

L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

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Friday, 5 June 2020

At the General Audience Francis expresses concern about the protests in the US after the tragic death of George Floyd

Racism is a sin that cannot be tolerated

Recalling that with violence nothing is achieved he launches an appeal for national reconciliation

Across the USA, after peaceful protests turned to violence in response to the blatant killing of George Floyd, an unarmed African American, at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Pope Francis raised his voice at the General Audience on Wednesday, 3 June, as he addressed the faithful from the Vatican's Apostolic Palace.

He addressed his thoughts directly to his "brothers and sisters in the United States", expressing his "great concern" for "the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr George Floyd".

Condemning the sin of racism everywhere, he stressed that "we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life", and recalled the words

of the Archbishop of Los Angeles in stating, "the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost".

The Holy Father then joined "the Church in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism", and asked the faithful to join him in imploring "the national reconciliation and peace for which we yearn", praying especially to "Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America", whom he asked to "intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and throughout the world".



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To heal the famine of hope

The Holy Father celebrates Mass for the Solemnity of Pentecost in the Vatican Basilica



Without the Holy Spirit the mission is propaganda

ANDREA TORNIELLI

Speaking to the General Assembly of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, on 5 July 1968, Ignatius, then Metropolitan of Latakia (Laodicea), spoke about the action of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in each believer, with these words: "He himself is this New Thing at work in the world. He is the presence of God-with-us and 'bearing witness with our spirit'. Without him (Holy Spirit) God is far away, Christ belongs to the past, and the Gospel is a dead letter, the Church is merely an organization, authority is domination, mission is propaganda, worship is an evocation, and Christian action is a slave-morality".

On the joyful day of Pentecost rendered even more festive by the Pope's return to the window, with Saint Peter's Square once again populated with faithful, the Church is aware once more of her missionary task. A task that does not originate from projects or pastoral plans, but from the grateful reverberation of a gift received, lived in the simplicity and ordinary nature of Christian life. "The mission, the 'Church on the move', is not a programme, an enterprise to be carried out by sheer force of will" – Francis wrote in his Message for World Mission Day 2020, quoting a passage from his interview book *"Senza di Lui non possiamo fare nulla"* – "It is Christ who makes the Church go out of herself. In the

mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you, and carries you".

On the day of Pentecost, during his homily for the Mass he celebrated in Saint Peter's Basilica, the Pope said: "we discover that the first task of the Church is proclamation. Yet we also see that the Apostles devised no strategy; when they were locked in there, in the Upper Room, they were not strategizing, no, they were not drafting any pastoral plan...". Both the homily and the Message for World Mission Day are linked to another important Message, the one that in recent days Francis sent to the Pontifical Missionary Societies (PMS). In that document – quickly filed away or interpreted as a confirmation of projects already underway – the Pope recalled that the horizon of the Church's mission is the normalcy of everyday life, not elitist upper rooms, and that Jesus met his first disciples while they were involved in their daily work, not "at a convention, a training workshop, or in the Temple". Francis did not propose projects of reform or of new foundation to the network of Pontifical Mission Societies. Speaking clearly about a quite present and ever timely risk, he asked the PMS not to complicate what is simple, suggesting instead that they continue to be an instrument at the service of the Pope and the local Churches.

FOR THE POPE'S HOMILY, SEE PAGE 6

VATICAN BULLETIN



AUDIENCES

Tuesday, 26 May

Cardinal Angelo Becciu, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints

Friday, 29 May

Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Archbishop emeritus of Lyon, France, with a delegation from the Lázare Community

Saturday, 30 May

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

Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

NEW DIOCESE

The Holy Father has established the Ecclesiastical Province of Pointe-Noire, Republic of the Congo, at the same time elevating the diocese to a Metropolitan Church. The new province of Pointe-Noire will have as suffragan Churches the dioceses of Dolisie and Nkayi. It will be called the Ecclesiastical Province of the South-West. The Holy Father appointed Bishop Miguel Ángel Olaverri Arroniz, SDB, of Pointe-Noire, as Metropolitan Archbishop. Until now he has served as Bishop of Pointe-Noire (30 May).

Archbishop Olaverri Arroniz, 72, was born in Pamplona, Spain. He was ordained a priest on 5 May 1976. He was ordained a bishop on 28 April 2013, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Pointe-Noire.

The Holy Father has established the Ecclesiastical Province of Owando, Republic of the Congo, elevating it to a Metropolitan Church; and assigning as suffragan Churches the dioceses of Impfondo and Ouesso. The Province will also be called the Ecclesiastical Province of the North. The Holy Father appointed Bishop Victor Abagna Mossa as Metropolitan Archbishop. Until now he has served as Bishop of Owando (30 May).

Archbishop Abagna Mossa, 73, was born in Makoua, Republic of the Congo. He was ordained a priest on 29 December 1974. He was ordained a bishop on 26 March 2011, subsequent to his appointment as Bishop of Owando.

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Eugène Lambert Adrian Rixen from his office as Bishop of Goiás, Brazil (27 May).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Jeová Elias Ferreira as Bishop of Goiás. Until now he has served as vicar general and parish priest of Nossa Senhora de Nazaré (27 May).

Bishop-elect Ferreira, 58, was born in Sobral, Brazil. He holds a degree in philosophy and theology and a licence in pastoral theology. He was ordained a priest on 30 November 1991.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Célio da Silveira Calixto Filho as Auxiliary Bishop of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Segia. Until now he has served as parish priest of Nossa Senhora de Fátima in the Suburban Episcopal Vicariate (27 May).

Bishop-elect da Silveira Calixto Filho, 47, was born in Passos, Brazil. Before entering the seminary he studied mechanical engineering, and later studied philosophy and theology. He holds a licence in theology.

He was ordained a priest on 28 September 2002.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Camilo Fernando Castellón Pizano, SDB, from his office as Bishop of Barrancabermeja, Colombia (29 May).

The Holy Father appointed Fr Ovidio Giraldo Velásquez as Bishop of Barrancabermeja. Until now he has served as national director of the Network for New Evangelization – SINE (29 May).

Bishop-elect Velásquez, 57, was born in Montebonito, Colombia. He studied philosophy and theology and holds a licence in philosophy. He was ordained a priest on 18 February 1989.

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Orlando Roa Barbosa as Metropolitan Archbishop of Ibagué, Colombia. Until now he has served as Bishop of Espinal, Colombia (29 May).

Archbishop Roa Barbosa, 61, was born in Cali, Colombia. He was ordained a priest on 6 December 1984. He was ordained a bishop on 28 July 2012, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Nasbinca and Auxiliary of Ibagué.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Gregorio Nicanor Peña Rodríguez from his office as Bishop of Nuestra Señora de la Al-

tagracia en Higüey, Dominican Republic (30 May).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Jesús Castro Marte as Bishop of Nuestra Señora de la Altagracia en Higüey. Until now he has served as titular Bishop of Giufi and Auxiliary of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (30 May).

Bishop Castro Marte, 54, was born in Guerra, Dominican Republic. He was ordained a priest on 13 June 1995. He was ordained a bishop on 26 August 2017, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Giufi and Auxiliary of Santo Domingo.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Michael Kalu Ukpog as Auxiliary Bishop of Umuahia, Nigeria, assigning him the titular episcopal See of Igitigi. Until now he has served as chancellor of the said Diocese and parish priest of Saint Theresa Parish (30 May).

Bishop-elect Kalu Ukpog, 55, was born in Amaekpu Ohafia, Nigeria. He studied philosophy and theology; he holds a degree in canon law and a doctorate in theology. He was ordained a priest on 7 August 1993.

The Holy Father appointed Fr Paul Daisuke Narui, SVD, as Bishop of Niigata, Japan. Until now he has served as secretary for Justice and Peace at the General Curia of the Society of the Divine Word – Verbites, in Rome (31 May).

Bishop-elect Daisuke Narui, 46, was born in Iwakura, Japan. He holds a degree and a licence in moral theology. He was ordained a priest on 10 March 2001.

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Joseph Maria Punt from his office as Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam, Netherlands (1 June).

The Holy Father appointed Bishop Johannes Willibrordus Maria Hendriks, as Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam. Until now he has served as Coadjutor of the said diocese (1 June).

Bishop Hendriks, 65, was born in Leidschendam, Netherlands. He was ordained a priest on 29 September 1979. He was ordained a bishop on 10 December 2011, subsequent to his appointment as titular Bishop of Arsacal and Auxiliary of Haarlem-Amsterdam. On 22 December 2018 he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Haarlem-Amsterdam.

NECROLOGY

Archbishop Pedro Ercílio Simon, Archbishop emeritus of Passo Fundo – Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, at age 78 (1 June)

Holy See Press Office Communiqué

Pope Francis enacts new procedures for awarding contracts in the Vatican

The Holy Father's *Motu Proprio* on transparency, control and competition in the procedures for the awarding of public contracts by the Holy See and the Vatican City State was published on Monday, 1 June. The text, promulgated by publication in the daily edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, will enter into force thirty days thereafter.

