Higher Committee of Human Fraternity calls to join together on 14 May

A day of prayer, fasting and works of charity

The Holy Father has accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity to call for a day of prayer, fasting and works of charity on Thursday, 14 May, to be observed by all men and women “believers in God, the All-Creator”. The proposal is addressed to all religious leaders and to people around the world to implore God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The appeal released on Saturday, 9 May, reads: “Our world is facing a great danger that threatens the lives of millions of people around the world due to the growing spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. While we reaffirm the role of medicine and scientific research in fighting this pandemic, we should not forget to seek refuge in God, the All-Creator, as we face such severe crisis. Therefore, we call on all peoples around the world to do good deeds, observe fast, pray, and make devout supplications to God Almighty to end this pandemic. Each one from wherever they are and according to the teachings of their religion, faith, or sect, should implore God to lift this pandemic off us and the entire world, to rescue us all from this adversity, to inspire scientists to find a cure that can turn back this disease, and to save the whole world from the health, economic, and human repercussions of this serious pandemic.

“As part of its efforts to realize the objectives of the Document on Human Fraternity, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity suggests announcing Thursday May 14th, 2020, a day for fasting, prayers, and supplications for the good of all humanity. As such, the Committee invites all religious leaders and peoples around the world to respond to this call for humanity and together beseech God Almighty to safeguard the entire world, to help us overcome this pandemic, to restore security, stability, healthiness, and prosperity, so that, after this pandemic is over, our world will become a better place for humanity and fraternity than ever before”.

General Audience
A cry that touches God’s heart  PAGE 3

John Paul I Vatican Foundation
The timeliness of Pope Luciani PAGE 4

Ramadan Message
Protecting together the places of worship PAGE 9

Domus Sanctae Marthae
Summaries of the Holy Father’s meditations PAGES 10, 11
AUDIENCES

Saturday, 2 May
Cardinal Marc Ouellet, P.S.S., Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops
Cardinal Gaetano Basseti, Archbishop of Perugia-Città della Pieve, Italy, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference
Bishop Ambrogio Spreafico of Frosinone-Veroli-Ferentino, Italy
Cardinal Angelo Becciu, Special delegate to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Monday, 4 May
Meeting of the Heads of the Dioceses of the Roman Curia

Tuesday, 5 May
Cardinal Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Luigi Suurich from his office as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy (30 Apr.).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Erminio De Scalzi from his office as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy (30 Apr.).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Giovanni Luca Raimondi as Auxiliary Bishop of Milan, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Peradusius, until now he has served as vicar general of the said diocese (30 Apr.).

Archbishop-elect Damiano, 59, was born in Trapani, Italy. He holds a licence in moral theology and in canon law. He was ordained a priest on 24 April 1987.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Cyprian Monis from his office as Bishop of Asansol, India (4 May).

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Salvatore Lobo from his office as Bishop of Baruipur, India (4 May).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Shyamal Bose as Bishop of Baruipur. Until now he has served as coadjutor of the said Diocese (4 May).

Bishop Bose, 59, was born in Gosaba, India. He was ordained a priest on 5 May 1989. He was ordained a bishop on 14 June 2009, subsequent to his appointment as coadjutor Bishop of Baruipur.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Noel Andrew Rucastle as Bishop of Owlshawoon, South Africa. Until now he has served as parish priest of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, and judicial vicar (4 May).

Bishop-elect Rucastle, 52, was born in Kimberley, South Africa. He holds a degree in theology. He was ordained a priest on 14 July 2000.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Robert Daniel Conlon from his office as Bishop of Joliet in Illinois, USA (4 May).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Jacques Assavno Ahiwa as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Elephantaria in Mauretania. Until now he has served as lecturer at the University of Strasbourg (5 May).

Bishop-elect Ahiwa, 52, was born in Kundiaba, Ivory Coast. He holds a doctorate in biblical theology. He was ordained a priest on 13 December 1997.

APOSTOLIC NUNCIO

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Mitja Leskovar as Apostolic Nuncio in Iraq, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Benevento. Until now he has served as Counselor to the Nunciature (4 May).

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski as Apostolic Nuncio in Ghana, at the same time raising him to the dignity of archbishop and assigning him the titular episcopal See of Limosano. Until now he has served as counsel to the Nunciature (5 May).

ORDER OF BISHOPS

The Holy Father has appointed as member of the Order of Bishops Cardinal Beniamino Stella, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, assigning him the title of the Suburbanicary Church of Porto-Santa Rufina (1 May).

VATICAN BULLETIN

Rescriptum ex Audientia SS.MI

The Supreme Pontiff Francis, in the Audience granted to the undersigned Substitute for General Affairs on 24 April 2020, decided to co-opt into the Order of Bishops, offering him equal standing among all the Cardinals honoured with the title of a suburbanicarian church, as an exception to canons 350 §§1-2 of the Code of Canon Law.

He appointed:

- Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra as Substitute for General Affairs of the Apostolic Signatura (1 May).
- Archbishop Andrea Viganò as Substitute for General Affairs of the Congregation for Bishops (1 May).

From the Vatican, 1 May 2020.

Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, Substitute for General Affairs

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International Eucharistic Congress postponed

The Director of the Holy See Press Office Matteo Bruini announced on Thursday, 23 April, that: “Due to the current health crisis and its consequences for the movement and gathering of the faithful and pilgrims, the Holy Father, along with the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses and with the Hungarian Episcopate, has decided to postpone the 52nd International Eucharistic Congress, scheduled to take place in September 2020, to September 2021.”
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

Today we begin a new series of catecheses on the theme of prayer. Prayer is the breath of faith, it is its most authentic expression. Like a cry that issues from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God. Let us think about the story of Bartimaeus, a character in the Gospel (cf. Mk 10:46-52), and I confess that for me he is the most beautiful character of all.

