

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Vatican City

Friday, 24 April 2020

The Holy Father at the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia for the feast of Divine Mercy

Against the virus of 'selfish indifference'



Mercy and salvation means waiting for those left behind

ANDREA MONDA

In his homily on Sunday, during the Mass celebrated in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, Shrine of Divine Mercy, the Pope recalled "Mercy does not abandon those who stay behind". To this, we may add, it is mercy that makes us human. Instead, in a group of migrating animals if one stops because it is tired, sick, or crippled, the others do not wait for it, they do not care, they abandon it. This is unlike us human beings. At the moment when someone falls, something kicks in that is manifested in the soul and in action, that something is human, yet more than human at the same time and that accords another direction, another dimension on the chain of natural facts. It happens that we stop to wait for the other. This human – yet more than human "thing" –, is mercy: which shows man's greater face; a divine face. On almost every page in the Gospels, we can find accounts of this face, the face of Christ, the true God and true man, who shows what men are like, like Him, even if they too often forget it.

In the Gospel, Jesus mostly walks, and does so with an urgent, pressing rhythm, moving from city to city to preach (Inspired by Matthew's text, the film by Pier Paolo Pasolini is exemplary in this regard) and many try to keep up with him, but they do not succeed; they struggle or, worse, they try to overcome him by harnessing him to their petty projects for power. In Simone Bariona's incipit, a beautiful story dedicated to the memories of Saint Peter as an old man, the Italian writer Ferruccio Parazzoli has the protagonist say: "A little more patience, Lord, I know I was always late". In fact, Jesus' rhythm is difficult to maintain, not least because it is unsettling, paradoxical, and he always escapes ideological temptations by going "elsewhere" continuously, as written at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark; however, if he sees that one of his sheep has lost its way, he always stops and comes back to recover him.

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General Audience

At the General Audience on Wednesday, 22 April, 50th Earth Day, the Holy Father called for ecological conversion that can lead to concrete actions in a deeper "commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family" and "by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vul-



nerable in our midst". In God's image we are called "to have care and respect for all creatures" he continued. But if we continue in our selfishness; if we continue to fail to care for the earth, if we destroy the very environment that sustains us, we will have no future.

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VATICAN BULLETIN



CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Bienvenu Manamika Bafouakouahou as Coadjutor Archbishop of Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. Until now he has served as Bishop of Dolisie, Democratic Republic of the Congo (18 Apr.).

Archbishop Bafouakouahou, 55, was born in Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of the Congo. He was ordained a priest on 29 August 1993. He was ordained a bishop on 25 August 2013, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Dolisie.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Robert W. Marshall as Bishop of Alexandria, USA. Until now he has served as vicar general and parish priest of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Alexandria, Tennessee (21 Apr.).

Bishop-elect Marshall, 60, was born in Memphis, USA. He holds a degree in history and a doctorate in law. He was ordained a priest on 1 June 2000.

RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to Guatemala Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, titular Archbishop of Nebbio. Until now he has served as Apostolic Nuncio to Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Yemen, and Apostolic

Delegate to the Arabian Peninsula (17 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed as Apostolic Nuncio to Samoa Archbishop Novatus Rugambwa, titular Archbishop of Tagaria, Apostolic Nuncio to New Zealand, Fiji, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga and Apostolic Delegate to the Pacific Ocean (17 Apr.).

PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The Holy Father appointed as Ordinary Member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences Mr Niraja Gopal Jayal, Professor at the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance of the Jawaharlal Nehru University of New Delhi, India (17 Apr.).

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PATRIMONY OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE

The Holy Father appointed as Member of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna, Italy (18 Apr.).

VATICAN APOSTOLIC LIBRARY

The Holy Father appointed as Vice Prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Library Mr Timothy James Jans, *Scriptor graecus* and director of the

printed books department of the Vatican Apostolic Library (20 Apr.).

PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

On Monday, 20 April, the Holy Father appointed as members of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America the following: Cardinal Alvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri, Bishop of Huehuetenango, Guatemala; Cardinal Juan de la Caridad García

Rodríguez, Archbishop of San Cristóbal de La Habana, Cuba; Bishop Paulo Cezar Costa de São Carlos, Brazil.

NECROLOGY

Bishop Miguel Ángel D'Annibale of San Martín, Argentina, at age 61 (14 Apr.).

Archbishop Aldo di Cillo Pagotto, SSS, Archbishop emeritus of Paraíba, Brazil, at age 70 (14 Apr.).

Bishop Gérard Mulumba Kalemba, Bishop emeritus of Mwaka, Democratic Republic of the Congo, at age 85 (15 Apr.).

Bishop Dorick McGowan Wright, Bishop emeritus of Belize City-Belmopan, Belize, at age 74 (15 Apr.).

Congregation for the Eastern Churches emergency fund

As many brothers and sisters of the Eastern Churches are celebrating the Sacred Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord and on the eve of the feast of Divine Mercy, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches has set up the *Fondo Emergenza CEC*, an emergency fund responding to the invitation of the Holy Father not to abandon the suffering, especially the poorest, in facing the global crisis caused by the pandemic Covid-19.

