

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Vatican City

Friday, 29 May 2020

Message of the Holy Father to the Pontifical Mission Societies

The miracle of freely giving oneself in service to the Church



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Global threats require a new solidarity



Pope Francis with António Guterres on 20 December 2019

In a recent interview with Andrea Monda, Editor-in-Chief of *L'Osservatore Romano*, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, responded to a series of questions on some of the greatest issues the world is facing during the current global pandemic. Among other things, he emphasized the need for "cooperation among" all States – including the most powerful! not only to combat Covid-19, but also "address the peace and security challenges we are facing" as a result of its spread, cautioning that "the pandemic should be a wake-up call. Deadly global threats require a new unity and solidarity".

MONDA ON PAGE 4

VATICAN BULLETIN



AUDIENCES

Saturday, 23 May

H.E. Ms. María Fernanda Silva, Ambassador of Argentina to the Holy See, for the presentation of her Letters of Credence

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

Bishop Claudio Maniago of Castellana, Italy

The Hon. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, President of Lazio Region

Thursday, 28 May

Cardinal Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, SJ, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Bishop Antonio De Luca, CSSR, of Teggiano-Policastro, Italy

Bishop Stefano Russo, Bishop emeritus of Fabriano-Matelica, Italy, Secretary General of the Italian Episcopal Conference

H.E. Mr Carlos Ávila Molina, Ambassador of Honduras, on a farewell visit

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father appointed Fr Canon Adam Piotr Bab as Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Lublin, Poland, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Arna. Until now he has served as parish priest of the parish of Saint Joseph in Lublin and director of the office of youth pastoral care (22 May).

Bishop-elect Bab, 45, was born in Lublin, Poland. He was ordained a priest on 22 May 1999. He holds a doctorate in pastoral theology. He is honorary canon of the Archcathedral Chapter of Lublin.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop John Hung Shan-chuan, SVD, from his office as Metropolitan Archbishop of Taipei, Taiwan (23 May).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Thomas Chung An-zu as Metropolitan Archbishop of Taipei, and Apostolic Administrator of Kinmen or Quemoy Islands and Matsu. Until now he has served as Bishop of Kiayi, Taiwan (23 May).

Archbishop Chung An-zu, 67, was born in Yunlin, Taiwan. He was ordained a priest on 26 December 1981. He was ordained a bishop on 30 December 2006, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Kiayi.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Archbishop Edmundo Luis Flavio Abastoflor Montero from his office as Metropolitan Archbishop of La Paz, Bolivia (23 May).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Percy Lorenzo Galván Flores as Metropolitan Archbishop of La Paz. Until now he has served as Bishop Prelate of the Territorial Prelature of Corocoro (23 May).

Archbishop Galván Flores, 54, was born in Tomás Frías, Bolivia. He was ordained a priest on 18 July 1991. He was ordained a bishop on 1 May

2013, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop prelate of Corocoro.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Mark Stuart Edwards, OMI, as Bishop of Wagga Wagga, Australia. Until now he has served as titular Bishop of Garba and Auxiliary of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia (26 May).

Bishop Edwards, 61, was born in Balikpapan, Indonesia. He was ordained a priest on 16 August 1986. He was ordained a bishop on 17 December 2014, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Garba and Auxiliary of Melbourne.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Gonzalo Arturo Bravo Álvarez as Bishop of San Felipe, Chile. Until now he has served as parish priest of El Salvador del Mundo parish in Valparaíso and dean of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso (26 May).

Bishop-elect Bravo Álvarez, 57, was born in Valparaíso, Chile. He obtained a licence in *Ciencias Básicas de la Ingeniería* and the title of civil engineer; he holds a degree in theology and a licence and doctorate in Biblical theology. He was ordained a priest on 12 October 1997.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Julio Esteban Larrondo Yáñez as Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Santiago de Chile, Chile, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Magarmel. Until now he has served as parish priest of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes parish and episcopal vicar of the southern area of Santiago (26 May).

Bishop-elect Larrondo Yáñez, 60, was born in Santiago, Chile. He completed his philosophical and theological studies. He was ordained a priest on 12 December 1992.

The Holy Father appointed Fr László Kerekes as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia, Romania, assigning him the titular see of Tharros. Until now he has

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Rescriptum ex Audientia SS.MI

Considering the need to guarantee a more rational organization of the economic and financial information of the Holy See and to digitize the models and underlying procedures, thereby guaranteeing the simplification of the activities and the efficacy of controls, as they are fundamental for the proper functioning of the Organisms of the Roman Curia; in anticipation of the function exercised for this purpose by the Office denominated Data Processing Center (CED), currently headquartered at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA)

the Supreme Pontiff Francis
has ordered the following

1 Responsibility over the CED shall be transferred from APSA to the Secretariat for the Economy (SPE), under terms established by the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the former, represented by the President, H.E. Bishop Nunzio Galantino, and the latter, represented by the Prefect, the most Rev. Fr Juan Antonio Guerrero, SJ;

2 the Officials and Staff responsible for and in charge of the CED shall pass from employment by APSA to that of the SPE, except for those who, through mutual agreement and for greater convenience, may remain under the employ of APSA;

3 the Prefect of the SPE shall provide for the reorganization of the service, guaranteeing to APSA whatever is necessary for the fulfilment of its institutional duties.

The Holy Father has established that this provision shall be promulgated by publication in the 20 May edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, entering into force on 1 June 2020.

From the Vatican, 11 May 2020

Cardinal PIETRO PAROLIN
Secretary of State

Holy See Press Office Communiqué

On Wednesday, 20 May, H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, was contacted by telephone by H.E. Saeb Erekat, Chief negotiator and Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The latter wished to inform the Holy See about recent developments in the Palestinian territories and of the possibility of Israel applying its sovereignty unilaterally to part of those territories, further jeopardizing the peace process.

The Holy See reiterates that respect for international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, is an indispensable element for the two peoples to live side by side in two States, within the borders internationally recognized before 1967.

The Holy See is following the situation closely, and expresses concern about any future actions that could further compromise dialogue, while also expressing its hope that Israelis and Palestinians will be soon able to find once again the possibility for directly negotiating an agreement, with the help of the International Community, so that peace may finally reign in the Holy Land, so beloved by Jews and Christians and Muslims.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

Prayer is "man's refuge before the flood wave of evil that grows in the world", Pope Francis said during the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 27 May, as he continued his series of catecheses on prayer. This week, the Holy Father reflected on the prayer of the righteous. The following is a translation of his catechesis which he delivered in Italian from the library of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace, in compliance with restrictions related to the pandemic.



Refuge against the flood wave of evil

The value of the prayer of the righteous

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!

We are dedicating today's catechesis to the *prayer of the righteous*.

God's plan for humanity is good, but in our daily affairs we experience the presence of evil. It is a daily experience. The first chapters of the Book of Genesis describe the progressive expansion of sin in human affairs. Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 3:1-7) doubt God's good intentions; they think they are dealing with an envious God who impedes their happiness. This is where their rebellion comes from: they no longer believe in a generous Creator who desires their happiness. Yielding to the temptation of evil, their hearts are overcome by a delirium of omnipotence: 'if we eat the fruit from the tree we will become like God' (cf. v. 5). And this is temptation: this is ambition that enters hearts. But their experience goes in the opposite direction: their eyes are opened and they discover they are naked (cf. v. 7), with nothing. Do not forget this: the tempter is a bad payer, he does not pay well.

Evil becomes even more disruptive with the second human generation, it is stronger: it is the story of Cain and Abel (cf. Gen 4:1-16). Cain is envious of his brother; there is the seed of envy; even though he is the first born, he sees Abel as a rival, one who undermines his primacy. Evil appears in his heart and Cain is unable to control it. Evil begins to enter his heart: his thoughts are always turned to looking badly upon the other, with suspicion. And this occurs with his thoughts too: "This one is evil, he will hurt me". And this thought enters his heartAnd thus the story of the first brotherhood ends in murder. I think of human fraternity today... war everywhere.

In Cain's descendants, arts and crafts develop, but violence develops too, expressed by the sinister canticle of Lamech, which sounds like a hymn of revenge: "I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me, if Cain is avenged seven times, truly

Lamech seventy-seven fold" (4:23-24). Vengeance: "You did this, you will pay". But the judge does not say this, I do. And I make myself the judge of the situation. And in this way evil spreads like wildfire, until it occupies the entire picture: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5). The great frescos of the universal flood (ch. 6-7) and of the tower of Babel (ch. 11) reveal that there is need of a new beginning, like a new creation, which will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Yet, in these first pages of the Bible, another, less striking, much more humble and pious story is also written, which represents the release of hope. While almost everyone behaves in a wicked manner, making hatred and conquest the great engine of human affairs, there are people who are capable of praying to God with sincerity, capable of writing mankind's destiny in a different way. Abel offers God the firstling sacrifice. After his death, Adam and Eve had a third son, Seth, to whom Enosh (which means 'mortal') was born, and it is stated: "At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord". (4:26). Then Enoch appears, a person who "walked with God" and was taken to heaven (cf. 5:22, 24). And lastly there is the story of Noah, a righteous man who "walked with God" (6:9), before whom God withheld his intention to blot out mankind (cf. 6:7-8).

While reading these narratives, one has the impression that prayer is a bulwark; it is man's refuge before the flood wave of evil that grows in the world. On closer inspection, we also pray to be saved from ourselves. It is important to pray: "Lord, please, save me from myself, from my ambitions, from my passions". The prayerful of the first pages of the Bible are peace workers: indeed, when prayer is authentic, it frees one from the instincts of violence and it is a gaze directed to God, that he may return to take care of the heart of mankind. We read in the

Catechism: "This kind of prayer is lived by many righteous people in all religions" (CCC, 2569). Prayer cultivates flowerbeds of rebirth in places where man's hatred has only been able to expand the desert. And prayer is powerful because it attracts the power of God and the power of God always gives life: always. He is the God of life and he causes rebirth.

This is why God's lordship passes through this chain of men and women, often misunderstood or marginalized in the world. But the world lives and grows thanks to the power of God whom these servants attract with their prayer. It is not at all a boisterous chain, and rarely makes headlines, yet it is so important to restoring trust to the world!

I remember the story of one man: an important government leader not from these days, but from the past. An atheist who had no religious feeling in his heart, but as a child he heard his grandmother pray, and this remained in his heart. And at a very difficult time in his life, that memory returned to his heart and said: "But my grandmother used to pray ...". He thus began to pray with his grandmother's formulas, and there he found Jesus. Prayer is always a chain of life: many men and women who pray sow life.



Prayer sows life, small prayers: this is why it is so important to teach children to pray. I suffer when I encounter children who do not know how to make the sign of the Cross. They have to be taught to make the sign of the Cross properly, because it is the first prayer. Then perhaps they may forget, take another path, but the first prayers learned as a child remain in the heart, because they are a seed of life, the seed of dialogue with God.