He was blind and sat begging for alms by the roadside on the periphery of his city, Jericho. He is not an anonymous character. He has a face and a name: Bartimaeus, that is, “son of Timaeus”.

One day he heard that Jesus was passing through there. In fact, Jericho was a crossroads of people, continually crisscrossed by pilgrims and tradesmen. Thus, Bartimaeus positioned himself: he would have done anything possible to meet Jesus. So many people did the same. Let us recall Zacchaeus who climbed up the tree. Many wanted to see Jesus; he did too. In this way the man enters the Gospels as a voice that loudly cries out. He cannot see. He does not know whether Jesus is near or far away but he hears him. He understands this from the crowd which, at a certain point, grows and comes closer… But he is completely alone and no one is concerned about him. And what does Bartimaeus do? He cries out. And he cries out and continues to cry out. He uses the only weapon he possesses: his voice.

He begins to shout: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (v. 51). He recognises in that poor, defenceless and despised man, all the power of his faith, which attracts the mercy and the power of God. Faith is having the courage to raise a voice, a cry that cries out to implore the gift of salvation. The Catechism states that “humility is the foundation of prayer” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2559). Prayer is born of the earth, of the humus from which “humble”, “humility” derive. It comes from our precarious state, from our continuous thirst for God (cf. Is 55:1; 53:1-2). Faith, as we have seen with Bartimaeus, is a cry. Lack of faith is the suppression of that cry. That attitude that the people had, in making him keep quiet: they were not people of faith, whereas he was. To suppress that cry is a type of omertà (code of silence). Faith is a protest against a pitiful condition: the cause of which we do not understand. Lack of faith is to limit ourselves to endure a situation to which we have become accustomed. Faith is the hope of being saved. Lack of faith is becoming accustomed to the evil that oppresses us and continuing in that way.

Dear brothers and sisters, we begin this series of catecheses with Bartimaeus’ cry because perhaps everything is already written in someone like him. Bartimaeus is a persevering man. He was surrounded by people who explained that imploring was useless, that it was clamouring without receiving a reply, that it was noise that was only bothersome, and thus please stop crying out. But he did not remain in silence. And in the end he obtained what he wanted.

Greater than any discussion to the contrary, there is a voice in mankind’s heart that invokes. We all have this voice within. A voice that comes forth spontaneously without anyone commanding it, a voice that asks itself about the meaning of our journey on earth, especially when we find ourselves in darkness: “Jesus, have mercy on me! Jesus have mercy on me!” (v. 51). This is a beautiful prayer.

But are these words perhaps not chiselled in all of creations? Everything invokes and implores that the mystery of mercy may be definitively fulfilled. Not only Christians pray; they share their cry of prayer with all men and women. But the horizon can be further widened: Paul states that all of creation “has been groaning in travail together until now” (Rom 8:22). Artists are often the interpreters of this silent cry of creation that is found in every creature and emerges above all in the heart of men and women, because they are “beggars before God” (CCC 2576). It is a beautiful definition of mankind: “beggars before God”. Thank you.

At the end of his catechesis, the Holy Father launched an appeal in favour of farm workers:

On 1st May, I received several messages about the world of work and its problems. I was particularly struck by that of the farm workers, among them many migrants, who work in the Italian countryside. Unfortunately, many are very harshly exploited. It is true that the current crisis affects everyone, but people’s dignity must always be respected. That is why I add my voice to the appeal of these workers and of all exploited workers. May the crisis give us the opportunity to make the dignity of the person and the dignity of work the centre of our concern.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. In this Easter season, I invoke upon you and your families the joy and strength that come from the Risen Christ. May God bless you!

I offer a special greeting to young people, the elderly, the sick and newweds. Trustingly place yourselves under the maternal protection of Mary and rest assured that she will not fail to comfort you in your time of trial. May the Lord Bless you and May Our Lady protect you.

“Jesus heals the blind”, Stained Glass Inc.
The John Paul I Vatican Foundation is born

The timeliness of Pope Luciani

Meeting the proposal to create an entity designated to study in depth the person, thought and teachings of John Paul I (26 August 1937 – 28 September 1998), on 17 February the Holy Father Francis constituted the John Paul I Vatican Foundation. Pope John Paul I was and remains a reference point in the history of the universal Church, whose importance – as Santo Spirito ii pointed out – is inversely proportional to the duration of his extremely brief Pontificate "maugisstantibus quan datus".

Albino Luciani’s life history is that of a pastor close to the people, centred on the essential of faith and charity and work beginning from a gaze of faith. Then receiving more than 100 representatives of international missions present at the inauguration of his Pontificate, he emphasized that "our heart is open to all peoples, all cultures and all races", to then affirm: "Of course, we do not have miraculous solutions for the great world problems, however we can offer something very precious: a spirit that helps to dissolve these problems and position them in the essential dimension, that of openness to the values of universal charity … so that the Church, humble messenger of the Gospel to all peoples of the earth, may contribute to create a climate of justice, brotherhood, solidarity and hope, without which the world cannot live". And thus, in the wake of the Conciliar Constitution Gaudium et Spes, as in many of the messages of Saint Paul vii, he moved in the wake of great diplomacy, bearing many fruits to the Church, nourishing her with charity.

With his sudden death this historic Church, so bowed to serve the world, was not interrupted.