Thanks to the active collaboration of the CNEWA (Catholic Near East Welfare Association) – PMP (Pontifical Mission for Palestine) central offices both in New York and in Canada, as well as their local offices, and in constant connection with the other Agencies that compose the ROACO (Riunione Opere Aiuto Chiese Orientali), it is

possible to support some relief efforts, also drawing on the Collection for the Holy Land, postponed this year to Sunday 13 September, which normally guarantees subsidies for the life of the Churches in the East. The Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development and the General Secretariat of *Caritas Internationalis* will be kept informed of every intervention.

In concrete, thanks to the suggestions of the Apostolic Nunciatures, it was decided immediately to guarantee the following donations in the name of the Holy Father:

– SYRIA: 10 ventilators, in collaboration with AVSI, to be shared in the three structures for which the project "Open Hospitals" continues

– HOLY LAND: 3 ventilators for St Joseph's Hospital in Jerusalem, the purchase and supply of diagnostic kits for Gaza and an extraordinary contribution for the work of the Holy Family Hospital at Bethlehem.

Other suggestions coming from other countries are being studied.

Despite the economic uncertainty, the Congregation will assure the aid it annually sends to schools and Catholic universities, as well as assistance to the displaced in Syria and Iraq and the refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, likewise in collaboration with the Catholic Agencies that form part of ROACO.

Let us all pray God the Father to free us from the evils afflicting humanity, as we join in acts of genuine solidarity and brotherly love.

For updates and information about contributing to the *Fondo Emergenza CEC*, please write to roaco@orientchurch.va

Prayer intention for the month of April

To help and accompany people suffering from addiction

In his prayer intention for the month of April, Pope Francis asks everyone to pray for those who suffer from addiction, especially addiction to gambling, pornography, and the internet so that they may be properly helped and accompanied. The video message was posted on thepopevideo.org through which the Pope entrusts his prayer intentions to the Worldwide Prayer Network.

The Pope's message is an appeal to help free people from old and new forms of slavery that chain the souls and the bodies of many men and women, of all age – even very young unfortunately – and social belonging.

"Surely, you have heard about the drama of addiction" Francis asks. "And... have you also thought about the addiction to gambling, to pornography, to the internet ... and the dangers of virtual space?" he continues while scenes of a desperate man who has lost everything playing cards, where not only has he lost his money but his car too; or a lonely young person in

front of the computer looking at websites for adults; or a woman laying in bed looking obsessively at her mobile phone are shown. Forms of "addiction" that lead into a tunnel where to exit on one's own is very difficult.

Let us "pray", the Pope says, "that those suffering from addiction may be properly helped and accompanied" supported "by the 'Gospel of Mercy' we can alleviate, care for and heal the suffering associated with new kinds of addiction". In the video concrete forms of helping are suggested: a man consoles a desperate man by resting his hand on the person's shoulder as a sign of protection while speaking to him; reaching out to young people; embracing one another in moments of need.

The video that accompanies the Pope's words, was produced and distributed by La Machi agency, in collaboration with Vatican Media, which handled the recording and the video is translated into nine languages.

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redazione.inglese.ore@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

Advertising Agency
Il Sole 24 Ore S.p.A.
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segreteria@redazione.ossrom.va

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

Fiftieth Earth Day

The Holy Father delivered a special reflection for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the fifth anniversary of his Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si', at the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 22 April. Speaking from the library of the Apostolic Palace, he warned that there can be "no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us". The following is the English text of the Pope's catechesis which he delivered in Italian.



Pope Francis urges the international community to find a common plan to avert the threat to our common home

No future without sustaining the environment

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning,

Today we celebrate the fiftieth Earth Day. This is an occasion for renewing our commitment to love and care for our common home and for the weaker members of our human family. As the tragic coronavirus pandemic has taught us, we can overcome global challenges only by showing solidarity with one another and embracing the most vulnerable in our midst. The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* deals precisely with this "Care for our Common Home". Today, let us together reflect a little on that responsibility which characterizes "our earthly sojourn" (*Laudato Si'*, 160). We must grow in awareness of caring for our common home.

We are fashioned from the earth, and fruit of the earth sustains our life. But, as the book of Genesis reminds us, we are not simply "earthly"; we also bear within us the *breath of life* that comes from God (cf. *Gen* 2:4-7). Thus we live in this common home as one human family in biodiversity with God's other creatures. As *imago Dei*, in God's image, we are called to have care and respect for all creatures, and to offer love and compassion to our brothers and sisters, especially the most vulnerable among us, in imitation of God's love for us, manifested in his Son Jesus, who became man in order to share our state with us and save us.

Because of our selfishness we have failed in our responsibility to be guardians and stewards of the earth. "We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair" (ibid., 61). We have polluted it, we have despoiled it, endangering our very lives. For this reason, various international and local movements have sprung up in order to appeal to our consciences. I deeply appreciate these initiatives; still it will be necessary for our children

to take to the streets to teach us the obvious: we have no future if we destroy the very environment that sustains us.

We have failed to care for the earth, our garden-home; we have failed to care for our brothers and sisters. We have sinned against the earth, against our neighbours, and ultimately against the Creator, the benevolent Father who provides for everyone, and desires us to live in communion and flourish together. And how does the earth react? There is a Spanish saying that is very clear about this. It goes: "God always forgives; we humans sometimes forgive, and sometimes not; the earth never forgives". The earth does not forgive: if we have despoiled the earth, its response will be very ugly.