The Document is the result of synergistic work coordinated by the Secretariat of State among the various bodies of the Roman Curia, including the Council for the Economy, the Secretariat for the Economy, the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See and the Governorate of Vatican City State. This is a unique code, which goes beyond the regulations currently in force in some individual entities and now applies to all entities referable to the Holy See and Vatican City State.

The regulations are among the most advanced international legislation on the subject. The inspiring principle of the new text is the diligence of the good family father, who seeks the effective and ethical management of his own resources, at the same time favouring transparency, control and the fair treatment of real competition among those who wish to establish an economic relationship with the entities concerned.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

At the General Audience on Wednesday, 3 June, Pope Francis focused his catechesis on prayer, encouraging the faithful to pray as Abraham taught us, that is, being "transparent" with God. At the end of his talk the Pope addressed the situation of civil unrest in the United States. Echoing the words of Archbishop José Gómez of Los Angeles, Francis stressed that "nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost". The following is a translation of the Holy Father's catechesis, which he delivered in Italian from the Vatican's Apostolic Library.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

There is a voice that suddenly resonates in Abraham's life. A voice that invites him to undertake a journey that he knows is absurd: a voice that spurs him to uproot himself from his homeland, from his family roots, in order to move toward a new, different future. And it is all based on a promise, in which he needs only to have trust. And to have trust in a promise is not easy. It takes courage. And Abraham had trust.

The Bible is silent on the steps of the first patriarch. The logic of things leaves us to presume that he had worshipped other divinities; perhaps he was a wise man, accustomed to observing the heavens and the stars. The Lord, in fact, promised him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars that speckle the sky.

And Abraham sets out. He listens to the voice of God and trusts in His word. This is important: he trusts the Word of God. And with this departure of his, a new way of understanding the relationship with God arose. It is for this reason that the patriarch Abraham is present in the great Jewish, Christian and Islamic spiritual traditions as the perfect man of God, capable of being submissive to Him, even when His will proves arduous, if not completely incomprehensible.

Abraham is thus the *man of the Word*. When God speaks, man becomes the receptor of that Word and his life the place in which it seeks to become flesh. This is a great novelty in man's religious journey: the life of a believer begins to be understood as a vocation, thus as a calling, as the place where a promise is fulfilled; and he moves in the world not so much under the weight of an enigma, but with the power of that promise, which one day will be fulfilled. And Abraham believed God's promise. He believed and he set out without knowing where he was going — thus says the Letter to the Hebrews (cf. 11:8). But he had trust.

In reading the Book of Genesis, we discover that Abraham experienced prayer in constant faithfulness to that Word, which

periodically appeared along his path. In short, we could say that in Abraham's life *faith becomes history*. Faith becomes history. Indeed Abraham, with his life, with his example teaches us this path, this path in which faith becomes history. God is no longer seen only in cosmic phenomena, as a distant God, who can instill fear. The God of Abraham becomes "my God", the God of my personal history, who guides my steps, who does not abandon me; the God of my days, companion in my adventures; the God Providence. I ask myself and I ask you: do we have this experience with God? "My God", the God who accompanies me, the God of my personal history, the God who guides my steps, who does not abandon me, the God of my days? Do we have this experience? Let us think about this a bit.

Abraham's experience is also attested to in one of the most original texts of the history of spirituality: the *Memorial* of Blaise Pascal. It begins like this: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and savants. Certitude, certitude; feeling, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ". This memorial, written on a small parchment and found after his death, sewn inside the philosopher's clothing, expresses not an intellectual reflection that a wise man like him can conceive of God, but the living, experienced sense of His presence. Pascal even noted the precise instant in which he felt that reality, having finally encountered it: the evening of 23 November 1654. It is not the abstract God or the cosmic God, no. He is the God of a person, of a calling, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, the God who is certainty, who is feeling, who is joy.

"Abraham's prayer is expressed first by deeds: a man of silence, he constructs an altar to the Lord at each stage of his journey" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2570). Abraham does not build a temple, but scatters the path of

stones that recall God's passage. A surprising God, as when He pays a visit in the form of three guests, whom Abraham and Sarah welcomed with care, and the three announce the birth of their son Isaac (cf. Gen 18:1-15). Abraham was 100 years old and his wife was more or less 90. And they believed, they trusted God. And Sarah, his wife, conceived. At that age! This is the God of Abraham, our God who accompanies us.

Thus, Abraham becomes familiar with God, even able to argue with Him, but ever faithful. He speaks with God and argues. Up to the supreme test, when God asks him to sacrifice his very son Isaac, the son of his elder years, his sole heir. Here Abraham lives faith as a tragedy, as a groping walk in the night, under a sky that, this time, is starless. And many times this also happens to us, to walk in the dark but with faith. God himself will halt Abraham's hand, already prepared to strike, because He saw his willingness truly complete (cf. Gen 22:1-19).

Brothers and sisters, let us learn from Abraham; let us learn how to pray with faith: to listen to the Lord, to walk, to dialogue, up to arguing. Let us not be afraid to argue with God! I will even say something that may seem like heresy. Many times I have heard people say to me: "You know, this happened to me and I became very angry with God" — "You had the courage to be angry at God?" — "Yes, I got angry" — "But this is a form of prayer". Because only a son or daughter is capable of being angry at their dad and then encounter him again. Let us learn from Abraham to pray with faith, to dialogue and to argue, but always willing to accept the Word of God and to put it into practice. With God, let us learn to speak like a child with his dad: to listen to him, to reply, to argue. But transparent like a child with his dad. This is how Abraham teaches us to pray. Thank you.

The Holy Father reflects on the Prayer of Abraham

Do not be afraid to argue with God

SPECIAL GREETINGS

I greet the English-speaking faithful joining us through the media. Dear brothers and sisters in the United States, I have witnessed with great concern the disturbing social unrest in your nation in these past days, following the tragic death of Mr George Floyd. My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life. At the same time, we have to recognize that "the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost". Today I join the Church in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism. Let us pray for the consolation of their grieving families and friends and let us implore the national reconciliation and peace for which we yearn. May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, intercede for all those who work for peace and justice in your land and throughout the world.

May God bless all of you and your families.

I greet the Italian-speaking faithful. The upcoming Feast of the Most Holy Trinity leads us back to the mystery of the intimate life of the Triune God, centre of the Christian faith, and it inspires us to find in God's love our comfort and our inner peace.

I address my thoughts to the elderly, to young people, to the sick and to newlyweds. Entrust yourselves to the Holy Spirit, 'who is Lord and giver of life', and be open to his love so that you will be able to transform your life, your families and your communities. My blessing to all!

Message on the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the revised Rite of Consecration of Virgins

Be women of mercy and experts in humanity

"Let everything that is happening all around us disturb you: do not close your eyes to it and do not flee from it. Be present and sensitive to pain and suffering. Persevere in proclaiming the Gospel, which promises fullness of life for all". Pope Francis wrote these words in a Message released on Monday, 1 June, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Rite of Consecration of Virgins. Due to the pandemic, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life had postponed the international meeting that had been organized to celebrate the anniversary. The following is the English text of the Pope's message.



Dear Sisters,

1. Fifty years ago, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, by mandate of Saint Paul VI, promulgated the new *Rite of Consecration of Virgins*. The current pandemic made it necessary to postpone the international meeting organized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to mark this important anniversary. Nevertheless, I wish to join you in giving thanks for what Saint John Paul II, addressing you on the twenty-fifth anniversary, referred to as a "twofold gift of the Lord to his Church": the renewed *Rite* and an *Ordo fidelium* "restored to the ecclesial community" (*Address to Participants in the International Conference on the Ordo Virginum*, 2 June 1995).

Your form of life has its primary source in the *Rite* and its juridical configuration in Canon 604 of the Code of Canon Law, and, since 2018, in the Instruction *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*. Your vocation is a sign of the inexhaustible and manifold richness of the gifts of the Spirit of the Risen Lord, who makes all things new (cf. *Rev* 21:5). It is likewise a sign of hope, pointing to the fidelity of the Father, who even today awakens in the hearts of some women the desire to be consecrated to the Lord in virginity, lived out in a concrete social and cultural setting, rooted in a particular Church, and expressed in a way of life that is ancient, yet modern and ever new.

Accompanied by your Bishops, you have become increasingly conscious of the distinctive nature of your form of consecrated life and have come to realize that your consecration makes you a particular *Ordo fidelium* in the Church. Continue along this path of co-operation with the Bishops in the development of sound programmes of vocational discernment and of initial and ongoing formation. The gift of your vocation finds expression within the symphonic unity of the Church, which is built up when she can see in you women capable of living the gift of sisterhood.