The journey of God in the history of God is conveyed through them: it has passed through a "remainder" of humanity that has not conformed to the law of the fittest, but has asked God to perform his miracles, and above all to transform our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (cf. Ez 36:26). And this helps prayer: because prayer opens the door to God, turning our often stony hearts into a human heart. And this demands a lot of humanity, and with humanity one can pray well.

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. As we prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, I invoke upon you and your families an abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. May God bless you!

The day after tomorrow we will celebrate the liturgical memorial of Saint Pope Paul VI. May the example of this Bishop of Rome, who reached the pinnacle of holiness, encourage each one to generously embrace evangelical ideals.

I offer my thoughts to *the elderly, to young people, to the sick and to neolyceans*. In this climate of preparation for the now forthcoming Solemnity of Pentecost, I exhort you to be ever docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, so that your life may always be warmed and illuminated by the love that the Spirit of God pours out into hearts. I offer my blessing to all!

INTERVIEW

with UN Secretary-General

Appreciation for Pope Francis' support for the global ceasefire appeal

Global threats require a new solidarity

ANDREA MONDA

"The pandemic should be a wake-up call. Deadly global threats require a new unity and solidarity". This concern was stressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr António Guterres, in this exclusive interview with Vatican media

Recently you made an appeal for peace in the world, a world affected by the pandemic. This initiative links up once again with those taken by Pope Francis – whom you met at the end of last year, when you delivered a video message together – who keeps asking to cease all wars. You said: The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war. Why, do you think, is it so difficult to get this message through?

First, I would like to renew my deep appreciation to Pope Francis for his support for my global ceasefire appeal and the work of the United Nations. His global engagement, compassion and calls for unity reaffirm the core values that guide our work: to reduce human suffering and promote human dignity.

When I launched the ceasefire appeal, my message to parties to conflict around the world was simple: fighting needs to stop so that we can focus on our shared enemy – Covid-19.

So far, the call has been endorsed by 115 Governments, regional organizations, more than 200 civil society groups as well as other religious leaders. Sixteen armed groups have pledged to end violence. Millions of people have also signed an on-line call for support.

But mistrust remains high, and it is difficult to turn these commitments into actions that make a difference in the lives of those impacted by conflict.

My special representatives and envoys are working tirelessly around the world, with my own direct involvement when necessary, to turn expressed intentions into effective cease-fires.

I continue to call on parties to conflict and on all those who can have influence on them, to place the health and safety of people first.

I would also like to mention another appeal I have made that I consider essential: an appeal for peace in the home. Across the globe, as the pandemic spreads, we are also witnessing an alarming increase in violence against women and girls.

I have asked Governments, civil society and all those who can help around the world to mobilize to better protect women. I have also appealed to religious leaders of every faith to unequivocally condemn all acts of violence against women and girls and to uphold the bedrock principles of equality.

A few months ago, before the pandemic broke out, you said that fear is the best-selling brand. This is something which now, in these weeks, could be even more amplified. How, do you think, is it possible to fight the feelings of fear spreading among people, especially in these difficult times?

Recovery also needs to go hand-in-hand with climate action. I have been calling on Governments to ensure that spending to revitalize economies should be used to invest in the future, not the past.

The Covid-19 pandemic is not just a global health emergency.

In recent weeks, there has been a surge of conspiracy theories and anti-foreigner sentiment. In some cases, journalists, health professionals, or human rights defenders have been targeted simply for doing their jobs.

From the very beginning of this crisis, I have been advocating for solidarity within societies and among countries. Our response must be based on human rights and human dignity.



Pope Francis with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 20 December 2019

I have also called on educational institutions to focus on digital literacy, and I have urged media, especially social media companies, to do much more to flag and remove racist, misogynist and other harmful content, in line with international human rights law.

Religious leaders have a crucial role to play to promote mutual respect in their communities and beyond. They are well-positioned to challenge inaccurate and harmful messages, and encourage all communities to promote non-violence and reject xenophobia, racism and all forms of intolerance.

Fear is certainly fostered by fake news, which, as you recently denounced, is spreading more and more. How is it possible to fight misinformation without risking to blot out fundamental freedoms and rights in the name of this battle?

People around the world want to know what to do and where to turn for advice. Instead, they have to navigate an epidemic of misinformation that, at its worst, can put lives at risk.

I salute the journalists and others who are fact-checking the mountain of misleading stories and social media posts.

In support of these efforts, I have launched a UN Communications Response initiative, under the name Verified, aimed at getting accurate, factual information to people while encouraging solutions and solidarity as we move from crisis to recovery.

Religious leaders also have a role to play to leverage their networks and communication capacities to support governments in promoting public health measures recommended by the World Health Organization – from physical distancing to good hygiene – and to dis-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Lençóis Maranhenses National Park, Brazil

Pontifical Letter for the 25th anniversary of John Paul II's 'Ut Unum Sint'

Prophetic gestures on the path towards unity

"May the Spirit inspire new prophetic gestures and strengthen fraternal charity among all Christ's disciples", Pope Francis writes in a letter addressed to Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of John Paul II's Encyclical "Ut Unum Sint", which "confirmed irrevocably" the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church". The following is the English text of the Holy Father's letter which was released on Monday morning, 25 May.



To my dear Brother
Cardinal Kurt Koch
President of the Pontifical Council
for Promoting Christian Unity

Tomorrow marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of Saint John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*. With his gaze fixed on the horizon of the Jubilee of 2000, Pope John Paul II desired that the Church, on her journey towards the third millennium, should be ever mindful of the heartfelt prayer of her Teacher and Lord "that all may be one" (cf. *Jn* 17:21). For this reason he issued the Encyclical that confirmed "irrevocably" (*UUS*, 3) the ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church. He published it on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, placing it under the sign of the Holy Spirit, the creator of unity in diversity. In

that same liturgical and spiritual context, we now commemorate it, and propose it once more to the People of God.

The Second Vatican Council recognized that the movement for the restoration of unity among all Christians "arose by the grace of the Holy Spirit" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1). The Council also taught that the Spirit, while "distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries", is "the principle of the Church's unity" (*ibid.*, 2). *Ut Unum Sint* reaffirmed that "legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the Church's unity, but rather enhances her splendour and contributes greatly to the fulfilment of her mission" (no. 50). Indeed, "only the Holy Spirit is able to kindle diversity, multiplicity and, at the same time, bring about unity... It is he who brings harmony to the Church", because, as Saint Basil the Great said, "He himself is harmony" (*Homily in the Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Istanbul*, 29 November 2014).

On this anniversary, I give thanks to the Lord for the journey he has allowed us to travel as Christians in quest of full communion. I too share the healthy impatience of those who sometimes think that we can and should do more. Yet we should not be lacking in faith and gratitude:



Homily at the Celebration of Vespers, Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls, 25 January 2014

many steps have been taken in these decades to heal the wounds of centuries and millennia. Mutual knowledge and esteem have grown and helped to overcome deeply rooted prejudices. Theological dialogue and the dialogue of charity have developed, as well as various forms of cooperation in the dialogue of life, at both the pastoral and cultural level. At this moment, my thoughts turn to my beloved Brothers, the heads of the different Churches and Christian communities, and to all our brothers and sisters of every Christian tradition who are our companions on this journey. Like the disciples of Emmaus, may we experience the presence of the risen Christ who walks at our side and ex-

plains the Scriptures to us. May we recognize him in the breaking of the bread, as we await the day when we shall share the Eucharistic table together.

I renew my gratitude to all who have worked and continue to work in the Dicastery to keep the awareness of this irrevocable goal alive in the Church. I am especially pleased to recognize two recent initiatives. The first is an *Ecumenical Vademecum for Bishops* that will be published this autumn, as an encouragement and guide for the exercise of their ecumenical responsibilities. Indeed, the service of unity is an essential aspect of the mission of every Bishop, who is "the visible source and foundation of unity" in his own Particular Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 23; cf. *CIC* 383 §3; *CCEO* 902-908). The second initiative is the launch of the journal *Acta Œcumenica* which, by renewing the Dicastery's Information Service, is meant to assist all who work in the service of unity.

On the path that leads to full communion it is important to keep in mind the progress already made, but equally important to scan the horizon and ask, with the Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, "Quanta est nobis via?" (no. 77). One thing is certain: unity is not chiefly the result of our activity, but a gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet "unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end. Rather, unity comes about in journeying; the Holy Spirit does this on the journey" (*Homily at the Celebration of Vespers, Saint Paul Outside the Walls, 25 January 2014*). With confidence, then, let us ask the Holy Spirit to guide our steps and to enable everyone to hear the call to work for the cause of ecumenism with renewed vigour. May the Spirit inspire new prophetic gestures and strengthen fraternal charity among all Christ's disciples, "that the world may believe" (*Jn* 17:21), to the ever greater praise of our Father in heaven.

From the Vatican, 24 May 2020

Franciscus

The Rosary with Pope Francis

Devoted and with one accord to prayer, together with Mary (Acts 1:14)

United in prayer to invoke the help and assistance of Our Lady in the pandemic, and to entrust the whole of humanity to the Lord. On 30 May 2020, at 5:30 pm, Pope Francis will preside over the prayer of the Holy Rosary from the Grotto of Lourdes in the Vatican Gardens. The Marian celebration, to be broadcast live via satellite, has been organized by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, on the theme: "Devoted and with one accord to prayer, together with Mary" (Acts 1:14). Shrines throughout the world will join in the prayer, with special participation on the part of families. It will be a worldwide act of prayer for those who wish to unite with Pope Francis on the eve of Pentecost Sunday.

Some women and men representing various categories of those particularly affected by the virus will pray the Mysteries. There will be a doctor and a nurse, representing the medical personnel working on the front lines in the hospitals; one person who has been cured and



one who has lost a family member, on behalf of all those who have been personally touched by the coronavirus; a hospital chaplain and a nursing nun, for all the priests and consecrated persons close to those affected by the disease; a pharmacist and a journalist, who represent all those who, even during the period of the pandemic, have continued to serve others; a Civil Defence volunteer with his family, on behalf of all those who are working to deal with this emer-

gency and the vast world of volunteer work; and a young family, into which a child was born during this very period, as a sign of hope and of the victory of life over death.

The Holy Father will place the many cares and sorrows of humanity, further aggravated by the spread of Covid-19, at Mary's feet. The concluding event of the Marian month is a further sign of closeness and comfort for those who, in various ways, have been affected by the coronavirus, in the certainty that the Heavenly Mother does not disregard our pleas for protection.

The largest shrines on the various continents will be linked. For example, from Europe: Lourdes (France), Fatima (Portugal), San Giovanni Rotondo, Pompeii (Italy) and Czestochowa (Poland); from North America: the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. (USA), the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico); from Africa: the Shrine of Elele (Nigeria) and Notre-Dame de la Paix (Ivory Coast); and from South America: Chiquiquira (Colombia), Lujan and Milagro (Argentina).

Global threats require a new solidarity

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

pel false information and rumors.