How can we restore a harmonious relationship with the earth and with the rest of humanity? A harmonious relationship... We so often lose sight of harmony: harmony is a work of the Holy Spirit. In our common home too, on the earth, and in our relationships with people, with our neighbour, with the poorest, how can we restore this harmony? We need a new way of looking at our common home. For this is not a storehouse of resources for us to exploit. For us believers, the natural world is the "Gospel of Creation": it expresses God's creative power in fashioning human life and bringing the world and all it contains into existence, in order to sustain humanity. As the biblical account of creation concludes: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (*Gen* 1:31). When we see these natural tragedies that are the earth's response to our mistreatment, I think: "If I ask the Lord now what he thinks about it, I do not believe he is saying it is a very good thing". It is we who have ruined the Lord's work!

In today's celebration of Earth Day, we are called to renew our sense of sacred respect for the earth, for it is not just our home

but also God's home. This should make us all the more aware that *we stand on holy ground!*

Dear brothers and sisters, "let us awaken our God-given aesthetic and contemplative sense" (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, 56). The prophetic gift of contemplation is something that we can learn especially from indigenous peoples. They teach us that we cannot heal the earth unless we love and respect it. They have the wisdom of "living well", not in the sense of having a good time, no, but of living in harmony with the earth. They call this harmony "living well".

At the same time, we need an ecological conversion that can find expression in concrete actions. As a single and interdependent family, we require a common plan in order to avert the threats to our common home. "Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan" (*Laudato Si'*, 164). We are aware of the importance of cooperation as an international community for the protection of

our common home. I urge those in positions of leadership to guide the preparations for two important international Conferences: *COP15 on Biodiversity* in Kunming, China, and *COP26 on Climate Change* in Glasgow, United Kingdom. These two meetings are of great importance.

I would like to support concerted action also on the national and local levels. It will help if people at all levels of society come together to create a popular movement "from below". The *Earth Day* we are celebrating today was itself born in precisely this way. We can each contribute in our own small way. "We need not think that these efforts are going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread" (*Laudato Si'*, 212).

In this Easter season of renewal, let us pledge to love and esteem the beautiful gift of the *earth*, our common home, and to care for all members of our human family. As brothers and sisters, which we are, let us together implore our heavenly Father: "Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth" (cf. *Ps* 104:30).

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. In the joy of the Risen Christ, I invoke upon you and your families the loving mercy of God our Father. May the Lord bless you!

Lastly, I greet *young people*, the *sick*, the *elderly* and *newlyweds*. My dearest ones, in the light of the Resurrection may you rediscover the joy and beauty of life which is God's gift. I offer my blessing to you all.





Last Sunday we celebrated the Lord's resurrection; today we witness the resurrection of his disciple. It has already been a week, a week since the disciples had seen the Risen Lord, but in spite of this, they remained fearful, cowering behind "closed doors" (Jn 20:26), unable even to convince Thomas, the only one absent, of the resurrection. What does Jesus do in the face of this timorous lack of belief? He returns and, standing in the same place, "in the midst" of the disciples, he repeats his greeting: "Peace be with you!" (Jn 20:19, 26). He starts all over. The resurrection of his disciple begins here, from this *faithful and patient mercy*, from the discovery that God never tires of reaching out to lift us up when we fall. He wants us to see

him, not as a taskmaster with whom we have to settle accounts, but as our Father who always raises us up. In life we go forward tentatively, uncertainly, like a toddler who takes a few steps and falls; a few steps more and falls again, yet each time his father puts him back on his feet. The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground, that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet.

You may object: "But I keep falling!" The Lord knows this and he is always ready to raise you up. He does not want us to keep thinking about our failings; rather, he wants us to look to him. For when we fall, he sees children needing to be put back on their

feet; in our failings he sees children in need of his merciful love. Today, in this church that has become a shrine of mercy in Rome, and on this Sunday that Saint John Paul II dedicated to Divine Mercy twenty years ago, we confidently welcome this message. Jesus said to Saint Faustina: "I am love and mercy itself; there is no human misery that could measure up to my mercy" (*Diary*, 14 September 1937). At one time, the Saint, with satisfaction, told Jesus that she had offered him all of her life and all that she had. But Jesus' answer stunned her: "You have not offered me the thing that is truly yours". What had that holy nun kept for herself? Jesus said to her with kindness: "My daughter, give me your failings" (10 October 1937). We too can ask

ourselves: "Have I given my failings to the Lord? Have I let him see me fall so that he can raise me up?" Or is there something I still keep inside me? A sin, a regret from the past, a wound that I have inside, a grudge against someone, an idea about a particular person... The Lord waits for us to offer him our failings so that he can help us experience his mercy.