2. Fifty years after the renewal of the *Rite*, I would say this to you: do not extinguish the prophetic nature of your vocation! You have been called, not because of your own merits, but by God's mercy, to make your lives a reflection of the face of the Church, the Bride of Christ. The Church is a virgin because, albeit composed of sinners, she continues to preserve the faith intact, to bring forth new life and to foster the growth of a new humanity.

In union with the Spirit and together with the entire Church and all those who hear the word of God, you are called to surrender yourselves to Christ and to say to him: "Come!" (*Rev* 22:17). In this way, you will experience the strength born of hearing his response: "Surely, I am coming soon!" (*Rev* 22:20). The coming of the Bridegroom is the horizon and goal of your ecclesial journey, a promise to be welcomed each day anew. By living in this way, "you will be stars to guide the world on its journey" (BENEDICT XVI, *Address to Participants in the Ordo Virginum Congress*, 15 May 2008).

I encourage you to reread and meditate on those texts of the *Rite* that speak of the meaning of your vocation. You are called to experience yourselves, and then to testify to others, that God, in his Son, loved us first, that his love is for all, and that it has the power to change sinners into saints. For "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word" (*Eph* 5:25-26). Your lives will reveal the eschatological tension that enlivens the whole of creation, drives the whole of history, and is born of the Risen Lord's invitation: "Arise, my

physical and mental illness, the young and the elderly, and all those in danger of being marginalized or discarded.

Be women of mercy, experts in humanity. Women who believe in the "revolutionary nature of love and tenderness" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 288). The pandemic is teaching us that "the time has come to eliminate inequalities, to heal the injustice that is undermining the health of the entire human family!" (*Homily at Mass for Divine Mercy Sunday*, 19 April 2020). Let everything that is happening all around us disturb you: do not close your eyes to it and do not flee from it. Be present and sensitive to pain and suffering. Persevere in proclaiming the Gospel, which promises fullness of life for all.

The Prayer of Consecration, in invoking upon you the manifold gifts of the Spirit, asks that you be enabled to live in *casta libertas* (*Rite of Consecration of Virgins*, 24). Let this "chaste freedom" be your way of relating to others, so that you can be a sign of the spousal love uniting Christ to the Church, virgin and mother, sister and friend of all. By your gentleness (cf. *Phil* 4:5), weave a web of authentic relationships that can help to make the neighbourhoods of our cities less lonely and anonymous. Be forthright, capable of *parrhesia*, but avoid the temptation to chatter and gossip. Have the wisdom, the resourcefulness, and the authority of charity, in order to stand up to arrogance and to prevent abuses of power.

4. On this Solemnity of Pentecost, I bless each of you, all those women preparing to re-



"The parable of the ten virgins", Codex Purpureus Rossanensis (detail)

love, my fair one, and come away" (*Song* 2:10; cf. ORIGEN, *Homilies on the Song of Songs* II:12).

3. The Homily proposed for the *Rite of Consecration* exhorts you to "Love everyone, especially those in need" (no. 16). Your consecration dedicates you to God without separating you from the setting in which you live and in which you are called to bear personal witness by a lifestyle of evangelical closeness (cf. *Ecclesiae Sponsae Imago*, 37-38). By such closeness to the men and women of our times, your virginal consecration helps the Church to love the poor, to discern forms of material and spiritual poverty, to help those who are weak and vulnerable, those suffering from

ceive this consecration, and all those who will receive it in the future. "The Holy Spirit is given to the Church as the inexhaustible principle of her joy as the Bride of the glorified Christ" (SAINT PAUL VI, *Gaudete in Domino*). As signs of the Church as Bride, may you always be women of joy, following the example of Mary of Nazareth, woman of the *Magnificat*, Mother of the living Gospel.

Rome, Saint John Lateran,
31 May 2020
Solemnity of Pentecost

Franciscus

Letter of the Holy Father to the Priests of the Diocese of Rome

Prophets of a new future

Courage, discernment and hope in order to respond effectively during this time of pandemic

As priests, we are "called to proclaim and prophesy the future", Pope Francis wrote in a Letter addressed to priests of the Diocese of Rome, released on Saturday, 30 May. The phase following the pandemic, he told the clergy, whose scheduled Lenten appointment had to be cancelled due to the pandemic restrictions, demands courage, discernment and hope in order "to bring about a time ever new: the time of the Lord". The following is the English text of the Holy Father's letter.

Dear Brothers,

During this Easter season I had thought we could meet and celebrate the Chrism Mass together but, since a diocesan celebration was not possible, I am writing this letter to you. This new phase that we have embarked upon demands of us wisdom, farsightedness and shared commitment, so that all the efforts and sacrifices made thus far will not be in vain.

During this time of pandemic, many of you have shared with me by e-mail or telephone your experience of this unexpected and disconcerting situation. In this way, even though I was not able to leave home or encounter you directly, you let me know "first-hand" what you were going through. This in turn I have brought to my prayers, both of thanksgiving for your courageous and generous witness and of petition and trusting intercession before the Lord, who always takes us by the hand (cf. *Mt* 14:31). The need to maintain social distancing did not prevent us from strengthening our sense of fellowship, communion and mission; and this helped us ensure that charity, especially towards the most vulnerable individuals and communities, was not quarantined. In our frank conversations, I was able to see that necessary distancing was hardly synonymous with withdrawal or the self-absorption which anaesthetises, sedates and extinguishes our sense of mission.

Encouraged by these exchanges, I am writing to you because I want to keep close to you and accompany, support and confirm you along the way. Hope also depends on our efforts, and we have to help one another to keep it alive and active. I mean that contagious hope which is cultivated and reaffirmed in the encounter with others, and which, as a gift and a task, is given to us in order to create the new "normality" that we so greatly desire.

In writing to you, I think of the early apostolic community, which also experienced moments of confinement, isolation, fear and uncertainty. Fifty days passed amid immobility, isolation, yet the first proclamation would change their lives forever. For even as the doors of the place where they stayed were closed out of fear, the disciples were surprised by Jesus who "stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'.



"The Good Shepherd", by Br. Frank Sharma, OCD, Teresianum, Rome

After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'. And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (*Jn* 20:19-22). May we too let ourselves be surprised!

*The doors of the house where the disciples met were locked for fear (*Jn* 20:19)*

Today, as then, we sense that "the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted... are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1). How well we know this! We all listened to the numbers and percentages that daily bombarded us; with our own hands we touched the pain of our people. What we heard was not something alien to our own experience: the statistics had names, faces, stories of which we were a part. As a community of priests, we were no strangers to these situations; we did not look out at them from a window. Braving the tempest, you found ways to be present and accompany your communities; when

you saw the wolf coming, you did not flee or abandon the flock (cf. *Jn* 10:12-13).

Suddenly we suffered the loss of family, neighbours, friends, parishioners, confessors, points of reference for our faith. We saw the saddened faces of those unable to be present and bid farewell to their loved ones in their final hours. We felt the suffering and powerlessness experienced by health care workers who, themselves exhausted, continued to work for days on end, out of a concern to meet so many needs. All of us felt the worry and fear experienced by those workers and volunteers who daily exposed themselves to risk in order to ensure that essential services were provided, and to accompany and care for the excluded and the vulnerable who were suffering even more from the effects of the pandemic. We witnessed the difficulties and discomforts of the lockdown: loneliness and isolation, especially among the elderly; anxiety, anguish and a sense of helplessness at the possibility of losing jobs and homes; violence and breakdown in relationships. The age-old fear of being infected once more reared its head. We shared the anguish and concern of entire families uncertain as to whether there would be food on the table in weeks to come.

We also experienced our own vulnerability and helplessness. Just as the kiln tests the potter's vases, so were we put to the test (cf. *Sir* 27:5). Dismayed, we felt all the more the precariousness of our own lives and our apostolic efforts. The unpredictability of the situation heightened the difficulty we feel in facing the unknown which we cannot control or direct and, like everyone else, we felt confused, fearful and defenceless. At the same time, we also experienced that healthy and necessary courage that refuses to yield in the face of injustice and reminds us that we were created for Life. Like Nicodemus, at night, confused by the fact that "the wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes", we too wondered: "How can this be?" And Jesus tells us too: "Are you a teacher of Israel, yet you do not understand these things?" (cf. *Jn* 3:8-10).

The complexity of the situation we had to face did not allow for textbook recipes or responses. It called for something much more than facile exhortations or edifying speeches incapable of touching hearts and confronting the concrete demands of life. The pain of our people was our pain, their uncertainties our own: our shared sense of frailty stripped us of any pseudo-spiritual complacency or any puritanical attempt to keep at a safe distance. No one can be unaffected by all that has happened. We can say that *we experienced as a community the time when the Lord wept*: for we too wept before the tomb of Lazarus his friend (cf. *Jn* 11:35), before the incomprehension of his people (*Lk* 13:14; 19:41), in the dark night of Gethsemane (cf. *Mk* 14:32-42; *Lk* 22:44). *It is also the time when his disciples weep* before the mystery of the cross and the evil which strikes so many innocent people. It is the bitter weeping of Peter after his denial (cf. *Lk* 22:62), and that of Mary Magdalene before the tomb (cf. *Jn* 20:11).

