Climate change is a challenge for society as a whole

Pope Francis’ video message to participants in the U.N. Climate Action Summit

Invoking honesty, responsibility and courage to face the planet’s environmental degradation, Pope Francis shared a video message with participants at the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York on 23 September. The following is the abbreviated text of the message that was projected in English at the Summit.

I would like to thank the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, for convening this meeting and for drawing the attention of Heads of State and Government — and of the entire international community and world public opinion — to one of the most serious and worrying phenomena of our time: climate change.

With the Paris Agreement of 12 December 2015, the international community became aware of the urgency and need for a collective response to help build our common home. However, four years after that historic Agreement, we can see that the commitments made by States are still very “weak”, and are far from achieving the objectives set.

Along with so many initiatives, not only by governments but by civil society as a whole, it is necessary to ask whether there is a real political will to allocate greater human, financial and technological resources to mitigate the negative effects of climate change and to help the poorest and most vulnerable populations, who suffer the most.

With honesty, responsibility and courage we have to put our intelligence “at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral” (Laudato Si’, 112), capable of placing economy at the service of the human person, building peace and protecting the environment.

While the situation is not good and the planet is suffering, the window of opportunity is still open. We are still in time. Let us not let it close.

I would like these three key words — honesty, courage and responsibility — to be at the heart of your work today and tomorrow. May they accompany you together with my best wishes and with my prayer.

Thank you very much.
NEW AMBASSADOR OF COLOMBIA

Mr Eastman Robledo, 52, is married. He holds a law degree and a Master’s degree in international relations. He has served as constitutional advisor to the Ministry of Government (1992-1993), presidential advisor for the Modernisation of the State (1994-1996); founder and director of the Think Tank, Strategic Programs for the Modernisation of the State (1994-1996); private secretary to the President (2000); Deputy High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia (2001); special advisor to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. (2001-2004); President’s adviser for strategic communications, public affairs and social responsibility at Eastman Consilium (since 2010); General Secretary to the Presidency of Colombia (since 2018).

NEW DIOCESE

The Holy Father established the new Ecclesiastical Province of Dili, East Timor, raising it to the status of Metropolitan Church with the Dioceses of Baucau and Maliana as suffragans, and appointed Bishop Virgilio do Carmo da Silva, 52, as its first Metropolitan Archbishop. Until now he has served as Bishop of Dili (19 March 2013, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Dili).

special envoy

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Marco Giancristina, Vicar General of the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista, as his Special Envoy and Permanent Observer to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (20 Sept.).

necrology

Archbishop Luigi Bambroichi, Archbishop emeritus of Catania, Italy, at age 93 (19 Sept.).

Bishop Gregorio Martinez Sacristán of Zamora, Spain, at age 72 (20 Sept.).

Bishop Sáenz de Hargaita, Bishop emeritus of Derry, Ireland, at age 79 (20 Sept.).
The martyrdom of everyday faithfulness

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

With the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall continue to fol-
louse a journey: the journey of the Gospel in the world. With great
realization, we see that both the fruitfulness of this jour-
ney, and the onset of problems within the Christian community.
From the very beginning there were always problems. How can we
harmonize the differences that
cocxist within it without the oc-
currence of conflict and schisms?

The community not only wel-
comed the Hebrews, but also the
Greeks, that is, people from the
diaspora, non-Jews, with their
own culture and sensitivities and
with another religion. Today we
call them "gentiles". And they
were welcomed. This shared pres-
ence brought with it a fragile and
precious balance: and before these difficulties, "weeds" begin to
appear, and which is the worst
weed that destroys a community?
The weed of discontent, the
weeds of gossip: the Greeks com-
plain about the community’s lack
of attention to their widows.

The Apostles begin a process of
discernment which consists in
recognizing all the difficulties and
trying to find solutions together.
They find a way out by dividing
the various tasks, for the peaceful
growth of the entire ecclesial
body, and in order to avoid neg-
lecting either the "course" of the
Gospel or caring for the poorest
members.

The Apostles are ever more
aware that their main vocation is
to pray and preach the Word of
God: to pray and proclaim the
Gospel: and they resolve the issue
by establishing a nucleus of "sev-
en men of good repute, full of
the Spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:3)
who, after receiving the lay-
ning on of hands, will "serve
tables". It refers to the deacons
who were created for this, for ser-
vice. In the Church a deacon is
not a deputy priest, but some-
thing else: He is not for the altar
but for service. He is the custodi-
an of service in the Church.

When a deacon is too fond of go-
ing to the altar, he is making a
mistake. This is not his path.
This harmony between service to
the Word and service to charity
represents the leaven that makes
the ecclesial body grow.

So the Apostles create the sev-
en deacons and among the seven
“deacons”, Stephen and Philip in
particular stand out. Stephen
evangelizes with strength and
charisma, but his word meets the
most obstinate resistance.

Not finding any other way to stop
him, what do his opponents do?
They choose the most paltry solu-
tion to annihilate a human being:
that is, slander or false witness.
And we know that slander always
kills. This “diabolical cancer” that
arises from the desire to destroy
the reputation of a person, also
attacks the ecclesial body and seri-
ously damages it, when as a res-
ult of malicious interests or to
cover up one's own inadequacies,
people unite to denigrate some-
one.

