a wonderful lay person in the parish: he works hard, he organizes everything we should ordain him a deacon?" Leave him there, don't ruin his life, let him remain a lay person. And speaking of deacons, deacons often have the temptation of clericalism; they see themselves as presbyters or pseudo-bishops. No! The deacon is the custodian of service in the Church. Please do not keep deacons at the altar: let them do their work outside, in service. If they have to go on a mission to baptize, let them baptize: it's ok. But in service, let them not be called priests.

Dear brothers, this great responsibility for the Lord's field should challenge us to open our hearts and minds, and to banish the fear that tempts us to withdraw into ourselves and to cut ourselves off from others. Fraternal dialogue among ourselves is important as is the sharing of gifts and cooperation between the particular Churches of the Indian Ocean: may these be a path of hope, dialogue and cooperation. The similarity of the pastoral challenges you face, such as the protection of the environment in a Christian spirit, or the problem of immigration, calls for shared reflection and coordinated action on a large scale in devising effective approaches.

In conclusion, I would like in a special way to greet, through you, all those priests and men and women religious who are elderly or ill. I would like each of you to ask yourself this question: Will I go and visit them? I ask you to convey to them my affection and the assurance of my prayers, and to care for them with gentle love and to confirm them in their fine mission of intercessory prayer.

Two women protect this Cathedral. The chapel nearby holds the remains of Bishop Vicente Rassomano- arivo, who was able to do much good and to defend and spread the faith in difficult times. There is also the statue of the Virgin Mary, whose arms, outstretched to the valley and the hills, seem to embrace everything. Let us ask these two women always to enlarge our hearts, to teach us the maternal compassion that women, like God himself, feel for the forgotten of the earth and to help us to sow seeds of hope.

As a sign of my constant heartfelt encouragement, I now impart to you my blessing, I bless you as a brother and I extend this blessing to all your dioceses.

Please, do not forget to pray for me, and to ask others to do the same!
APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR

At the vigil in Antananarivo, an appeal to young people for commitment

Do not be afraid to get your hands dirty

After a moment of prayer at the tomb of Blessed Vincenzo Rasoanaivorona on Saturday afternoon, 7 September, Pope Francis returned to the Nunciature and then traveled by popemobile to Soanandaotraiza Field to provide a prayer vigil to which the Lord Jesus has invited us. Thank you for the songs and traditional dances you performed with such enthusiasm, and they were not wrong! Thank you, Vavy Elsyssa and Vary Elsyssa, for sharing with each of us the process of seeking, with its hopes and challenges, that brought you here today. How good it is to meet two young people with a living faith in the move! Jesus always leaves our hearts restless; he shows us the way and gets us moving. Disciples, if they wish to grow in friendship, must not keep still, complaining or looking inward. They need to be on the move, acting, committed, certain that the Lord is supporting and accompanying them.

This is why I like to think of every young person as a seer. Do you remember the first question Jesus posed to his disciples on the banks of the river Jordan? The first question was: "What do you seek?" (Jn 1:38). The Lord knows that we are looking for "happiness for which we were created" and which "the world will not be able to take from us" (Ecclesiasticus 1, 177). Each person shows it differently, but deep down all of you are looking for the happiness that no one will be able to take from us (cf. ibid., 177).

You told us, Rova, that in your heart you had long wanted to visit prisoners. You began by helping a priest in his ministry, and little by little you became more and more involved, to the point where this became your personal mission. You realized that your life is a mission. This search, born of faith, helps make the world in which we live a better place, more in accord with the Gospel. What you did for others also transformed you; it changed your way of seeing and judging people. It made you a fairer and more sensitive person. You understood and discovered that the Lord is part of your life; he gives you a happiness that the world cannot take away from you.

Rova, in your mission, you learned to stop labelling people and instead to call them by name, as the Lord does with us. He does not call us by our sins, our errors, our faults, our limits, but by our names: each of us is precious in his eyes. The devil also knows our names, but he would rather call us by constantly reminding us of our sins and errors; in this way, he makes us feel that however much we do, nothing can ever change, everything will remain the same. The Lord will have none of that. The Lord always reminds us how precious we are in his eyes, and he entrusts us with a mission.

Rova, you learned to see the distinctiveness of each person, but also the history hidden behind each face. You abandoned the quick and easy criticism that always paralyzes us, and you learned something that, for many people, takes years to discover. You realized that a good number of those in prison were there not because they were bad, but because they had made bad choices. They took the wrong path and they realize it, but now they long to make a fresh start.

