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God's consoling embrace

Holy Father presides at an extraordinary moment of prayer and special 'Urbi et Orbi' blessing



Something more than fear of loneliness and abandonment

ANDREA MONDA

The English author C.S. Lewis, who had been recently widowed after his wife's death from a tumour, wrote a letter to comfort his seriously ill friend Malcolm. In it, he recounts the Passion of Jesus who had been abandoned by all, flogged and unjustly condemned to death, and who felt so alone that he addressed the Father from the Cross with the words: "My God why have you forsaken me?" A very unique way to comfort.

Some time earlier Jesus had been asked an anxiety ridden question on death: "Do you not care if we perish?". It had come from the disciples who had awakened Jesus from his sleep at the stern of the boat in the storm in the Sea of Galilee. Pope Francis lingered on this scene narrated in the Gospel of Mark and echoed this question several times during his discourse yesterday afternoon in Saint Peter's Square. The Pope then prayed before the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani* and before the crucifix of the Church of San Marcello which had been moved for the occasion and placed in the square in front of the Basilica, in the rain.

The wooden face displays a grimace of suffering that seems to ask: "Do you not care if I perish?". Jesus died alone, condemned by his people, abandoned by his friends. He died alone from the terrible suffering resulting, not only from his wounds, but above all from the suffocation caused by being nailed to the cross. A crucified [person] dies from asphyxia. Yesterday almost 1,000 people died from the coronavirus throughout Italy. They died alone from asphyxia, unable to breathe. The most dreadful aspect of this pandemic is precisely the loneliness to which it condemns us to live and, above all, to die. All this scares every man and woman, but it mysteriously offers something more to Christians. Christians know that Jesus continues to suffer in these brothers and sisters, as if completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (Colossians 1:24).

At the end of his letter to Malcolm, Lewis writes: "I think it is only in a shared darkness that you and I can really meet at present; shared with one another and, what matters most, with our Master. We are not on an untrodden path. Rather, on the main-road".

For the Pope's homily, see page 4/5

VATICAN BULLETIN



AUDIENCES

Thursday, 26 March

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

Cardinal Robert Sarah, Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

H.E. Mr Mario Juan Bosco Cayota Zappetini, Ambassador of Uruguay, on a farewell visit

Prof. Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Sant'Egidio Community

Friday, 27 March

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and his entourage

Fr Abbot Guillermo León Arboleda Tamayo, OSB, President of The Subiaco Cassinese Congregation of the Order of Saint Benedict

Saturday, 28 March

Prof. Andrea Monda, Editor-in-Chief of *L'Osservatore Romano*

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

Prof. Paolo Papanti-Pelletier, sole judge of the Tribunal of Vatican City State

Prof. Franco Anelli, Magnificent Rector of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart

Hon. Mrs Virginia Raggi, Mayor of Rome, Italy

Monday, 30 March

H.E. Mr Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of Italy

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life

ORIENTAL CHURCHES

The Holy Father gave his assent to the appointment by the Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church of Antioch for Syrians of Fr Camil Afram Antoine Semaan as Exarch for Syrian faithful living in Jerusalem, Palestine and Jordan, assigning him the titular see of Hierapolis for Syrians. Until now he has served as parish administrator of the same circumscription (28 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Semaan, 39, was born in Beirut, Lebanon. He holds a degree in philosophy and theology; a licence in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 24 June 2006.

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Antonio José López Castillo from his office as Archbishop of Barquisimeto, Venezuela (25 Mar.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Marcello Romano from his office as Bishop of Araçuaí, Brazil (25 Mar.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Robert Joseph Baker from his office as Bishop of Birmingham, USA (25 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Steven John Raica as Bishop of Birmingham. Until now he has served as Bishop of Gaylord, USA (25 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ján Kuboš as Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Spiš, Slovakia, assigning him the titular episcopal see of Quiza. Until now he has served as parish priest and Dean in Kežmarok, member of the Presbyteral Coun-