Brought to the Sanhedrin and
accused by false witnesses — they
had done the same to Jesus and
they will do the same to all the
martyrs through false testimonies
and slander — Stephen proclaims
a re-reading of the sacred story
centred on Christ, to defend him-
self. And the Paschal mystery of
Jesus dead and Risen is the key
to the entire story of the Coven-
ant. Imbued with this overabund-
ance of the Divine Gift, Stephen
courageously denounces the hy-
pocrisy with which the prophets
and Christ himself had been

treated. And he reminds them of
the story, saying: “Which of the
prophets did not your fathers per-
secute? And they killed those
who announced beforehand the
coming of the Righteous One,
whom you have now betrayed
and murdered” (Acts 7:52).
He does not mince his words, but
rather speaks with clarity; he
speaks the truth.

This stirs a violent reaction in
the audience and Stephen is con-
demned to death, condemned to
be stoned.

However, he manifests the true "fabric" of a disciple of
Christ. He does not seek short-
cuts, he does not appeal to im-
portant people who could save
him, but rather places his life in
the hands of the Lord, and
Stephen’s prayer is very beautiful
at that moment: “Lord Jesus, re-
ceive my spirit” (Acts 7:59) — and
he dies as a son of God, forgiv-
“Lord do not hold this sin
against them” (Acts 7:50).

These words of Stephen teach
us that it is not beautiful
speeches that reveal our identity
as children of God, but that only
by surrendering one’s life into
the hands of the Father and forgiving
those who offend us can the qual-
ity of our faith be shown.

There are more martyrs today
than there were at the beginning
of the life of the Church, and
martyrs are everywhere. Today
the Church is rich in martyrs, it is
steeped in their blood. “The
blood of Christians is seed” (Ter-
rullian, Apologia, 50:19) and ensures
the growth and fruitfulness of the
People of God. Martyrs are not just
“saintly”, but rather men and
women in flesh and blood who —
as Revelation says — “have
washed their robes and made
them white in the blood of the
Lamb” (7:14). They are the true
victors.

Let us also ask the Lord today
that by looking to the martyrs
of yesterday and today, we can learn
to live a full life, welcoming
the martyrdom of everyday faith-
lessness to the Gospel and conform-

ing to Christ.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking
pilgrims and visitors taking part
in today’s Audience, especially
the groups from England, Scot-
land, Denmark, Malta, Norway,
Kenya, Australia, Mariana Is-
lands, China, Indonesia, Malay-
sia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the
United States of America. In a
particular way my greeting goes
to the new seminarians of the
Venerable English College as they
begin their priestly formation
here in Rome. Upon all of you,
and your families, I invoke the
joy and peace of our Lord Jesus
Christ. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to
young people, the elderly, the sick
and disabled. This Friday, we
will celebrate the memorial of
Saint Vincent de Paul, Founder
and Patron Saint of charitable as-
ociations. May the example giv-
en to us by Saint Vincent de Paul
lead us all to a joyful and selfless
service to the neediest and open
us up to the duty of hospitality
and the gift of life.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I welcome you and thank Dr Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Department, who is presenting over the Plenary Assembly for the first time. The words he has addressed to me on behalf of you all. Some of your faces are more familiar to me, as you accompany me in my daily work and in my apostolic journeys. I know, however, that there are many other people who also live their work week at the pace of the Pope’s commitments. But they do so “behind the scenes”, putting into their work, at the service of the Church, all their professionalism and creativity, their passion and discretion.

I am happy to be able to see you all together today and to thank you for what you do! Thanks to your work may many people be encouraged in their journey of faith and many are invited to search for and encounter the Lord. Thanks to your work, the Pope speaks in nearly forty languages – it is a true “Pentecostal miracle”! Thanks to you the Magisterium of the Pope and the Church is read on paper, listened to on the radio, seen on television networks and websites and shared through social media, in the ever increasing whirlwind of the digital world.

It is the first time that I have met you all together since the beginning, four years ago, of the process of bringing together the members of the Roman Curia all the entities that, in different ways, deal with communications (cf. Motu Proprio The current context of communications, 27 June 2015). Reforms are almost always laborious, and so are those regarding Vatican media. There may have been some particularly difficult stretches on the path; there may have been some misunderstandings, but I am happy to see that the road is going ahead with foresight and prudence. I know of the effort you have made to make the best use of the resources entrusted to you, containing non-productive costs.

For the Church, communication is a mission. No investment is too great for spreading the Word of God. At the same time, every effort must be well spent, made to bear fruit. The credibility of what we say is also measured by this. Moreover, to remain faithful to the gift received, one must have the courage to change, never to feel that one has succeeded, nor to be discouraged. It requires always getting back into play, leaving behind one’s false sense of security and embracing the challenge of the future. Moving with the times does not mean extinguishing the memory of the past; it means keeping its flame alive.