This reminds us of one of the most beautiful gifts that our friendship with Jesus can offer us: "He is in you, he is with you and he never abandons you. However far you may wander, he is always there, the Rock One. He calls you and he waits for you to return to him and start over again" (Christus Vivit, 2), and he entrusts you with a mission. Today he asks all of us to discover and to celebrate that gift.

We all know, also from personal experience, that people can go astray and run after enticing illusions that promise something to be quick, easy and instantaneous joy, but that end up leaving our hearts, our dreams and our soul stranded along the way. Be careful about those who promise easy roads and who then abandon you halfway. When we are young, these temptations seduce us with promises that ultimately decease us; they take away our vitality and joy, they leave us dependent and bitter, trapped in a dead end.

About becoming bitter… Perhaps it is not the case, but there is a risk that you can start thinking: "That’s the way things are… nothing will change and no one can alter a single thing". Especially when you lack the bare necessities to make it from day to day or to pursue your studies, or when you realize that without a job, stability and social injustice, your future is blocked… and are then tempted to give up. Be careful when faced with this bitterness! Be careful!

The Lord is the first to tell you no! This is not the way to go. He is alive and he also wants you to be alive. He wants you to share all your gifts and charisms, all your dreams and your talents (cf. ibid., 1). The Lord calls each of us by name and says: Follow me! He does not call us to run after mirages, but to become missionary disciples here and now. He is the first to reject all those voices that would lull you to sleep, make you passive, numb and apathetic, and thus prevent you from seeking new horizons. With Jesus, there are always new horizons to be sought. He wants you to change us and to make our lives a mission. But he tells us one thing: he tells us not to be afraid to get our hands dirty.

Through you, the future is coming to Madagascar and to the Church. The Lord is the first to trust in you, but he also asks you to trust in yourselves, to trust in your own skills and abilities, which are many. He asks you to encourage one another and join him in writing the most beautiful page of your lives, rejecting apathy and, like Rova, offering a Christian answer to the problems that you face. The Lord calls us to be builders of the future (cf. ibid., 174). You will be the builders of the future! He invites you to contribute as only you can, by the joy and freshness of your faith. To each one of you, you, you and you… I ask and invite you to ask yourself: Can the Lord count on you? Can your fellow Madagascans count on you? Can Madagascar, your fatherland, count on you?

The Lord is not looking for lone adventurers. He gives us a mission, yes, but he does not send us out alone to the front lines.

Vavy Elsyssa made this point very well. It is impossible to be a missionary disciple all by ourselves. We need others in order to experience and share the love and the trust that the Lord has shown us. A personal encounter with Jesus is essential, not simply as individuals but also in community. Certainly, we can accomplish great things on our own, but together we can dream of and undertake things undreamt of! Vavy put it nicely: we are invited to confirm the face of Jesus in the face of others. By celebrating the faith in our families, by creating fraternal bonds, by sharing in the life of a group or movement and by encouraging one another to take things undreamt of! Vavy put it nicely: we are invited to confirm the face of Jesus in the face of others. By celebrating the faith in our families, by creating fraternal bonds, by sharing in the life of a group or movement and by encouraging one another to take things undreamt of! Vavy put it nicely: we are invited to confirm the face of Jesus in the face of others. By celebrating the faith in our families, by creating fraternal bonds, by sharing in the life of a group or movement and by encouraging one another to take things undreamt of! Vavy put it nicely: we are invited to confirm the face of Jesus in the face of others.
On Sunday morning, 8 September, more than one million people participated in the Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in Antananarivo's Soanandahatavy Field. The following is the English text of the Pontiff’s homily.

The Gospel tells us that “great multitudes accompanied Jesus” (Lk 14:25). Like the multitudes gathered along his path, you too have come in great numbers to receive his message and follow in his footsteps. But you also know that following Jesus is not easy. You haven’t had much rest, and many of you have even spent the night here. Today, Luke’s Gospel reminds us of how demanding that commitment can be.