Let us go back to the disciples. They had abandoned the Lord at his Passion and felt guilty. But meeting them, Jesus did not give a long sermon. To them, who were wounded within, he shows his own wounds. Thomas can now touch them and know of Jesus' love and how much Jesus had suffered for him, even though he had abandoned him. In those wounds, he touches with his hands God's tender closeness. Thomas arrived late, but once he received mercy, he overtook the other disciples: he believed not only in the resurrection, but in the boundless love of God. And he makes the most simple and beautiful profession of faith: "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). Here is the resurrection of the disciple: it is accomplished when his frail and wounded humanity enters into that of Jesus. There, every doubt is resolved; there, God becomes *my God*; there, we begin to accept ourselves and to love life as it is.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the time of trial that we are presently undergoing, we too, like Thomas, with our fears and our doubts, have experienced our frailty. We need the Lord, who sees beyond that frailty an irrepressible beauty. With him we rediscover how precious we are even in our vulnerability. We discover that we are like beautiful crystals, fragile and at the same time precious. And if, like crystal, we are transparent before him, his light – the light of mercy – will shine in us and through us in the world. As the Letter of Peter said, this is a reason for being "filled with joy, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials" (1 Pt 1:6).

On this feast of Divine Mercy, the most beautiful message comes from Thomas, the disciple who arrived late; he was the only one missing. But the Lord waited for Thomas. Mercy does not abandon

The Holy Father's Homily at the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia for the feast of Divine Mercy instituted by John Paul II

Against the virus of 'selfish indifference'

"While we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic", there is the risk "that we may then be struck by an even worse virus, that of 'selfish indifference'. And even more, the 'danger' that we 'will forget those who are left behind'", Pope Francis warned, as he celebrated Mass for the feast of Divine Mercy on Sunday, 19 April, at Rome's Santo Spirito in Sassia [Holy Spirit in

Sassia] – not far from Saint Peter's – the church which is dedicated to the devotion to Divine Mercy. It was Saint John Paul II who instituted the feast of Divine Mercy on the occasion of the canonization of Saint Faustina Kowalska, 20 years ago. Once again due to Covid-19, the Holy Father celebrated Mass without the presence of the faithful. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily.



At the Regina Caeli

Best wishes to Eastern Catholics celebrating Easter

At the end of Holy Mass on the Second Sunday of Easter, Feast of Divine Mercy, celebrated privately in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, in Rome, the Holy Father led the recitation of the Regina Caeli. The following is a translation of the Pope's reflection, given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Second Sunday of Easter, it was meaningful to celebrate the Eucharist, here, in the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia, which Saint John Paul II chose as the Shrine of Divine Mercy. The Christian response to the storms of life and history cannot but be mercy: compassionate love among us and toward everyone, especially those who suffer, those who have greater difficulties and those who are more abandoned... Not pietism, nor welfarism, but compassion that comes from the heart. Divine Mercy comes from the Heart of Christ, of the Risen Christ. It flows from the ever-open wound of his side, open for us, who are always in need of pardon and comfort. May Christian mercy also inspire fair sharing among nations and their institutions, in order to face the current crisis in the spirit of solidarity.

I extend my greetings to our brothers and sisters of the Eastern Churches, who are celebrating the Feast of Easter today. Let us proclaim together: "The Lord is truly risen!" (Lk 24:34). Above all, during this time of trial, let us feel what a great gift is the hope that comes from being risen with Christ! In particular, I rejoice with the Eastern Catholic communities who, due to ecumenical reasons, celebrate Easter with the Orthodox. May this fraternity be of comfort in those places where Christians are a small minority.

Let us turn now to the Virgin Mary, Mother of Mercy, with Paschal joy.

Mercy and salvation means waiting for those left behind

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This is what happens in the Gospels' accounts of the Easter period, which relate to the apparitions of the Risen One. In fact, Jesus took the longest step of all, for he conquered death, and though he is absolutely unattainable, he decides to return to take back his own, the "brothers" as he calls them (and only after the resurrection does he use this term), and he goes to those who a few days before had abandoned him, denied him, and betrayed him.

A surprising choice. In the sporting world people often say "you don't alter the team that is winning". Yet, Jesus instead reverses this logic, by insisting you do not change the team which loses. It is to this team that one must give trust, and transmit hope. And so he returns to his own, he does not abandon them. And if by chance even one of them is missing, he comes back especially for him, the last lost sheep: Thomas, whom Jesus allowed to touch his wounds – the "slits of hope" –, and it becomes, as the Pope recalls, "the most simple and beautiful profession of faith": "My Lord, my God". It is because of this attentive care on the part of their pastor, because of this patient and merciful love of the teacher, that the disciples will then be able to do what they have

done from the day of Pentecost onwards: to begin anew and evangelize the world with an invincible courage and joy in their hearts. The essential point of Christianity is the inseparable link between the love received and the love given, the correspondence between the two measures, the forgiveness of others because our debts have been forgiven. The image of crystals evoked by the Pope is both beautiful, and effective: "fragile and at the same time precious. And if, like crystal, we are transparent before him, his light – the light of mercy – will shine in us and through us in the world".

This is not just a beautiful image, or a story from twenty centuries ago, but what happens today, every day and, above all, what must happen tomorrow. If it is true that "Mercy does not abandon those who stay behind", the Pope exhorts us to live accordingly: "Now, while we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic, there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind... In that community, after the resurrection of Jesus, only one was left behind and the others waited for him. Today the opposite seems to be the case: a small part of the human family has moved ahead, while the majority has remained behind".