The perspective marked by his brief Pontificate was not a parenthetical. Although John Paul I’s governance of the Church was not able to unfold in history, he nevertheless contributed – explius tempora multa – to strengthen the design of a Church close to the people’s suffering and to their thirst for charity.

Through the cause for the Canonization of John Paul Paul I today the acquisition of sources has been accomplished, launching a work of important research and elaboration from a historical and historiographic viewpoint. Thus a proper restitution of the memory of Pope Luciani is now possible, so that his historical value can be fully restored in the historical contingencies crossed with the analytical rigour that he is due and to open new study perspectives on his work.

In this regard the constitution of a new ad hoc Foundation can rightly fulfill the task not only of protecting the entire patrimony of the writings and work of John Paul I, but also provide incentive for the systematic study and dissemination of his thought and his spirituality. All the more motivated by the consideration of how extraordinarily timely his person and his message are.

Rescriptum ex Audientia SS. MI.

The Holy Father, in the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Secretary of State on 10 February 2020, decided to institute the John Paul I Vatican Foundation, with canonical and civil juridical character and with its headquarters at the Secretariat of State.

The purpose of the Foundation is the promotion and dissemination of knowledge of the thought, works, and example of Pope John Paul I.

The Foundation shall be governed by canon law, by laws in force in Vatican City and by the attached Statute, approved by the Supreme Pontiff and to be understood as an integral part of this act.

The Holy Father has additionally appointed, in accordance with and for the purposes of article 7 of the Statute, the President of the Foundation in the person of the undersigned Secretary of State.

From the Vatican, 17 February 2020

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness

Closeness, humility, simplicity, insistence on the mercy of God, love of neighbour and solidarity were his salient traits. He was a bishop who lived the experience of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, applied it, and in his brief Pontificate helped the Church advance along the main paths it indicated: a return to the wellsprings of the Gospel and a renewed missionary approach, episcopal collegiality, service in ecclesial poverty, seeking Christian unity, interreligious dialogue, dialogue with contemporaneity and international dialogue, conducted with perseverance and determination, in favour of justice and peace.

I think, for example, of his General Audiences and on his insistence on ecclesial poverty, on universal fraternity and on active love for the poor: he wanted to include among the traditional precepts of the Church a command on the works of solidarity and he proposed it to Italian bishops.

I think of his appeal at the Angelus of 24 September 1978 in favour of peace in the Middle East, with the invitation to prayer addressed to the Presidents of different faiths. An appeal that he had previously expressed in his address to the Diplomatic Corps held on 17 August, in which, freeing himself from the presuppositions of geopolitical attention-seeking, he defined the nature and particularity of the Holy See’s diplomatic work beginning from a gaze of faith. Then receiving more than 100 representatives of international missions present at the inauguration of his Pontificate, he emphasized that "our heart is open to all peoples, all cultures and all races", to then affirm: "Of course, we do not have miraculous solutions for the great world problems, however we can offer something very precious: a spirit that helps to dissolve these problems and position them in the essential dimension, that of openness to the values of universal charity ... so that the Church, humble messenger of the Gospel to all peoples of the earth, may contribute to create a climate of justice, brotherhood, solidarity and hope, without which the world cannot live". And thus, in the wake of the Conciliar Constitution Gaudium et Spes, as in many of the messages of Saint Paul vii, he moved in the wake of great diplomacy, bearing many fruits to the Church, nourishing her with charity.

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Aims of the new Foundation

The Holy Father, with Rescriptum ex Audientia SS.mi of 17 February 2020, established the “John Paul I Vatican Foundation”, in accordance with the Code of Canon Law and the fundamental Law of Vatican City State, thereby meeting the proposal to create an entity designated to study in depth the person, thought and teachings of his venerable Predecessor, Pope John Paul I – Albino Luciani (26 August 1937 – 28 September 1998) – and to promote the study and dissemination of his writings (cf. Statute, art. 1).

More particularly the Foundation aims to:

- protect and preserve the cultural and religious patrimony left by Pope John Paul I of Rome, thought and teachings of his venerable Predecessor, Pope John Paul I – Albino Luciani (26 August 1937 – 28 September 1998) – and to promote the study and dissemination of his writings (cf. Statute, art. 1).
- offer itself as a reference point, in Italy and abroad, for those who work in the same field and with the same objectives (Statute, art. 2).

Concurrently, the Supreme Pontiff has appointed as President of the Foundation H.E. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State. In implementing what is established by art. 4, paragraph 1 of the Statute, the said President has appointed as members of the Administrative Board, for the duration of a five-year term, the following persons: Dr. Stefania Falasca, who also assumes the role of Vice President of the Foundation; Cardinal Beniamino Stella; Msgr Andrea Celli, Fr Davide Fiocco, Dr. Lina Petri, Dr. Alfonso Cauteruccio.

In the performance of its activities the Foundation may avail itself of a Scientific Committee, composed of six members, chosen from among persons of proven competence and expertise, but with the possibility of being temporarily expanded for particular initiatives, projects, studies, research or consultations.

- to offer itself as a reference point, in Italy and abroad, for those who work in the same field and with the same objectives (Statute, art. 2).