We should realize that Luke sets out those demands within his account of Jesus’ ascent to Jerusalem. He starts with the parable of the banquet to which everyone is invited, especially the outcasts living on the streets, in the squares and at the crossroads. And he concludes with the three “parables of mercy”, where a party is celebrated when what was lost was found, the outcasts living on the streets, in the squares and at the crossroads. And he concludes with the three “parables of mercy”, where a party is celebrated when what was lost was found, where someone who seemed dead is welcomed with joy and restored to life with the possibility of making a new start. For us as Christians, our sacrifices only make sense in the light of the joyful celebration of our encounter with Jesus Christ. 

Jesus’ first demand has to do with family relationships. The new life the Lord holds out to us seems troubling and scandalously unjust to those who think that entry into the kingdom of heaven can be limited or reduced only to bonds of blood or membership in a particular group, clan or particular culture. When “family” becomes the decisive criterion for what we consider right and good, we end up judging and even “consecrating” practices that lead to the culture of privilege and exclusion: favoursism, patronage and, as a consequence, corruption. The Master demands that we see beyond this. He says this clearly: anyone incapable of seeing beyond their family, cultural or social background “cannot be my disciple” (Lk 14:26). His devoted love is a free gift given to all and meant for all.

With these three demands, the Lord wants to prepare his disciples for the celebration of the coming of the kingdom of God, and to free them from the grave obstacle that, in the end, is one of the worst forms of enslavement: living only for oneself. It is the temptation to fall back into our little universe, and it ends up leaving little room for other people. The poor no longer enter in, we no longer hear the voice of God, we no longer enjoy the quiet joy of his love, we are no longer eager to do good… Many people, by shutting themselves up in this way, can feel “apparently” secure, yet they end up becoming bitter, querulous and lifeless. This is no way to live a full and dignified life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit that has its source in the heart of the risen Christ (cf. Evangelii Gaudium, 5).

Never abuse the name of God to justify violence

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Finally, how difficult it can be to share the new life that the Lord offers us when we are continually driven to self-justification, because we think that everything depends exclusively on our efforts and resources! Or, as we heard in the first reading, when the race to amass possessions becomes stifling and overwhelming, which only increases our selfishness and our willingness to use immoral means. Jesus’ demand is that we rediscover how to be grateful and to realize that, much more than a personal triumph, our life and our talents are the fruit of a gift (cf. Gaudete et Exsultate, 53), a gift created by God through the silent interplay of so many people whose names we will only know in the kingdom of heaven.

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With these demands, the Lord, as he walks towards Jerusalem, asks us to lift our gate, to adjust our priorities and, above all, to make room for God to be the centre and axis of our life.

As we look around us, how many men and women, young people and children are suffering and in utter need! This is not part of God’s plan. How urgently Jesus calls us to die to our self-centredness, our individualism and our pride! In this way, we can allow the spirit of fraternity to triumph – a spirit born from the pierced side of Jesus Christ, in which we are born as God’s family – and in which everyone can feel loved because understood, accepted and appreciated in his or her dignity. In the face of contempt for human dignity, we often remain with arms folded or stretched out as a sign of our frustration before the grim power of evil. Yet we Christians cannot stand with arms folded in indifference, or with arms outstretched.
Poverty is not inevitable

Visit to the City of Friendship

Indeed this village reflects a long history of courage and mutual assistance. This city is the fruit of many years of hard work. At its foundations, we find a living faith translated into concrete actions capable of "moving mountains". A faith that made it possible to see opportunity in place of insecurity; to see hope in place of inevitability; to see life in a place that spoke only of death and destruction. Remember what the Apostle Saint James wrote: "Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jas 2:17). The building blocks of teamwork and a sense of family and community have enabled you to rebuild, with patience and skill, your confidence not only in yourselves but also in one another. This has given you the chance to take the lead in shaping this enterprise. It has been an education in the values handed down by those first families who took a risk with Father Opeka – the values of hard work, discipline, community, self-respect and respect for others. You have come to understand that God's dream is not only for our personal development, but essentially for the development of the community, and that there is no worse form of slavery, as Father Pedro reminded us, than to live only for ourselves.

Dear young people of Akamasoa, I would like to say a special word to you. Never stop fighting the baneful effects of poverty, never yield to the temptation of settling for an easy life or withdrawing into yourselves. Thank you, Fanny, for the moving testimony you shared with us on behalf of the youth of this village. Dear young people, this great work accomplished by your elders, is now yours to carry forward. You will find the strength to do so in your faith and in the living witness that your elders have made a reality in your lives. Allow the gifts that the Lord has given you to flourish in your midst. Ask him to help you to be generous in the service of your brothers and sisters. In this way, Akamasoa will not be merely an example for the coming generations, but something even greater: the point of departure for a work inspired by God that will come to full flower in the measure that you continue to witness to his love for present and future generations.