Among the groundless news that daily assail public opinion, currently there is a lot of criticism of UN agencies, as for example the World Health Organization (WHO). What is your opinion with regard to this?

As we mourn the lives lost to the virus, we despair that many more will follow, particularly in places least able to cope with a pandemic.

Looking back at how the pandemic unfolded, and at the international response, will be crucial. But, right now, the World Health Organization and the entire UN system are in a race against the clock to save lives.

I am particularly worried about the lack of adequate solidarity with developing countries – both in equipping them to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and to address the dramatic economic and social impacts on the world's poorest.

The World Health Organization, and the entire United Nations system have mobilized fully to save lives, stave off famine, ease the pain and plan for recovery.

We set out a U.S.\$7.6 billion Global Humanitarian Response Plan for the most vulnerable populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons. Donors have generously pledged close to \$1 billion so far and I continue my advocacy to ensure that this plan is fully funded.

Our country teams are working in coordination with Governments to mobilize funding, to assist health ministries on preparedness, and to support economic and social measures, from food security and home schooling to cash transfers and many others.

Our peace operations continue to carry out their important protection mandates, and to support peace and political processes.

The UN system network of supply chains has been placed at the disposal of developing countries, with millions of test kits, respirators and surgical masks having now reached more than 100 countries. We have set up solidarity flights to bring more supplies and workers to dozens of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

And since the beginning, I have mobilized the expertise within the entire UN family to produce a series of reports and policy briefs to provide analysis and advice for an effective, coordinated response by the international community. (<https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-secretary-general/>)

We are living in a time where attacks against multilateralism are multiplying. Do you think there is a need to strengthen people's trust in international institutions? And how could this be done?

The collaboration and contribution of all States – including the most powerful – is essential to not only fight Covid-19 but also to address the peace and security challenges we are facing. It is also essential to help create conditions for an effective recovery in the developed and developing world.

The virus has demonstrated our global fragility. And this fragility is not limited to our health systems. It affects all areas of our world and our institutions.

The fragility of coordinated global efforts is highlighted by our failed response to the climate crisis, by the ever-increasing risk of nuclear proliferation, by our inability to come together to better regulate the web.

The pandemic should be a wake-up call. Deadly global threats require a new unity and solidarity.

You have openly commended the European initiative aimed at developing a vaccine for Covid-19. However, finding a vaccine might tempt someone to take up a dominant position within the international community. How can we avoid this risk? And even



before finding a vaccine, what can be done in order to test the treatments that have proven to be of some efficacy?

In an interconnected world, none of us is safe until all of us are safe.

This was, in a few words, the essence of my message at the launch of "ACT Accelerator" – the global collaboration to speed up the development, production and equitable access to new Covid-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines.

This must be seen as a global public good. Not a vaccine or treatments for one country or one region or one-half of the world – but a vaccine and treatment that are affordable, safe, effective, easily-administered and universally available – for everyone, everywhere. This vaccine needs to be the people's vaccine.

How can we avoid having first rank and second rank countries in this fight against the virus? At any rate, there is a danger that the pandemic will widen the gap between rich and poor. How can we avoid this happening?

The pandemic is exposing inequalities everywhere. Economic inequalities, disparities in access to health services and so much more.

Poverty could rise by 500 million people – the first increase in three decades.

We cannot allow this to happen and this is why I continue to advocate for a global relief package amounting to at least 10 per cent of the global economy.

The most developed countries can do this with their own resources, and some have already begun to put in place such measures. But developing countries need massive and urgent support.

The International Monetary Fund has already approved emergency financing to a first group of developing countries. The World Bank has indicated that with new and existing resources, it can provide \$160 billion of financing over the next 15 months. The G20 has endorsed the suspension of debt service payments for the poorest countries.

I fully appreciate these steps, which can protect people, jobs and development gains. But even this will not be sufficient and it will be important to consider additional measures, including debt relief, to avoid prolonged financial and economic crises.

Some say that after this pandemic the world will never be the same again. What could the future of the United Nations be in tomorrow's world?

The pandemic recovery brings opportunities to steer the world onto a safer, healthier, more sustainable and inclusive path.

The inequalities and gaps in social protection that have been so painfully exposed will need to be addressed. We will also have an opportunity to place women and gender equality at the forefront to help build resilience to future shocks.

Recovery also needs to go hand-in-hand with climate action.

I have been calling on Governments to ensure that spending to revitalize economies should be used to invest in the future, not the past.

Taxpayers' money should be used to accelerate the decarbonization of all aspects of our economy and privilege the creation of green jobs. Now is the time to put a price on carbon and for polluters to pay for their pollution. Financial institutions and investors must take climate risks fully into account.

Our template remains the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Now is the time to be determined. Determined to defeat Covid-19 and to emerge from the crisis by building a better world for all.

Vatican Museums and Apostolic Palace to reopen

After remaining closed for three months due to the health emergency, the Vatican Museums and the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo will reopen to the public, on 1 and 6 June, respectively.

The Museums will be opening with a "renewed spirit of sharing" of the "extraordinary universal patrimony of history, art and faith", noted Barbara Jatta, Director of the Vatican Museums, along with several important changes, such as the restoration of the Hall of Constantine, and the complete renovation of "Room 8", which is dedicated to Rafael, as 2020 marks 500 years since his death.

Beginning on Monday, 1 June, all the people who enter

the structures will be subject to hygiene and social distancing norms: body temperatures will be monitored upon entry and face masks will be required. Additionally, there will be medical personnel on hand at all times during all hours of public access, and visits will follow an extraordinary programme in light of the evolving public health situation.

In order to better control the number of visitors allowed inside, entry to the Vatican Museums during this period will require a reservation, which can be made on the official website at www.museivaticani.va, while the usual €4 reservation fee will be waived at this time.

There will also be changes to the hours of operation. The following schedule will apply at the Vatican Museums: the Pontifical Collections will remain open to the public from Monday to Thursday, 10am - 8pm, with last entry at 6pm; Friday and Saturday, 10am - 10pm, with last entry at 8pm; the usual free opening on the last Sunday of the month will remain suspended during this period.

Meanwhile, the magnificent gardens of the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo will be open to the public exclusively on Saturdays and Sundays, 10am - 6pm, with the last entry permitted at 5pm, beginning, as noted, on Saturday, 6 June.

In a message to the Pontifical Mission Societies Pope Francis indicates the path to take and the temptations to avoid

The miracle of freely giving oneself in service to the Church

"Missionary fervour" can never "be obtained as the result of reasoning or calculation", but rather arises from giving oneself in service to the Church. Pope Francis said this in a message to the Pontifical Mission Societies whose annual general assembly originally scheduled for Thursday, 21 May, Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, was postponed following restrictions imposed in recent months due to the pandemic. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's message which was written in Italian.

When they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all

Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth". When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight (Acts 1:6-9).

The Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. Nonetheless, they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs (Mk 16:19-20).

Then he led them [out] as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them, he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God (Lk 24:50-53).

The source of mission

ANDREA TORNIELLI

Pope Francis' Message to the Pontifical Mission Societies is a weighty text, concrete in its directions, indicating the one true source of the Church's missionary work, and at the same time seeking to avoid, by naming them, certain pathologies that risk degrading the mission itself. The mission, Francis explains, is not the result of the application of "secular notions of activism or technical-professional competence", but born out of the "overflowing joy" that "the Lord gives to us" and that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is a grace, this joy that no one alone can give himself. Being missionaries means reverberating the great and unmerited gift that has been received, that is, reflecting the light of an Other, as the moon does with the sun.

"In every human context", the Pope writes, "witnesses are those who vouch for what someone else has done. In this sense, and only in this sense, can we be witnesses of Christ and his Spirit". It is that *mysterium lunae* dear to the Fathers of the Church in the first centuries, who saw clearly that the Church lives moment after moment by the grace of Christ. Like the moon, the Church does not shine of her own light, and when she looks at herself too much or trusts in her own abilities, she ends up being self-referential and no longer gives light to anyone.

The origin of this Message is the contents of the Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, the text that outlined the path of the current Pontificate. Francis recalls that proclaiming the Gospel and professing the Christian faith are something very different from any political, cultural, psychological or religious proselytism. The Church grows in the world by attraction, and "if one follows Jesus, happy to be attracted by him, others will take notice. They may even be astonished".

The Message to the PMS, makes clear the Pope's intention to quell that tendency to consider the mission as something elitist, to be directed and managed through deliberate programmes, applying strategies, which obtain a "realization" through reasoning, appeals, activism, training. Even more evident from this pontifical text published today (21 May) is that the Bishop of Rome considers this a present risk, and therefore his words have a value that goes well beyond the Pontifical Mission Societies, to which it is addressed. To avoid the self-referential tendency, the anxiety of commanding, and the delegation of missionary work to "a superior class of specialists" who consider baptized people as an inert mass to be reanimated and mobilized. Francis recalls several distinct traits of the Christian mission: gratitude and gratuitousness, humility, proximity to the lives of the people where they are and as they are, and a preference for the little ones and for the poor.

dom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6). Yet, when Christ leaves them, instead of being sad, they return to Jerusalem "with great joy", as Luke tells us (cf. 24:52). It would be odd if something had not occurred. Indeed, Jesus had already promised them the power of the Holy Spirit, who was to descend upon them at Pentecost. This is the miracle that changes everything. They become more confident when they entrust everything to the Lord. They are filled with joy. Moreover, that joy is the fullness of consolation, the fullness of the presence of the Lord.

Paul writes to the Galatians that the Apostles' fullness of joy is not the effect of pleasant feelings that make them happy. It is an overflowing joy that can only be experienced as a fruit and gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. 5:22). Receiving the joy of the Spirit is a grace. Moreover, it is the only force that enables us to preach the Gospel and to confess our faith in the Lord. Faith means bearing witness to the joy that the Lord gives to us. A joy such as this cannot be the result of our own efforts.

Jesus told his disciples that he would send them the Spirit, the Comforter, prior to his departure. In this way, he also entrusted the apostolic work of the Church to the Spirit for all time, until his return. The mystery of the Ascension, together with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, indelibly marks the mission

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

This year I had decided to participate in your annual General Assembly on Thursday, 21 May, the feast of the Ascension of the Lord.



The Assembly was subsequently cancelled because of the pandemic that affects us all. I would now like to send this Message in order to share what I had intended to say to you personally. This Christian feast, in the remarkable times in which we are living, appears to me even more fruitful as a source of reflection for the journey and mission belonging to each one of us and to the entire Church.

We celebrate the Ascension as a feast, yet it commemorates the departure of Jesus from his disciples and from this world. The Lord ascends to heaven and the Eastern liturgy narrates the astonishment of the angels in seeing a man who in his flesh rises to be seated at the right hand of the Father. Even so, while Christ is at the point of ascending to heaven, the disciples, who had seen him risen, still do not seem to understand what is happening. He is about to bring his Kingdom to fulfillment and they are still caught up in their own ideas. They ask him if he is going to restore the king-

dom of the Church: it is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the consequence of our ideas and projects. This is the feature that makes missionary activity bear fruit and preserves it from the presumption of self-sufficiency, much less the temptation to commandeer Christ's flesh, ascended to heaven, for narrowly "clerical" projects and aims.