I have seen the work you have done. I see it every day. For this reason, today I would like to thank God together with you for the strength that he has given you and that he gives us. May the grateful memory for all that has already been done and the awareness of the common effort fill you with strength to move forward on this path.

In reality, our strength alone is not enough. Saint Paul VI said this 55 years ago when he received the members of the first Plenary Assembly of what was then called the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications. He recognized how limited our strengths were in the face of this immense field of communication. But he is precisely because of this – he said – that it is necessary “to think of another order of strengths, another way of judging things, order and method, that we go to study at the school of the Lord . . . A thought of faith must therefore support the smallness of our humble efforts [. . .]. The more we become instruments in God’s hands, that is, small and generous, the more likely our effectiveness will increase” (Insegnamento I [1964], 95).

We know that since then the challenges in this area have grown exponentially, yet our efforts are still not enough. The challenge to which you are called, as Christians and as communicators, is truly great. And precisely for this reason it is beautiful.

I am therefore pleased that the theme chosen for this Assembly is “We are members of one another” (Eph 4:25). Your, and our strength, lies in unity, in being members of one another. Only in this way will we be able to respond ever better to the demands of the Church’s mission.

In my Message for this year’s World Communications Day, which bears the same title, I wrote that “A community is that much stronger if it is cohesive and supportive”, if it “pursues common objectives . . . The metaphor of the body and the members leads us to reflect on our identity, which is based on communion and on ‘otherness’. As Christians, we all recognize ourselves as members of the one body whose head is Christ”, and we “are called to manifest that communion which marks our identity as believers. Faith itself, in fact, is a relationship, an encounter; and under the impetus of God’s love, we can communicate, welcome and understand the gift of the other and respond to it”.

Communication in the Church cannot but be characterized by this principle of participation and sharing. Communication is truly effective only when it becomes witness, that is, participation in the life that is given to us by the Spirit and reveals us in communion with each other, members of one other.

Saint John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter on Rapid Development: “Communication both within the Church community, and between the Church and the world at large, requires openness and a new approach towards facing questions regarding the world of media . . . This is one of the areas in which collaboration between the lay faithful and Pastors is most needed, as the Council appropriately emphasized, ‘A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders . . . In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world’” (Lumen Gentium, 37) (12).

For this reason I encourage you to continue, in your daily work, to work increasingly as a team, in this cooperation between lay people, religious and priests from many countries, of many languages, which is very good for the Church. May the very style of your work bear witness to communion.

I also encourage you, beyond the work of this Plenary Assembly, to seek with tenacity and creativity all the ways of strengthening the network with the local Churches. I encourage you in this to also support the formation of digital environments in which people communicate, and not simply connect.

I know that recently this Department has advanced several tangible instruments to ensure that the circularity of communication at the service of all may increase between the local Churches and the Department itself. I know that you have new projects, which will certainly not lack the support of the Pope. Through your work you participate in the service of the Church’s unity and in the coordination of the communications of the entire Roman Curia. We must walk together. We must know how to interpret and direct our time. May ecclesial communications truly be an expression of a single “body”.

Thank you to each of you; my thanks also to your families and communities. I ask you, please, to pray for me, and I bless you wholeheartedly.
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have a discourse to read... it is not very long; it is seven pages... but I will not communicate. I think that what I want to say in this address will be clearly understood by reading it in reflection. For this reason, I will consign this address to Dr Ruffini, whom I thank for the work he does for me, so that he may make it known to all of you. And I will allow myself to speak a little spontaneously with you, to say what is in my heart regarding communication. At least I think not so many will fall asleep, and we can communicate better!

Thank you for your work, thank you for this quite numerous Dicastery... I asked the Prefect: “But what should communication be?”... “Yes”, he said — to avoid that famous anec- dotage... “How many people work in the Vatican?” he answered. “About half”. They all work, and they work with this attitude that expresses God’s desire: to communicate himself, in what theologians call perichoresis, he communicates himself, and is communicated to us. This is the beginning of communication: it is not an office job, like advertising, for example. To communicate is pre- cisely to receive from God’s Being and to have the same attitude, unable to remain alone: the need to communicate what I have and I think to be true, just, good and beautiful. To communicate. And you are specialists in communication, you are technicians in communica- tion. We must not forget this. One communicates with the soul and with the body; one communicates with the mind, with the heart, with the hands; one communicates with everything. A true communicator gives everything, gives all of him or herself — as we say in my land, “they put all the meat on the grill”, they do not hold anything back for themselves. And it is true that the greatest communica- tion is love: in love there is the fullness of communication: love for God and among us.