cil and of the College of Consultors (25 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Kuboš, 54, was born in Trstená, Slovakia. He was ordained a priest on 18 June 1989.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jean-Baptiste Tiama as Bishop of Mopti, Mali. Until now he has served as Bishop of Sikasso, Mali (27 Mar.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Nicolaus Adi Seputra, MSC, from his office as Archbishop of Merauke, Indonesia (28 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Rami Al-Kabalan as titular Bishop of Arethusa for Syrians. Until now he has served as Apostolic Visitor for Syrian faithful living in Western Europe and procurator of the Patriarchate of Antioch for Syrians at the Holy See. He has taken the name of 'Flavian'. (28 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Al-Kabalan, 40, was born in Zaydal, Syria. He holds a degree in philosophy and theology; a licence in theology; a doctorate in oriental canon law. He was ordained a priest on 16 July 2005.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Julio Edgar Cabrera Ovalle from his office as Bishop of Jalapa, Guatemala (30 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr José Benedicto Moscoso Miranda as

Bishop of Jalapa. Until now he has served as parish priest of La Sagrada Familia Parish, member of the College of Consultors and vicar forane (31 Mar.).

Bishop-elect Moscoso Miranda, 60, was born in San Luis Jilotepeque, Guatemala. Before entering the seminary he studied accounting and philosophy; once in the seminary he studied theology. He was ordained a priest on 3 January 1987.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Ignacy Dec from his office as Bishop of Świdnica, Poland (31 Mar.).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Marek Mendyk as Bishop of Świdnica. Until now he has served as titular Bishop of Rusuccuru and Auxiliary Bishop of Legnica, Poland (31 Mar.).

APOSTOLIC NUNCIO

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Luis Miguel Muñoz Cárdena as Apostolic Nuncio to Sudan and Eritrea, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Nasai. Until now he has been a Counsellor to the said Nunciature (31 Mar.).

LENTEN SERMON

On Friday morning, 27 March, Fr Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher of the Papal Household, delivered the Third Lenten Sermon in the Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

Calendar for Holy Week Liturgical Celebrations presided by the Holy Father

As a result of the extraordinary situation that has arisen, due to the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, and taking into account the provisions provided by the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, with a Decree dated 25 March 2020, it has become necessary to provide an update in relation to the upcoming Liturgical Celebrations presided over by the Holy Father: with regard to both the Calendar and the methods of participation.

Therefore, the Holy Father will celebrate the Holy Week rites at the Altar of the

Cathedral, in Saint Peter's Basilica, in accordance with the following calendar and without the participation of people:

5 April

Palm Sunday of the
Passion of the Lord

*Commemoration of the entry of
the Lord into Jerusalem and
Holy Mass at 11:00 AM*

9 April

Holy Thursday

*Holy Mass of the Lord's Supper,
11:00 AM*

10 April
Good Friday

*Celebration of the Passion of the
Lord, 6:00 PM
Via Crucis on the parvis of Saint
Peter's Basilica, 9:00 PM*

11 April
Holy Saturday

Easter Vigil, 9:00 PM

12 April

Easter Sunday of the
Resurrection of the Lord

*Holy Mass at 11:00 AM.
At the end of Holy Mass, Pope
Francis will impart the Urbi et
Orbi blessing.*

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redazione.inglese.or@spc.va
www.osservatoreromano.va

ANDREA MONDA
Editor-in-Chief

Giuseppe Fiorentino
Assistant Editor

Editorial office
via del Pellegrino, 00120 Vatican City
telephone +390669899300, fax +390669893675

TIPOGRAFIA VATICANA EDITRICE
L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

"To see God means having a personal relationship with him. This requires looking deep within our hearts and making space for him". Pope Francis explained this at the General Audience on Wednesday, 1 April, as he continued his series of catecheses on the Beatitudes, focusing on the sixth Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's words which he shared in Italian from the private library of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace.



A journey of purification

The Holy Father continues his series of catecheses on the Beatitudes

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning,

Today, let us read together the sixth Beatitude which promises the vision of God and has *purity of heart* as a condition.

There is a Psalm that reads: "my heart says to thee, 'Thy face, Lord, do I seek.' Hide not thy face from me" (Ps 27[28]:8-9).