When the ongoing work and efficacy of the Holy Spirit is not appreciated in the Church's mission, it means that even the most carefully chosen missionary language becomes like "words of human wisdom" aimed at glorifying oneself or concealing one's own interior deserts.

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

Salvation is an encounter with Jesus, who loves and forgives us by sending the Spirit

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who comforts and defends us. Salvation is not the consequence of our missionary initiatives nor of our talking about the incarnation of the Word. For each one of us, salvation can take place only through the lens of an encounter with the one who calls us. For this reason, the mystery of predilection begins and can only begin with an outburst of joy and gratitude. The joy of the Gospel is that “great joy” of the poor women who on Easter morning went to the tomb of Christ, found it empty, then encountered the risen Jesus and raced home to tell the others (cf. *Mt* 28:8-10). Only because we have been chosen and singled out can we bear witness to the glory of the risen Christ before the entire world.

In every human context witnesses are those who vouch for what someone else has done. In this sense, and only in this sense, can we be witnesses of Christ and his Spirit. As described in the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark, after the Ascension the apostles and disciples “went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs” (16:20). By his Spirit, Christ testifies to himself through the works that he fulfils in and with us. As Saint Augustine explains, the Church would not pray to the Lord to ask that faith be given to those who do not know Christ unless she believed that it is God himself who directs and draws our wills towards himself. The Church would not make her children pray to the Lord to persevere in the faith of Christ if she did not believe that it is the Lord himself who possesses our hearts. Indeed, if she asked him for these things, but thought that she could give them to herself, it would mean that all her prayers would be empty words, rote formulas or platitudes imposed by ecclesiastical custom rather than authentic prayer (cf. *On the Gift of Perseverance. To Prosper and Hilary*, 23, 63).

Unless we realize that faith is a gift of God, even the prayers which the Church raises to God are meaningless. Nor do they reflect a sincere passion for the happiness and salvation of others and for those who do not recognize the risen Christ, however much time we may spend on planning for the conversion of the world to Christianity.

If we recognize that the Holy Spirit ignites and preserves the faith in our hearts, everything changes. Indeed, the Spirit enkindles and enlivens the Church's mission, bestowing all those individual accents and styles that make the proclamation of the Gospel and the confession of the Christian faith something different from all political, cultural, psychological or religious forms of proselytism.

I considered many of these features of mission in my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, and here I shall recall a few of them.

Attractiveness. The mystery of the Redemption entered into and continues to work in the world through an attraction that can draw the hearts of men and women because it is and appears more alluring than the seductions which appeal to the selfishness that is a result of sin. As Jesus says in the Gospel of John, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him” (6:44). The Church has always insisted that this is the reason why we follow Jesus and proclaim his Gospel: through the force of attraction wrought

by Christ himself and by his Spirit. The Church, as Pope Benedict XVI has said, grows in the world through attraction and not through proselytism (cf. *Homily*, Mass for the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida, 13 May 2007: AAS 99 [2007], 437). Saint Augustine says that Christ reveals himself by attracting us. Moreover, he cites the poet Virgil, who states that all are attracted to what gives them pleasure. Jesus does not just persuade our wills, but awakens our pleasure (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 26:4). If one follows Jesus, happy to be attracted by him, others will take notice. They may even be astonished. The joy that radiates from those attracted by Christ and by his Spirit is what can make any missionary initiative fruitful.

Gratitude and Gratuitousness. The joy of proclaiming the Gospel always shines brightly against the backdrop of a grateful memory. The Apostles never forgot the moment that Jesus touched their hearts: “It was about four in the afternoon” (*Jn* 1:39). The reality of the Church shines forth whenever gratitude is manifested



within her by the free initiative of God, for “he loved us” first (1 *Jn* 4:10) and “it is only God who gives the growth” (1 *Cor* 3:7). The loving predilection of God surprises us, and surprise by its very nature cannot be owned or imposed by us. One cannot be “necessarily surprised”. Only in this way can the miracle of gratuitousness, the gratuitous gift of self, blossom. Nor can missionary fervour ever be obtained as the result of reasoning or calculation. To be “in a state of mission” is a reflection of gratitude. It is the response of one who by gratitude is made docile to the Spirit and is therefore free. Without a recognition of the predilection of the Lord, who inspires gratitude in us, even knowledge of the truth and of God himself would, presented as a goal to be achieved by our own efforts, in fact become a “letter that brings death” (cf. 2 *Cor* 3:6), as Saint Paul and Saint Augustine were the first to point out. Only in the freedom of gratitude can one truly know the Lord, whereas it is useless and above all improper to insist on presenting missionary activity and the proclamation of the Gospel as if they were a binding duty, a kind of “contractual obligation” on the part of the baptized.

Humility. Since truth and faith, happiness and salvation are not our own possessions, a goal

achieved by our own merits, then the Gospel of Christ can be proclaimed only with humility. One can never think of serving the Church's mission by employing arrogance as individuals and through bureaucracies, with the pride of one who misunderstands even the gift of the sacraments and the most authentic words of the Christian faith, seeing them as merited rewards. One cannot be humble out of good manners or the desire to appear attractive. We are humble when we follow Christ, who said to his disciples: “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart” (*Mt* 11:29). Saint Augustine asks why, after the resurrection, Jesus let himself be seen by his disciples and not by those who had crucified him, concluding that Jesus did not want to give the impression of “challenging his killers in some way. For Jesus, it was actually more important to teach humility to his friends, rather than uphold the truth before his enemies” (*Sermon* 284, 6).

To facilitate, not to complicate. Another authentic feature of missionary work is its imitation of the patience of Jesus, who always showed mercy to others as they continued to grow. A small step

forward in the midst of great human limitations can be more pleasing before God than the great strides made by those who go through life without great difficulties. A missionary heart recognizes the real condition of real people, with their own limits, sins and frailties in order to become “weak among the weak” (cf. 1 *Cor* 9:22). “Going forth” on mission to reach human peripheries does not mean wandering without direction and meaning, like those frustrated vendors who complain that people are too unsophisticated to be interested in their wares. Sometimes this means slowing our pace in order to lead a person who is still by the wayside. At times this means imitating the father in the parable of the prodigal son, who leaves the doors open and looks out each day awaiting the return of his son (cf. *Lk* 15:20). The Church is not a customs office and anyone who participates in the mission of the Church is called not to impose unnecessary burdens on people already worn out or to require demanding programmes of formation in order

to enjoy what the Lord gives easily, or to erect obstacles to the will of Jesus, who prays for each of us and wants to heal and save everyone.

Proximity to life “in progress”. Jesus met his first disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee while they were focused on their work. He did not meet them at a convention, a training workshop, or in the Temple. It has always been the case that the proclamation of Jesus' salvation reaches people right where they are and just how they are in the midst of their lives in progress. Amid the needs, hopes and problems of everyday life we find the place where one who has acknowledged the love of Christ and received the gift of the Holy Spirit can offer an account of his or her faith, hope, and charity to those who ask for it. By journeying together with others, alongside everyone. Especially given the times in which we live, this has nothing to do with designing “specialized” training programmes, creating parallel worlds, or constructing “slogans” that merely echo our own thoughts and concerns. I have elsewhere spoken of those in the Church who proclaim loudly that “this is the hour of the laity”, while in the meantime the clock seems to have stopped.

The “sensus fidei” of the People of God. There is one reality in the world that has a kind of “feel”

Giving oneself in service to the Church

for the Holy Spirit and his workings. It is the People of God, called and loved by Jesus, who for their part continue to seek him amid the difficulties of their lives. The People of God beg for the gift of his Spirit: entrusting their expectation to the simple words of their prayers and never entertaining the presumption of their own self-sufficiency. The holy People of God are gathered together and anointed by the Lord, and in virtue of this anointing are made *infallible* "in *credendo*", as the Tradition of the Church teaches. The working of the Holy Spirit equips the faithful People with an "instinct" of faith, the *sensus fidei*, which helps them not to err when believing the things of God, even if they do not know the theological arguments and formulas that define the gifts they experience. The mystery of the pilgrim people, who with their popular piety travel to shrines and entrust themselves to Jesus, Mary and the saints, draws from this and shows that it is connatural to the free and gratuitous initiative of God, apart from our pastoral planning.

A special care for the little ones and the poor. Any missionary impulse, if derived from the Holy Spirit, manifests predilection for the poor and vulnerable as a sign and reflection of the Lord's own preference for them. Those directly involved with the Church's missionary initiatives and structures should never justify their lack of concern for the poor with the excuse, widely used in particular ecclesiastical circles, of having to concentrate their energies on certain priorities for the mission. For the Church, a preference for the poor is not optional.

All these demands and approaches are part of the Church's mission, guided by the Holy Spirit. Normally, in ecclesiastical language and speech, the necessity of the Holy Spirit as the source of the Church's missionary activity is acknowledged and affirmed. Yet this acknowledgement can at times be reduced to a type of "ceremonial nod" to the Most Holy Trinity, a stock introductory preface to our theological discussions and pastoral plans. There are many situations in the Church where the primacy of grace appears to be no more than a theoretical concept or an abstract formulation. Instead of leaving room for the working of the Holy Spirit, many initiatives and entities connected to the Church end up being concerned only with themselves. Many ecclesiastical establishments, at every level, seem to be swallowed up by the obsession of promoting themselves and their own initiatives, as if that were the objective and goal of their mission.

To this point, I have sought to reiterate criteria and starting points for the missionary activity of the Church that I explained in greater detail in my Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. I have done so because I believe that for the PMS it is beneficial and fruitful – and indeed urgently necessary – to discuss these criteria and suggestions in this stage of their journey.

THE PMS AT THE PRESENT TIME.

TALENTS TO DEVELOP, TEMPTATIONS AND MALADIES TO AVOID

Where should we look in considering the present and future of the PMS? What are the dead weights that risk burdening the journey?

The identity of the Pontifical Mission Societies has certain hallmarks. In a manner of speaking, some are genetic, whereas others have developed through a lengthy historical process and are often overlooked or taken for granted. Yet these features can safeguard and enhance, above all in the present time, the contribution of this "network" to the universal mission to which the entire Church is called.

– *The Missionary Societies arose spontaneously from missionary fervour expressed by the faith of the baptized.* There has always been a deep rela-

tionship between the Missionary Societies and the infallible *sensus fidei in credendo* of the faithful People of God.

– *The Missionary Societies, since their beginning, have moved along two "tracks", or better along two parallel channels, that in their simplicity have always been close to the heart of the People of God: those of prayer and of charity in the form of almsgiving which "saves from death, and purges all sin" (Job 12:9), the "intense love" that "covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet 4:8).* The founders of the Mission Societies, beginning with Pauline Jaricot, did not invent the prayers and works to which they entrusted their hopes for the proclamation of the Gospel. They simply drew them from the infinite treasury of those familiar and habitual gestures of the People of God on its pilgrimage through history.