We know that, in situations like these, it is not easy to find the right way forward, and any number of voices will make themselves heard telling us about all that could have been done in the face of this unknown reality. Our usual ways of relating, planning, celebrating, praying, meeting and even dealing with conflict were changed and challenged by an invisible presence that turned our everyday existence upside down. Nor did it simply affect individuals, families, specific social groups or countries. The nature of the virus caused our former ways of dividing and classifying reality to disappear. The pandemic knows no descriptors, no boundaries, and none of us can think of getting by alone. We are all affected and involved.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

SOLEMNITY OF PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit heals us of the famine of hope

Pope Francis celebrates Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica

On Sunday, 31 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica, with a limited number of the faithful in attendance. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's homily.

"There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor 12:4), as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. He continues: "There are different forms of service, but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (vv. 5-6). Diversity and unity: Saint Paul puts together two words that seem contradictory. He wants to tell us that the Holy Spirit is the one who brings together the many; and that the Church was born this way: we are all different, yet united by the same Holy Spirit.

Let us go back to the origin of the Church, to the day of Pentecost. Let us look at the Apostles: some of them were fishermen, simple people accustomed to living by the work of their hands, but there were also others, like Matthew, who was an educated tax collector. They were from different backgrounds and social contexts, and they had Hebrew and Greek names. In terms of character, some were meek and others were excitable; they all had different ideas and sensibilities. They were all different. Jesus did not change them; he did not make them into a set of pre-packaged models. No. He left their

differences and now he unites them by anointing them with the Holy Spirit. With the anointing comes their union – union in diversity. At Pentecost, the Apostles understand the unifying power of the Spirit. They see it with their own eyes when everyone, though speaking in different languages, comes together as one people: the people of God, shaped by the Spirit, who weaves unity from diversity and bestows harmony because in the Spirit there is harmony. He himself is harmony.

Let us now focus on ourselves, the Church of today. We can ask ourselves: "What is it that unites us, what is the basis of our unity?" We too have our differences, for example of opinions, choices, sensibilities. But the temptation is always fiercely to defend our ideas, believing them to be good for everybody and agreeing only with those who think as we do. This is a bad temptation that brings division. But this is a faith created in our own image; it is not what the Spirit wants. We might think that what unite us are our beliefs and our morality. But there is much more: our principle of unity is the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that first of all we are God's beloved children; all equal, in this respect, and all different. The Spirit comes to us, in our differences and difficulties, to tell us that we have one Lord – Jesus – and one Father, and that for this reason we are brothers and sisters!

Let us begin anew from here; let us look at the Church with the eyes of the Spirit and not as the world does. The world sees us only as on the right or left, with one ideology or the other; the Spirit sees us as sons and daughters of the Father and brothers and sisters of Jesus. The world sees conservatives and progressives; the Spirit sees children of God. A worldly gaze sees structures to be made more efficient; a spiritual gaze sees brothers and sisters pleading for mercy. The Spirit loves us and knows everyone's place in the grand scheme of things for him, we are not bits of confetti blown about by the wind, rather we are irreplaceable fragments in his mosaic.

If we go back to the day of Pentecost, we discover that the first task of the Church is proclamation. Yet we also see that the Apostles decided no strategy; when they were locked in there, in the Upper Room, they were not strategizing, no, they were not drafting any pastoral plan. They could have divided people into groups according to their roots, speaking first to those close by and

then to those far away, in an orderly manner... They could have also waited a while before beginning their preaching in order to understand more deeply the teachings of Jesus, so as to avoid risks... No. The Spirit does not want the memory of the Master to be cultivated in small groups locked in upper rooms where it is easy to "nest". This is a terrible disease that can also infect the Church: making her into a nest instead of a community, a family or a Mother. The Spirit himself opens doors and pushes us to press beyond what has already been said and done, beyond the precincts of a timid and wary faith. In the world, unless there is tight organization and a clear strategy, things fall apart. In the Church, however, the Spirit guarantees unity to those who proclaim the message. The Apostles set off: unprepared, yet putting their lives on the line. One thing kept them going: the desire to give what they received. The opening part of the First Letter of Saint John is beautiful: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you" (cf. 1:3).

Here we come to understand what the secret of unity is, the secret of the Spirit. The secret of unity in the Church, the secret of the Spirit is gift. For the Spirit himself is gift: he lives by giving himself and in this way he keeps us together, making us sharers in the same gift. It is important to believe that God is gift, that he acts not by taking away, but by giving. Why is this important? Because our way of being believers depends on how we understand God. If we have in mind a God who takes away and who imposes himself, we too will want to take away and impose ourselves: occupying spaces, demanding recognition, seeking power. But if we have in our hearts a God who is gift, everything changes. If we realize that what we are is his gift, free and unmerited, then we too will want to make our lives a gift. By loving humbly, serving freely and joyfully, we will offer to the world the true image of God. The Spirit, the living memory of the Church, reminds us that we are born from a gift and that we grow by giving; not by holding on but by giving of ourselves.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us look within and ask ourselves what prevents us from giving ourselves. There are, so to speak, three main enemies of the gift, always lurking at the door of our hearts: narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. *Narcissism* makes us idolize ourselves, to be concerned only with what is good for



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us. The narcissist thinks: "Life is good if I profit from it". So he or she ends up saying: "Why should I give myself to others?". In this time of pandemic, how wrong narcissism is: the tendency to think only of our own needs, to be indifferent to those of others, and not to admit our own frailties and mistakes. But the second enemy, *victimhood*, is equally dangerous. Victims complain every day about their neighbour: "No one understands me, no one helps me, no one loves me, everyone has it in for me!". How many times have we not heard these complaints! The victim's heart is closed, as he or she asks, "Why aren't others concerned about me?". In the crisis we are experiencing, how ugly victimhood is! Thinking that no one understands us and experiences what we experience. This is victimhood. Finally, there is *pessimism*. Here the unending complaint is: "Nothing is going well, society, politics, the Church...". The pessimist gets angry with the world, but sits back and does nothing, thinking: "What good is giving? That is useless". At this moment, in the great effort of beginning anew, how damaging is pessimism, the tendency to see everything in the worst light and to keep saying that nothing will return as before! When someone thinks this way, the one thing that certainly does not return is hope. In these three – the narcissist idol of the mirror, the mirror-god; the complaint-god: "I feel human only when I complain"; and the negativity-god: "everything is dark, the future is bleak" – we experience a famine of hope and we need to appreciate the gift of life, the gift that each of us is. We need the Holy Spirit, the gift of God who heals us of narcissism, victimhood and pessimism. He heals us from the mirror, complaints and darkness.

Brothers and sisters, let us pray to him: Holy Spirit, memory of God, revive in us the memory of the gift received. Free us from the paralysis of selfishness and awaken in us the desire to serve, to do good. Even worse than this crisis is the tragedy of squandering it by closing in on ourselves. Come, Holy Spirit: you are harmony; make us builders of unity. You always give yourself; grant us the courage to go out of ourselves, to love and help each other, in order to become one family. Amen.

Holy Father returns to the window of his private study for the Regina Caeli and prays for the poor of the Amazon

People are more important than the economy

For the first time since restrictions were imposed three months ago in order to contain the pandemic, on Sunday, 31 May, Pope Francis returned to the window of his study in the Vatican Apostolic Palace to pray the Regina Caeli with the faithful and pilgrims present in Saint Peter's Square. The following is a translation of his greeting and the reflection he shared in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning,

Today that the Square is open, we are able to return. It is a pleasure!

Today we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost, in memory of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the first Christian community. Today's Gospel (cf. Jn 20:19-23) takes us back to the evening of Easter and shows us the Risen Jesus who appears in the Upper Room, where the disciples have taken refuge. They were afraid. He "stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you!'" (v. 19). These first words pronounced by the Risen One – "Peace be with you" – are to be considered as more than a greeting: they express forgiveness, the forgiveness granted to the disciples who, to tell the truth, had abandoned him. They are words of reconciliation and forgiveness. And when we wish peace to others, we too are granting forgiveness, and asking for forgiveness as well. Jesus offers his peace precisely to these disciples who are afraid, who find it hard to believe what they have seen, that is, the empty tomb, and they underestimate the witness of Mary of Magdala and of the other women. Jesus forgives; he always forgives, and offers his peace to his friends. Do not forget: Jesus never tires of forgiving. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness.