Pope Francis' lucid, prophetic vision warns us of the greatest risk facing

the whole world today. Just when we can begin to imagine a recovery from this terrible health emergency, there is the risk of a two-speed restart. But, to go back to the world as it was before the pandemic, is not only impossible, but it would not be right, because that world was not right. In yesterday's world, in fact, "vested interests" have often prevailed and this has polluted politics, that "high form of charity" according to the expression of Paul VI quoted by the Pope in the intentions of this morning's Mass from the Domus Sanctae Marthae: today, instead the political parties "may seek together the good of the country and not the good of their own party". The world of tomorrow is opening before us, and so, the Pope exhorts us, that it could be truly "new", a world of resurrection after death: "Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future, a future for all without discarding anyone. Because without an all-embracing vision, there will be no future for anyone. Today the simple and disarming love of Jesus revives the heart of his disciple. Like the apostle Thomas, let us accept mercy, the salvation of the world. And let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world".

Andrea Mondia, 19 April 2020

those who stay behind. Now, while we are looking forward to a slow and arduous recovery from the pandemic, there is a danger that we will forget those who are left behind. The risk is that we may then be struck by an even worse virus, that of *selfish indifference*. A virus spread by the thought that life is better if it is better for me, and that everything will be fine if it is fine for me. It begins there and ends up selecting one person over another, discarding the poor, and sacrificing those left behind on the altar of progress. The present pandemic, however, reminds us that there are no differences or borders between those who suffer. We are all frail, all equal, all precious. May we be profoundly shaken by what is happening all around us: the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family! Let us learn from the early Christi-

an community described in the Acts of the Apostles. It received mercy and lived with mercy: "All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need" (Acts 2:44-45). This is not mere ideology: it is Christianity.

In that community, after the resurrection of Jesus, only one was left behind and the others waited for him. Today the opposite seems to be the case: a small part of the human family has moved ahead, while the majority has remained behind. Each of us could say: "These are complex problems, it is not my job to take care of the needy, others have to be concerned with it". Saint Faustina, after meeting Jesus, wrote: "In a soul that is suffering we should see Jesus on the cross, not a parasite and a burden... [Lord] you give us the chance to practise deeds of mercy,

and we practise making judgments" (*Diary*, 6 September 1937). Yet she herself complained one day to Jesus that, in being merciful, one is thought to be naive. She said, "Lord, they often abuse my goodness". And Jesus replied: "Never mind, don't let it bother you, just be merciful to everyone always" (24 December 1937). To everyone: let us not think only of our interests, our vested interests. Let us welcome this time of trial as an opportunity to prepare for our collective future, a future for all without discarding anyone. Because without an all-embracing vision, there will be no future for anyone.

Today the simple and disarming love of Jesus revives the heart of his disciple. Like the apostle Thomas, let us accept mercy, the salvation of the world. And let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world.

Wednesday, 1 April

For those who work in media and communication

On Monday, 1 April, Pope Francis offered daily Mass at Santa Marta to those in the world of media and communication who are working to ensure that people do not feel too isolated, "for the education of children, and to help us to bear this time of isolation". Taking his cue from the struggle between Jesus and the Doctors of the Law over Jesus' identity, the Holy Father focused his homily on the theme of discipleship. When the Doctors of the Law were cornered by Jesus' words, they responded with anger and insults. However, the Pope said, those who believe in Jesus and remain in his Word are true disciples: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples" (Jn 8:31). The Lord does not emphasize studying and learning which he takes for granted, but rather stresses the importance of remaining in him, a central

Living the Covenant with God, is what makes us Christian, the Holy Father stressed. "A Christian is not someone who can just show their baptismal certificate. A certificate of baptism is just a piece of paper", he added. "You are a Christian if you say 'yes' to the election of the Lord, if you follow the promise that the Lord has made to you and if you live the Covenant with God. This is the Christian life," he explained.

The Lord never forgets his covenant, the Pope said. Indeed, "his faithfulness is memory. His faithfulness to his people. His faithfulness to Abraham is the memory of the promise he made". This promise of hope was made to each of us as his chosen people. "This is the revelation that the Word of God gives us today about our Christian existence", the Pope said. He ended his homily by inviting the faithful to be "conscious of being chosen, joyful in going towards a promise and faithful in making the Covenant".

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theme to which he often returns, including at the Last Supper.

Indeed, the Pope continued, being a Christian is not about having an identity card that identifies one as Christian, but rather Christian identity is discipleship. "If you remain in the Lord, in the word of the Lord, in the life of the Lord, then you will be a disciple", the Pope explained. On the other hand, if one does not remain in the Lord, one can still appreciate doctrine and follow Jesus as a good and charitable person, but in that case one cannot be a disciple.

Being a Christian disciple, the Pope noted, makes us free as it means allowing oneself to be guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit, not to be subject to ideologies. The Holy Father invited the faithful to ask the Lord to help us "understand this wisdom of remaining in him, and help us understand familiarity with the Spirit". This is the anointing that those in the Lord will receive.

Thursday, 2 April

For the homeless and those who suffer unseen

During Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, 2 April, Pope Francis prayed for the many homeless and those who live hidden within the cracks of society, whose plight is particularly evident in this pandemic. "These days of sorrow and sadness highlight so many hidden problems", he explained, before describing a photograph he had recently seen in newspapers that had greatly moved him: "So many homeless people in a city, huddling in a parking lot". He invited the faithful to ask Saint Teresa of Calcutta to awaken in us a sense of closeness to these people.