– *The Mission Societies, which arose spontaneously from the life of the People of God, in their simple and concrete configuration were recognized by the Church of Rome and her Bishops, who in the last century sought to adopt them as a unique expression of their own service to the universal Church.* Hence the title "Pontifical" was conferred upon these Societies. From that time on, the PMS have always shown themselves to be an instrument of service in support of the particular Churches in the work of proclaiming the Gospel. In this same way, the Pontifical Mission Societies have readily served the Church as part of the universal ministry exercised by the Pope and by the Church of Rome, which "presides in charity". In this way, carrying out their work and without becoming embroiled in complex theological disputes, the PMS have countered the claims of those who, also in ecclesiastical circles, wrongly contrast charisms and institutions, reading their relationship through the lens of a fallacious "dialectic of principles". For in the Church even permanent structural elements, such as the sacraments, the priesthood, and apostolic succession are continuously to be recreated by the Holy Spirit and are not simply realities at the Church's disposal (cf. CARD. J. RATZINGER, *The Theological Locus of Ecclesial Movements*, Address given at the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements, Rome, 27-29 May 1998).

– *The Missionary Societies, since their initial diffusion, have been structured as a widespread network spread throughout the People of God, wholly anchored and indeed "immanent" in the network of preexisting institutions and realities in the Church's life, such as dioceses, parishes, and religious communities.* The particular vocation of persons engaged in the Missionary Societies has never been lived or perceived as an alternative path, a relationship "external" to the ordinary forms of the life of the particular Churches. The summons to pray and gather resources for the missions has always been exercised as a service to ecclesial communion.

– *The Missionary Societies, which in time became a network spread throughout the world, mirror in their own configuration the variety of accents, situations, problems, and gifts that characterize the life of the Church in the various parts of the world.* This plurality can serve as a safeguard against ideological homogenization and cultural unilateralism. In this sense, the PMS reflect the mystery of the universality of the Church, in which the incessant work of the Holy Spirit creates harmony from different voices, even as the Bishop of Rome, in his service of charity, exercised also through the Pontifical Mission Societies, safeguards unity in faith.

All the characteristics described above can help the Pontifical Mission Societies to avoid certain pitfalls and pathologies on their journey and that of many other ecclesial institutions. Let me present a few of these.



PITFALLS TO AVOID

Self-absorption. Church organizations and agencies, quite apart from the good intentions of their individual members, sometimes end up turning in on themselves, devoting energy and attention primarily to promoting themselves and to advertising their own initiatives. Some seem to be dominated by an obsession to continually redefine their own importance and their own bailiwicks within the Church, under the guise of relaunching their specific mission. In this way, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger once said, they can foster the misleading idea that a person is somehow more Christian if he or she is occupied with intra-ecclesial structures, whereas in reality nearly all the baptized are daily living lives of faith, hope, and charity, without ever participating in Church committees or concerned for the latest news about ecclesiastical politics (cf. *Una compagnia sempre riformanda*, Speech at the IX Meeting in Rimini, 1 September 1990).

Control anxiety. Institutions and agencies sometimes set out to help ecclesial communities by employing the gifts generated in them by the Holy Spirit, yet over time they presume to exercise supremacy and control over the very communities they are meant to serve. This attitude is almost always accompanied by the claim that they are exercising the role of "overseers" called to determine the legitimacy of other groups. They end up acting as if the Church was a product of their own calculations, plans, agreements and decisions.

Elitism. An elitist feeling, the unspoken notion of belonging to an aristocracy, takes hold at times among those who are part of groups and organized institutions in the Church: a superior class of specialists who strive to increase their own influence in collusion or in competition with other ecclesiastical elites, and train their members according to secular notions of activism or technical-professional competence, but always with the main goal of promoting their own oligarchic privileges.

Isolation from the people. The elitist temptation in some organizations connected to the Church can be accompanied at times by a sentiment of superiority and of intolerance towards the rest of the baptized, towards the people of God who may attend parishes and visit shrines, but are not "activists" busy in Catholic organizations. The People of God is viewed as an inert mass, always in need of being awakened and mobilized

Message to the Pontifical Mission Societies



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through a “consciousness-raising” consisting in arguments, appeals and teachings. As if the certainty of faith was the consequence of persuasive speech or training methods.

Abstraction. Once they become self-absorbed, institutions and entities connected to the Church lose contact with reality and fall prey to abstraction. They needlessly multiply instances of strategic planning in order to produce projects and guidelines that serve only as means of self-promotion for those who come up with them. They take problems and dissect them in intellectual laboratories where everything has been domesticated and is viewed through the lens of their own ideology. Everything, even references to the faith or verbal appeals to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, once taken outside of their proper context, can thus end up rigidified and unreal.

Functionalism. Self-absorbed and elitist organizations, even within the Church, often end up staking everything on the imitation of secular models of worldly efficiency, like those rooted in competition, whether economic or social. Opting for functionalism gives the illusion of being able to “sort matters out” in a balanced way, keeping things under control, maximizing one’s own relevance, and improving the everyday management of existing structures. However, as I already said to you at our 2016 meeting, a Church afraid of entrusting herself to the grace of Christ and focusing on the efficiency of her bureaucracy is already dead, even if structures and programmes that favour the interest of “self-absorbed” clergy or lay people linger for centuries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

Looking at the present and towards the future, and considering the resources needed for the PMS to overcome the pitfalls of the journey and move forward, I would like to offer a few suggestions as an aid for your discernment. Since you have undertaken your own process of re-evaluation of the PMS, which you would like to be guided by the thinking of the Pope, I offer for your attention some general criteria and starting points, without entering into details, not least because different situations may require adaptations and modifications.

1) To the best of your ability, and without undue speculation about the future, *preserve or recover the role of the PMS as part of the larger People of God from which they arose.* It would prove bene-

ficial to seek a greater “immersion” in the reality of people’s lives. Following Jesus means emerging from our own problems and concerns. It would be worthwhile to enter into concrete circumstances and conditions, while seeking to reintegrate the capillary effect of actions and contacts of the PMS within the greater network of Church institutions (dioceses, parishes, communities, and groups). By prioritizing your specific presence in the People of God, with its bright spots and difficulties, you can better elude the pitfall of abstraction. One must provide answers to real questions and not just formulate and multiply proposals. Perhaps concrete contact with real life situations, and not just discussions in boardrooms or theoretical analyses of our own internal dynamics, will generate useful insights for changing and improving operating procedures and adapting them to different contexts and circumstances.

2) I suggest proceeding in such a way that the essential structure of the PMS remains bound to the *practice of prayer and of gathering resources for mission*, in all its simplicity and practicality. This would clearly demonstrate the relationship of the PMS to the faith of the People of God. With all necessary flexibility and adaptations, this basic design of the PMS should neither be forgotten nor distorted. Asking the Lord to open hearts to the Gospel and asking everyone to tangibly support missionary work: these are simple and practical things that everyone can readily do in this present time when, even amid the scourge of this pandemic, there is a great desire to encounter and remain close to the heart of the Church’s life. So seek new paths, new forms of service, but try not to complicate what in reality is quite simple.

3) The PMS are and must be experienced as an *instrument of service* for the mission of the particular Churches, against the backdrop of the mission of the universal Church. This is the ever-precious contribution that the Societies make to the spread of the Gospel. All of us are called to nurture by means of love and gratitude, as well as by our works, the seeds of divine life that the Spirit of Christ causes to blossom and grow where he wills, even in the deserts. Please, in your prayer ask above all that the Lord make everyone better prepared to recognize the signs of his activity, in order then to reveal them to the whole world. Even this can be helpful: to ask that, in the depths of our own hearts, our prayer to the Holy Spirit may not be reduced to a mere formality in our meetings and homilies. It is not helpful to theorize about super-strategies or mission “core guidelines” as a means of reviving missionary spirit or giving missionary patents to others. If, in some cases, missionary fervour is fading, it is a

sign that faith itself is fading. In such cases, the attempt to revive the flame by strategies and speeches will end up only weakening it all the more, causing the desert to expand.

4) The service undertaken by the PMS naturally brings its staff into *contact with countless realities*, situations and events that are part of the great ebb and flow of the life of the Church on every continent. In this contact, we may encounter numerous problems and forms of inertia that can mark ecclesial life, but also the gratuitous gifts of healing and consolation that the Holy Spirit disseminates in daily life, in what might be called the “middle class of holiness”. Rejoice and savour these encounters that you experience thanks to the work of the PMS, and let yourselves be astonished by them. I think of the reports of many miracles that happen to children, who perhaps encounter Jesus thanks to the initiatives proposed by the Holy Childhood. Yours is a labour that can never be reduced to an exclusively bureaucratic-professional scope. When it comes to mission, bureaucracies or functionaries should never exist. Your gratitude can in turn become a gift and witness for all. With the means that you have at your disposal, and quite naturally, you can recount the comforting story of persons and communities in which the miracle of faith gratuitously shines with hope and charity.

5) Gratitude for the wonders worked by the Lord among his chosen ones, the poor and the little ones to whom he reveals those things hidden from the wise (cf. *Mt 11:25-26*), can make it easier for you too to *avoid the pitfalls of self-absorption* and leave yourselves behind as you follow Jesus. The very notion of a self-centred missionary effort, which spends time contemplating and celebrating its own initiatives, would be absurd. Do not waste time and resources, then, in looking at yourself in a mirror, devising plans centred on internal mechanisms, functionality and the efficiency of your own bureaucracy. Look outside. Do not look at yourselves in the mirror. Break every mirror in the house! The criteria employed in implementing programmes should aim not at burdening the network of the PMS but at making structures and procedures more flexible. National Directors, for example, should be working to identify potential successors, taking as their sole criterion proposing persons with great missionary zeal, not just members of their own small group.

6) Regarding the *collection of resources* to help the missions, I have already spoken during our past gatherings about the risk of turning the PMS into an NGO, where everything is devoted to locating and appropriating funds. This depends more on the attitude with which things are done than the goals that are achieved. It can certainly be advisable and even appropriate when fundraising to use creativity and even updated methods for seeking funding from potential and worthy sources. However, if in some areas the collection of donations lessens, even because of the waning of Christian memory, the temptation may arise to resolve the problem ourselves by “covering up” the situation and gambling on some better fundraising system developed by groups specializing in large donors. Our pain at the loss of faith and the reduction of resources should not be covered up but rather placed in the hands of the Lord. In any case, asking for offerings for the missions should continue to be directed first and foremost to the larger body of the baptized, also through different ways of taking up the collection for the missions carried out in every country in October on the occasion of World Mission Day. The Church continues to advance thanks to the widow’s mite and the contributions of innumerable people healed and consoled by Jesus, who for this reason, overflowing with gratitude, donate whatever they have.