But what should communication be like? One of the things you must not do is advertising, mere advertis- ing. You must not do what human businesses do, that try to attract more people by using a technical term: you must not proselytize. I would like our communication to be Christian and not an element of proselytism. Proselytism is not symbol of the pagan mentality. Jesus asks the Father, at the Last Supper, to guard his disciples lest they fall into the world and into worldliness (cf. Jn 17:12-19). The climate of worldliness is not a novelty of the 21st century. It has always been a danger; there has always been temptation, it has always been the enemy, worldliness. “Father, guard them lest they fall in the world, lest the world be stronger than they are.” And many, I see them, think: “Yes, we must close ourselves off some- what, be a small but authentic church.” I am allergic to those words: “small but authentic”. If some- thing is authentic, it is not necessary to say so. I will come back to this. This is a withdrawal into oneself, with the temptation of resignation. We are few in number: but not few like those who defend themselves because they are few and the enemy is greater in number, few like yeast, few like salt: this is the Christian vocation! We need not be ashamed of being few in number, and we need not think: “No, the Church of the future will be a Church of the chosen ones”, we do not once again fall victim to the heresy of the Es- senes. And this is how Christian au- thenticity is lost. We are a Church of few, but like leaven. As Jesus said. Like salt. Resignation to cul- tural defeat — allow me to call it that — comes from a mean spirit; it does not come from God. It is not a Christian spirit, the com- plaint of resignation. This is the second thing I would like to say to you: do not be afraid. Are we few in number? Yes, but with the desire for “mas- sion”, to show others who we are. By bearing wit- ness. Once again I repeat that expression of Saint Francis to his friars, when he sent them to preach: “Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, even with words”. That is, witness in the first place.

I look at this Lithuanian Archbishop here before me, and I think of the Bishop Emeritus of Kaunas, who will now be made a cardinal: that man, how many years did he spend in prison? By his witness he did so much good! With suffering... It is our martyrs, those who give life to the Church: not our artists, our great speakers, our custodians of the true and complete doctrine... No, the martyrs. A Church of martyrs. And to communicate is this: to com- municate this great richness that we have. This is the second thing. The third thing I take from what I said just a bit ago, which I am slightly allergic to: “This is some- thing authentically Christian”, “this is truly so”. We have fallen into the culture of adjectives and adverbs, and we have forgotten the strength of nouns. A communicator must make one understand the weight of the reality of the nouns that reflect the reality of people. And this is a mission of communication: to com- municate without, without sugar-coating with adjectives or adverbs. “This is a Christian matter”: why say that? Everyone is a Christian! The mere fact of the noun “Christian”, “I am of Christ”, is a pagan world, and this is nothing new. The world “has always been a Christian. Benedict XVI said this very clearly: “the Church does not grow through proselytism but through attraction”, that is, by wit- ness. And our communication must be a witness. If you want to commu- nicate just one truth without goodness and beauty, stop, do not do it. If you want to communicate a truth more or less, but without involving yourselves, without witnessing to that truth with your own life, with your own flesh, stop, do not do it. There is always the signature of wit- ness in each of the things we do. Witnesses. Christian means witnesses, “martyrs”. This is the “martyrly” di- mension of our vocation: to be wit- nesses. This is the first thing I would like to say to you.

Another thing is a certain resigna- tion, which so often enters the hearts of Christians. We see the world... it is a pagan world, and this is nothing new. The “world” has always been a communication is love: in love there is the fullness of communication: love for God and among us.
Revolution from the ground up is needed.

The following is a translation of an introductory note written by the Prefect for Papal Collections, Cardinal Parolin, for “L’Osservatore Romano” on 27 September 2019. The note was translated into English by the Vatican Information Office. The English edition was compiled with a view toward the Special Synodal Assembly to be held in the Vatican from 5 to 27 October.

Cardinal Parolin, Secretary of State, led the Holy See Delegation to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, underway in New York from 17 to 30 September. His schedule included, among other events, an address to the UN High Level Meeting on Multilateral Action in Favor of the Protection of Persons from Repression on Monday, 23 September. The following is the English text of his address, courtesy of L’Osservatore Romano.

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Why a Synod for the Amazon region?

Contributing to the reflection ahead of the Assembly

The second article, authored by José Antonio Acó珠海 Dávila Santos, presents several characteristics of the “synodal culture” and an “extractivist” mindset that has been present in the history of the Church. The Synod’s mission is to help Christians to remember their responsibilities for the protection of creation, to face the challenges that are posed by the current social, economic, and cultural changes, and to promote a spirituality that is rooted in the Word of God. The Synod is a powerful instrument for change and can help to bring about a new vision of the Church that is welcoming to cultural, social, and human diversity.

The Synod is also an opportunity for the Church to reflect on its own history and to acknowledge the mistakes that have been made in the past. The Synod is a chance to listen to the voices of those who are affected by the current developments and to take their concerns into account. The Synod is a place where different perspectives can be shared and where a dialogue can take place.

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Never break away from your roots in order to be modern

"To be modern, some believe it is necessary to break away from your roots. And this is their downfall, because roots, traditio, are the guarantee of the future". Pope Francis shared these thoughts with participants in the General Chapter of Discalced Augustinians, which convened in audience in the Clementine Hall on Thursday morning, 12 September. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Provvidence willed that today I meet you, Discalced Augustinians, and to-morrow your brothers of the Order of Saint Augustine — brothers, cousins, friends, foes, one never knows! Let us praise God for the charisms he has imbued the Order with and continues to inspire in the Church through the witness of the great Pastor and Doctor of Hippo.

I thank the Prior General for the words with which he introduced this meeting, which concludes your con- ference on the occasion of what you call the "Year of the Charism" — beautiful!

