

CHALLENGES THAT CONFRONT HUMANITY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

EVANGELIZATION INTENTION – JANUARY

That Christians, and other religious minorities in Asian countries, may be able to practise their faith in full freedom.



[...] Saint Joseph Vaz continues to be an example and a teacher for many reasons, but I would like to focus on three. First, he was an exemplary priest. Here today with us are many priests and religious, both men and women, who, like Joseph Vaz, are consecrated to the service of God and neighbour. I encourage each of you to look to Saint Joseph as a sure guide. He teaches us how to go out to the peripheries, to make Jesus Christ everywhere known and loved. He is also an example of patient suffering in the cause of the Gospel, of obedience to our superiors, of loving care for the Church of God (cf. *Acts* 20:28). Like ourselves, Saint Joseph Vaz lived in a period of rapid and profound transformation; Catholics were a minority, and often divided within; there was occasional hostility, even persecution, from without. And yet, because he was constantly united with the crucified Lord in prayer, he could become for all people a living icon of God's mercy and reconciling love.

Second, Saint Joseph shows us the importance of transcending religious divisions in the service of peace. His undivided love for God opened him to love for his neighbour; he ministered to those in need, whoever and wherever they were. His example continues to inspire the Church in Sri Lanka today. She gladly and generously serves all members of society. She makes no distinction of race, creed, tribe, status or religion in the service she provides through her schools, hospitals, clinics, and many other charitable works. All she asks in return is the freedom to carry out this mission. Religious

freedom is a fundamental human right. Each individual must be free, alone or in association with others, to seek the truth, and to openly express his or her religious convictions, free from intimidation and external compulsion. As the life of Saint Joseph Vaz teaches us, genuine worship of God bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all.

Finally, Saint Joseph gives us an example of missionary zeal. Though he came to Ceylon to minister to the Catholic community, in his evangelical charity he reached out to everyone. Leaving behind his home, his family, the comfort of his familiar surroundings, he responded to the call to go forth, to speak of Christ wherever he was led. Saint Joseph knew how to offer the truth and the beauty of the Gospel in a multi-religious context, with respect, dedication, perseverance and humility. This is also the way for the followers of Jesus today. We are called to go forth with the same zeal, the same courage, of Saint Joseph, but also with his sensitivity, his reverence for others, his desire to share with them that word of grace (cf. *Acts* 20:32) which has the power to build them up. We are called to be missionary disciples.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that, following the example of Saint Joseph Vaz, the Christians of this country may be confirmed in faith and make an ever greater contribution to peace, justice and reconciliation in Sri Lankan society. This is what Christ asks of you. This is what Saint Joseph teaches you. This is what the Church needs of you. I commend all of you to the prayers of our new saint, so that, in union with the Church throughout the world, you may sing a new song to the Lord and declare his glory to all the ends of the earth. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised (cf. *Ps* 96: 1-4)! Amen.

HOLY MASS AND CANONIZATION OF BLESSED JOSEPH VAZ

FRANCIS

14 January 2015

See full message:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150114_srilanka-filippine-omelia-canonizzazione.html

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Other text:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170428_egitto-conferenza-pace.html

UNIVERSAL INTENTION – FEBRUARY

That those who have material, political or spiritual power may resist any lure of corruption.



"Dirty bread of corruption"

In his homily during Holy Mass in the Chapel of Santa Marta, Pope Francis commented on the parable of the dishonest steward taken from the Gospel of St Luke (16:1-8).

The Holy Father began: "The Lord speaks to us again about the spirit of the world, about worldliness: how this worldliness works and how perilous it is. In his prayer after the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, Jesus besought the Father not to allow his disciples to fall into worldliness".

The Pope reaffirmed that "worldliness is the enemy", and "the devil derives great pleasure" from seeing us live according to its ways. He pointed to the dishonest steward described in the Gospel as an example of worldliness. "Some of you might say: 'But this man only did what everyone does!'. No, not everyone! Some company administrators, public administrators, government administrators ... but perhaps not many. It's an attitude of taking short cuts, of taking the easy road to earn a living".