Let us pray that throughout Madagascar and everywhere in the world this ray of light will spread, so that we can enact models of development that support the fight against poverty and social exclusion, on the basis of trust, education, hard work and commitment. For these are always indispensable for the dignity of the human person.

Thank you, friends of Akamasoa, dear Father Pedro and co-workers, thank you once again for your prophetic witness, for your witness that brings hope. May God continue to bless you.

I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me.
APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MADAGASCAR

On Sunday afternoon, 8 September, the Pope concluded his event-filled day with a meeting with priests, religious and seminarians of Madagascar. A long line of people greeted the Pontiff as he travelled in the popemobile from the quarry to the Collège Saint Michel. After arriving at the athletic field of the school founded by the Society of Jesus in Antananarivo, the Pope delivered a discourse before meeting privately with Jesuits in the nearby chapel. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s public address.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When they brought me this table, I thought it was time to eat, but no, it is a d d re s s .

I thought it was time to eat, but no, it is a d d re s s .

I would like before all else to greet all those priests and consecrated persons who could not be with us today due to poor health, advanced age or other reasons. Let us say a little prayer for them in silence...

I conclude my visit to Madagascar here with you. As I witness your joy, and think of everything else that I have seen during my brief stay on your island, my heart echoes the words spoken by Jesus in Luke’s Gospel. Filled with joy, he exclaimed: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to little ones” (Lk 10:21). My joy has been confirmed...
Prayer for workers

Let us praise the Lord.

A just wage for all

To occupy spaces (cf. ibid., 233), the quarry which was opened by the Akamasoa Association. The following is the text of the Pope's prayer for the workers during the encounter (cf. Lk 6:20-23). Happy are you, happy as a Church that lives joyfully by preaching the Good News to the marginalized of the earth, to those who are closest to God's heart.

Prayer for workers

The marginalized of the earth are closest to God's heart

Often we can yield to the temptation of wasting our time talking about “successes” and “failures”, the “usefulness” of what we are doing or the “may be for those who work with their hands and with immense physical effort: soothe their wearied frames, that they may tenderly care for their children and join in their games. Grant them unfailing spiritual strength and physical health, lest they succumb beneath the burden of their labours. Grant that the fruits of their work may ensure a dignified life to their families. May they come home at night to warmth, comfort and encouragement, and together, under your gaze, find true joy. May our families know that the joy of earning our daily bread becomes perfect when that bread is shared. May our children not be forced to work, but receive schooling and continue their studies, and may their teachers devote themselves fully to their task, without needing other work to make a decent living.

Apostolic Journey to Madagascar

The seventy-two realized that the success of their mission depended on its being carried out “in the name of the Lord Jesus”. That was what amazed them. It had nothing to do with their own virtues, names or titles. There was no need to pass out their own propaganda; it was not their fame or their vision that stirred and saved other people. The joy of the disciples was born of their certainty that they were acting in the name of the Lord, sharing in his plan and participating in the life which they loved so much that they wanted to share it with others.

It is interesting to see how Jesus sums up his disciples’ work by speaking of victory over the power of Satan, a power that we, ourselves, could never overcome, if not in the name of Jesus. Each of us can testify to battles fought… including a few defeats. In all those situations that you mentioned when you spoke of your efforts to evangelize, you fight this same battle in the name of Jesus. In his name, you triumph over evil whenever you teach people to praise our heavenly Father, or simply teach God’s Word and the catechism, or visit the sick and bring the consolation of reconciliation. In Jesus’ name, you triumph whenever you give a child something to eat, or save a mother from despair at being alone in the face of everything, or provide work to the father of a family. The battle is won whenever you overcome ignorance by providing an education. You bring God’s presence whenever any of you helps show respect for all creatures, in their proper order and perfection, and prevents their being misunderstood or exploited. It is a sign of God’s victory whenever you plant a tree or help bring drinkable water to a family. What a great sign of victory over evil it is, whenever you work to restore thousands of persons to good health.