This language manifests the thirst for a personal relationship with God, not a mechanical one, not a somewhat vague one, no: personal, which the Book of Job also expresses as a sign of a sincere relationship. The Book of Job reads: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see thee" (42:5). And often I think that this is the journey of life, in our relationship with God. We know God from hearsay, but with our experience, we go forward, forward, forward, and in the end, we come to know him directly, if we are faithful ... And this is the maturity of the Spirit.

How do we reach this intimacy, to know God with our eyes? We can think of the disciples at Emmaus, for example, who have the Lord beside them but "their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:16). The Lord will open their eyes at the end of a journey that culminates with the breaking of bread and had begun with a scolding: "O Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk 24:25). This is the reprimand at the beginning. It is the root of their blindness: their hearts were foolish and slow. And when the heart is foolish and slow, things cannot be seen. Things appear foggy. Herein lies the wisdom of this Beatitude: in order to contemplate it, we need to enter within ourselves and make room for God because, as Saint Augustine says, God is "more inward than my innermost self" (*"interior intimo meo"* Confessions III, 6, 11). In order to see God, there is neither the need to

change eyeglasses or vantage point, nor to change the theological authors who teach the path: we need to free the heart from its deception. This is the only path.

This is a decisive maturity: when we realize that our worst enemy is often hidden within our heart. The most noble battle is the one against the inner deception that creates our sins. Because sins change our inner vision, they change our evaluation of things. They make us see things that are not real or at least not *that* real.

It is thus important to understand what *purity of heart* is. In order to do so, we should remember that, for the Bible, the heart does not consist only in feelings, but rather it is a human being's most intimate place, the inner space where people are themselves. This is according to the Bible.

The Gospel of Matthew itself says "if our eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness" (Matt 6:23). This light is the gaze of the heart, the perspective, synthesis and the point from which reality can be seen (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 143).

But what does having a "pure" heart mean? A pure heart lives in the presence of the Lord, preserving in the heart what is worthy of the relationship with him. Only in this way can one possess an intimate life that is "unified, linear and unwinding."

A purified heart is, therefore, the result of a process that implies liberation and renunciation. Those who are pure of heart are not born that way but rather they have experienced an inner simplification, learning to re-

nounce the evil within oneself, which the Bible calls circumcision of the heart (cf. Dt 10:16; 30:6, Ex 44:9; Jer 4:4).

This inner purification implies recognition of the part of the heart that is under the influence of evil – "You know Father, I feel this way, I think this way, I see this way and this is bad": recognizing the bad part, the part that is clouded by evil – in order to learn the art of always allowing ourselves to be trained and guided by the Holy Spirit. The journey from a sick heart, from a sinful heart, from a heart that cannot see things well because it is in sin, to the fullness of the light of the heart, is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who guides us to take this journey. Through this journey of the heart, we can achieve "seeing God".

In this *beatific vision*, there is an eschatological dimension of the future, as with all Beatitudes: it is the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven towards which we are directed. But there is also the other dimen-

sion: to see God means understanding the design of Providence in what happens to us, to recognize his presence in the Sacraments, his presence in our brothers and sisters, especially the poor and the suffering, and to recognize God there where he manifests himself (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2519).

This Beatitude is somewhat the fruit of the preceding ones: if we have listened to the thirst for good that dwells within us and we are aware of living of mercy, a journey of freedom begins which lasts an entire lifetime and leads us to Heaven. It is serious work, work that is carried out by the Holy Spirit if we give him the room to do it, if we are open to the action of the Holy Spirit. This is why we can say that it is mostly the work of God in us – in the trials and the purifications of life – and this is the work of God and of the Holy Spirit who brings great joy, true and profound peace. Let us not be afraid, let us open the doors of our heart to the Holy Spirit so that he may purify us and lead us forward in this journey towards full joy.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media, as we continue on our Lenten journey towards Easter. Upon you and your families, I invoke the strength and peace that come from our Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you!

Lastly, I greet *young people*, the *sick*, the *elderly* and *neovoluntaries*. May the last glimpse of the Lenten season that we are experiencing, foster a suitable preparation for the celebration of Easter, leading each of us to an even deeper closeness to Christ. I offer my Blessing to everyone.