7) The *use of the donations* received is always to be evaluated with an appropriate *sensus Ecclesiae*

Freely giving oneself in service to the Church

regarding the distribution of funds in support of structures and projects capable of advancing the apostolic mission and the preaching of the Gospel in various ways and in diverse parts of the world. Attention should always be paid to the most fundamental necessities of communities while at the same time avoiding a welfare culture, which instead of assisting missionary zeal ends up making hearts lukewarm and feeding phenomena of parasitic dependency, also within the Church. Your contribution should aim at giving concrete answers to objective needs, without squandering resources in initiatives marked by abstraction, self-absorption or generated by clerical narcissism. Do not yield to inferiority complexes or the temptation to imitate those super-functional organizations that collect funds for good causes and then use a good percentage of them to finance their own bureaucracy and to publicize their brand name. Even publicity can at times become a way of promoting one's own interests by showing how one works for the poor and those in need.

8) As for the *poor*, you too must not forget them. This was the recommendation at the Council of Jerusalem that the apostles Peter, James and John passed on to Paul, Barnabas and Titus, who came to discuss their mission among the uncircumcised: "Only, we were to be mindful of the poor" (*Gal 2:10*). Following that recommendation, Paul organized collections for the benefit of the brethren of the Church of Jerusalem (cf. *1 Cor 16:1*). The preferential option for the poor and the little ones has always been present since the origins of the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. Works of spiritual and corporal charity on their behalf are expressions of a "divine preference" that serves as a constant challenge to the faith of all Christians, who are called to have the same attitude as that of Jesus (cf. *Phil 2:5*).

9) The PMS, in their worldwide network, reflect the rich variety of the "people with a thousand faces", gathered together by the grace of Christ and marked by missionary fervour. That zeal is not always intense and lively in the same way everywhere. Even so, the same urgency of confessing Christ dead and resurrected finds expression in a variety of accents and adapts to diverse contexts. The revelation of the Gospel is not identified with any one culture and when it encounters new

changes to make in procedures, it is good that these point towards unburdening rather than increasing the load, aiming at operational flexibility and not producing more rigid bureaucracies that involve the threat of introversion. An excessive centralization, rather than helping, can complicate missionary outreach. Even a purely national organization of initiatives can jeopardize the nature of the PMS network, as well as the exchange of gifts between the Churches and local communities lived as the tangible fruit and sign of charity among brothers and sisters in communion with the Bishop of Rome.

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10) The PMS are not an autonomous entity in the Church, acting in a vacuum. Among their distinctive features always to be cultivated and renewed is the special bond uniting them to the Bishop of the Church of Rome, which presides in charity. It is comforting to know that this bond manifests itself in a work carried out joyfully, without seeking applause or staking claims. A work that precisely in its gratuitousness is intertwined with service to the Pope, the servant of the servants of God. I would ask that the distinctive sign of your closeness to the Bishop of Rome be precisely this: the sharing of the love of the Church, a reflection of her own love for Christ, experienced and expressed quietly, without pride or a concern for "turf wars". Daily efforts born of charity and the mystery of gratuitousness, which support countless persons who remain deeply thankful, yet perhaps even unaware of whom to thank, since they may never have heard of the PMS. The mystery of charity, within the Church, works in this way. We continue to advance together, even amid trials, thanks to the gifts and the consolations of the Lord. In the meantime, and at every step, we joyfully acknowledge that all of us are useless servants, beginning with myself.

CONCLUSION

Move forward with enthusiasm! There is much to do on the journey that awaits you. If there are

changes to make in procedures, it is good that these point towards unburdening rather than increasing the load, aiming at operational flexibility and not producing more rigid bureaucracies that involve the threat of introversion. An excessive centralization, rather than helping, can complicate missionary outreach. Even a purely national organization of initiatives can jeopardize the nature of the PMS network, as well as the exchange of gifts between the Churches and local communities lived as the tangible fruit and sign of charity among brothers and sisters in communion with the Bishop of Rome.

In any event, always demand that every consideration regarding the operational aspect of the PMS be illuminated by the one thing necessary: a spark of true love for the Church as a reflection of love for Christ. Yours is a service rendered to apostolic fervour, namely to that impulse of Christian life which only the Holy Spirit can bring about within the People of God. Think about doing your work well, "as if everything depended on you, while knowing that everything in fact depends on God" (Saint Ignatius of Loyola). As I already mentioned to you in one of our encounters, imitate the ready spirit of Mary. When she visited Elizabeth, Mary did not do so on her own: she went as a servant of the Lord Jesus, whom she carried in her womb. She said nothing about herself, but simply brought her Son and praised God. It was not about her. She went as the servant of the One who is the sole protagonist of missionary activity. Nonetheless, she wasted no time, going in haste and doing what was needed to look after her kinswoman. She teaches us this same readiness, the haste born of fidelity and adoration.

May Our Lady watch over you and the Pontifical Mission Societies, and may her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, bless you. For before ascending to heaven, he promised to be with us always, to the end of time.

Given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran,
the 21st of May 2020,
the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.

Franciscus



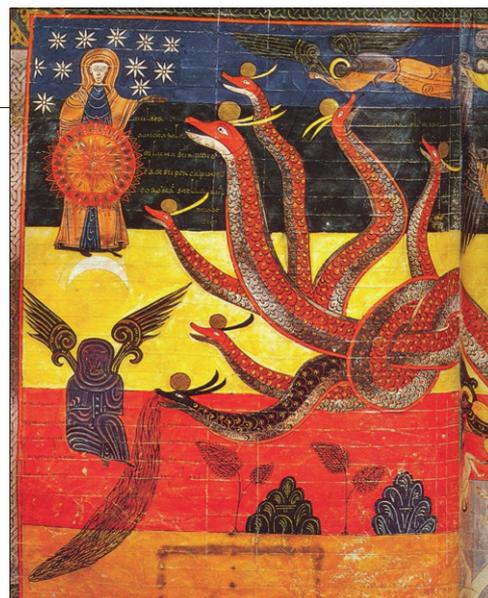
storytelling

WORD OF THE YEAR

"I would like to devote this year's Message to the theme of storytelling, because I believe that, so as not to lose our bearings, we need to make our own the truth contained in good stories. Stories that build up, not tear down; stories that help us rediscover our roots and the strength needed to move forward together".

(Message of the Holy Father for the World Day of Social Communications 2020)

"Commentary on the Apocalypse"
by Beatus of Liébana (detail, XI century)



Social distancing in our relationship with God

The continuous struggle against 'shapeless' time

TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE, OP

On January 22nd and 23rd, 2020, the director general of the World Health Organisation presided over an Emergency Committee to consider whether the outbreak of a new virus in Wuhan constituted a public health emergency of international concern. The committee was unable to agree. The following day, January 24th, Pope Francis published his message for the 54th World Communications Day, on the art of storytelling. The world was on the verge of waking up to a new global plague. What stories can we tell faced with a pandemic?

The Pope asserts that we need stories 'so as not to lose our bearings... stories that help us rediscover our roots and the strength needed to move forward together.' Our stories, communal and individual, shape our sense of time so that we can navigate towards a future with hope. But in this time of lockdown, the usual calendars that give us a sense of future are collapsing. Family gatherings for weddings and funerals are not possible; we cannot come together to celebrate the great feasts of the liturgical year; even the sporting calendar no longer gives us a sense of anticipation. Our time has become shapeless. A pandemic leaves us without any bearings. We need stories that shape our lives in a time of plague.

Providentially, the Pope's message begins with a quotation – "That you may tell your children and grandchildren" (Ex 10:2) – that directly refers to the plagues inflicted on the Egyptians. The blood of lambs on the doorposts of the Hebrews saved them from the final plague, the death of all the first born males. Plagues in the Bible confront us with death, not just as the inevitable fate of every living thing, but as a

ruthless power that only the Lord of life and death can overthrow. Every pandemic carries a hint of the apocalypse, of 'the pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him' (Rev 6:8).

Plagues have frequently cast the shadow of death over humanity but never before have we been so aware of a global menace. I read every day of how many victims there have been in every country of the world. What story of hope can Christianity offer today faced with Covid-19?

The Jewish Passover is a remembrance of the plagues that led to the liberation of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt. This memory shaped the Lord's confrontation with the ultimate enemy of humanity, death on the night before his betrayal. This is the story with which we can find our bearings in a time of pestilence. On that night, all that gave bearing and direction to the disciples collapsed. Everything on which they had staked their hope was about to crumble. Ahead lay only betrayal, denial, desertion, the collapse of their little community, and the suffering and death of the one who called them his friends. As the disciples on the road to Emmaus said, 'We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel' (Lk 24:21). The cross seemed to be not just the death of one person, but the victory of death itself.

So Jesus' gesture in taking the bread, blessing it and declaring it to be his body, and the wine to be his blood, was a gesture pregnant with a hope beyond all their imagining. It did not just grapple with his death the next day, but with the reign of death, reaching forward to the victory of Easter Day.

One glimpses the splendour of the drama of that last night in situations when death casts its dark shadow over peoples. I first was

touched by this during a visit to Rwanda in 1993, as the genocide was beginning to ignite. I was due to visit the Dominican sisters in the north when the Belgian Ambassador came and warned us to stay at home since the country was on fire, but we went anyway. After a day charged with violence, with rebels and soldiers, with children maimed by mines, I went to visit my Dominican sisters. What could I say in the midst of such horror? I was lost for words. Then I remembered that I had a memory and a promise to re-enact, which defied death, and which promised communion when humanity was scattered. This is the story with which we challenge the menace of plague, which is why it is deeply sad that most of us cannot gather together to celebrate it but must watch on-line.

Pope Francis' message for World Communication Day is an invitation to remember that even in the isolation of our own homes we can sustain communion in ways that were never possible before. We respond to a global crisis with a global communion. The number of people attending the daily Eucharist on-line at my priory in Oxford is three times the number who came to church here before Covid-19. I am receiving a tsunami of emails and phone calls. I skype and zoom as never before.

Yet the physical isolation gnaws at our humanity. We need the nourishment of each other's faces and the sustenance of gentle touch. If we are deprived of these our humanity is starved. Grandparents are unable to embrace their children, and we find ourselves separated from people whom we love. Zoom and Skype are not enough. How can we bear it?

The story of the Last Supper tells of a communion that is born of Jesus' deepening isolation. He presides

at the Last Supper over a community which is already disintegrating. In the garden of Gethsemane, his disciples sleep while he struggles alone to face his destiny. He is a solitary figure as he stands before the judgment of the high priests and Pontius Pilate, and then he attains the utter solitude of the cross, made unutterably worse by the baying mob below. So one way to bear the isolation which is imposed on billions is as a sharing in the loneliness of Jesus which he bore so that we might belong to each other in him.