"The master praises the dishonest steward in the Gospel", the Pope continued. "He is praising bribery. The habit of bribes and kickbacks is a worldly and extremely sinful habit.... God commanded us to bring home bread through honest work". Instead "this steward was giving dirty bread to his children to eat. And his children, who perhaps were educated in expensive universities and were raised in very cultured circles, were fed dirt by their father. For in bringing home unclean bread,

their father lost his dignity. And this is a grave sin. It might start with a small bribe, but it is like a drug”.

Pope Francis explained, in fact, that it is a serious sin “because it is so against our dignity”. “That dignity by which we are united through our work. Not through bribes and kickbacks. Not through this addiction to worldly cunning. When we read in the papers or hear someone on the news speak about corruption, perhaps we think that corruption is just a word. This is corruption: not earning our daily bread with dignity”.

However, the Holy Father noted, there is another road, an alternative route to worldly cunning. It is the path of “Christian cleverness”. This path, he said, “allows us to be cunning but not according to the spirit of the world. Jesus himself said it: be wise as serpents, innocent as doves”. Uniting these two realities is a grace and a gift of the Holy Spirit, the Pope said. “This Christian cleverness is a gift; it is a grace that the Lord gives to us. But we need to ask for it”.

Pope Francis then turned his attention to the families of the world’s dishonest stewards. “Perhaps today,” he said, “it would be good for all of us to pray for the many children who receive dirty bread from their parents, since they too are hungry; they are hungry for dignity”.

The Holy Father concluded by inviting all of those present “to ask the Lord to change the hearts of those who are devoted to the goddess of bribery” in order that “they might understand that dignity comes from noble work, from honest work, from daily work, and not from the easy road which in the end strips you of everything”. For when they face death, he said, “these poor people who lose their dignity through the practice of bribery do not take with them the money they earned; they only take their lack of dignity. Let us pray for them”.

MORNING MEDITATION

FRANCIS

8 November 2013

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2013/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20131108_dirty-bread.html

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Other text:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141023_associazione-internazionale-diritto-penale.html

EVANGELIZATION INTENTION - MARCH

That the Church may appreciate the urgency of formation in spiritual discernment, both on the personal and communitarian levels.



[...] Through prayer and discernment, the Pope said. "Jesus admonishes those who did not know how to discern the present moment," citing as an example the parable of the fig tree (Mk 13:29-29), in which Jesus reproves those who are able to perceive the arrival of Spring in the blossoming of the fig tree and yet are unable to recognize the signs of the times.

Discernment, Pope Francis said, helps us "to recognize true signs and to know the way we should take at this moment". And prayer is necessary in order to live each moment well. "Yet the only Lord and Master of time is God", he said, and there is nothing we can do about this. "There is no human virtue that has the least power to exert influence over time. The only virtue that can help us to confront the mystery of time must be given to us by the Lord: it is hope".

The Pope therefore recommended prayer, discernment and hope. "In this way," he said, "the Christian is able to move on the road of the moment, with prayer and discernment. But he hopes in the Lord as he awaits the end of time. Men and women of the moment and of time, of prayer and discernment and hope".

Pope Francis concluded: "May the Lord grant us the grace to walk in wisdom. This, too, is a gift: that wisdom which, in the moment, leads us to pray and discern and which, in time, is God's messenger that helps us to live with hope".

MORNING MEDITATION
FRANCIS
26 November 2013

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2013/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20131126_master-time.html

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UNIVERSAL INTENTION – APRIL

That economists may have the courage to reject any economy of exclusion and know how to open new paths.



Apart from the immediate and practical aspect of providing material relief to these brothers and sisters of ours, the international community is challenged to devise long-term political, social and economic responses to issues that transcend national and continental boundaries, and affect the entire human family.