God's consoling embrace

The Pope's words to the many ordinary people who courageously and selflessly give their lives for the good of all

The crucifix bathed in tears from heaven

ANDREA TORNIELLI

It was the protagonist of the prayer that Pope Francis celebrated on Friday evening, 27 March, in an empty Saint Peter's Square, immersed in an unreal silence, a foreshadowing of Good Friday; the Crucifix bathed by the rain that irrigated the body, adding water to the blood painted on the wood, which the Gospel tells us came out from the wound inflicted by the spear.

The cross of the Crucified Christ that had survived a fire and which the people of Rome used to carry on procession against the plague; that Crucified Christ that Saint John Paul II had embraced during the penitential liturgy of the Jubilee of the Year 2000, was the silent and defenceless protagonist at the centre of the empty space. Even *Mary Salus Populi Romani*, protected in a plexiglass case that became opaque from the rain, appeared to give way, as if to almost disappear, humbly, before He, raised on the Cross for the salvation of humanity.

Pope Francis looked small and more hunched as he walked – with some effort and in solitude – up the steps to the parvis, making himself the interpreter of the world's suffering to offer it at the foot of the Cross. "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" The distressing crisis that we are experiencing with the pandemic "exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities" and now "that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: 'Wake up, Lord!'".

The siren of an ambulance, one of many which in these days pass through our neighbourhoods, rescuing the newly infected, accompanied the bells at the very moment of the *Urbi et Orbi* Eucharistic Blessing when the Pope, still alone, once again faced the deserted square lashed by the rain, making the sign of the Cross with the Monstrance. Yet again, He was the protagonist, that Jesus who wished to make himself nourishment for us and who still today repeats to us "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?... Do not be afraid".

On Friday, 27 March, at 6:00 PM, Pope Francis presided over an extraordinary moment of prayer in Saint Peter's Square, to implore for an end to the pandemic and for "God's consoling embrace" to reach all of humanity adrift in a stormy sea, giving "health to our bodies and comfort [to] our hearts." The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily.

When evening had come" (Mt 4:35). The Gospel passage we have just heard begins like this. For weeks now it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void, that stops everything as it passes by; we feel it in the air, we notice it in people's gestures, their glances give

them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost. Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one voice, saying "We are perishing" (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this.

It is easy to recognize ourselves in this story. What is harder to understand is Jesus' attitude. While his disciples are quite naturally alarmed and desperate, he stands in the stern, in the part of the boat

that sinks first. And what does he do? In spite of the tempest, he sleeps on soundly, trusting in the Father; this is the only time in the Gospels we see Jesus sleeping. When he wakes up, after calming the wind and the waters, he turns to the disciples in a reproaching voice: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (v. 40).

Let us try to understand. In what does the lack of the disciples' faith consist, as contrasted with Jesus' trust? They had not stopped believing in him; in fact, they called on him. But we see how they call on him: "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" (v. 38). *Do you not care*: they think that Jesus is not interested in them, does not care about them. One of the things that hurts us and our families most when we hear it said is: "Do you

not care about me?" It is a phrase that wounds and unleashes storms in our hearts. It would have shaken Jesus too. Because he, more than anyone, cares about us. Indeed, once they have called on him, he saves his disciples from their discouragement.

The storm exposes our vulnerability and uncovers those false and superfluous certainties around which we have constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities. It shows us how we have allowed to become dull and feeble the very things that nourish, sustain and strengthen our lives and our communities. The tempest lays bare all our prepackaged ideas and forgetfulness of what nourishes our people's souls; all those attempts that anesthetize us with ways of thinking and act-

ing that supposedly "save" us, but instead prove incapable of putting us in touch with our roots and keeping alive the memory of those who have gone before us. We deprive ourselves of the antibodies we need to confront adversity.

In this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about our image, has fallen away, uncovering once more that (blessed) common belonging, of which we cannot be deprived: our belonging as brothers and sisters.

"Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" Lord, your word this evening strikes us and regards us, all of us. In this world, that you love more than we do, we have gone ahead at breakneck speed, feeling

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Monday, 9 March

Mass for victims of coronavirus

During his homily for Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 9 March, which was broadcast live to be near to those affected by the coronavirus, Pope Francis focused on the Sacrament of Reconciliation as he reflected on the First Reading on the Second Monday of Lent taken from the Book of the Prophet Daniel (9:4-10) in which the prophet confesses his sins and those of his people. "When we prepare ourselves to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation", the Holy Father said, we have to do an examination of conscience. However, there is a difference between making a list of sins on the intellectual level and a heartfelt recognition of sin: "to make a list of sins in the mind, to say 'I've sinned', then say them to the priest and then the priest forgives me", he said, is like making a to do list and this "remains in the mind. A true confession of sins must remain in the heart", he pointed out.

Pope Francis invited the faithful to confess from the heart like Daniel did when he ex-

Wednesday, 11 March

Mass especially for detainees

On Wednesday morning, 11 March, Pope Francis continued his live broadcasts of Mass at Santa Marta by offering the celebration to detainees. "They suffer and we must be near to them with our prayer so that the Lord might console them", he said. He began his homily by referring to the day's reading from Jeremiah and explained how the devil tempts us to reject God's plan by placing obstacles. The devil, Pope Francis said, has two styles of persecuting Christians. First, he tries to seduce with worldliness by "making them change the plan of redemption", in order to "distance us from the cross of Christ". And then, he tries to destroy the person because "the devil's pride is so great that he tries to destroy and enjoys destroying through maliciousness".

It is through discernment, the Holy Father explained, that we can conquer the devil. Indeed, discerning how the devil is working on us is the very way to overcome the obstacles that the devil places on our path of discip-

indifference"; being so self-involved that we lose our identity and become adjectives.

The parable, the Pope explained, tells the story of a wealthy man who was pleased with his wealth and his life and a poor man, Lazarus, whom he saw regularly outside his door. To the wealthy man, it seemed natural to see the poor man there. The Gospel narrative says that when Lazarus died he was taken to heaven beside Abraham while the rich man was simply buried.

There are two striking things about this parable: "the fact that the rich man knew that this poor man existed and that his name was Lazarus but did not care"; and the "great abyss" between the two men. Although the rich man was informed, the Pope pointed out, his "heart was closed. Thus, the information that this man possessed could not reach his heart, he did not know how to be moved".

This also happens to us, the Pope remarked. "Many of us, many groups of women and men experience this detachment between what they think, what they know and what they feel ... they are indifferent". The Holy Father said that the expression, "globalization of indifference" came to him when he visited Lampedusa for the first time and witnessed the migrant situation there. When we worry about our personal matters, he said, we tend to forget "starving children, we forget those poor people who seek freedom on the frontiers of countries, migrants forced to flee from hunger and war only to find a wall ... a wall that does not let them in".

Another striking thing about this Bible passage, the Pope continued, is that we are not told the name of the rich man. "The Gospel does not tell us the name of this man. He had no name. He only had adjectives of his life: rich, powerful, many adjectives". Our egoism, he said, "causes us to lose our identity, our name", and we fall into a culture of adjectives where our worth is determined by what we have and this is the result of indifference. The Holy Father concluded his homily by inviting the faithful to ask the Lord for the grace of not falling into a state of indifference before human suffering, the grace to be moved to do something for others.

Friday, 13 March

Mass for Pastors

On Friday morning, 13 March, Pope Francis began Holy Mass at Santa Marta with a prayer for priests "who need to accompany the people of God during this crisis. May the Lord grant them the strength and the ability to choose the best ways to help". During the homily, he commented on the day's Gospel (Mt 21:33-46) which narrates the parable of the tenants, and refers to God's care of his people. The vineyard, the Holy Father explained, represents the chosen people, the tenants are the Doctors of the Law and the servants are the prophets. Meanwhile, the hedge, winepress and tower represent the covenant made in Sinai. In the parable the servants who are sent by God to receive the fruit of the vineyard from the tenants are beaten and killed. This parable "is a story about infidelity" to God's call and to the covenant made, the Pope explained. They confused the gift of the covenant for possession.