I would like to tell you first of all that I appreciate your joy in being Augustinians: "Happy to serve the Most Holy Trinity!" — it would seem to be a Franciscan motto, but in reality it is simply evangelical. Indeed, Saint Augustine is one of those figures who enable us to feel the fascination of God, who draws us to Jesus Christ, who draws us to the Word of God. He is a giant in the world of Christian thought, but the Lord also gave him the vocation and mission of fraternity. He did not close himself off in the vast horizon of his mind, but remained open to the People of God and to the broth- ers and sisters who shared com-munity life with him. Even as a priest and bishop, he lived as a monk, des- pite his pastoral commitments; and upon his death he left many men’s and women’s monasteries.

You Discalced Augustinians are rooted in this long religious tradi- tion begun by Saint Augustine, as the Prior General recalled a moment begun by Saint Augustine, as rooted in this long religious tradi- tion, are the guarantee of the future".

The qualification “discalced” ex- presses the need for poverty, detach- ment, and trust in Divine Provi- dence. There is a liturgical hymn that is used on the feast of Saint John the Baptist, and it says that the people went “with a barefoot spirit” to be baptized: barefoot not just be- cause they are not wearing socks — I see that you have shoes, one at least... The barefoot spirit: this is the charism. This is an evangelical requirement that the Spirit makes us feel more strongly at certain mo- ments in the Church’s journey. And we must always be attentive and docile to the voice of the Spirit: he is the protagonist, he is the one who makes the Church grow! Not us, but him. The Holy Spirit is the wind that blows and makes the Church move forward, with that great force that blows and makes God's mission.

In particular, this year you wished to emphasize the vow of humility, the fourth vow that characterizes you. I congratulate you on this choice and I share the discernment of which the Prior Father has been the spokesman: this vow of humility is a "key", a key that opens God’s heart and the hearts of men. And it opens first of all your own hearts to be faithful to the original charism, to always feel you are missionary-disciples, available to the calls of God.

Humility is something you cannot take in hand: either it is there or it is not; it is a gift. You cannot take it in hand. I remember a religious who was very vain, very vain — this is his- torical — he is still alive. His superi- ors always told him: “You must be more humble, more humble...” And in the end he said: “I will do 30 days of exercises so that the Lord may give me the grace of humility”. And when he came back he said: "Thank God, I was so vain, so vain; but after the exercises I have conquered all my passions!" He had found humility. Humility is something that comes on its own. Thank God, but it comes; you cannot make it.

The Spirit blows in the Church’s sails, also the wind of the spirit of gentes, and you know how to be ready to set out. We live in an age in which the spirit of gentes is being renewed, also through a crisis which we would like to be of growth, of fi- delity to the mandate of the Risen Lord, a mandate that retains all its force and relevance. I too join you with emotion in remembering the Augustinian missionaries who gave their lives for the Gospel in different parts of the world. I am pleased to see that you treasure these witnesses of the past in order to renew your own commitment today, in the forms that the Second Vatican Council and the current challenges demand.

Dear brothers, by gratefully recall- ing your journey, or better, the jour- ney that the Lord led you (cf. Deut 8:2), the meaning of this “Year of the Charism” can be fully understood. It is not referential — no, it must not be this — but a living community that draws its strength from Christ; this is what you want; it is not self-referentiality but the will to walk in Christ, the living Christ.

“Happy to serve the Most High in a spirit of humility”. Go forth in this way! May the Lord bless you, and may Our Lady and Saint Au-gustine keep you. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you!

**Why a Synod for the Pan-Amazon region?**

(Continued from page 6)
Experience God together

With members of the Order of Saint Augustine

We can "show God to this world in a clear, courageous and uncompromising way" if we experience him "together," Pope Francis shared this insight with participants in the General Chapter of the Order of Saint Augustine, whom he received in audience in the Clementine Hall on Friday, 13 September.

The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address, which he received in audience in the Clementine Hall on Friday, 13 September.

Dear Brothers,

I welcome all of you, gathered in Rome for the General Chapter, and I thank the Prior General for his words.

At this Chapter you have chosen to face the most important challenge of your moment, in the light of the Word of God, of the Magisterium of the Church and of the great Father Augustine.

You are well aware that communities of consecrated men and women are places where one seeks to live the experience of God from a deep interiority and in communion with our brothers and sisters. This is the first basic challenge that consecrated people are facing and that today I wish to entrust to you in particular: to experience God together to show God to this world in a clear, courageous way, without compromise or hesitation. It is a great responsibility!

I remember the words of Saint Paul VI in the wonderful Exhortation Evangelii Testificatio: "From the beginning, the tradition of the Church — is it perhaps necessary to recall it? — presents us with this privileged witness of a constant search for God, of an undivided love for Christ alone, and of absolute dedication to the growth of His kingdom. Without this concrete sign there would be a danger that the charity which animates the entire Church would grow cold, that the salvific paradox of the Gospel would be blunted, and that the "salt of faith would lose its savour in a world undergoing secularization."

At this Chapter you have chosen to face the most important challenge of your moment, in the light of the Word of God, of the Magisterium of the Church and of the great Father Augustine.