And precisely to inspire mission, Jesus gives his Spirit to the Apostles. The Gospel states: "he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (v. 22). The Holy Spirit is fire that burns away sins and creates new men and women; he is the fire of love with which the disciples can

'set the world on fire', that tender love that favours the little ones, the poor, the excluded... In the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation we received the Holy Spirit with his gifts: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God. This last gift – fear of God – is the very opposite of the fear that first paralyzed the disciples: it is love for the Lord; it is the certainty of his mercy and his goodness; it is the confidence that we are able to move in the direction he indicates, without ever lacking his presence and support.

The feast of Pentecost renews the awareness that the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit abides in us. He also gives us the courage to go outside the protective walls of our "Upper Rooms", of our little groups, without casing into a quiet life or withdrawing into sterile habits. Let us now raise our thoughts to Mary: when the Holy Spirit came, she was there, with the Apostles, a protagonist with the first Community that experienced the wonders of Pentecost, and let us pray that she obtain for the Church the ardent missionary spirit.

After the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, seven months ago, the Synod for the Amazon concluded. Today, the feast of Pentecost, let us invoke the Holy Spirit so that he might give

light and strength to the Church and to society in the Amazon region, sorely tried by the pandemic. Many have been infected and have died, including members of the indigenous peoples, who are particularly vulnerable. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Amazon, I pray for the poorest and the most defenseless in that precious Region, but also for others throughout the world, and I plead that no one should lack health care. Take care of people, not save for the economy. Take care of people, who are more important than the economy. We people are temples of the Holy Spirit; the economy is not.

Today is the National Day of Relief in Italy, to promote solidarity towards the sick. I renew my appreciation to those who, especially in this period, have offered and offer their witness of caring for neighbours. I recall with gratitude and admiration all those who, supporting the sick in this pandemic, have given their lives. Let us pray in silence for the doctors, volunteers, nurses, all the healthcare workers and those who have given their lives in this period. I wish all of you a happy Pentecost Sunday. We have such need of the light and strength of the Holy Spirit! The Church needs it to walk harmoniously and courageously, witnessing to the Gospel. And the entire human family needs it, in order to emerge from this crisis more united and not more divided. You know that from a crisis like this one we do not come out the same, as before: we emerge either better or worse. May we have the courage to change, to be better, to be better than before and to be able to build in a positive way the post-crisis of the pandemic.

Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch. *Arrivederci* [See you again], in the Square!



Letter to the Priests of the Diocese of Rome

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

The notion of a "safe" society, carefree and poised for infinite consumption has been called into question, revealing its lack of cultural and spiritual immunity to conflict. A series of old and new questions and problems (in many places long since considered resolved) came to dominate the horizon and our attention. Those questions will not be answered simply by resuming various activities. They necessarily challenge us to develop a capacity for listening in a way attentive yet filled with hope, serene yet tenacious, persevering yet not fearful. This can prepare and open up the path that the Lord is now calling us to take (cf. *Mk* 1:2-3). We know that in the wake of tribulation and painful experiences we are never again the same. So all of us need to be vigilant and attentive. The Lord himself, in the hour of his own suffering, prayed for exactly this: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one" (*Jn* 17:15). Having experienced, as individuals and in our communities, our vulnerability, frailty and limitations, we now run the grave risk of withdrawing and "brooding" over the desolation caused by the pandemic, or else that of seeking refuge in a boundless optimism incapable of grasping the deeper meaning of what is happening all around us (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 226-228).

Times of tribulation challenge us to discern the temptations that threaten to mire us in bewilderment and confusion, in a mind-set that would prevent our communities from nurturing the new life that the Risen Lord wishes to give us. A variety of temptations can nowadays blind us and encourage sentiments and approaches that block hope from stimulating our creativity, our ingenuity and our ability to respond effectively. Rather than seeking to acknowledge frankly the gravity of the situation, we can attempt to respond merely with new and reassuring activities as we wait for everything to "return to normal". But in this way we would ignore the deep wounds that have opened and the number of people who have fallen in the meantime. We can also sink into a kind of numbing nostalgia for the recent past that leads us to keep repeating that "nothing will ever be the same again" and thus show ourselves incapable of inviting others to dream and to develop new paths and new styles of life.

Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you". When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you!" (*Jn* 20:19-21)

The Lord did not choose the perfect situation to appear suddenly in the midst of his disciples. Certainly we would have preferred that what happened did not have to happen, but it did; and like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we too can

continue to speak sadly and in hushed tones along the way (cf. *Lk* 24:13-21). Yet by appearing in the Upper Room behind closed doors, amid the isolation, fear and insecurity experienced by the disciples, the Lord was able to surpass all expectations and to give a new meaning to history and human events. Any time is fitting for the message of peace; in no situation is God's grace ever lacking. Jesus' appearance in the midst of confinement and forced absence proclaims, for those disciples and for us today, a new day capable of challenging all paralysis and resignation, and harnessing every gift for the service of the community. By his presence, confinement became fruitful, giving life to the new apostolic community.

So let us say with confidence and without fear: "Where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more" (*Rom* 5:20). Let us be fearless amid the messy situations all around us, because that is where the Lord is, in our midst; God continues to perform his miracle of bringing forth good fruit (cf. *Jn* 15:3). Christian joy is born precisely of this certainty. In the midst of the contradictions and perplexities we must confront each day, the din of so many words and opinions, there is the quiet voice of the Risen Lord who keeps saying to us: "Peace be with you!"

It is comforting to read the Gospel and think of Jesus in the midst of his people, as he welcomes and embraces life and individuals just as they are. His actions embody Mary's moving song of praise: "He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly" (*Lk* 1:51-52). Jesus offers his own hands and his wounded side as a path to resurrection. He does not hide or conceal those wounds; instead, he invites Thomas to touch his pierced side and to see how those very wounds can be the source of Life in abundance (cf. *Jn* 20:27-29).

Over and over again, as a spiritual guide, I have been able to witness how "a person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life's depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the suffering of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. They sense that the other is flesh of our flesh, and are not afraid to draw near, even to touch their wounds. They feel compassion for others in such a way that all distance vanishes. In this way, they can embrace Saint Paul's exhortation: 'Weep with those who weep' (*Rom* 12:15). Knowing how to mourn with others: that is holiness" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 76).

*"As the Father has sent me, so I send you" When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (*Jn* 20:21-22)*

Dear brothers, as a community of priests, we are called to proclaim and prophesy the future, like the sentinel announcing the dawn that brings a new day (cf. *Is* 21:11). That new day will either be completely new, or something much worse than what we have been used to. The Resurrection is not simply an event of past history to be remembered and celebrated; it is much more. It is the saving proclamation of a new age that resounds and already bursts onto the scene: "Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (*Is* 43:19); it is the future, the "ad-vent" that the Lord even now is calling us to build. Faith grants us a realistic and creative imagination, one capable of abandoning the mentality of repetition, substitution and maintenance. An imagination that calls us to bring about a time ever new: the time of the Lord. Though an invisible, silent, expansive and viral presence has thrown us into crisis and turmoil, may we let this other discreet, respectful and non-invasive Presence summon us anew and teach us to face reality without fear. If an impalpable presence has been able to disrupt and upset the priorities and apparently overpowering global agendas that suffocate and devastate our communities and our sister earth, let us not be afraid to let the presence of the Risen Lord point out our path, open new horizons and grant us the courage to live to the full this unique moment of our history. A handful of fearful men were able to change the course of history by courageously proclaiming the God who is with us. Do not be afraid! "The powerful witness of the saints is revealed in their lives, shaped by the Beatitudes and the criterion of the final judgement" (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 109).

Let us be surprised yet again by the Risen Lord. May he, whose pierced side is a sign of how harsh and unjust reality can be, encourage us not to turn aside from the harsh and difficult realities experienced by our brothers and sisters. May he teach us how to accompany, soothe and bind up the wounds of our people, not with fear but with the audacity and evangelical generosity of the multiplication of the loaves (*Mt* 14:15-21); with the courage, concern and responsibility of the Good Samaritan (cf. *Lk* 10:33-35); with the joy of the shepherd at his newfound sheep (*Lk* 15:4-6); with the reconciling embrace of a father who knows the meaning of forgiveness (cf. *Lk* 15:20); with the devotion, gentleness and tender love of Mary of Bethany (cf. *Jn* 12:1-3); with the meekness, patience and wisdom of the Lord's missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 10:16-23). May the wounded hands of the Risen Lord console us in our sorrows, revive our hope and impel us to seek the Kingdom of God by stepping out of our familiar surroundings. Let us also allow ourselves to be surprised by our good and faithful people, so often

tried and torn, yet also visited by the Lord's mercy. May our people teach us, their pastors, how to mould and temper our hearts with meekness and compassion, with the humility and magnanimity of a lively, supportive, patient and courageous perseverance, one that does not remain indifferent, but rejects and unmasks every form of scepticism and fatalism. How much we have to learn from the strength of God's faithful people, who always find a way to help and accompany those who have fallen! The Resurrection is the proclamation that things can change. May the Paschal Mystery, which knows no bounds, lead us creatively to those places where hope and life are struggling, where suffering and pain are opening the door to corruption and speculation, where aggression and violence appear to be the only way out.