Inspired by the day's readings from Genesis and the Gospel of John, which speak of Abraham and God's covenant with the chosen people, during his homily Pope Francis explained that Christians must be conscious that they have been chosen by God. They should be joyful and tread the path of salvation precisely because they were "elected, chosen by God" and thus are the recipients of the "promise of fruitfulness, to which we must respond with fidelity to the Covenant".

Friday, 3 April

For those working to solve long term problems resulting from the pandemic

On Friday, 3 April, during his daily Mass at Santa Marta, the Holy Father prayed for all those who are working to resolve issues that will arise after the pandemic including poverty, unemployment and hunger. Pope Francis' homily was dedicated to our Lady of Sorrows, whom the Church remembers today. "It will do us good to think about our Lady's Sorrows and to thank her because she accepted to be a mother".

Pope Francis retraced the seven sorrows of Our Lady. The first sorrow, he said occurred only 40 days after Jesus' birth when Simeon's prophecy spoke of a sword that would "pierce her heart". In the second sorrow, she thinks about the flight to Egypt to save her son's life. Her third sorrow recalls "those three days of anguish when the boy remained in the temple". Our Lady's fourth and fifth sorrow, the Holy Father continued, see her meeting Jesus on the way to Calvary and his death on the Cross. Lastly, in the sixth and seventh sorrow, Mary continues to accompany Jesus when he is taken down from the Cross and fi-

nally buried. "It is good for me", the Holy Father said, "late in the evening when I pray the Angelus, to pray these seven sorrows as a remembrance of the Mother of the Church".

Indeed, he said, "Our Lady never asked anything for herself". Like a disciple she accompanied, followed and listened to Jesus. She did not wish to take away any title from Jesus, her only title being mother which she received from "Jesus right there, at the moment of the Cross". She never asked to be "a quasi-redeemer or a co-redeemer": no. The Redeemer is one and this title does not duplicate. Asking for nothing, "she received the gift of being his mother and the duty to accompany us as Mother, to be our mother".

Pope Francis concluded his homily by inviting the faithful to honour Our Lady and to thank her for being a Mother, and to pause and reflect on Our Lady's pain and sorrows".

Saturday, 4 April

The fight against temptation

Taking his cue from the day's Gospel Reading which sees the doctors of the law and the high priest as protagonists (Jn 11:45-58), during Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Saturday morning, 4 April, Pope Francis prayed for people who may be tempted to take advantage of the pandemic for their own personal gains: "We pray today that the Lord might grant an upright and transparent conscience to everyone, that they might allow God to look on them without shame".

Temptation begins with a small feeling of restlessness, the Holy Father explained which in the case of the high priest began with John the Baptist. However, unlike John the Baptist who had no repercussions, Jesus began to perform signs and miracles, to speak to the people and he did not always observe the law. This led to an increase in restlessness.

As the restlessness grew, the doctors of the law and high priest began to test him, at times astonished at his wisdom, at times humiliated until they finally decide to get rid of Jesus because he was too dangerous, and they felt justified in doing so: "if we let him continue, everyone will believe in Him. It's dangerous. They will follow Him and they will separate themselves from us" - the people were not attached to them".

The process of temptation of the high priest is an example of how temptation works in us, Pope Francis said. It begins as a small idea that grows larger and begins to infect others until we end up justifying ourselves. This justification, he explained is necessary because it calms us interiorly. However, he said, there is an antidote to the process and that is "identifying this process within us ... this process that changes our hearts, from good to bad". The first step we have to take is to ask the Lord for his forgiveness. Then we should ask ourselves "how did this process begin in my soul"; how did it grow, who did I infect. And finally, we should ask ourselves how did I justify myself. At the end of his homily, the Holy Father prayed that the Holy Spirit may enlighten us to have this interior awareness".

Monday, 6 April

For detainees in overcrowded prisons

During his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 6 April, Pope Francis reflected on the day's Gospel Reading (Jn 12:1-11) in which Lazarus and Martha's sister, Mary, anoints Jesus' feet with very expensive perfumed oil, incurring the indignation of Judas who complained of the waste that could



A very different Easter

Rogationist Father reflects on this special time of grace lived during the coronavirus

FR CLAUDIO PIZZUTO, RCJ *

The 2020 Lenten season that has just finished and the Eastertide we are living can be referred to as being a very, very different one.

Lent, an intense time by its very nature, is a special time of grace and of "radiant sadness" as Schmemmann used to describe it, drawing from the experience of the Fathers of the Church. Yes, the alleluia disappears from our liturgies, the colour purple marks the vestments, there are no flowers on the altar and we offer a small resolution or sacrifice because such is the tradition....

All this should make room in our lives for a more "solemn" space in which to prepare ourselves for Easter. However, it is not a time that is marked just by "sadness", because by their very nature Christians are not sad, but rather it is a time of "radiant sadness" because during this time of grace, sadness simply has the purpose of expressing the sorrow for the time of "slavery" not to the Egyptian people but the slavery to what seems essential in our lives but that in reality is only superfluous.