This change from gift to possession is the result of the "sin of forgetting". Rather than receive the gift that God made of himself, we begin to feel we own it. Thus, "the promise is no longer a promise, the election is no longer an election ... It becomes an ideology", the Holy Father explained. Because God made a gift of himself to us, this gift must be given freely to others as it does not belong to us. At the end of his reflection, Pope Francis prayed that we might be granted the grace of "receiving the gift as a gift and of transmitting this gift as a gift and not as a possession".

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

pressed the shame involved in this process. Indeed, the Holy Father said, when we realize that we have sinned and feel this in our hearts we are filled with shame. "Being ashamed of our sins is a grace we need to ask". When we lose our sense of shame, he explained, we lose a sense of moral judgment and respect for others. On the other hand, when a sense of shame is part of the memory of our sin, "this touches God's heart" because it means that we have understood what we "have done to a God who is so good, so compassionate, so righteous". The Holy Father concluded his homily by asking the Lord to grant us the grace to feel ashamed for our sins.

Tuesday, 10 March

The Lord changes scarlet to white

On Tuesday, 10 March, the Holy Father continued his reflection from the day before, on the importance of recognizing and confessing our sins with our hearts, in his homily at Santa Marta. "Today the Lord calls all us sinners to enter into dialogue with him because sin makes us withdraw into ourselves", the Pope said. That is precisely what happened to Adam and Eve. After sinning they hid themselves in shame.

The Pope then referred to the Reading from Isaiah (1:16-20) in which the Lord calls sinners to talk with him: "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow". In other words, the Pope explained, the Lord is telling us to approach him and not to be afraid of speaking to him because he can change everything. He then gave the example of Saint Jerome who, he said, was very penitent, prayed a lot and always tried to give the Lord everything he asked of him. When the Lord continued to be unhappy despite all this, Jerome became angry and asked him why he was unsatisfied with him despite his efforts. And the Lord said, give me your sins. The Pope invited the faithful to "have the courage to go to the Lord with all our wretchedness and speak to him" in order to avoid falling into the snare of believing we are not sinners like the Doctors of the Law in the day's Gospel passage from Matthew (23:1-12).

ship. When a person is persecuted, it is because they are facing the vengeance of the devil, for it means that they have conquered him. This is evident today in the lives of many Christians who are "cruelly persecuted", the Holy Father said, as he gave the example of Asia Bibi's suffering during her nine-year imprisonment. He concluded his homily with a prayer asking the Lord to grant us this discernment: "May the Lord grant us the grace to discern the Lord's way which is the cross, from the way of the world which is vanity, and appearance".

Thursday, 12 March

Mass for civil authorities

During his morning Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, 12 March, the Holy Father continued to pray for those affected by the coronavirus: "for the sick, their families, for parents who are home with their children, but above all, I would like to ask you to pray for the authorities" who have to make difficult decisions for our wellbeing. In his homily as he commented on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, from the day's Gospel Reading of Luke (Lk 16:19-31) he reflected on the temptation of falling into a "globalization of



Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends Message for the feast of Vesakh

Constructing a Culture of Compassion and Fraternity

“Buddhists and Christians: Constructing a Culture of Compassion and Fraternity” is the theme of the Message that the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sent to Buddhists for the feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri 2020. The following is the English text of the Message which was jointly signed by Cardinal Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, President of the Dicastery, and by Msgr Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K., Secretary.

Dear Buddhists Friends,

On behalf of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, we extend our heartfelt greetings and good wishes to you and to all Buddhist communities around the world as you celebrate the feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri. For the last 24 years, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue has sent greetings to you on this happy occasion. Since this year marks the 25th anniversary of this traditional message, we would like to renew our bond of friendship and collaboration with the various traditions you represent.

This year, we would like to reflect with you on the theme “*Buddhists and Christians: Constructing a Culture of Compassion and Fraternity*”. We are mindful of the high value our respective religious traditions give to

compassion and fraternity in our spiritual quest and in our witness and service to a wounded humanity and a wounded earth.

The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* states: “Authentic teachings of religions invite us to remain rooted in the values of peace; to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious co-existence”. Meeting the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch in Thailand last November, His Holiness Pope Francis expressed that “we can grow and live together as good “neighbors” and thus be able to promote among the followers of our religions the development of new charitable projects, capable of generating and multiplying practical initiatives on the path of fraternity, especially with regard to the poor and our much-abused common home. In this way, we will contribute to the formation of a culture of compassion, fraternity and encounter, both here and in other parts of the world” (cf. *Visiting the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch, Bangkok, 21 November 2019*).

The Feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri prompts us to recall that Prince Siddhartha set out in search of wisdom by shaving his head and renouncing his princely status. He

traded his garments of Benares silk for the simple robe of a monk. His noble gesture reminds us of Saint Francis of Assisi: he cut his hair and traded his fine clothes for the simple robe of a mendicant because he wanted to follow Jesus, who “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Philippians 2:7) and had “nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). Their example and that of their followers inspire us to a life of detachment in view of what is most important. Thus, in consequence, we may more freely devote ourselves to fostering a culture of compassion and fraternity for the alleviation of human and ecological suffering.

Everything is related. Interdependence brings us back to the theme of compassion and fraternity. In a spirit of gratitude for your friendship, we humbly ask you to accompany and support your Christian friends in fostering loving kindness and fraternity in the world today. As we, Buddhists and Christians, learn from one another how to become ever more mindful and compassionate, may we continue to look for ways to work together to make our interconnectedness a source of blessing for all sentient beings and for the planet, our common home.

We believe that to guarantee the continuity of our universal solidarity, our shared journey requires educational process. To this end, a global event will take place on 15 October 2020 on the theme “Reinventing the Global Compact on Education”. “This meeting will rekindle our dedication for and with young people, renewing our passion for a more open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding” (Pope Francis, *Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education, 12 September 2019*). We invite you to work together with all to promote this initiative, individually and within your communities, to nurture a new humanism. We are also happy to see that Buddhists and Christians are drawing on deeply held values and working together to uproot the causes of social ills in various parts of the world.

Let us pray for all those who are affected by the coronavirus pandemic and for those who are caregivers. Let us encourage our faithful to live this difficult moment with hope, compassion, and charity.

Dear Buddhist friends, in this spirit of friendship and collaboration, we wish you once again a peaceful and joyful feast of Vesakh/Hanamatsuri.

God’s consoling embrace

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powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste. We did not stop at your reproach to us, we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick. Now that we are in a stormy sea, we implore you: “Wake up, Lord!”

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Lord, you are calling to us, calling us to faith. Which is not so much believing that you exist, but coming to you and trusting in you. This Lent your call reverberates urgently: “Be converted!”, “Return to me with all your heart” (*Joel 2:12*). You are calling on us to seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*. It is not the time of your judgement, but of our judgement: a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and to others. We can look to so many exemplary companions for the journey, who, even though fearful, have reacted by giving their lives. This is the force of the Spirit poured out and fashioned in courageous and generous self-denial. It is the life in the Spirit that can redeem, value and demonstrate how our lives are woven together and sustained by or-

dinary people – often forgotten people – who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines nor on the grand catwalks of the latest show, but who without any doubt are in these very days writing the decisive events of our time: doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: “That they may all be one” (*Jn 17:21*). How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we founder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears

to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God’s strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

The Lord asks us and, in the midst of our tempest, invites us to awaken and put into practice that solidarity and hope capable of giving strength, support and meaning to these hours when everything seems to be floundering. The Lord awakens so as to awaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side. The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. *Is 42:3*) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

“*Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?*” Dear brothers and sisters, from this place that tells of Peter’s rock-solid faith, I would like this evening to entrust all of you to the Lord, through the intercession of Mary, Health of the People and Star of the stormy Sea. From this colonnade that embraces Rome and the whole world, may God’s blessing come down upon you as a consoling embrace. Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: “Do not be afraid” (*Mt 28:5*). And we, together with Peter, “cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us” (cf. *1 Pet 5:7*).

ANGELUS

At the Angelus on Sunday, 29 March, Pope Francis joined a recent appeal launched by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, calling for an "immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world" to counteract the Covid-19 emergency. Earlier, the Holy Father had reflected on the day's Gospel passage which recounts the Resurrection of Lazarus. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's reflection which he delivered in Italian from the private library of the Apostolic Palace.