Continue to fight these battles, but always in prayer and in praise. There are also battles that we fight within ourselves. God circumscribes the influence of the evil spirit, the spirit that very often inspires us in “an inordinate concern for our personal freedom and relaxation, which leads us to see our work as a mere appendage to our life, as if it were not part of our very identity. At the same time, the spiritual life comes to be identified with a few religious exercises which can offer a certain comfort, but which do not encourage encounter with others, engagement with the world or a passion for evangelization” (Evangelii Gaudium, 78). As a result of this, instead of being men and women of prayer, we become “professionals of the sacred”. Let us instead conquer the spirit of evil on its own terrain. Whenever it tells us to put our trust in financial security, spaces of power and human glory, let us respond with the evangelical responsibility and poverty that inspires us to give our lives for the mission (cf. ibid., 78). Please, let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary joy.

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus prays for the Father to having revealed these things to the ‘little ones’. We are indeed little, for our joy, our happiness, is found in precisely his revelation that those who are simple can “see and hear” what neither the intelligent nor prophets and kings were able to see and hear. It is God’s presence in those who are suffering and afflicted, those who hunger and thirst for justice, those who are merciful (cf. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). Happy are you, happy as a Church of the poor and for the poor, a Church imbued by the fragrance of her Lord, a Church that lives joyfully by preaching the Good News to the marginalized of the earth, to those who are closest to God’s heart.

Please convey to your communities my affection and my closeness, my prayers and my blessing. As I now bless you in the name of the Lord, I ask you to think of your communities and your places of mission, that the Lord may continue to speak of goodness to all, wherever they find themselves. May you continue to be a sign of his living presence in our midst!

Please, don’t forget to pray for me, and to ask others to do the same!

Before finishing I would like to perform a duty of justice and of gratitude. This is the last of the nine addresses that were translated by Father Marcel. I am going to make him uncomfortable because I am also going to ask him to translate these words of thanks for Father Marcel [he turns to him] for the work that you did, and to thank you for the letter but also for the way that you interpreted my words. I thank you very much, and may the Lord bless you.
**APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO MAURITIUS**

On Monday morning, 9 September, following a welcome ceremony at the Port Louis Airport, the Pope travelled by open car to the Monument of Mary Queen of Peace, greeting the faithful along the way. He then celebrated Mass in memory of Blessed Jacques-Désiré Laval. The following is the English text of his homily.

Here, before this altar dedicated to Mary Queen of Peace, on this mountain from which we can see the city and the sea beyond, we are part of a great multitude, a sea of faces come from Mauritius and other islands of this Indian Ocean region to hear Jesus preach the Beatitudes. We have come to hear that same word of life that today, as two thousand years ago, has the power and the fire able to warm the coldest of hearts. Together we can say to the Lord: We believe in you, and with the light of faith and every beat of our hearts, we know the truth of the words of the prophet Isaiah: Proclaim peace and salvation, bring the good news… that our God already reigns.

The Beatitudes "are like a Christian's identity card. So if anyone asks: 'What must one do to be a good Christian?', the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 6). So it was with the 'apostle of Mauritian unity', Blessed Jacques-Désiré Laval, so greatly venerated in these lands. Love for Christ and for the poor so marked his life that he could not conceive of an "aloof and sanitized" preaching of the Gospel. He knew that evangelization entails becoming all things to all people (cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22), and so he learned the language of the recently freed slaves and taught them the Good News of salvation in simple language. He was able to gather the faithful, to train them for mission and to establish small Christian communities in the neighbourhoods, towns and nearby villages: small communities, many of which gave rise to present-day parishes. His pastoral solicitude earned the trust of the poor and outcast, and made them the first to come together and find responses to their sufferings.

Through his missionary outreach and his love, Father Laval contributed to the Maid of Peace, on this island which will also bring me to your doors, beautiful Island is almost here.

Do not be afraid to dirty your hands.

**Uncertainty and unemployment threaten the future**

**Video Message to the people of Mauritius**

The language of the Gospel is love.

The Catholic Church, from its beginnings, is sent to all peoples, and speaks all of the world's languages. But the language of the Gospel – as you know – is love.

May the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, allow me to proclaim the Gospel with the power of the Holy Spirit, in such a way that everyone may understand and receive it.

I ask you, please pray for me even more in these days, as you are already in my heart and I am praying for you.