As priests, sons and members of a priestly people, it is up to us to take responsibility for the future and to plan for it as brothers. Let us place in the wounded hands of the Lord, as a holy offering, our own weakness, the weakness of our people and that of all humanity. It is the Lord who transforms us, who treats us like bread, taking our life into his hands, blessing us, breaking and sharing us, and giving us to his people. And in all humility, let us allow ourselves to be anointed by Paul's words and let them spread like a fragrant balm throughout our City, thus awakening the seeds of hope that so many people quietly nurture in their hearts: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 *Cor* 4:8-10). Let us share with Jesus in his passion, our passion, and experience, also with him, the power of the Resurrection: the certainty of God's love that affects us deeply and summons us to take to the streets in order to bring "glad tidings to the poor ... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19), with a joy that all can share in their dignity as children of the living God.

All these things, which I have been thinking about and experiencing during this time of pandemic, I want to share fraternally with you, so that they can help us on our journey of praising the Lord and serving our brothers and sisters. I hope that they can prove useful to each of us, for "ever greater love and service".

May the Lord Jesus bless you and the Blessed Virgin watch over you. And please, do not forget to keep me in your prayers.

Fraternally,

FRANCIS

Rome, Saint John Lateran,
31 May 2020,
the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Holy Father's video message to the World Pentecost vigil organized by CHARIS

In times of great trial let us emerge as better people

Thousands of faithful from more than 100 countries joined together in prayer, via traditional and social media for the Pentecost vigil organized by CHARIS, the sole international service of Catholic Charismatic Renewal which was founded one year ago at Pope Francis' request.

Established on 8 December 2018 by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life as an entity for communion, its statutes came into effect on Pentecost 2019 when the Catholic Fraternity and the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Service (ICCRS) definitively ceased their activities.

The Pope participated in the online vigil which took place on Saturday evening, 30 May, at 10:00 pm in Rome, via a video message in which he prayed for the Holy Spirit's consolation and strength to overcome the trials of the pandemic. The following is a translation of his message which he delivered in Spanish.

When the feast of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered in one place. Thus begins the second chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles that we have just heard. Today too, thanks to technical advances, we are gathered together, believers from various parts of the world, on the eve of Pentecost.

The story continues: "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit" (vv. 2-4).

The Spirit comes to rest on each of the disciples, on each one of us. The Spirit promised by Jesus comes to renew, to convert, to heal every one of us. He comes to cure us of our fears – how many fears we have! – our insecurities; He comes to heal our wounds, the wounds we also inflict on one another; and He comes to make us into disciples, missionary disciples, witnesses full of courage, of apostolic *parrhesia*, necessary for the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus, as we read in the following verses what happened to the disciples.

Today more than ever we need the Father to send us the Holy Spirit. In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus says to His disciples: "Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me



speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit" (v. 4). And, in verse 8, He says to them: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".

Witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit leads us to this witness. Today the world suffers, it is wounded; we are living in a very wounded world, which suffers, especially the poorest, who are rejected, when all our human securities have disappeared, the world needs us to give it Jesus. We are able to give this witness only with the strength of the Holy Spirit. We need the Spirit to give us new eyes, to open our mind and our heart so as to face this moment and

the future with the lesson we have learned: we are a single humanity. We cannot save ourselves by ourselves. No one saves him or herself alone. No one. Saint Paul said, in the Letter to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28), united by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus announces. We know it, we knew it, but this pandemic we are living through has made us experience it in a much more dramatic way.

We have before us the duty to build a new reality. The Lord will do it; we can collaborate: "I make all things new", he says (Rev 21:5).

When we come out of this pandemic, we will no longer be able to do what we have been doing, how we have been doing it. No, everything will be different. All the suffering will have been pointless if we do not build together a more just, more equitable, more Christian society, not in name, but in reality, a reality that leads us to Christian behaviour. If we do not work to end the pandemic of poverty in the world, the pandemic of poverty in the country of each one of us, in the city where each of us lives, this time will have been in vain.

From the great trials of humanity, including the pandemic, we emerge either better or worse. We do not come out the same.

I ask you: How do you want to come out of it? Better or worse? And that is why today we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit so that he may change our hearts and help us to come out better.

If we do not live to be judged according to what Jesus tells us: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me ... in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36), then we will not come out of it better.

And this is a task for all of us, all of us. And also for you, members of CHARIS, who are all the charismatics together.

The third document of Mechelen, written in the 1970s by Cardinal Suenens and Bishop Helder Camara, called: "Charismatic Renewal and Service of Man", marks this path in the current of grace. Be faithful to this call of the Holy Spirit!

I am reminded of the prophetic words of John XXIII when he announced the Vatican Council, and which Charismatic Renewal cherishes in particular: "May the Divine Spirit listen in the most comforting way to the prayer that ascends to Him from all corners of the earth: Renew in our time the wonders as of a new Pentecost, and grant that the Holy Church, remaining unanimous in prayer, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus and under the guidance of Peter, may increase the Kingdom of the Divine Saviour, the Kingdom of Truth and Justice, the Kingdom of Love and Peace".

I wish for all of you, on this eve of Pentecost, the consolation of the Holy Spirit. And the strength of the Holy Spirit, to come out of this moment of pain, sadness and trial that is the pandemic; to come out of it better.

May the Lord bless you and the Virgin Mother keep you.

Holy Rosary presided by Pope Francis in the Vatican Gardens

Stories of life, suffering and hope

On Saturday 30 May, Pope Francis led the Rosary from the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens, where he prayed to Our Lady for an end to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to some 130 faithful present in the Vatican, thousands joined Pope Francis in the recitation of the Rosary from Marian Shrines throughout the world via television, radio and digital platforms. Images of the Marian shrines could be viewed on a large screen at the Vatican's Lourdes Grotto and on the screens of those connected for the event.

At the beginning and the end of the recitation of the Rosary, Pope Francis recited the prayers he had invited the faithful to pray throughout the Marian month of May.

Each decade of the five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary was led by a person who was directly affected by the virus. The first decade was led by a doctor and a nurse, repres-

enting all medical staff who have worked so hard on the frontline of the medical emergency. The second of the Glorious Mysteries was led by a person who has recovered from the virus and a person who lost a family member to it. The third was led by a priest who is a hospital chaplain, and by a woman religious who is a nurse. The fourth Mystery was led by a pharmacist and a journalist, the fifth was led by a member of the Italian civil protection and his family, and by a couple who had recently welcomed a baby.

After reciting the Rosary, the Holy Father shared a few words in Spanish with the many faithful connected via satellite from Marian shrines in Latin America: "They tell me there are many shrines in Latin America that are connected, and I would like to offer them a greeting in Spanish.

To all of you in the Shrines of Latin America, I see Guadalupe



and so many others, who are linked with us, joined in prayer. I greet you in my native tongue. Thank you for being close to all of us. May our Mother of Guadalupe accompany us".

INTERVIEW

with Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

Cardinal Tagle with Pope Francis during his visit to the Philippines in January 2015



The Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples on the Pope's message to the PMS

Francis is asking us to rediscover mission in ordinary Christian life

ALESSANDRO GISOTTI

A healthy jolt to give renewed enthusiasm to the Church's missionary commitment. One week from the publication of Pope Francis' message to the Pontifical Mission Societies, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, shared his thoughts on the key points of the Holy Father's message with *L'Osservatore Romano* and Vatican News. We should put into practice what the Pope asked, Cardinal Tagle said, which is to rediscover authentic missionary spirit, and not to rely on practices that, under the guise of efficiency and success, keep from the heart of the mission: the proclamation of the Good News to all people.

Cardinal Tagle, Francis' message to the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) was widely recognized far beyond the horizon of those to whom it was addressed. Once again the Pope underlined how much the mission is at the heart of the life and identity of the Church. What particularly impressed you with this message?

There are many things that fascinated me about Pope Francis' message to the Pontifical Mission Societies. Let me name a few. First, the Holy Father had accepted the invitation to address the National Directors of the PMS during their general assembly that should have taken place the month of May of this year. Due to the pandemic, the assembly was called off. But instead of welcoming the cancellation of an audience as an opportunity to rest, the Pope still decided to write and send a message. For me, this message contains not only the Pope's words and insights but also his passion for mission and solicitude for PMS. While reading the document, we should listen to his soul, his excitement, his hopes and his pre-occupations. Secondly, I believe that while the message is specifically addressed to the National Directors of the PMS, the Pope wants the whole Church, the

whole People of God, to read, study and meditate on it. It will serve as a guide for the National Directors. But it also serves as a tool for the examination of conscience of the whole Church in the area of missionary spirit and engagement.