Stop to all wars in the world

The Pontiff joins appeal by UN Secretary-General for immediate global ceasefire

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning,

The Gospel passage for this fifth Sunday of Lent is the resurrection of Lazarus (cf. Jn 11:1-45). Lazarus was Martha and Mary's brother; they were good friends of Jesus. When Jesus arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has already been dead for four days. Martha runs towards the Master and says to Him: "If you had been here, my brother would not have died!" (v. 21). Jesus replies to her: "Your brother will rise again" (v. 23) and adds: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (v. 25). Jesus makes himself seen as the Lord of life, he who is capable of giving life even to the dead. Then Mary and other people arrive, in tears, and so Jesus – the Gospel says – "was deeply moved in spirit and troubled... Jesus wept" (vv. 33, 35). With this turmoil in his heart, he goes to the tomb, thanks the Father who always listens to him, has the tomb opened and cries aloud: "Lazarus, come out!" (v. 43). And Lazarus emerges with "his hands and feet bound with bandages and his face wrapped with a cloth" (v. 44).

Here we can experience first hand that God is life and gives life, yet takes on the tragedy of death. Jesus could have avoided the death of his friend Lazarus, but he wanted to share in our suffering for the death of people dear to us, and above all, he wished to demonstrate God's dominion over death. In this Gospel passage we see that the faith of man and the omnipotence of God, of God's love, seek each other and finally meet. It is like a two lane street: the faith of man and the omnipotence of God's love seek each other and

finally meet. We see this in the cry of Martha and Mary, and of all of us with them: "If you had been here!" And God's answer is not a speech, no, God's answer to the problem of death is Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life" ... have faith. Amid grief, continue to have faith, even when it seems that death has won. Take away the stone from your heart! Let the Word of God restore life where there is death.

Today, too, Jesus repeats to us: "Take away the stone". God did not create us for the tomb, but rather he created us for life, [which is] beautiful, good, joyful. But "through the devil's envy death entered the world" (Wis 2:24) says the Book of Wisdom, and Jesus Christ came to free us from its bonds.

We are thus called to take away the stones of all that suggests death: for example, the hypocrisy with which faith is lived, is death; the destructive criticism of others, is death; insults, slander, are death; the marginalization of the poor, is death. The Lord asks us to remove these stones from our hearts, and life will then flourish again around us. Christ lives, and

those who welcome him and follow him come into contact with life. Without Christ, or outside of Christ, not only is life not present, but one falls back into death.

The resurrection of Lazarus is also a sign of the regeneration that occurs in the believer through Baptism, with full integration within the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Through the action and power of the Holy Spirit, the Christian is a person who journeys in life as a new creature: a creature for life, who goes towards life.

May the Virgin Mary help us to be compassionate like her son Jesus, who made our suffering his own. May each of us be close to those who are in difficulty, becoming for them a reflection of God's love and tenderness, which frees us from death and makes life victorious.

After the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, the Secretary-General of the United Nations recently launched an appeal for an "immediate global

ceasefire in all corners of the world", citing the current Covid-19 crisis, which does not recognise borders. An appeal for a total ceasefire.

I join those who have welcomed this appeal and I invite everyone to follow it by ceasing all forms of hostility, promoting the creation of humanitarian aid routes, openness to diplomacy, and attentiveness to those who are in situations of great vulnerability.

May our joint fight against the pandemic bring everyone to recognize the great need to reinforce brotherly and sisterly bonds as members of a single human family. In particular, may it inspire a renewed commitment to overcome rivalries among the leaders of nations and the parties involved. Conflicts cannot be resolved through war! Antagonism and differences must be overcome through dialogue and a constructive search for peace.

At this time, my thoughts turn especially to all those people who suffer the vulnerability of being compelled to live in a group: rest homes, barracks... In particular I would like to mention those who are in prison. I read an official note by the Commission for Human Rights which mentions the problem of overcrowded prisons, which could become a tragedy. I ask the authorities to be sensitive to this serious problem and to take the necessary measures to avoid future tragedies.

I wish everyone a Happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me; I do so for you. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci.*



The Raising of Lazarus, by Duccio di Buoninsegna – Kimbell Art Museum