Cardinal, Secretary of State

Pope Paul VI visits Venice on 16 September 1972, with Patriarch Albino Luciani, who would later succeed him as Pope, taking the name John Paul I.
Preface by Pope Francis to book on John Paul II

He shed his blood for the Church offered his sufferings for humanity

One hundred years since his birth

On the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Karol Wojtyła, which will be observed on 18 May, the Libreria Editrice Vaticana has seen fit to press a small and agile volume entitled Saint John Paul II. A celebration in Words and Images (2020, 128 pp., €7.00; $9.95). The work opens with Francis’s preface, which is reproduced on this page, and covers the Pontificate of the Polish Pope through a collection of writings and phrases running from the day of his election, 16 October 1978, to that of his death on 2 April 2005. The edition is also available in English, co-published with the American printing house Paulist Press, and in Polish, co-published with the printing house Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława BM., also thanks to the patronage of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland to the Holy See and of the Polish Institute of Rome. The selection of texts of his homilies, his addresses, his Magisterium was made by Giuseppe Merola, while the images by Vatican Media were selected by Mirosława Lesner.

Message for the Feast of Our Lady of Luján

Everyone together as ‘virtual’ pilgrims

A particular feast was celebrated in Luján, Argentina in honour of the Virgin Mary. Due to the Covid-19 emergency, the traditional observance on 8 May was followed by the faithful only by means of social communication. At 7 PM the Archbishop of Mercedes-Luján, Msgr Jorge Eduardo Scheing, presided the Mass, and the pregeminatio of the statue of the Patroness of Argentina this year was only “virtual”. Announcing this news, the prelate referred to a signed letter the Pope had sent on 28 April, for the celebration which he too will join as a “spiritual and virtual pilgrim”. “I will look upon her yet once again. I will let myself be looked upon by her”, writes the Pontiff, referring to the Blessed Virgin. “That Mother’s gaze – he adds – which renews you, takes care of you, gives you strength”. The Pope emphasized that he will not be done but “together with the Holy faithful People of God who love Her so much, faithful and sinful people like me”. He then recalled a special tradition: the changing of the mantle that covers the Blessed Virgin. The new mantle was blessed and placed on the statute on Sunday, 3 May.

On the day of the celebration, Francis writes, “we will tell her our worries and our joys”, invoking “the grace to always ask for forgiveness”. In conclusion he quotes the words of “that great priest from my previous diocese”, Fr Amelio Luis Calori: “This evening, Our Lady, the promise is sincere. But, for every eventualty, do not forget to leave the key outside.”
29 April marked 40 years since the death of the British director

Alfred Hitchcock contributed in a decisive way in demonstrating that one could make great cinema, cinema as pure cinema, even detached from the framework of a genre. It was probably for films that definitively broke with genre, putting into crisis the world of critics who in fact went completely from indifference to enthusiasm in his regard, giving the impression of having lost their traditional parameters of judgment.

More specifically, Hitchcock demonstrated that the concept of aesthetics in cinema is not necessarily linked to pre-established parameters, which, in even the most adult place of his career, he was able to express - but also to the recognizability of a directorial style. A principle that he was able to incessantly tailor into a way of storytelling that was progressively linked to the image, so much so that even the most distracted viewer, even the most indifferent, will never forgive you. François Truffaut said about him before Hitchcock cinema was von Sternberg’s “pure cinema”, that is, cinema as pure cinema, even detached from the framework of a genre.

‘But she’s still breathing’

Sofia Filippetti

Sir Alfred Hitchcock shot the famous shower scene in Psiché twice. It should have lasted a minute and a half, but was then reduced to 45 seconds, gripping scenes that saw us all in. All that is ‘Hitch’ (as his friends and closest collaborators called him) is that scene: a tension to detail, down to obsession. The will to be perfect. And to be perfect – the master of directors would say – you need to be plausible and credible. Otherwise, the viewer, even the most distracted, will never forgive you. François Truffaut said about him before Hitchcock cinema was von Sternberg’s “pure cinema”, that is, cinema as pure cinema, even detached from the framework of a genre.

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VATICAN BULLETIN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

START OF MISSION
On 10 March, Archbishop Antoine Camilleri, began his mission as Apostolic Nuncio in Ethiopia with the presentation of his Letters of Credence to H.E. Mrs Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

NEUROLOGY

Bishop Aldo Mongiano, ISMC, Bishop emeritus of Roraima, Brazil, at age 100 (5 Apr.).

Bishop Patrick Leo McCarrick, Bishop emeritus of Northampton, Great Britain, at age 94 (23 Apr.).

Bishop Emilio S. Alhue, SDB, Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Boston, USA, at age 85 (20 Apr.).

Bishop Silas Silvius Njiru, Bishop emeritus of Meru, Kenya, at age 92 (28 Apr.).

Bishop Philippe Breton, Bishop emeritus of Aire et Dax, France, at age 83 (29 Apr.)

Bishop Mathew Amikuzhiakkattil, Bishop emeritus of Idaski for Syro-Malabars, India, at age 77 (1 May).

The Swiss Guards recall the victims of the Sack of Rome

Faithful to the Pope with spirit of sacrifice

No mask can hide the smile or lessen the manner of kindness and welcome that continues to characterize, even in this time of pandemic, the service of the Pontifical Swiss Guard at the entrance gates to Vatican City. As “phase 2” has begun, the guards wear masks to protect themselves, as well as others. The ceremony and the Mass are in increasingly more direct contact with people.

Meanwhile, on 6 May, the Corp’s traditional celebration also took place in a particular way in order to limit the possibility of spreading the virus. At 5 PM, Msgr Luigi Roberto Cona, ap. at the Secretariat of State, presided at Mass in the Church of Santa Maria della Piazzetta in the Teutonic Cemetery. At 6 PM in the “Piazzale dei Protomartiri Romani”, Commander Christof Graf placed a floral wreath in memory of the 147 guards who fell defending Pope Clement VII during the Sack of Rome on 6 May 1527. Afterwards, Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, Substitute, conferred honours upon several guards in recognition of their long and faithful service to the Holy See.