The Pope emphasized strongly that the mission is a free gift of the Holy Spirit, not the outcome of strategies that imitate "models of worldly efficiency". What do you think should be done to avoid this risk of functionalism, of efficiency in the new projects of PMS?

It is important to say that Pope Francis is not against efficiency and methods that could make our mission fruitful and transparent. But he is warning us about the danger of "measuring" Church mission using only the standards and outcomes predetermined by models or schools of management, no matter how good and useful these may be. The tools of efficiency can help but should never substitute for Church mission. The most efficiently run Church organization may end up being the least missionary. By emphasizing that mission is a gift of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis is leading us back to some fundamental truths like: faith in God is a gift from God Himself; the Kingdom of God is inaugurated and fulfilled by God; the Church is God's creation; the Church awakens to her mission, proclaims the Gospel and goes to the ends of the earth because the Risen Lord sends the Holy Spirit from the Father. At the root of the Church and mission is a gift of God, not a human plan. Jesus comes to meet us as the Love of the Father. But we have a role to play – to pray, to discern the divine gift, receive it in faith and act on it as the Giver desires. Separated from this root of grace, the actions of the Church, not just the projects of PMS, are reduced to mere functions and fixed plans of action. God's surprises and "disturbances" are considered destructive of our prepared projects. For me, to avoid the risk of functionalism, we need

to return to the spring of the Church's life and mission: God's gift in Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Apart from that vivifying source, our hard work would cause tiredness, boredom, anxiety, competition, insecurity and despair. Firmly rooted in the gift of the Holy Spirit, we could face our mission and its pains, with joy and hope.

With a very strong image, Francis urged the PMS to "break every mirror in the house". The temptations of narcissism and self-sufficiency are "maladies" that worry the Holy Father. How is it possible to get "vaccinated" against this virus that sickens the Church?

Narcissism is a result of a purely pragmatic or functional view of mission. Mission slowly becomes more about me, my name, my success, my achievement, my fame and my followers and less about the Good News of God's mercy, of Jesus' compassion, of the Holy Spirit's surprising movements. And when good results come, narcissism or self-focus leads to self-sufficiency. My achievements prove that I can rely on my own capacities. To need God and other people is an insult to my unlimited capabilities. Self-sufficiency deepens narcissism. This cycle traps a person or an institution within the narrow world of self-isolation, which is the opposite of mission. This is

the mirror that Pope Francis wants to us to break – self-absorption. I propose that we use a transparent glass that will enable us to see beyond ourselves, not a mirror where I look only at my face and the immediate environment surrounding me. Or better still, as the Pope suggests, let us open the windows and doors, look out, step out to God's creation, to neighbours, to street corners, to the suffering, to the confused, to the youth, to the wounded. Looking at them, we hope to see ourselves too. We see God. They are the real mirrors we should be looking at. The vaccine against narcissism and self-sufficiency is to get out of ourselves. The vaccine is called "the Church that goes forth" (*La chiesa in uscita*). Only then will we find ourselves. It is about changing mirrors, I think.

The Pope also asks that we think of the poorest rather than self-promotion. He asks to reach people "where they are and just how they are in the midst of their lives" and to trust the sensus fidei of the People of God. Are the PMS ready to challenge themselves for a new impetus in their fundamental mission at the service of the Church?

By bringing mission back to the action of the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis reminds us of the Church, Temple of the Holy Spirit, the People of God, the active agent of mission. PMS and other mission-oriented groups are reminded that mission is not their exclusive domain, nor are they the sole promoters of mission. The Church as a living edifice of the Holy Spirit has already been missionary from her historical beginnings. The Pope rightly recalls the origins of the PMS in the concern, prayer and acts of charity of simple people. PMS was born thanks to women and men who lived holiness in their daily ordinary life, a holiness that moved them to share the gift of Jesus to



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Holy Father's video message for global prayer campaign 'Thy Kingdom Come'

Investing in health, employment and the fight against inequality

In a video message released on Sunday, 31 May, in support of the 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer movement, promoted by Archbishop of Canterbury, His Grace Justin Welby, Pope Francis prayed that Christians may "be more deeply united as witnesses of mercy for the human family so severely tested in these days". The following is the English text of the Holy Father's message which was broadcast as part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's liturgical service for the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With joy, I join Archbishop Justin Welby and all of you to share some thoughts from the heart. This is Pentecost: we celebrate the day on which the Spirit of God came down with power. Since that day, God's life dwells among us, bringing us new and previously unknown hope, peace and joy. At Pentecost God "infected" the world with life. How different this is from the contagion of death that has ravaged the earth for months now! Today, more than ever, it is necessary to implore the Holy Spirit to pour forth into our hearts the life of God, who is love. Indeed, if there is to be a better future, our hearts must change for the better.

On the day of Pentecost, people who spoke different languages assembled and encountered one another. In these months, however, we have been required to observe appropriate and necessary measures to keep our distance from one another. Yet we have also come to understand, perhaps better, what others are experiencing: we have been

brought together by fear and uncertainty. How many troubled and broken hearts are in need of comfort! I think of how, when Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, he used a particular word: *Paraclete*, that is, *Comforter*. Many of you have experienced the consolation brought by the Spirit, that inner peace which makes us feel loved, that gentle strength that always inspires courage, even amid suffering. The Spirit assures us that we are not alone, that God sustains us. Dear friends, we must give in turn the gift that we have received: we are called to share the comfort of the Spirit, the *closeness of God*.

How can we do this? Let us think about all those things that we long for: comfort, encouragement, someone to care for us, someone to pray for us, someone to weep with us and help us face our difficulties. Everything we would like others to do for us, let us do for them instead (cf. *Mt 7:12*). Do we want to be heard? Let us first listen. Do we need encouragement? Let us give encouragement. Do we want someone to care for us? Let us care

for those who are alone and abandoned. Do we need hope for tomorrow? Let us give hope today. Today our world is experiencing a tragic *famine of hope*. How much pain is all around us, how much emptiness, how much inconsolable grief! Let us, then, become messengers of the comfort bestowed by the Spirit. Let us radiate hope, and the Lord will open new paths as we journey towards the future.

I would like to share with you something about this journey that we are making together. How greatly I desire that, as Christians, we can be more deeply united as *witnesses of mercy* for the human family so severely tested in these days. Let us ask the Spirit for the gift of unity, for only if we live as brothers and sisters can we spread the spirit of fraternity. We cannot ask others to be united if we ourselves take different paths. So let us pray for one another; let us each feel responsible for the other.

The Holy Spirit bestows wisdom and good counsel. In these days let us invoke his aid upon those charged with making complex and pressing decisions, that they may *defend human life and the dignity of work*. For this is what must be invested in: health, employment, and the elimination of inequalities and poverty. Now as never before we need a vision rich in humanity: we



cannot start up again by going back to our selfish pursuit of success without caring about those who are left behind. And even if many are doing precisely that, the Lord is asking us to change course. On the day of Pentecost, Peter spoke with a bold courage (*parrhesia*) prompted by the Spirit. "Repent" (*Acts 2:38*), he urged, be converted, change the direction of your lives. That is what we need to do: go back, turn back to God and our neighbour: no longer isolated and anesthetized before the cry of the poor and the devastation of our planet. We need to be united in facing all those pandemics that are spreading, that of the virus, but also those of hunger, war, contempt for life, and indifference to others. Only by walking together will we be able to go far.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are proclaiming the Gospel message of life and you are a sign of hope. I thank you from my heart. I ask God to bless you and I ask you to pray that he bless me. Thank you.

Francis is asking us to rediscover mission in ordinary Christian life

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those who need Him. They used the means given to them by the Holy Spirit: prayer and acts of charity. The Holy Father is encouraging PMS and the Church to bring the understanding and practice of mission back to the ordinariness of Christian life, to make mission a simple, non-complicated part of Christian life in families, in workplaces, in schools, on farms, in offices and in parishes. I think one big challenge is how to help our faithful see that faith is a great gift of God, not a burden. If we are happy and enriched by our experience of faith, then we will share that gift with others. Mission becomes sharing of a gift, rather than an obligation to fulfill. We walk together with brothers and sisters in the same journey called mission. Mission and synodality meet.

An important part of the Message is dedicated to donations. For the Pope it is necessary to overcome the temptation to go in search of large donors transforming the Pontifical Mission Societies into NGOs focused on raising funds. How will these exhortations of the Pope be implemented on a practical level?