Tears of sadness for the time lost and the energy spent chasing useless passions and lifeless desires. Let us try to think of the time spent running from one place to another, completely surrendered to our commitments that are so important that we do not even have the time to look at the faces of the people we meet and those who speak to us. Sadness for all those times that we selfishly told relatives and friends: "I am sorry, I would very much like to but I don't have the time ...".

It is a time of grace because we understand how silly it is not to pause for a moment to share a coffee or offer a caress to our elderly or sick relatives or friends; a slavery that ties us up with chains, that can all be traced back to our selfishness, to the anxious race to continue to celebrate our "self". How much time is wasted in deceitfully thinking that the work we carry out is a "just" one, so as to reassure our conscience.

However, this sadness is "radiant" because Lent encloses a hidden

treasure. It is like a walnut: a tough and even ugly shell on the outside, and a delicious fruit inside. Lent encloses a "radiant light", the joy of the return, the return to what is essential. The Liturgy "slows down its rhythms" and "dims the light of colour" so that we can pause to reflect and return home, just like the prodigal son; return to that home where the Father is and where everything regains its colour and the light of a feast.

But do we really feel this way about Lent and Easter? Last year, or two years ago, did we experience this time of grace with this spirit in order to prepare ourselves for Easter? I do not think so. Each year, Lent was the same as the other days of the year. There were certainly liturgies, initiatives and "pious practices", but our heart remained the same, fatigued and uncomfortable, and arrived at Easter very much the same as it was before. Who knows how many good intentions there were at the start of Lent 2018 or 2019..., that were lost along the journey because there were always too many commitments. But this year, everything was different. I think we will never forget Lent and Easter 2020. Indeed at the end of February we were ready to begin the "nth Lent" with the "usual" Ash Wednesday, but an unexpected obstacle appeared: Covid-19. At first it seemed like something so remote from us, a simple flu that would soon pass into the repertoire of forgotten news. But then it did not reveal itself as such. Precisely at the beginning of our Lent, this microscopic virus appeared, and within a short time it brought Italy to its knees.

And the virus still continues to affect us. In a short time, fear and sadness arose, caused by the various decrees that increasingly limited our freedom as citizens and as Christians especially when the measure – that has perhaps never been adopted before in the entire history of our Church – was introduced: all Holy Masses to be celebrated without people. We were speechless before this unexpected measure but we also understood the need to stop the spread of this virus, avoiding all forms of assembly, including



Eucharistic celebrations. The slogan was "stay at home", a slogan that has been drummed into our ears since the start of Lent and still continues to be said.

Thus throughout this season we sat with our eyes wide open in front of the television or on social networks to be as informed as possible, but also alas to listen to the devastating number of victims that this coronavirus has caused. But now – as a Christian – I try to have a more wider outlook on what has happened. I realize that in every tragedy, the Lord knows how to sow small seeds of light that can shine even in the darkest nights. Covid-19 has left and will continue to leave profound wounds (hopefully not for much longer) in the history of humanity. However, it is also true that our God "is able to write straight along crooked lines". I realized this when a young man who does not have a very serene relationship with faith published a small drawing representing Jesus giving the globe a blood transfusion. Even though this youth's faith continues to somewhat waver, it is nevertheless beautiful that some seed of new faith is beginning to bear some fruit. As it is to receive messages or calls from those from whom we had not heard in a long time. Like a grandmother I know who called me a few days ago and explained that during this time of quarantine, she is taking the opportunity to call people on the telephone.

Lent and Easter 2020 were not like the usual celebrations that un-

fold themselves year after year. They were an opportunity to rise again. Yes because we will regain the true life. This will be the "true Easter" because a tiny virus has forced us to stay at home, to slow down our activities and to have more time. Even though suffering resulting from coronavirus cannot be erased, the Lord will certainly allow us to stand up again and to rediscover ourselves as people and not robots who waste away behind their appointment books that are always filled with commitments and things to do. Covid-19 has infected and killed our "I don't have the time ..." to make room for a newly discovered God, thanks to the Eucharistic celebrations, rosaries and prayers broadcast on television or on social networks. The pandemic and that stay at home slogan have allowed us to rediscover relationships, fondness and a strong desire to re-contact others.

It was a time in which opposing ideologies and prejudices were set aside not only in a small circle of people but throughout the world to rediscover ourselves as people with more solidarity, prepared even to travel across the world, ready to risk contagion, for the love of giving oneself especially to those who suffer. A time in which many have experienced the Providence that is revealed in the many people who do not hold back when there is a need to help those who may not have a home in which to spend the quarantine.

Covid-19 is thus a truly historic event, a pandemic that has brought all of humanity to its knees. However, Christians always look forward with hope and find light even in the darkest tunnels. With this "jolt", the Lord has given us an opportunity to truly rise again, to welcome the True Life. Let us thank the Lord because this Easter we have been more attentive to our relationship and communion with him and with one another.

* Priest, Rogationists of the Heart of Jesus

For more information about the Rogationists visit: www.cristore.it

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have been spent on the poor. But Jesus knew that as the money keeper and a thief, Judas did not truly have the poor at heart and he said "the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me".