Thank you, and see you soon!
Uncertainty and unemployment threaten the future

The statue of Mary, the Mother who protects and accompanies us, reminds us that she herself was called “blessed”. Let us ask her for the gift of openness to the Holy Spirit. Our Lady experienced a sorrow that pierced her heart like a sword, and crossed the most painful threshold of grief as she beheld the death of her Son. May she obtain for us that persevering joy that never fal ters or fades. The joy that constantly leads us to experience and proclaim: “The Most High has done great things, and holy is his name”.

At the end of the Mass, before bestowing the final blessing, the Pope offered the following words of greeting and appreciation.

Before concluding this celebration, I would like to offer all of you my cordial greeting and heartfelt thanks. I especially thank Cardinal Piet for his kind words and for all the work that went into preparing this visit. I also thank Bishop Aubry, the coordinator, the translator and all those who assisted in any way, and the entire people of God of this Church.

To the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the other authorities of the country, whom I will meet this afternoon, I express my deep appreciation for their warm welcome and for their prompt and generous assistance.

My affectionate thanks also go to the priests, the deacons, the consecrated men and women, and the many volunteers. My thoughts go also to those in prison who have followed the “Alpha” programme in prison, and wrote letters to me; I send them my warm greetings and my blessing.

Finally, I greet with deep gratitude all the People of God here present, and particularly the faithful from Seychelles, Réunion, the Comoros, Chagos, Agaléga, Rodrigues and Mauritius. I assure all of you of my prayers and my closeness. May the Lord continue to grant to all the wisdom and strength needed to attain their legitimate aspirations. And I ask you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you, all of you!

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Building the human family without exclusion or rejection

On Monday afternoon, 9 September, Pope Francis paid a courtesy visit to H.E. Baron Visneck, Acting President of Mauritius, at the Presidential Palace in Port Louis. He then met Authorities and Members of Civil Society and of the Diplomatic Corps, and delivered an address after a greeting from the country’s Prime Minister. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s discourse.

Mr President,
Mr Prime Minister,
Honourable Members of Government and the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society and the different Religious Confessions,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer a cordial greeting to the authorities of the State of Mauritius and I thank them for the invitation to visit your Republic. I thank the President and the Prime Minister for their kind words and for the reception that they have accorded to me. I greet the Members of Government, the representatives of civil society, and the Diplomatic Corps. I would also acknowledge the presence among us of representatives of other Christian confessions and of the different religions present in Mauritius, and I thank them fraternally.

Thanks to this brief visit, I have the pleasure of encountering your people, known not only for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, but above all for the beauty born of the ability to acknowledge, respect and harmonize existing differences in view of a common project. This sums up the history of your people, born of the arrival of migrants from different horizons and continents who brought their own traditions, cultures and religions, and gradually learned to be enriched by the difference of others and to find ways of living together and striving to build a society committed to the common good.

The union of the People of God

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

that precede his death and Resurrection, and follow the celebration of the crowd in Jerusalem that had received him like a King. He did so by explaining that the strength of Peter and of his successors — what shields her from the gates of hell — lies in the prayer for Peter that Jesus entrusted to God the Father.

As Saint John Paul II explained, Jesus’ words (Lk 22:50-53) “doubtlessly refer to the eschatological dimension of the kingdom, when the Apostles will be called to ‘judge the twelve tribes of Israel’ (Lk 22:30). However, they also have a value for its present phase, for the time of the Church here on earth. And this is a time of trial.” These words “enable [us to see] Peter’s mission and very power in light of the grace of election. What Jesus promises and entrusts to him comes from heaven and belongs — must belong — to the kingdom of heaven” (General Audience, Wednesday, 2 December 1992).

In this regard, you possess an authoritative voice, one that has taken on life. A voice that can remind us that it is possible to achieve lasting peace when we start with the conviction that “diversity is a beautiful thing when it can constantly enter into a process of reconciliation and seal a sort of cultural covenant resulting in a ‘reconciled diversity’” (Evangelii Gaudium, 239). This in turn serves as a foundation for the opportunity to build true fellowship within the greater human family, without feeling the need to marginalize, exclude or reject anyone.

Your people’s DNA preserves the memory of those movements of migration that brought your ancestors to this island and led them to open to differences, to integrate them and to promote them for the benefit of all. For this reason, I encourage you, in fidelity to your roots, to take up the challenge of welcoming and protecting those migrants who today come looking for work and, for many of them, better conditions of life for their families. Make an effort to welcome them, following the example of your ancestors, who welcomed one another. Be protagonists and defenders of a true culture of encounter that enables migrants (and everyone) to be respected in their dignity and their rights.