In the coherent vision of Pope Francis, donations are seen as offerings of charity that accompany prayer for the mission. This perspective makes the donations or collections part of the gift of faith and mission. When the horizon of gift is replaced by that of efficiency in running an organization, then the donations become merely funds or resources to be used, rather than tangible signs of love, of prayer, of sharing the fruits of human labour. The danger is that money would be raised in the name of mission but without becoming an expression of missionary charity on the part of a donor. The goal might shift to simply reaching a desired amount of money rather than awakening missionary consciousness and joy. With eyes set on a monetary target, the temptation to rely on large donors becomes great. I suggest that we devote more time and energy to providing people with opportunities to encounter Jesus and His Gospel and to be missionaries in their daily lives. The faithful who become committed and joyful missionaries are our best resource, not money per se. It is also good to remind our faithful that even their small donations, when put together, become a tangible expression of the Holy Father's universal missionary

charity to churches in need. No gift is too small when given for the common good.

There is no Church without mission, Francis repeats to us once again with this strong Message that recalls Evangelii Gaudium. What is your hope as Prefect of the Congregation that has the mission inscribed in its DNA?

The Message of Pope Francis to the PMS Directors echoes the main themes of *Evangelii Gaudium*. I believe that *Evangelii Gaudium* is Pope Francis' unique way of articulating for our time the ecclesiological and missiological legacy of Vatican II. He also expresses the influence of Saint Paul VI's *Evangelii nuntiandi* on his missionary vision. In the past six decades, we have heard the loud affirmation that the identity and reason for existence of the Church is mission. The mission of the Church is to share the Gift she has received. I am reminded of the first letter of Saint John where he says, "This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched – we speak of the word of lifeIndeed our purpose in writing you this is that our joy may be complete" (1 John

1:1-4). I hope that we could return to this simple and joyful beginning of the Church and her apostolic mission.

How does an extraordinary moment like the one we are experiencing due to the pandemic affect all this?

The COVID 19 pandemic has brought much suffering and fear to the human family. We cannot and should not ignore its impact on the Church and mission. It might take us many more years to have a better grasp of this event in our lives. But we can declare even now that amidst the uncertainties, the lockdown, the unemployment, the loss of income, and many other effects of the pandemic, the Holy Spirit has vigorously poured the gifts of compassion, heroism, love of family, ardent prayer, rediscovery of the Word of God, hunger for the Eucharist, a return to simple lifestyle, caring for creation, to name a few. When the Church feels restricted in her usual activities, the Holy Spirit continues His mission without any limitations. The Church is called to look and to marvel at the astonishing works of the Holy Spirit. We appreciate the gift and we will narrate the stories of the Holy Spirit's action during the pandemic in the many years ahead.

WORLD MISSION DAY

Listen to the call to mission

Holy Father's Message for WMD 2020

"In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: 'Here am I, send me' (6:8). Pope Francis said in his message for the 94th World Mission Day 2020, signed on Sunday, 31 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost. The following is the English text of the Holy Father's message for World Mission Day which will be celebrated on Sunday, 18 October."



Here am I, send me (Is 6:8)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to express my gratitude to God for the commitment with which the Church throughout the world carried out the Extraordinary Missionary Month last October. I am convinced that it stimulated missionary conversion in many communities on the path indicated by the theme: "Baptized and Sent: the Church of Christ on Mission in the World".

In this year marked by the suffering and challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the missionary journey of the whole Church continues in light of the words found in the account of the calling of the prophet Isaiah: "Here am I, send me" (6:8). This is the ever new response to the Lord's question: "Whom shall I send?" (ibid.). This invitation from God's merciful heart challenges both the Church and humanity as a whole in the current world crisis. "Like the disciples in the Gospel we were caught off guard by an unexpected, turbulent storm. We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us. Just like those disciples, who spoke anxiously with one

voice, saying 'We are perishing' (v. 38), so we too have realized that we cannot go on thinking of ourselves, but only together can we do this" (*Meditation in Saint Peter's Square*, 27 March 2020). We are indeed frightened, disoriented and afraid. Pain and death make us experience our human frailty, but at the same time remind us of our deep desire for life and liberation from evil. In this context, the call to mission, the invitation to step out of ourselves for love of God and neighbour presents itself as an opportunity for sharing, service and intercessory prayer. The mission that God entrusts to each one of us leads us from fear and introspection to a renewed realization that we find ourselves precisely when we give ourselves to others.

In the sacrifice of the cross, where the mission of Jesus is fully accomplished (cf. *Jn* 19:28-30), God shows us that his love is for each and every one of us (cf. *Jn* 19:26-27). He asks us to be personally willing to be sent, because he himself is Love, love that is always "on mission", always reaching out in order to give life. Out of his love for us, God the Father sent his Son Jesus (cf. *Jn* 3:16). Jesus is the Father's Missionary: his life and ministry reveal his total obedience to the Father's will (cf. *Jn* 4:34; 6:38; 8:12-30; *Heb* 10:5-10). Jesus, crucified and risen for us, draws us in turn into his mission of love, and with his Spirit which enlivens the Church, he makes us his disciples and sends us on a mission to the world and to its peoples.

"The mission, the 'Church on the move', is not a programme, an enterprise to be carried out by sheer force of will. It is Christ who makes the Church go out of herself. In the mission of evangelization, you move because the Holy Spirit pushes you, and carries you" (*Senza di Lui non possiamo fare nulla: Essere missionari oggi nel mondo. Una conversazione con Gianni Valente*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana: San Paolo, 2019, 16-17). God always loves us first and with this love comes to us and calls us. Our personal vocation comes from the fact that we are sons and daughters of God in the Church, his family, brothers and sisters in that love that Jesus has shown us. All, however, have a human dignity founded on the divine invitation to be children of God and to become, in the sacrament of Bap-

tism and in the freedom of faith, what they have always been in the heart of God.

Life itself, as a gift freely received, is implicitly an invitation to this gift of self: it is a seed which, in the baptized, will blossom as a response of love in marriage or in virginity for the kingdom of God. Human life is born of the love of God, grows in love and tends towards love. No one is excluded from the love of God, and in the holy sacrifice of Jesus his Son on the cross, God conquered sin and death (cf. *Rom* 8:31-39). For God, evil – even sin – becomes a challenge to respond with even greater love (cf. *Mt* 5:38-48; *Lk* 22:33-34). In the Paschal Mystery, divine mercy heals our wounded humanity and is poured out upon the whole universe. The Church, the universal sacrament of God's love for the world, continues the mission of Jesus in history and sends us everywhere so that, through our witness of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel, God may continue to manifest his love and in this way touch and transform hearts, minds, bodies, societies and cultures in every place and time.

Mission is a free and conscious response to God's call. Yet we discern this call only when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church. Let us ask ourselves: are we prepared to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to listen to the call to mission, whether in our life as married couples or as consecrated persons or those called to the ordained ministry, and in all the everyday events of life? Are we willing to be sent forth at any time or place to witness to our faith in God the merciful Father, to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, to share the divine life of the Holy Spirit by building up the Church? Are we, like Mary, the Mother of Jesus, ready to be completely at the service of God's will (cf. *Lk* 1:38)? This interior openness is essential if we are to say to God: "Here am I, Lord, send me" (cf. *Is* 6:8). And this, not in the abstract, but in this chapter of the life of the Church and of history.

Understanding what God is saying to us at this time of pandemic also represents a challenge for the Church's mission. Illness, suffering, fear and isolation challenge us. The poverty of those who die alone, the abandoned,

those who have lost their jobs and income, the homeless and those who lack food challenge us. Being forced to observe social distancing and to stay at home invites us to rediscover that we need social relationships as well as our communal relationship with God. Far from increasing mistrust and indifference, this situation should make us even more attentive to our way of relating to others. And prayer, in which God touches and moves our hearts, should make us ever more open to the need of our brothers and sisters for dignity and freedom, as well as our responsibility to care for all creation. The impossibility of gathering as a Church to celebrate the Eucharist has led us to share the experience of the many Christian communities that cannot celebrate Mass every Sunday. In all of this, God's question: "Whom shall I send?" is addressed once more to us and awaits a generous and convincing response: "Here am I, send me!" (*Is* 6:8). God continues to look for those whom he can send forth into the world and to the nations to bear witness to his love, his deliverance from sin and death, his liberation from evil (cf. *Mt* 9:35-38; *Lk* 10:1-12).

The celebration of World Mission Day is also an occasion for reaffirming how prayer, reflection and the material help of your offerings are so many opportunities to participate actively in the mission of Jesus in his Church. The charity expressed in the collections that take place during the liturgical celebrations of the third Sunday of October is aimed at supporting the missionary work carried out in my name by the Pontifical Mission Societies, in order to meet the spiritual and material needs of peoples and Churches throughout the world, for the salvation of all.

May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization and Comforter of the Afflicted, missionary disciple of her Son Jesus, continue to intercede for us and sustain us.

Rome, Saint John Lateran,
31 May 2020, Solemnity of
Pentecost

Franciscus

"The Prophet Isaiah",
by Marc Chagall