In Rwanda, and then more recently in Syria within hearing distance of the front line with ISIS, the pregnant hope of our simple Eucharistic story was unveiled for me. This is the narrative which no pestilence can subvert. And yet for millions of people going to Mass is experienced simply as boring. For many, it does not touch their imagination but is a dreary duty to be endured.

It is paradoxical that one of the most popular stories of the twentieth century, *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien is an exploration of his belief in the Eucharist. He wrote to his son Michael, just before his first communion, 'I put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament. There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity and the true way of all your loves upon earth.' It appears strange that a romance that touched the imagination of the world is Eucharistic, and yet the Eucharist itself often fails to do so. How can the beauty of its narrative become evident?

Pope Francis identifies heroism as a characteristic of compelling stories: "The stories of different ages all have a common "loom": the thread of

Why we pray during a global pandemic

During times of great uncertainty, small moments of meaning inevitably emerge that invite us to think differently about our present situation.

One of those moments was captured in a recent photo of two men praying. Look closer and you see that one man is a Jew, the other a Muslim and both are paramedics in Israel. One can hardly discern the crushing pressure and unbearable sorrow these two professionals likely have experienced. But there they are together, united in a shared mission, and centered in a place of peace before they voluntarily resume another heartbreaking day on the job.

It is not unusual for people to turn to prayer during hard times. A University of Copenhagen economist recently found that more people are practicing "religious coping" as Internet searches for prayers set a five-year record last month. Hard times certainly are not the exclusive province of prayer. Many people pray with gratitude for the abundance in their lives including a good job, a healthy body, a close group of friends.

While we encourage the practice of prayer to God every day, we nonetheless welcome the resurgence in prayer – even if driven by hard times. It's often during adversity when prayer becomes most valuable to its practitioners. When the walls seem to be closing in, forcing us to reckon with our mortality, prayer can free us by creating space allowing us to find peace about how we should live out the time we have on this Earth. While the phrase "Don't just stand there, do something!" is true, we believe the inverse also is true: "Don't just do something, stand there in prayer!"

As an age-old practice, prayer is both widely recognized and, at the same time, deeply misunderstood. Some have used prayer as a



prop, desiring merely an outward appearance of piety; others have used it as a bludgeon to question the piety of those they've never met. Indeed, if prayer is confined to a mere spectator's sport, its meaning, purpose and benefits never will be known or realized.

A good way to understand prayer is to see it as a prism in that something truly unique is discovered depending on how it's observed. Prayer helps us to get to know ourselves better and helps us work on our many flaws. But prayer also helps us turn away from ourselves to focus on the needs of others. It helps humble us through acceptance of the reality that we have much less control over events in life than we realize. It also reminds us that, while we are free thinking and free acting individuals, our choices can and do impact the broader community to which we belong. Crucially, prayer helps us to act and become the

people we are called to be. As Mother Teresa once said: "Prayer in action is love and love in action is service."

As religious leaders of diverse faiths, prayer helps reveal answers to questions that weigh on us. Admittedly, the answers we seek sometimes are not readily clear. When this happens, our prayers continue. And through our prayers, we realize that a straight line seldom exists between the questions we are confronted with and the answers we desire. What becomes important is to stand there in prayer.

As people across the nation research lists on the Internet to keep them busy while sheltering in place, it is our earnest desire that prayer helps show people how to live out their time on Earth, part of which includes acting in solidarity to give aid and comfort to those who are suffering.

The Muslim and Jewish paramedics seen praying in the photo never imagined delivering their services during a global pandemic. And yet they find the courage to get up every morning and continue to serve those in need. They run the risk of getting sick, and even dying. But they find the grace to pray and the strength to do the work. They know that people are depending on them.

For these two paramedics, and all first responders, for medical workers, for elected officials, for the sick and their families, for those who died, we continue to pray.

Cardinal BLASE J. CUPICH
Archbishop of Chicago
Roman Catholic Church

Metropolitan NATHANAEL SYMEONIDES
Primate of the Metropolis of Chicago
Greek Orthodox Church

The continuous struggle against 'shapeless' time

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

their narrative involves "heroes", including everyday heroes, who in following a dream confront difficult situations and combat evil, driven by a force that makes them courageous, the force of love. By immersing ourselves in stories, we can find reasons to heroically face the challenges of life. *The Lord of the Rings* is the story of plodding little beings, who fear adventure but become heroes.

If we can see the drama of our Eucharist as story of heroism, it may ignite our imagination. Two examples spring to mind. The first is the early English poem, "The Dream of the Rood" which may date to the seventh century. It portrays Jesus as 'a young hero' who mounts the cross to do battle like a knight. The second is the film *Des hommes et des Dieux*, directed by Xavier Beauvois, which won the *Grand Prix* at the Cannes film festival in 2010. It touched the imagination of millions because it is the true story of ordinary timid monks becoming heroes. It tells of a small community of Trappist monks in Algeria in the 1990s who are caught up in a rising tide of violence. Should they stay and risk death or go? The most moving scene is their Last Supper. Old brother Luke produces a couple of bottles of wine and puts on the

gramophone the music of *Swan Lake*. Nothing is said. We just see their faces, filled with sorrow at the suffering that lies ahead and with joy that they will share in the story of the last days of their Lord. It is the utter beauty of a Eucharistic heroism, quiet and without pretension.

How can we live this present situation heroically and so touch the imagination of our contemporaries? In earlier plagues, such as the Black Death, Christians went out and ministered to the sick risking death. The heroes of our plague are the nurses and doctors who labour on the front line. Many of them do so as an expression of their Christian faith, but how can the Church explicitly live out the drama of the Eucharistic story now, when churches are closed, and many hospitals, at least in the UK, do not let chaplains enter?

I have come to accept, with difficulty, the wisdom and rightness of the decision to self-isolate the clergy. Otherwise we would become instruments of contagion ourselves. There are some examples of heroism: Don Giuseppe Berardelli, the 72 year old priest who gave up his ventilator so that a young person could live and who died as a result, or I think of an American Dominican working in New York who has moved into a hospital to be of service to the suf-

fers from the virus, even though it means leaving his community. But I struggle to imagine how the Church can make clear the heroism of our great story faced with Covid-19. Self-isolation may be necessary but it does not look heroic! Maybe it is with a sort of holy realism, looking death in the face, acknowledging the unique drama that each victim undergoes, but refusing to panic, for we believe that death's rule is over.

There is a final theme in the Pope's message which has become unexpectedly relevant in today's crisis. Francis stresses the beauty of telling our own stories to God. 'To tell our story to the Lord is to enter into his gaze of compassionate love for us and for others. We can recount to him the stories we live, bringing to him the people and the situations that fill our lives. With him we can re-weave the fabric of life, darning its rips and tears.'

Many people this Easter have been unable to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Two months after



The cast members from "Des hommes et des Dieux"

the publication of his message, the Pope urged the faithful to confess their sins to God if no priest is available. This need not just be a recital of sins but, as the Pope's message suggests, the sharing of one's story with God, with its dramas, failures and triumphs. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Scriptum super librum 1^o Sententiarum*, goes further and says that when there is no priest, one can recite one's sins to another lay person, who cannot give absolution but who is a sort of minister of the sacrament 'by necessity'. So in this crisis, we can all represent the merciful ear of God, attending to the drama of each other's lives, reassuring each other of love's final victory.



REGINA CAELI

Chinese Catholics are an "integral part" of the Universal Church, who shares their hopes and supports them in life's trials, Pope Francis said on Sunday, 24 May, after reciting the Regina Caeli from the library of the Vatican's Apostolic Palace. The following is a translation of the Holy Father's address which was dedicated to Sunday's Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord.

On World Communications Day, Pope Francis remembers Our Lady of Sheshan

Closeness and support to Catholics in China

Appeal for the care of creation and the weakest on the fifth anniversary of 'Laudato Si'

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good Morning,

Today, in Italy and in other countries, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord is being celebrated. The Gospel reading (cf. Mt 28:16-20) shows us the Apostles who gather in Galilee, at "the mountain to which Jesus had directed them" (v. 16). The Lord's final encounter with his followers takes place here, on the mountain. The "mountain" has a strong symbolic and evocative charge. Jesus proclaimed the Beatitudes on the Mount (cf. Mt 5: 1-12); He withdrew to the mountains to pray (cf. Mt 14:23). He welcomed the crowds there and healed the sick (cf. Mt 15:29). However this time on the mountain, he is no longer the Master who acts and teaches, but rather the Risen One who asks the disciples to take action and to proclaim, entrusting to them the mandate to continue his work.

He assigns to them the mission to all the peoples. He says: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (vv. 19-20). The contents of the mission entrusted to the Apostles are the following: to proclaim, baptize, teach and walk the path traced by the Master, that is, the living Gospel. This message of salvation first of all implies the duty of witness – one cannot proclaim without witness – to which we too, today's disciples, are called to explain our faith. Faced with such a demanding task, and thinking of our weaknesses, we feel inadequate, as the Apostles themselves surely felt. But we must not be discouraged, remembering the words Jesus addressed to

them before ascending to Heaven: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (v. 20).

This promise ensures the constant and consoling presence of Jesus among us. But how is this presence realised? Through His Spirit, who leads the Church to walk through history as the companion of every person. That Spirit sent by Christ and the Father, who works the remission of sins and sanctifies all those who are repentant and open themselves with confidence to his gift. With the promise to remain with us until the end of time, Jesus inaugurates the style of his presence in the world as the Risen One. Jesus is present in the world but with another style, the

style of the Risen One, that is a presence that is revealed in the Word, in the Sacraments and in the constant and interior action of the Holy Spirit. The Feast of the Ascension tells us that although Jesus ascended to Heaven to dwell gloriously at the right hand of the Father, he is still and always among us: this is the source of our strength, our perseverance and our joy, from the very presence of Jesus among us with the strength of the Holy Spirit.

May the Virgin Mary accompany our journey with her maternal protection. May we learn from her the gentleness and courage to be witnesses in the world of the Risen Lord.

After praying the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Let us join spiritually with the Catholic faithful in China, who today celebrate with particular devotion the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Help of Christians and Patroness of China, worshipped in the Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai. Let us entrust to the guidance and protection of our Heavenly Mother the Pastors and faithful of the Catholic Church in that great country, so that they may be strong in faith and steadfast in fraternal union, joyful witnesses and promoters of charity and fraternal hope, and good citizens.

Dearest Catholic brothers and sisters in China, I wish to assure you that the universal Church, of which you are an integral part, shares your hopes and supports you in your trials of life. She accompanies you with prayer for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit, so that the light and beauty of the Gospel, God's power for the salvation of whoever believes, may shine within you. In expressing to you all once again my great and sincere affection, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing. May Our Lady keep you always!

Finally, let us entrust to the intercession of Mary Help of Christians all the Lord's disciples and all the people of good will who in this difficult time, in every part of the world, passionately and committedly work for peace, for dialogue between nations, for service to the poor, for the care of creation and for the victory of humanity over every disease of body, heart and soul.