The wreath-laying ceremony, which normally involves the participation of guests of honour and family members, was conducted in a reserved and restricted manner, respecting the rules of hygiene and safety that apply in Vatican City State. Both the ceremony and the Mass were livestreamed by Vatican Media and could be followed live on the website www.guardiasvizzera.ch.

Meanwhile, the swearing-in of new guards, which is traditionally held on 6 May, has been postponed to Sunday, 4 October, due to the coronavirus pandemic.
Christians and Muslims: Protecting together the places of worship

Message for the month of Ramadan and ‘Id al-Fitr

This year too, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) has sent to the Islamic community the traditional message of best wishes on the occasion of the month of Ramadan, which began on 23 April, and of ‘Id al-Fitr (1441 H./2020 A.D.), the feast that marks its conclusion. Published on Friday, 8 May, the text was prepared before the surge of the Covid-19 pandemic, and reflects on the theme of respect and of protection of places of worship. Therefore, the Combonian Cardinal Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ, explained in a note, “I would like, as PCID President, to add the wish that Christians and Muslims, united in the spirit of fraternity, may demonstrate solidarity with the humanity so harshly stricken, and address their prayers to Almighty and Merciful God, that he extend his protection over every human being, so that these such difficult moments may be overcome”. Moreover, the Cardinal explained in an interview given to Vatican News, the feast is “essential, as Easter also was for us, for them too this year it assumes a particular significance due to the pandemic”. In essence it is a Ramadan experienced “in a more interior dimension, because the community aspect cannot be celebrated”. And in this regard he recalled what “Pope Francis, in this difficult situation, has called us to spread, which is the ‘contagion of hope’, encouraging “the different religious leaders to promote unity, solidarity and brotherhood, so that from this moment on we may all come out better than what we were before and help our societies to be ready to change all that is necessary, not following only the laws of economy and profit”. The following is the English text of the PCID Message, signed by the Cardinal President and the Secretary of the Dicastery, Mgr Indunil Kodithuwakku Janakaratne Kanikanamalage.

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters,

The month of Ramadan is so central in your religion and therefore dear to you at personal, familial and social levels. It is a time for spiritual healing and growth, of sharing with relatives and friends. For us, your Christian friends, it is a propitious time to further strengthen our relationships with you, by greeting you, meeting you on this occasion and, where possible, by sharing in an iftar with you. Ramadan and ‘Id al-Fitr thus are special occasions to foster fraternity between Christians and Muslims.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue offers its prayerful best wishes and hearty congratulations to you all.

The thoughts we like to share with you this year followed our cherished tradition are about the protection of the places of worship.

As we all know, the places of worship occupy an important place in Christianity and Islam, and in other religions as well. For both Christians and Muslims, churches and mosques are spaces reserved for prayer, personal and communitarian alike. They are constructed and furnished in a way that favours silence, reflection and meditation. They are spaces where one can go deep in himself/herself, so favouring for God-experience in silence. A place of worship — any religion therefore is “a house of prayer” (Isaiah 56, 7).

Places of worship are also spaces for spiritual hospitality, where believers of other religions also join for some special ceremonies like weddings, funerals, feasts of the community etc. While they participate in the events in silence and with due respect to the religious observances of the believers of that particular religion, they also savour the hospitality accorded to them. Such practice is a privileged witness to what unites believers, without diminishing or denying what distinguishes them.

In this regard, it is worthwhile to recall what Pope Francis said when he made a visit to the Heydar Aliyev Mosque, in Baku (Azerbaijan) on Sunday, 5 October 2014. “Meeting one another in fraternal friendship in this place of prayer is a powerful sign, one that shows the harmony which religions can build together, based on personal relations and on the good will of those responsible”.

In the context of recent attacks on churches, mosques and synagogues by wicked persons who seem to per- ceive the places of worship as a privileged target for their blind and senseless violence, it is worth noting what the Document on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”, signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in Abu Dhabi, on 4 February 2019, said: “The protection of places of worship — synagogues, churches and mosques — is a duty guaranteed by religions, human values, laws and international agreements. Every attempt to attack places of worship or threaten them by violent assaults, bombings or destruction, is a deviation from the teachings of religions as well as a clear violation of international law.”

While appreciating the efforts done by the international community at different levels for the protection of the places of worship worldwide, it is our hope that our mutual esteem, respect and cooperation will help strengthen the bonds of sincere friendship, and enable our communities to safeguard the places of worship to assure for coming generations the fundamental freedom to profess one’s own beliefs.

With renewed esteem and fraternal greetings, in the name of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, we convey friendly wishes for a fruitful month of Ramadan and a joyous ‘Id al-Fitr.

From the Vatican, 17 April 2020

Pope’s prayer intention for the month of May

Deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor

The prayer intention for the month of May is dedicated to deacons. They are “not second-level priests”, Pope Francis says, but “are part of the clergy”. The video message was posted on “hep- opevideo.org” through which the Pope entrusts his prayer intentions to the Worldwide Prayer Network.

The Holy Father asks everyone to pray that deacons, faithful in their service to the Word and the poor, may be an invigorating symbol for the entire Church.

The scenes which form the backdrop to the Pontiff’s message highlight deacons in their mission. Francis recalls that these men “live their vocation in and with their family” and at the same time “are dedicated to the service of the poor, who carry within them the face of the suffering Christ”. Whether in churches, at the altar or in the sacristy, in the home, in prisons or in hospital wards; in the streets and in stations, to help the homeless, deacons — the Pope concluded — “are the guardians of service in the Church”.