Recalling the recent history of your people, I would like to render homage to the democratic tradition that took root following your independence and that helps to make Mauritius a haven of peace. I express the hope that this art of living democracy can be cultivated and developed, especially by resisting every form of discrimination. For “authentic political life, grounded in law and in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every way we live, so that economic growth can contribute to social harmony and to uphold the transcendent value of life against every kind of reductionism. And I express once more the desire of the Catholics of Mauritius to continue to participate in this fruitful dialogue that has so deeply marked the history of your people. Thank you for your witness.

Once again, I thank all of you for your warm welcome. I ask God to bless your people and every effort you make to foster the encounter of different cultures, civilizations and religious traditions in the promotion of a just society: one that does not forget its young and, above all, those who are most vulnerable. May God’s love and mercy continue to accompany you and to protect you! Thank you for your attention.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

Yesterday evening I returned from my Apostolic Journey to Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius. I thank God that he allowed me to undertake this itinerary as a pilgrim of peace and hope, and I renew the expression of my gratitude to the respective Authorities of these States, as well as to the Episcopates, who invited and welcomed me with such affection and attention, and the Apostolic Nuncios who worked so hard for the success of this trip.

The hope of the world is Christ, and his Gospel is the most powerful leaven of fraternity, freedom, justice and peace for all peoples. With my visit, I sought to bring this leaven, Jesus' leaven, to the peoples of Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius.

In Mozambique I went to sow seeds of hope, peace and reconciliation in a land that has suffered a great deal in the recent past due to a long armed conflict, and that was struck last spring by two cyclones that caused very serious damage. The Church continues to accompany the peace process, which actually took a step forward this past 1 August with a new Accord between the parties. And here I would like to pause to thank the Sant'Egidio Community that has worked so very, very much in this peace process.

I encouraged the Authorities of the Country in this regard, exhorting them to work together for the common good. And I encouraged the young people, who had gathered from various religious affiliations, to build peace, by overcoming resignation and anxiety, spreading social friendship and holding dear the traditions of the elders. To the bishops, priests and consecrated people, whom I met in the Cathedral of Maputo, dedicated to Mary Immaculate, I proposed the way of Nazareth, the way of the generous “yes” to God, in grateful remembrance of his call and of its very origins. A strong sign of this evangelical presence is the Hospital of Zimpeto, on the outskirts of the capital, built thanks to the commitment of the Sant'Egidio Community. In this hospital I saw that what is most important are the sick, and that everyone works for the sick. Moreover, not everyone belongs to the same religious confession. The hospital director is a woman, a researcher, a good woman who carries out AIDS research. She is Muslim, yet she is the director and this hospital was built by the Sant'Egidio Community. But all, everyone together for the people, are united like brothers and sisters. My visit to Mozambique culminated in the Mass celebrated in the great Stadium in the rain, but we were all happy. The hymns, the religious dances... so much happiness. And there, the appeal of the Lord Jesus resonated: “Love your enemies” (Lk 6:27), the seed of true revolution, that of love, which extinguishes violence and creates fraternity.

From Maputo I travelled to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. A country rich in beauty and natural resources, but marked by so much poverty. I expressed the hope that, enlivened by their traditional spirit of solidarity, the Madagascan people might overcome adversity and build a future of development, by combining respect for the environment and social justice. As a prophetic sign in this direction, I visited the “City of Friendship - Akamasoa”, founded by a Lazarist missionary, Fr Pedro Opeka: there, efforts are made to unite work, dignity, care for the poorest, education for children — all animated by the Gospel. At Ambalavao, at the granite quarry, I raised to God the Eucharist for Workers.

Then I had an encounter with children from various congregations, in the Carmelite monastery. Indeed, without faith and prayer one cannot build a city worthy of mankind. With the country's Bishops, we renewed the commitment to be "sowers of peace and hope", taking care of the People of God, especially the poor, and our presbytery. Together, we venerated Blessed Victoire Rasoanamarina, the first Madagascan woman to be raised to the glory of the Altars. With the very numerous young people — many young people at that vigil, so many — I experienced a vigil filled with witness, song and dance.