Today is World Social Communications day, dedicated this year to the theme of storytelling. May this event encourage us to tell and share constructive stories that help us to understand that we are all part of a story that is larger than ourselves, and we can



God of love, show us our place in this world as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth, for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Praise be to you!

(@Pontifex)



Remembering the fifth anniversary of Pope Francis' Document

Laudato Si', Encyclical to help us look to the future after the pandemic

ANDREA TORNIELLI

Recalling the five years of *Laudato Si'* is not a ritual celebration. The week and the year dedicated to the Encyclical represent a sort of verification to gather initiatives, ideas, experiences and good practices. They are a way of sharing what the document set in motion in communities and in territories, throughout the world, and to reflect on its timeliness in the present moment, as the entire world is combatting the Covid-19 pandemic.

One of the merits of the extensive Papal text, which begins with the fundamentals of the relationship between creatures and Creator, is to make us understand that everything is connected: no environmental issue exists apart from the social one, and climate change, migration, wars, poverty and underdevelopment are manifestations of a unique crisis that even before being ecological is, at its root, an ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis. It is about a profoundly realistic gaze. *Laudato Si'* was not born out of nostalgia to turn back the clock of history and return to pre-industrial forms of life, but rather, it identifies and describes the processes of self-destruction triggered by the search for immediate profit and for the deified market. The root of the ecological problem, Pope Francis writes, lies precisely in the fact that there is a "certain way of understanding [that] human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us".

Starting over from reality means objectively accounting for the human condition, beginning with the recognition of the limitations of the world and its resources. It means a

departure from the blind trust represented by the "technocratic paradigm" which, the Pope affirms, following in the footsteps of Romano Guardini, "has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since 'the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts'". Men and women, we also read in the Encyclical, "have constantly intervened in nature, but for a long time this meant

frequently ignoring or forgetting the reality in front of us". Thus, "the time has come to pay renewed attention to reality and the limits it imposes; this in turn is the condition for a more sound and fruitful development of individuals and society".

The crisis we are experiencing due to the pandemic has rendered all this even more evident: "we have gone ahead at breakneck speed", the Pope stated during the *Statio Orbis*

regardless, thinking we would stay healthy in a world that was sick". Also during that intense moment of prayer to invoke the end of a pandemic that made us reawaken to all our fragility and helplessness, Francis noted that we are called to "seize this time of trial as a *time of choosing*... a time to choose what matters and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not". *Laudato Si'* guides us in ret-



A photograph by Yann Arthus-Bertrand

being in tune with and respecting the possibilities offered by the things themselves. It was a matter of receiving what nature itself allowed, as if from its own hand. Now, by contrast, we are the ones to lay our hands on things, attempting to extract everything possible from them while

on 27 March, "feeling powerful and able to do anything. Greedy for profit, we let ourselves get caught up in things, and lured away by haste... we were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet. We carried on re-

hinking society where human life, especially that of the weakest, is defended; where everyone has access to care, where people are never discarded and nature is not indiscriminately plundered but rather cultivated and safeguarded for those who will come after us.

VATICAN BULLETIN

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served as parish priest of Blessed Eusebio parish in Târgu Secuiesc (26 May).

Bishop-elect Kerekes, 51, was born in Ghelinta, Romania. He completed his theological studies and obtained a licence in Canon Law and a doctorate at Saint Paul Catholic University in Ottawa. He was ordained a priest on 16 May 1993.

RELATIONS WITH STATES

The Holy Father appointed Msgr Ante Jozic, titular Archbishop-elect of Cissa, as Apostolic Nuncio to Belarus (21 May).

PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

The Holy Father appointed as member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Prof. Eric Steven Lander,

President and Founding Director of the Broad Institute of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard Cambridge, USA (25 May).

NECROLOGY

Bishop Andrea Jin Daoyuan, Bishop "without jurisdiction" of the Diocese of Changzhi/Luan, in Shanxi, in Mainland China, at age 90 (20 Nov. 2019)

Bishop Czesław Stanula, CSSR, Bishop emeritus of Itabuna, Brazil, at age 80 (14 May)

Bishop Vincent Malone, titular Bishop of Abora and Auxiliary Bishop emeritus of Liverpool, Great Britain, at age 88 (18 May)

Bishop Johann Weber, Bishop emeritus of Graz-Seckau, Austria, at age 93 (23 May)

Bishop Oscar Lino Lopes Fernandes Braga, Bishop emeritus of Benguela, Angola, at age 88 (26 May)

Regina Caeli

Closeness to Catholics in China

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look to the future with hope if we truly care for one another as brothers and sisters.

Today, on the day of Mary Help of Christians, I address an affectionate and cordial greeting to the Salesians. I recall with gratitude the spiritual formation I received from the sons and daughters of Don Bosco.

Today I was supposed to go to Acerra to support the faith of that population and the commitment of those who are working to counter the drama of pollution in the so-called "Land of Fire". My visit has been postponed. However, I send my greetings, my blessing and my encouragement to the Bishop, the priests, the families and the entire diocesan community, as we look forward to meeting each other as

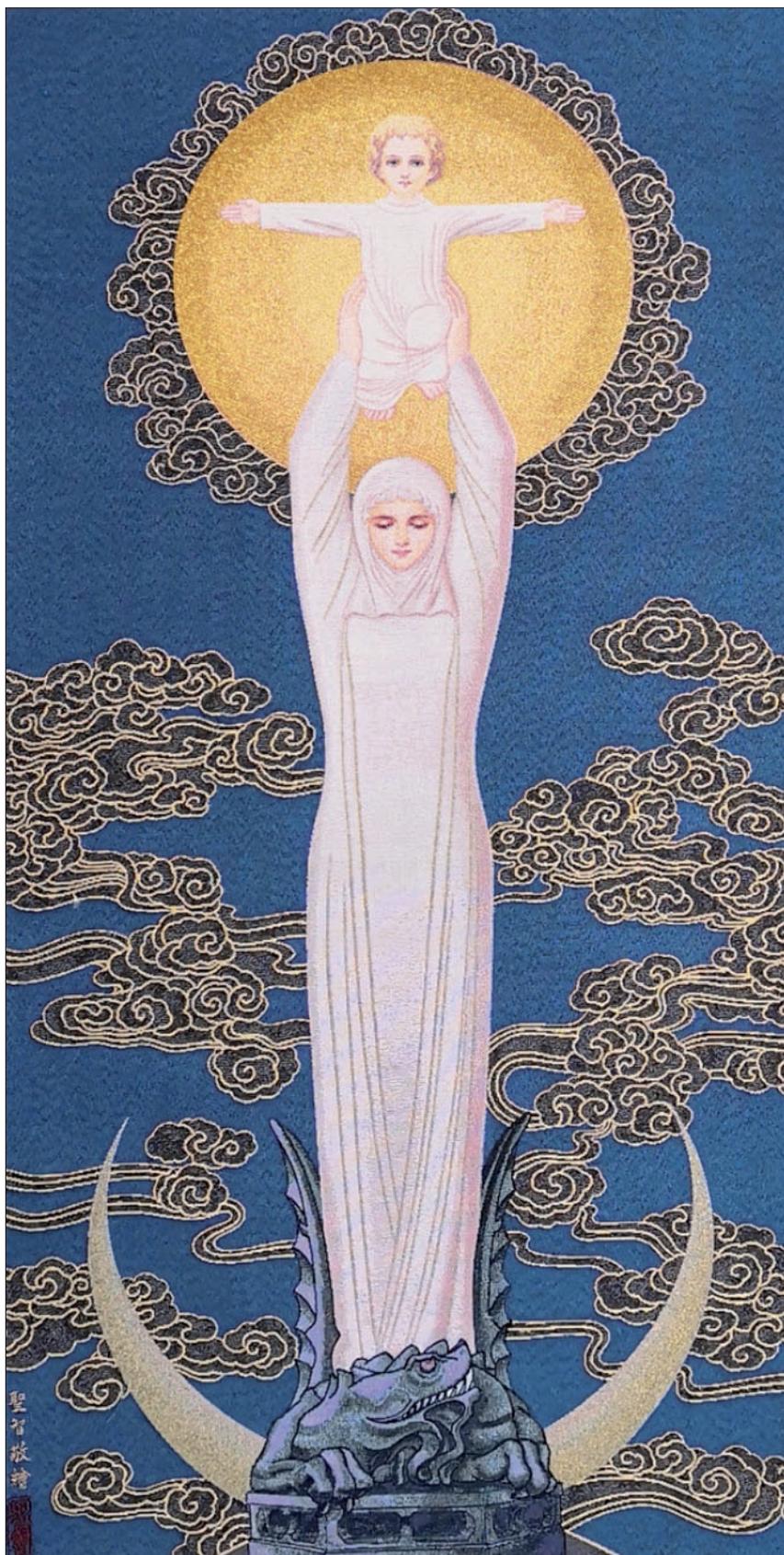
soon as possible. I will go there, for sure!

And today is also the fifth anniversary of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which sought to draw attention to the cry of the earth and of the poor. Thanks to the initiative of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the "*Laudato Si'* Week" we have just celebrated will blossom into a special Year of the anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, a special year to reflect on the Encyclical, from 24 May this year until 24 May next year. I invite all people of good will to participate, in order to take care of our common home and our most fragile brothers and sisters. The prayer dedicated to this Year will be published on the site. It will be beautiful to pray it.

I wish you all a good Sunday. Please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci!*

Prayer for the special year of the anniversary of *Laudato Si'*

Listen to the cry of the earth and of the poor



by Mr Zhu Weiran (Shengzhi)

The following is a translation of the special prayer to accompany the celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Encyclical "Laudato Si': On the Care for Our Common Home", announced by the Holy Father after praying the Regina Caeli, on Sunday, 24 May. The Pope also invited the faithful to take part in the "Laudato Si' Year".

Loving God,

Creator of Heaven, Earth, and all therein contained.

Open our minds and touch our hearts, so that we can be part of Creation, your gift.

Be present to those in need in these difficult times, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Help us to show creative solidarity as we confront the consequences of the global pandemic.

Make us courageous in embracing the changes required to seek the common good.

Now more than ever, may we all feel interconnected and interdependent.

Enable us to succeed in listening and responding to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. May their current sufferings become the birth-pangs of a more fraternal and sustainable world.

We pray through Christ our Lord, under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians.

Amen.

A Jubilee Year for the Earth

"Care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion. Jesus reminded us that we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters". With this tweet on Saturday, 23 May, the Holy Father announced the "Special Year" initiative dedicated to the Encyclical on "Care for Our Common Home", which began on Sunday, 24 May, the fifth anniversary of the signing of *Laudato Si'*. In the days leading up to his announcement, he had reminded his followers that "each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see", and that "because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence. We have no such right" (22 May). Promoted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the year dedicated to *Laudato Si'* will end on 24 May 2021. During this time several initiatives will be hosted at all levels – national and international. Let us remember, as the Holy Father noted, that "when we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them" (May 22).