The fight against poverty is not merely a technical economic problem, but above all a moral one, calling for global solidarity and the development of more equitable approaches to the concrete needs and aspirations of individuals and peoples worldwide. In the light of this demanding task, this initiative of your Foundation is most timely. Drawing inspiration from the rich patrimony of the Church's social doctrine, the present Conference is exploring from various standpoints the practical and ethical implications of the present world economy, while at the same time laying the foundations for a business and economic culture that is more inclusive and respectful of human dignity. As Saint John Paul II frequently insisted, economic activity cannot be conducted in an institutional or political vacuum (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 48), but has an essential ethical component; it must always stand at the service of the human person and the universal common good.

An economic vision geared to profit and material well-being alone is – as experience is daily showing us – incapable of contributing in a positive way to a globalization that favours the integral development of the world's peoples, a just distribution of the earth's resources, the guarantee of dignified labour and the encouragement of private initiative and local enterprise. An economy of exclusion and inequality (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 53) has led to greater numbers of the

disenfranchised and those discarded as unproductive and useless. The effects are felt even in our more developed societies, in which the growth of relative poverty and social decay represent a serious threat to families, the shrinking middle class and in a particular way our young people. The rates of unemployment for the young are not only a scandal needing to be addressed first and foremost in economic terms, but also, and no less urgently, as a social ill, for our youth are being robbed of hope and their great resources of energy, creativity and vision are being squandered.

It is my hope that your Conference will contribute to generating new models of economic progress more clearly directed to the universal common good, inclusion and integral development, the creation of labour and investment in human resources. The Second Vatican Council rightly pointed out that, for Christians, economic, financial and business activity cannot be separated from the duty to strive for the perfecting of the temporal order in accordance with the values of God's Kingdom (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 72). Yours is in fact a vocation at the service of human dignity and the building of a world of authentic solidarity. Enlightened and inspired by the Gospel, and in fruitful cooperation with the local Churches and their pastors, as well as other believers and people of good will, may your work always contribute to the growth of that civilization of love which embraces the entire human family in justice and peace.

Upon all of you, and your families, I invoke the Lord's blessings of wisdom, joy and strength.

ADDRESS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE
CENTESIMUS ANNUS PRO PONTIFICE FOUNDATION
FRANCIS
13 May 2016

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/may/documents/papa-francesco_20160513_centessimus-annus-pro-pontifice.html

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EVANGELIZATION INTENTION – MAY

That the lay faithful may fulfil their specific mission, by responding with creativity to the challenges that face the world today.



[...] Often we have given in to the temptation of thinking that committed lay people are those dedicated to the works of the Church and/or the matters of the parish or the diocese, and we have reflected little on how to accompany baptized people in their public and daily life; on how in their daily activities, with the responsibilities they have, they are committed as Christians in public life. Without realizing it, we have generated a lay elite, believing that committed lay people are only those who work in the matters “of priests”, and we have forgotten, overlooked, the believers who very often burn out their hope in the daily struggle to live the faith. These are the situations that clericalism fails to notice, because it is more concerned with dominating spaces than with generating initiatives. Therefore we must recognize that lay people — through their reality, through their identity, for they are immersed in the heart of social, public and political life, participate in cultural forms that are constantly generated — need new forms of organization and of celebration of the faith. The current pace is so different (I do not say better or worse) than what we were living 30 years ago! “This challenges us to imagine innovative spaces and possibilities for prayer and communion which are more attractive and meaningful for city dwellers” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 73). It is illogical and therefore impossible to think that we as pastors should have the monopoly on solutions for the multitude of challenges that contemporary life presents us. On the contrary, we must be on the side of our people, accompanying them in their search and encouraging the imagination capable of responding to the current set of problems. We must do this by discerning with our people and never for our people or without our people. As St Ignatius would say, “in line with the necessities of place, time and person”. In other words, not uniformly. We cannot give general directives in order to organize the People of God within its public life. Inculturation is a

process that we pastors are called to inspire, encouraging people to live their faith where and with whom they are. Inculturation is learning to discover how a determinate portion of the people today, in the historical here and now, live, celebrate and proclaim their faith. With a particular identity and on the basis of the problems that must be faced, as well as with all the reasons they have to rejoice. Inculturation is the work of artisans and not of a factory with a production line dedicated to "manufacturing Christian worlds or spaces".