In Antananarivo the Sunday Eucharist was celebrated in the great “Diocesan Field”, large crowds gathered around the Lord Jesus. And lastly at the Saint-Michel Institute, I met the priests, consecrated men and women and seminarians of Madagascar. It was an encounter in the spirit of praise to God.

Monday was dedicated to the visit to the Republic of Mauritius, a well known tourist destination which I chose because it is a place of integration among various ethnic groups and cultures. Indeed, throughout the last two centuries, different peoples have landed on that archipelago, especially from India. And after independence it experienced strong economic and social development. Interreligious dialogue is strong there, as is friendship among the leaders of the various religious confessions; something which could appear strange to us. However they experience friendship in this way, which is natural.

When I entered the Bishopric, I found a beautiful, very beautiful bouquet of flowers: it was sent by the Grand Imam as a sign of brotherhood.

Holy Mass in Mauritius was celebrated at the Monument of Mary Queen of Peace, in memory of Blessed Jacques-Désiré Laval, also known as “the Apostle of Mauritian unity”. In that context, the Gospel of the Beatitudes, the identity card of Christ’s disciples, is an antidote to the temptation to egotistical and discriminatory wellbeing. The Gospel and the Beatitudes are the antidote to this egotistical and discriminatory lifestyle, and also the leaven of true happiness steeped in mercy, justice and peace. I was struck by the Bishops’ ministry of evangelization to the poor. Later, during the encounter with Mauritian Authorities, I expressed my admiration for the commitment to harmonize differences into a common project. I encouraged them to continue, also in the present, to welcome, maintain and develop democratic life.

And so I arrived at the Vatican yesterday evening. Before beginning a journey and on its return, I always go to Our Lady, to the Salus Populi Romani, so that she may accompany me on the trip, as a Mother, and tell me what I must do, and take care of my words and my gestures. One is safe with Our Lady.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us give thanks to God and ask him that the seeds scattered on this Apostolic Journey may bear abundant fruits for the people of Mozambique, Madagascar and Mauritius. Thank you!

Special Greetings

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, especially those from England, Scotland, Ireland, Denmark, the Faroese Islands, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Zimbabwe, India, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Canada and the United States of America. Upon you and your families, I invoke the joy and peace of the Lord. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to young people, the elderly, the sick and the needy. Tomorrow, we celebrate the Memorial of the Most Holy Name of Mary. I invite everyone to look to Our Lady and allow yourselves to be inspired by her Christian sentiment, in order to live and imitate ever more her Son, Jesus. Thank you!
MOMENTS FROM THE HOLY FATHER’S APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO AFRICA

At the “Matthew 25” House

Following the meeting in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Maputo, Mozambique, the Holy Father visited the “Matthew 25” House, which was founded to help street children.

With a rag ball

In Maputo, Mozambique, the Pope met a group of young people from Scholas Occurrentes, who gave him a homemade ball created from rags. Moved by the reminder of his childhood, when he too played with a similar ball, he remarked of work and play: “If there is no work, life does not go well, and if you don’t know how to play, life doesn’t go well either.”

The Holy Father then suggested that an artistic competition be held with the rag ball as its focus, adding that he himself would present the prize to the winner.

A special encounter

Before his final departure on Tuesday, 10 September, the Holy Father greeted about 100 elderly women who are assisted by the Apostolic Nunciature in Madagascar.

Among the joyful people

Pope Francis greeted the sea of people awaiting him on route to the Mary Queen of Peace Monument in Port Louis, Mauritius, where he celebrated Mass before some 100,000 faithful, dedicating much of his homily to the young people of Mauritius, and to the importance of happiness.

From exclusion to Communion

Founded in 1989 by Argentine missionary Fr Pedro Opeka, the “City of Friendship - Akamasoa”, located near a waste landfill in Antananarivo, Madagascar, was once a “place of exclusion, suffering, violence and death”. Fr Opeka explained to the Pope that it is now a thriving community, “an oasis of hope where children have regained their dignity, young people have returned to school”, parents are employed and the Sunday Eucharist is celebrated weekly. This eradication of poverty was achieved “thanks to faith, work, school, mutual respect and discipline”, he said. The Holy Father was welcomed to the community by a 13-year-old spokesperson. Speaking on behalf of his peers, the youth promised the Pope that they will do all they can to put into practice “his messages of love and affection” and to remain “firm in the faith”, despite temptations of an easier lifestyle.