You Augustinians have been called to witness to that warm, living, visible, contagious charity of the Church, through a community life that clearly manifests the presence of the Risen One and his Spirit. Unity in charity — which I take up the cross is the measure of love. That is how it is. Certainly, keeping this flame of fraternal charity burning will not be possible without that "in Deum" of your Rule: "Primam, propiter quod in unum estis congruents, ut unanimes habientes in domo et in vobis anima unam et cor unum in Deum (n. 3). That is, tending toward God. This addition to the expression of the Acts of the Apostles is actually Augustine’s, in order to emphasize that this is the profound dynamism of your communities, the first great source from which all your service to the Church and to humanity flows. The anima unam et cor unum is born of this perennial Source: in Deum. Your hearts, always tending toward God. Always! May every member of the community be oriented, as the first "holy intention" each day, toward the search for God, or letting God seek him out. This "direction" must be declared, confessed, witnessed to among you without false modesty. The search for God cannot be obscured by other aims, even generous and apostolic. Because that is your first apostolate. We are here — you should be able to say among yourselves each day — because we are walking toward God. And since God is Love, one walks toward him in faith.

As dear Fr Agostino Trapé wrote: "According to the Rule, charity is not only the end and the means of religious life, but it is also its centre: from charity it must proceed and to charity it must be oriented, with a perpetually movement of circular causality, every thought, every affection, every attitude, every action." (Saint Agostino. La Regola, Milan 1971, Ancora, p. 137).

Wiring to Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine expressed his own experience of community in this way: "Upon the love of such friends I readily cast myself without reservation, especially when chafed and wearied by the scandals of this world; and in their love I rest without any disturbing care: for I perceive that God is there" (Letters, 73, 10). And in the face of the scandals of the Church or even the scandals of your family, peace is on this road. Return and focus on this and the scandals will fall, on their own, because they show that there is no other way, this is the way.

It is good to return often to that meditation that Augustine offered to his faithful on the First Letter of John, where hechristens the Church "water charitatis", a mother who weeps at the division of her children and calls for and evokes the unity of charity. "Then if you would know that you have received the Spirit, question your heart: lest haply you have the grace of baptism, and have not the virtue of the Sacrament question your heart. If love of your brethren be there, set your mind and I thank the Prior General for Rome for the General Chapter, I welcome all of you, gathered in

Dears brethers, today too, this is the challenge and responsibility: to live in your communities in such a way as to experience God together and be able to show him, living, to the world! The experience of the Lord, as he is, as he seeks us each day. May Mary, mother of Jesus and luminous figure of the Church, accompany you and keep you always. I bless you wholeheartedly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.
For a world free of nuclear weapons

On Monday, 16 September, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, delivered an address at the 63rd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which was held in Vienna from 16 to 20 September. The following is the text of his address.

Madam President,

I have the great honour of conveying to you and to all the distinguished participants at this 63rd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis.

Madam President, on behalf of the Delegation of the Holy See, I congratulate you and the membership on your election to this distinguished Conference. I would also like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to IAEA Acting Director General, Cornel Feruta, and to the Secretariat for their dedicated work for the benefit of the whole IAEA family.

Allow me to express as well the Holy See’s deep sadness at the passing of Director General Yukiya Amano and extend to Dr. Amano’s family, friends, IAEA staff and all who mourn his passing, the heartfelt condolences of the Holy See. Director General Amano’s tireless commitment to the noble goal of the Agency – “Atoms for Peace and Development” – will be sorely missed. May the noble soul of Dr. Amano rest in peace.

Madam President,

The Holy See commends and supports the many activities of the IAEA that have strengthened international cooperation and contributed in a significant way to the prevention of nuclear proliferation and to the promotion of nuclear disarmament. Such activities also help to foster integral human development, by promoting technical cooperation in the nuclear sciences and their applications, and by advancing the peaceful use of nuclear technologies. The efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security, as well as to foster a culture of safety, have been greatly improved due to the IAEA’s strategies of strengthening global, regional, and national networks and fora, and by expanding capability and capacity in nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, in addition to emergency preparedness and response.

The broader goals of nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful uses of nuclear technologies, each depend upon these crucial IAEA strategies.

The role of Science and Technology within the framework of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be better supported by various nuclear technologies. Furthermore, their applications, as outlined in the IAEA developmental protocols, may promote integral development, thus enhancing our IAEA of God’s creation. Indeed, IAEA technical cooperation projects in the fields of human health, water and environment, climate change, food security and smart agriculture have contributed significantly to the alleviation of hunger and the ability of countries to meet their development goals in a sustainable way. In these efforts, Science and Technology play a key role. Pope Francis has stated that “the scientific community, through interdisciplinary dialogue, has been able to research and demonstrate our planet’s crisis, so too today that same community is called to offer a leadership that provides generosity and specific solutions [...] a normative system that includes inviolable limits and ensures the protection of ecosystems, before the new forms of power deriving from the techno-economic model causes irreversible harm not only to the environment, but also to our societies, to democracy, to justice and freedom.”