Translated into nine languages, the video was prepared by La Machi agency, which is responsible for production and distribution, in collaboration with Vatican Media, which recorded it.

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For pharmacists

On Thursday, 16 April, Pope Francis began his homily at Santa Marta with prayers of gratitude for pharmacists who “have been working hard to help the sick”. During his homily, he commented on the days following the Resurrection of Jesus which he said were not very tranquil as the people were filled with “fear, amazement and doubt”. The disciples themselves who knew that the Lord had risen, had appeared to Simon and had heard the testimony of the disciples on their return from Emmaus, were afraid. “Their fear grew when Jesus appeared in their midst for they thought they were seeing a ghost (cf. Lk 24:37). However, when Jesus spoke to them inviting them to touch his wounds, their fear turned into immense joy. But their joy was so great that it kept them from believing: it was as if they “were paralyzed with joy”, the Holy Father explained. Different from being “happy, positive or radiant”, this was the greatest possible joy”. “Joy is the fruit of the ing. “Instead of accepting the truth that they saw before them, their hearts were so closed that they chose the way of ‘communicating of compromise’, the Pope explained. Peter on the other hand had received from the Holy Spirit the gift of “frankness and courage” on Pentecost which enabled him to be bold. That is precisely where the mission begins. At the end of his homily the Holy Father prayed that the Lord may help us to always be courageous in proclaiming his Word.”

For politicians

On Monday 20 April, Pope Francis reflected on the figure of Nicodemus who was a leader of the Jews and a righteous Pharisee. Although Nicodemus was restless because Jesus’ actions had been foretold by the prophets, he would visit Jesus at night as he knew that those who were with Jesus were negatively judged. However, despite his confession to Jesus, that he believed he was from God, the Pope explained, Nicodemus stopped at that, unable to ask what to do next, to make the leap. Jesus in turn replies: “Unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Misunderstanding his meaning, Nicodemus asks how one can be born again as an adult and Jesus explains that being born from above means to be born of the Spirit. The Spirit, the Holy Father said, is unpredictable. As Jesus further explained, it is a wind “that blows where it wants and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes”. Those who are doleful to the Spirit, he continued, are people who allow themselves to be carried away one place to the other by the Holy Spirit and thus attain the freedom of the Spirit. In one of the gospels of St. John, Pope Francis said, it is not sufficient for us to follow the commandments. We must allow the “spirit to enter into” us and take us where he wants. Like Nicodemus, we too may stop before the “what next” “because we do not know what step to take or we do not trust God enough”, he explained. However, he added, “to be truly born again, we must be willing to allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit’s freedom even without knowing where we will end up.”

Morning Mass at the Domus Sanctae Marthae

Holy Spirit”, he added, and there can be none without him. Thus “to receive the joy of the Holy Spirit is a grace”.

Referring to Saint Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi (n. 80), Pope Francis explained that this joy is similar to the one experienced by Ezra and Nehemiah when they discovered the Book of the Law. Addressing the Israelties as they wept having heard the Book of the Law, Nehemiah said “the joy of the Lord is our strength”. The Holy Father concluded his homily with a prayer asking the Lord to grant us the grace of having the strength to preach the Gospel and be witnesses of the Lord’s joy.

For those who care for the disabled

On Saturday, 18 April, during his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta, Pope Francis reflected on the day’s First Reading which described the boldness with which Peter and John pushed the priests, scribes and elders into a corner after a man had been healed in the name of God. These “uneeducated men”, the Pope said had left the learned men speechless. The boldness of their belief, parrhesia, he said, became the “style of Christian preachers in the Acts of the Apostles”. Parrhesia is “the Christian courage that drives someone to speak openly”. Indeed in the Acts of the Apostles, “it says that Paul and Barnabas has sought to explain the mystery of Christ to the Hebrews with boldness and the “preached the Gospel boldly”. In fact, the Pope noted, one cannot be a good Christian without parrhesia.

The Holy Father then turned to a passage from a Letter to the Hebrews which tells of the Christian community’s loss of their original boldness and their tepidness (Heb 10:23-25). “Remember the days past when after you had been enlightened, you endured a great contest of suffering … therefore do not throw away your confidence”. This confidence is thus crucial to Christians. The priests, scribes and elders had hardened and corrupt hearts and therefore they could only remain astounded at the healings. “Instead of accepting the truth that they saw before them, their hearts were so closed that they chose the way of ‘compromise’, the Pope explained. Peter on the other hand had received from the Holy Spirit the gift of “frankness and courage” on Pentecost which enabled him to be bold. That is precisely where the mission begins. At the end of his homily the Holy Father prayed that the Lord may help us to always be courageous in proclaiming his Word.”

Prayer is the key to opening the door to the Spirit, the Pope said, as it did for the disciples. In the first reading, the Christian community was somewhat afraid when Peter and John returned after being questioned by the priests, the Sanhedrin and experienced a “second Pentecost” that emboldened them. At the end of his homily the Pope prayed that through prayer we may be open to the Spirit so that he will bring us forward in our life of service to the Lord.

For unity in Europe

During his homily for Mass at Santa Marta on Wednesday, 22 April, Pope Francis returned to the figure of Nicodemus (Jn 3:26-21) and Jesus’ words to him regarding God’s love. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” These words, the Holy Father explained, contain a wealth of theological revelation about redemption and identified two key aspects: God’s love and the choice between light and darkness. The Cross is the highest expression of God’s love and as such, anyone who contemplates the Cross has everything revealed to them, the Pope said. Indeed, “so many Christians spend time gazing at the Crucified One… And there they find everything because they have understood”, he continued. As Saint Paul explains “human reasoning is useful only to a certain point”.