Unfaithful administrators abound today, the Holy Father said. Let us "think of some charitable or humanitarian organizations that have many, many employees ... and only about 40% of donations make it to the poor because" the rest goes to paying salaries. This, he explained "is a way of taking money from the poor".

Reflecting on today's poor people, the Holy Father said that the ones we are able to see are only the tip of the iceberg. The great majority of the poor are hidden and "we do not see them because we enter into this culture of indifference which denies their existence". In this way, he continued, we minimize their reality. Indeed he continued, even those who are not indifferent to the poor see their presence "as if it were normal" like a statue or an ornament.

The hidden poor, even with jobs, are the victims of economic and financial systems who are too embarrassed to ask for help although they struggle from pay check to pay check. He gave the example from his time as Archbishop of

Buenos Aires when he received news of 15 families who were forced to move into an abandoned factory because they could no longer afford to pay their rent.

Pope Francis ended his homily by reminding the faithful that on the Day of Judgment we will be judged according to our relationship with the poor: Did we feed them, visit those in prison and in hospital? Did we help the widow and the orphan? "When Jesus says, 'The poor you always have with you', he is saying 'I will always be with you in the poor. I will be present there'. This he stressed, "is not acting like a Communist. This is at the centre of the Gospel".

Mercy, medicine for humanity

Interview with the rector of the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia



Msgr Jozef Bart with the Holy Father, 19 April.



NICOLA GORI

On Sunday, 19 April, the Holy Father visited the Church of Santo Spirito in Sassia in Rome, not far from Saint Peter's Square, to celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy, instituted by Saint John Paul II in 2000 on the occasion of the canonization of Sr Faustina Kowalska. The Church has become a spiritual centre of devotion to the merciful heart of Jesus as she houses a relic of the Saint donated by Pope Wojtyła himself, who celebrated Mass in this Church on 23 April 1995 and blessed the image of Christ inspired by the Polish nun after her mystical vision in 1931. In the following interview (conducted before Pope Francis' visit) with *L'Osservatore Romano* Msgr Jozef Bart, rector of the Church, explains the significance and relevance today of Divine Mercy devotion in light of the tragedy the world is experiencing.

What is the significance of Pope Francis' visit in this time of coronavirus emergency?

Pope Francis' visit is an event that we have been awaiting for a long time. At this time in the history of the Church, we are being led by a Pontiff who focuses his magisterium on mercy. His evangelic program is one of mercy. He repeats this and reminds us of it every day. Today we are living not only a time of pandemic, but also that of a "third world war fought piecemeal". There is disorder and disorientation, somewhat everywhere. Thus mercy becomes a medicine, a prescription to heal the social and ecclesial fabric. The Pope's visit falls at a time in which many parts of the world are facing the emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many people are suffering from illness, lack of work, economic difficulties, lack of security. Mercy thus assumes the value of a message of comfort, of tenderness, of courage. A message of relief for people who are experiencing great discomfort. In this Church the Pope will send a very strong message of hope reflecting the cry of John Paul II who said: where, if not in divine mercy can the world find refuge and hope?

What is Saint Faustina Kowalska's message to the women and men of today?

Pope Francis' visit takes place 20 years after the canonization of Sister Faustina and the institution

of the Feast of Divine Mercy, but also 15 years after the death of the Polish Pope. Pope Wojtyła emphasized that the message of the Saint (Faustina) was a prophetic cry addressed to all of Europe and the world. The message entrusted from Jesus to Faustina regards the whole planet because she was sent to announce divine mercy to all humanity. Let us consider how truly current and accessible to all her message is in this moment in history.

How important was this Shrine of Divine Mercy to John Paul II?

From the time he was Archbishop of Krakow, John Paul II followed Sister Faustina's Cause of Canonization. He had the grace of seeing her beatified and canonized. When he was elected the Successor of Peter, he carried from Krakow the message of divine mercy in his heart. The Feast of Divine mercy has been celebrated in the Church

of Santo Spirito in Sassia, ever since the 1950's, precisely from 1957. This is the first reason why Pope Wojtyła chose this church. The second reason is because every day here we sense the inner vibrations of the pilgrims and Peter. Jesus asked the Saint to bring to all this comforting message of mercy. Therefore John Paul II wanted Santo Spirito in Sassia to be a beacon to spread this wealth, also thanks to a great inner inspiration. He himself was very attached to this church, so much so that he came to visit it and celebrate Mass on 23 April 1995. On that occasion he confided in me: "Every day I feel attached to this Church and I sense the vibrations of your hymns". There is another detail that is worth remembering. Every day through his private secretary the now Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, the Pontiff used to send us messages with prayer intentions for difficult cases that he wanted to entrust to the "hour of mercy" recited in this Church.

Statement of the Director of the Holy See Press Office

World Youth Day and Meeting of Families postponed

The Holy Father has decided to postpone by one year World Youth Day and the World Meeting of Family.

The Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, made the announcement on Monday, 20 April: "Due to the current health situation and its consequences for the movement and gathering of young people and families, the Holy Father, along with the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, has decided to postpone by one year the next World Meeting of Families, scheduled to take place in June 2021, and the next World Youth Day, scheduled to take place in Lisbon in August 2022, to June 2022 and August 2023 respectively" reads the statement.