All positive consequences of nuclear technology must, however, be accompanied with the more fundamental recognition that any effort to see social advancement, any effort to promote the common good, must be based on a desire to ensure the integral development of every man and woman. As affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development of 1986: “The human person is the central subject of development.”

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI notably affirmed the Holy See’s general commitment “to support the use of peaceful and safe nuclear technology for authentic development”, and underscored “the urgent need for continued dialogue and cooperation between the worlds of science and of faith in building a culture of respect for man, for human dignity and freedom, for the future of our human family, and for the long-term sustainable development of our planet”. Furthermore, the Holy See is convinced that the use of nuclear power as a source of energy with a small CO2-footprint and as part of basic energy supply has to be decided upon by every State according to its needs and possibilities, while taking into account, at the same time, global considerations. As Pope Francis has also stated, our immense technological and scientific advances and development have not always been “accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.”

Madam President,

The Holy See recognizes the important contribution of the IAEA to creating a world free of nuclear weapons. This role is characterized by the effective combination of those measures available under the comprehensive safeguards agreements (CSAs) together with various additional protocols (APs).

The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with the aim of moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world entirely free of nuclear weapons, and affirmed that nuclear weapons are arms of mass and environmental destruction.

Furthermore, the Holy See supports the IAEA’s participation in the verification and monitoring of Iran’s commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the continued and patient efforts of the international community to revive negotiations around the nuclear programme of the DPRK, which threatens the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. IAEA safeguards, reflecting the Agency’s critical role in nuclear verification in the region, represent an essential contribution to promoting peace and security and help to build a climate of confidence in place of IAEA recriminations. The use of IAEA safeguards constitutes an important tool in moving towards the goal of denuclearization.

The Holy See expresses its gratitude and appreciation to the Agency in developing strategies for the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT), in establishing and enhancing radiotherapy programmes, and for helping low and middle income Member States improve the effectiveness of their radiation medicine services as part of a comprehensive cancer control strategy, as well as for supporting the training of health professionals and for engaging in fundraising to boost cancer control programmes and activities.

Madam President,

In conclusion, the Holy See reiterates its sincere gratitude and affirms its unwavering support for the IAEA’s many contributions to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as to the safe, secure, and peaceful, development and operation of nuclear technologies.

Thank you.

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Do not use God as a pretext to build walls

Pope Francis shares his advice with new Bishops

No one should “use God as a pretext to build walls, destroy bridges and sow hatred”, Pope Francis said to a group of new Bishops whom he met in the Clementine Hall on Thursday morning, 27 September. The new prelates, who were ordained over the past year, had just completed a formation course organized by the Congregations for Bishops and for the Oriental Churches. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address, which he delivered in Italian.

Dear Brothers,

Good morning,

I welcome you to this concluding encounter of your pilgrimage to Rome organized by the Congregations for Bishops and for the Oriental Churches. I thank Cardinals Ouellet and Sandri for their efforts in organizing these days.

As new members of the Episcopal Conference, a few minutes ago you descended together to the tomb of Peter, a “trophies” of the Church of Rome. There, you professed the same faith as the Apostle. It is not a theory or a compendium of doctrine, but a person Jesus. His face brings us close to God’s gaze. Our world, even unwittingly, seeks this divine closeness. He is the mediator. Without this proximity of love, the foundation of reality wavers. The Church loses the life-giving tenderness of the Good Shepherd. Here you have repeated with Jesus: “body the Good Shepherd. Here you have received the measure of an immeasurable love, the awareness that our identity consists in a continuous encounter with people, dedicating more time to them rather than leaving people waiting and not sweeping problems under the rug. Therefore, bringing yourself closer, being in contact with people, dedicating more time to them rather than to your desks, not fearing contact with a reality to be discovered and embraced. And then, to hold wounds, to be “passion-browned”, to take care of others, expend oneself (cf. Lk 10:29-37). Each of these verbs of proximity is a milestone in the Bishop’s journey with his people. Each one requires involvement and getting one’s hands dirty. To be close means empathizing with the People of God, sharing in their suffering, not scorning their hopes. Being close to the people means trusting that the grace that God faithfully pours over you and of which we are channels also means trusting in the crosses we bear, is greater than the mire that we fear. Please do not allow fear of the risks that may prevent them from making their way. May your Churches emblazon your identity as a sign of the cross that Jesus has joined your decisions by uttering your name along with theirs.

The measure of closeness is attentiveness to the least, which, you need, is a proclamation of the Kingdom. Your sobriety will also be so, at a time when in many parts of the world, all is reduced to means in order to satisfy secondary needs that engender and fatten the heart. Making a simple life for oneself means bearing witness that Jesus suffices for us and that the treasure with which we wish to surround ourselves is made instead of those who, in their poverty, remind us of and represent Him: not the abstract poor, statistics and social categories, but real people whose dignity is entrusted to us as their fathers. Fathers of real people; that is paternity, the capacity to see, concreteness, the ability to caress, the ability to weep.