However, Pope Francis added, some people are unable to do so, to live in the light because they have become accustomed to the darkness. The light ‘blinds them and they cannot see’. Like human bats “they can only move about during the night”. When we are in a state of sin, we find ourselves in this condition “unable to tolerate the light. It is easier to live in darkness”. This is because the “light shows us what we do not want to see”. And, he added, “those who are corrupt do not know what the light is, and do not recognise it”.

At the end of his homily, Francis invited the faithful to let God’s love shine in our lives through the Holy Spirit and to ask ourselves “Do I walk in the light or in darkness”.

For families and usurers

During Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, 23 April, Pope Francis reflected on the day’s Gospel passage in which the Apostles were brought before the Sanhedrin and the high priest for questioning for having disobeyed the order not to teach in the name of Jesus. The Apostles, however, and Peter in particular, were courageous and bold in upholding their faith saying: “we must obey God”. Although Peter himself had denied Jesus, and had been filled with fear, he was bold because of the Holy Spirit, whom God gives “to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32). He could have chosen to compromise, but instead he chose to pursue the journey. People have had to do this throughout the history of the Church “in order to save the People of God”, the Pope said.

In the moment of temptation, “Satan desires that you be sated like wheat”, Jesus told the Apostles before his Passion. However, Jesus tells Peter “but I have prayed for you so that your faith may not fail”, the Pope continued. In the same way Jesus prays for all of us and when we pray to him we should not only ask for a grace but also to contemplate Jesus. “Let us think about how Peter was able to progress on this path from being a coward to becoming a courageous person with the gift
Continued from page 10

of the Holy Spirit”, the Pope urged the faithful. He concluded by observing: “Of this grace of allowing the Lord to “teach us how to ask him for the grace of praying for each one of us”.

Friday, 24 April

For teachers and students

Taking his cue from the Gospel passage about the loaves and fishes (Jn 6:1-15) at Holy Mass on Friday, 24 April, the Holy Father reflected on how Jesus tests his disciples. Jesus asks Philip “where can we buy some bread for these people to eat”. Although Jesus knew what he was about to accomplish, he was testing Philip. Jesus, the Holy Father noted, “continually put them to the test in order to teach them”. When the Apostles didn’t answer, he asked them, he would stop and use that as an opportunity to teach them. Indeed the Gospel is filled with similar examples because Jesus wanted his disciples to grow to become pastors of the People of God.

Jesus, the Pope continued, loved being with the crowd “because this too is a symbol of the universality of Redemption”. However the Apostles did not share this view “because they liked to be close to the Lord, to hear everything the Lord said”. Jesus sought the closeness of the people and he wanted to “form the heart of the people within the People of God” in order to serve them.

Jesus teaches the Apostles this pastoral behaviour of being close to the People of God because the People of God make one tired as “they always ask for concrete things”. The pasteur must always be able to provide these things. “You feed them”, Jesus tells the Apostles. This means you provide: “are they distressed? Give them comfort. Are they hungry? Show them the way out”, the Pope said.

Thus, the very “power of the pastor is service. He has no other power”. When pastors begin to err and take other powers, then their vocation is ruined, he warned. Pope Francis ended his homily by asking the Lord to speak to the pastors of the Church, and to teach them above all not to be afraid but rather to be close to his people.

Saturday, 25 April

For those who work in funeral services

During his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Saturday, 25 April, the Holy Father reflected on Christian mission as he commented on the passage from the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus sent his disciples forth to proclaim the Good News. “Faith is either missionary or it is not faith at all”, the Pope stressed. It is not something for one’s self. As one goes in faith, it is for one other, who is what is meant by being sent forth. In other words, “faith must be transmitted, it must be offered”, the Pope told the faithful. And above all, it should be transmitted through witness.

Being Christian or Catholic is not merely a cultural matter. In transmitting the faith, we reveal God through our witness so that the Holy Spirit can take action within God’s people. Thus, the Pope explained, when people say they are Christians but live like pagans, no one will be convinced. But when one lives as a Christian, people are attracted. This, he said, is hearing witness.

But bearing witness, the Holy Father continued, must be done with humility, echoing Peter’s words in the day’s First Reading: “Clothe yourselves with humility towards each other (1 Pt 5:5). If we go out of ourselves to witness, we will be fruitful and work wonders, the Lord says. Transmitting faith is not like transmitting ideas as teachers do. This is because in transmitting the faith, we are accompanied by the Lord.

Monday, 27 April

For artists and creativity

In his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Monday, 27 April, the Holy Father commented on the day’s Gospel Reading from John (Jn 6:22-29) in which Jesus redirects the crowd who sought him after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. They had sought him because they were hungry, but not because they were thirsty. But Jesus exhorts them: “do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (v. 27). When the people asked him how they could do this, Jesus replied: “that you believe in him whom he has sent” (v. 29).

The Lord then recognizing that the people had forgotten the Word, reminded them of his first encounter with the Word. He “corrected the path of the people who had taken a more worldly, rather than evangelical path”, the Pope said. This loss of path can occur to us as we lose our memory of our first enthusiasm for the Word of the Lord. We might move away and forget the freshness of that first call. When this happens, Pope Francis said, the Lord asks us to return to that first encounter. When we are faced with temptation, it is a grace return “to that first call, when Jesus looked at us with love”.

The Holy Father ended his homily by asking for the grace to return to the moment of our first encounter with Jesus, “to our own Galilee within us”.

Tuesday, 28 April

For prudence as quarantine restrictions case

On Tuesday morning, 28 April, during his homily at Santa Marta, the Holy Father continued to reflect on the courage of Christians as he commented on the day’s Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 5:7-11). In it, Stephen courageously speaks to the people, the elders and the scribes who, after accusing him of false testimony, drag him out of the city and then stone him.

Because the Doctors of the Law did not tolerate his clarity of doctrine, the Pope said, they asked someone to say they had heard Stephen make blasphemous remarks about God and the Law. Essentially they did to Stephen what they had done to Jesus. And the same thing continues to happen to today’s martyrs. He gave the example of Asia Bibi, a Catholic from Pakistan who had been imprisoned for many years due to slander. Unfortunately, he added, in the face of false news that shapes opinion, sometimes nothing can be done, as occurred during the Shoah when opinion was created to cast out an entire people.

But, Pope Francis continued, there is also the “small daily lynching of gossip that creates opinion in order to condemn people” and to ruin their reputation. Truth, on the other hand, he explained, “is clear and transparent, it is the testimony of truth, of what is believed”. The Pope invited the faithful to think about our words and the times when our own comments commit this lynching.

“May the Lord help us”, said the Pope, “to be righteous, in our judgments, not to begin to follow this mass condemnation that provokes gossip”.

Thursday, 30 April

For the deceased

We cannot know Christ or his mystery unless we are drawn by the Father, Pope Francis said during his homily for Holy Mass at Santa Marta on Thursday, 30 April. Although we can study religion or theology and learn much about Christ, this is not sufficient. Taking his cue from the day’s First Reading which narrated the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, he reflected on conversion. The eunuch, who was an official in the Ethiopian royal court was reading a passage from the prophet Isaiah on his return from Jerusalem when God sent Philip the Deacon to him. God had already prepared his heart and so when the time came and they saw some water by the wayside, the Ethiopian asked to be baptized.

It is important to understand this principle in our apostolic mission as Christians, the Pope said. Conversion is not something that we do ourselves as only God can convert someone and only the Father can draw someone to Jesus. Our job, the Holy Father explained, is to be witness. Instructing others on the faith is not enough in missionary work. True proclamation involves bearing witness in our own lives. We must also remember that witness and prayer go together, and that there cannot be one without the other. When we bear witness without proselytising, we open the door to people’s hearts, leading them to welcome the message and mystery of Jesus while prayer opens the Father’s heart to draw people to Jesus. At the end of his homily, Pope Francis asked the Lord to grant us the grace to live our work with witness and prayer.

For the full texts of the Holy Father’s daily meditations at Santa Marta visit: www.custodem.va
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good Morning.

The fourth Sunday of Easter, which we celebrate today, is dedicated to Jesus the Good Shepherd. The Gospel says that: “The Lord is the shepherd of the sheep. He calls us by name. He calls us because he loves us. However, the Gospel says, there are other voices, that are not to be followed: those of strangers, thieves and brigands who mean harm to the sheep.

These different voices resonate within us. There is the voice of God, who speaks kindly to the conscience, and there is the tempting voice that leads to evil. How can we recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd from that of the thief, how can we distinguish the inspiration of God from the suggestions of the evil one? How can we recognize the voice of God, however, since the pandemic has required the establishment of social distancing measures that prohibit gatherings?

Let us ask ourselves where they come from. Let us ask for the grace to recognize and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd, who brings us out of the enclosures of selfishness and leads us to the pastures of true freedom. May Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel, guide and accompany our discernment.

After the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, today we celebrate World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Christian life is always a response to God’s call, in any living condition. This Day reminds us of what Jesus said one day, that the field of the Kingdom of God requires much work, and we must pray the Father to send labourers to work in his harvest (cf. Mt 9:37-38). Priesthood and consecrated life require courage and perseverance, and one cannot continue along this path without prayer. I invite everyone to invoke the Lord for the gift of good workers for his Kingdom, with a heart and hands that are open to his love.

Once again I would like to express my closeness to those who are suffering from Covid-19, to those who are dedicated to their care and to all those who, in any way, are suffering from the pandemic. At the same time, I would like to support and encourage the international cooperation that is launching various initiatives aimed at responding adequately and effectively to the serious crisis we are experiencing. Indeed, it is important to bring together scientific capabilities, in a transparent and disinterested way, in order to find vaccines and treatments and to guarantee universal access to essential technologies that will enable every infected person, in every part of the world, to receive the necessary health care.

I offer a special thought to the “Meter” Association, promoter of the National Day for children victims of violence, exploitation and indifference. I encourage those in charge and the staff to continue their prevention and awareness raising work alongside the various educational agencies. And I thank the children from the Association who have sent me a collage with hundreds of daisies they coloured. Thank you!

We have just started May, the quintessential Marian month, during which the faithful love to visit the Shriners dedicated to Our Lady. This year, because of the health situation, let us visit these places of faith and devotion spiritually, to place in the heart of the Blessed Virgin our worries, expectancies and plans for the future.

And since prayer is a universal value, I have accepted the proposal of the Higher Committee for Human Fraternity for believers of all religions to unite spiritually this 14 May for a day of prayer, fasting, and works of charity, to invoke God to help humanity overcome the coronavirus pandemic. Remember: 14 May, all believers together, believers of different traditions, to pray, fast, and perform works of charity.

I wish everyone a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. Arrivederci.