Apparently there are stethoscopes nowadays that are capable of hearing a heart from a metre apart. We need Bishops who are capable of hearing the heartbeat of their community and of their priests, even at a distance. To hear the beat. Pastors who are not satisfied simply by formal presence, scheduled meetings and occasional conversation. Pastors come to mind who are so well gowned that they seem to be like distilled water that has no flavour. Apolitical of listening, who know how to lend an ear even to what is unpleasant to hear. Please do not surround yourselves with lackeys and yes men ... priests who are “social climbers” who always try ... no, please. Do not yearn to be confirmed by those who should be confirmed by you. There are many forms of loneliness to your Churches. In particular, I would like to encourage regular pastoral visits: frequent visits, to meet people and Pastors; to make visits according to the example of Our Lady who waited no time and went in haste to her cousin. The Mother of God shows us that visiting is drawing near to the One who makes us leap with joy; it means bringing the solace of the Lord who does great things among the humble members of his people (cf. Lk 1:39ff).

Lastly I ask you again to reserve the greatest closeness for your priests. The priest is the closest “neighbour” to the bishop. Love the closest neighbour. I beseech you to embrace them, thank them and reassure them in my name. They too are exposed to the difficulties of a world that, though tired of obscurity, cannot do without the light. They need to be loved, followed, encouraged. God does not want half measures from them, but a complete yes. In shallow waters they become stagnant, but their lives are made for the open sea. Like yours. Therefore take courage dearest brothers! I thank you and I bless you. Please remember to pray every day for me too. Thank you.
On the parable of the dishonest steward

Transform goods and riches into relationships

"Wealth can propel one to build walls, create division and discrimination. Jesus, on the contrary, encourages his disciples to reverse course." Pope Francis emphasized this to the faithful who had gathered for the Angelus in Saint Peter's Square on Sunday, 22 September. The Holy Father drew this lesson from the parable of the dishonest steward recounted in the day's Gospel passage. The following is a translation of his reflection, which he shared in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

The parable in this Sunday's Gospel passage (cf. Lk 16:1-15) has as its protagonist a sly and dishonest steward who, charged with wasting his master's goods, is about to be dismissed. In this difficult situation, he does not complain; he does not seek justifications nor does he allow himself to become discouraged, but thinks of a way out in order to ensure himself a calm future. He initially reacts with clarity of mind, recognizing his own limitations: "I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg" (v. 3); then he acts shrewdly, robbing his master for the last time. In fact, he calls the debtors and reduces the debts they owe to the master, in order to make them friends and so be repaid by them later. This is to make friends through corruption and obtaining gratitude through corruption, as sadly is common practice today.

Jesus presents this example certainly not to encourage dishonesty, but prudence. Indeed he emphasizes: "The master commended the dishonest steward for his prudence" (v. 8), that is, for that combination of intelligence and cunning, which enables one to overcome difficult situations. The key to reading this narrative lies in Jesus' statement at the end of the parable: "make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations" (v. 9).

It is somewhat confusing, but it is not so: the "unrighteous mammon" is money — also called "devil's dung" — and in general material goods.

Wealth can propel one to build walls, create division and discrimination. Jesus, on the contrary, encourages his disciples to reverse course: "Make friends for yourselves by means of mammon". It is an invitation to know how to change goods and wealth into relationships, because people are worth more than things, and count more than the wealth they possess. Indeed, in life, it is not those who have many riches who bear fruit, but those who create and keep alive many relationships, many friendships through a variety of "mammon", that is, the different gifts that God has given them. But Jesus also points to the ultimate aim of his exhortation: "Make friends for yourselves by means of mammon so that they may receive you into the eternal habitations". If we are able to transform wealth into tools of fraternity and solidarity, not only will God be there to welcome us into heaven, but also those with whom we have shared, properly stewarded what the Lord has placed in our hands.

Brothers and sisters, this Gospel passage makes the question of the dishonest steward dismissed by his master, resonate in us: "What shall I do now?" (cf. v. 3). In facing our shortcomings and our failures, Jesus assures us that we are always in time to put right with good the harm done. Those who have caused scars, make someone happy; those who have wrongfully taken, give to those who are in need. By doing so, we will be commended by the Lord "because we have acted with prudence", that is, with the wisdom of those who recognize themselves as children of God and challenge themselves for the Kingdom of Heaven.

May the Blessed Virgin help us to be prudent by assuring ourselves not worthy successors to eternal life, so that at the moment of the final judgement, the needy people whom we have helped, can testify to them in we saw and served the Lord.

After the Marian prayer, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet all of you, people of Rome and pilgrims from various countries. In particular I greet participants in the Via Crucis foot race that passed through Rome's streets this morning to bring the message of peace, fraternity and above all, dialogue among different cultures and religions.

I greet the group from the Polish Catholic Mission in Germany, the San Leonardo Choir from Procida, the confirmands from Settimello, Florence, and the Sisters of Beautiful Love, who are celebrating the 25th anniversary of their foundation.

Sunday, 29 September, is World Day of Migrants and Refugees. I will celebrate Mass here in Saint Peter's Square on that occasion. I invite you to participate in this celebration to express also through prayer our closeness to migrants and refugees around the world.

I wish everyone a Happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. Arrivederci!