There are two memories that should be asked to be safeguarded in our people. The memory of Jesus Christ and the memory of our forebears. The faith we have received was a gift that came to us in many cases from the hands of our mothers, from our grandmothers. They were the living memory of Jesus Christ within our homes. It was in the silence of family life that most of us learned to pray, to love, to live the faith. It was within family life, which then took on the shape of parish, school, community, that the faith came into our life and became flesh. It was this simple faith that accompanied us often in the many vicissitudes of the journey. To lose our memory is to uproot ourselves from where we came and therefore is also not even knowing where we are going. This is fundamental, when we uproot a lay person from his faith, from that of his origins; when we uproot him from the faithful Holy People of God, we uproot him from his baptismal identity and thus we deprive him of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The same happens to us when we uproot ourselves as pastors from our people, we become lost. Our role, our joy, a pastor's joy, lies precisely in helping and in encouraging, as many have done before us: mothers, grandmothers and fathers, history's real protagonists. Not through our concession of good will, but by right and actual statute. Lay people are part of the faithful Holy People of God and thus are the protagonists of the Church and of the world; we are called to serve them, not to be served by them. [...]

LETTER TO CARDINAL MARC OUELLET
PRESIDENT OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
FRANCIS
19 March 2016

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160319_pont-comm-america-latina.html

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UNIVERSAL INTENTION – JUNE

That social networks may work towards that inclusiveness which respects others for their differences.



Today we are living in a world which is growing ever “smaller” and where, as a result, it would seem to be easier for all of us to be neighbours. Developments in travel and communications technology are bringing us closer together and making us more connected, even as globalization makes us increasingly interdependent. Nonetheless, divisions, which are sometimes quite deep, continue to exist within our human family. On the global level we see a scandalous gap between the opulence of the wealthy and the utter destitution of the poor. Often we need only walk the streets of a city to see the contrast between people living on the street and the brilliant lights of the store windows. We have become so accustomed to these things that they no longer unsettle us. Our world suffers from many forms of exclusion, marginalization and poverty, to say nothing of conflicts born of a combination of economic, political, ideological, and, sadly, even religious motives.

In a world like this, media can help us to feel closer to one another, creating a sense of the unity of the human family which can in turn inspire solidarity and serious efforts to ensure a more dignified life for all. Good communication helps us to grow closer, to know one another better, and ultimately, to grow in unity. The walls which divide us can be broken down only if we are prepared to listen and learn from one another. We need to resolve our differences through forms of dialogue which help us grow in understanding and mutual respect. A culture of encounter demands that we be ready not only to give, but also to receive. Media can help us greatly in this, especially nowadays, when the networks of human communication have made unprecedented advances. The internet, in particular, offers immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity. This is something truly good, a gift from God.

This is not to say that certain problems do not exist. The speed with which information is communicated exceeds our capacity for reflection and judgement, and this does not make for more balanced and proper forms of self-expression. The variety of opinions being aired can be seen as helpful, but it also enables people to barricade themselves behind sources of information which only confirm their own wishes and ideas, or political and economic interests. The world of communications can help us either to expand our knowledge or to lose our bearings. The desire for digital connectivity can have the effect of isolating us from our neighbours, from those closest to us. We should not overlook the fact that those who for whatever reason lack access to social media run the risk of being left behind.

While these drawbacks are real, they do not justify rejecting social media; rather, they remind us that communication is ultimately a human rather than technological achievement. What is it, then, that helps us, in the digital environment, to grow in humanity and mutual understanding? We need, for example, to recover a certain sense of deliberateness and calm. This calls for time and the ability to be silent and to listen. We need also to be patient if we want to understand those who are different from us. People only express themselves fully when they are not merely tolerated, but know that they are truly accepted. If we are genuinely attentive in listening to others, we will learn to look at the world with different eyes and come to appreciate the richness of human experience as manifested in different cultures and traditions. We will also learn to appreciate more fully the important values inspired by Christianity, such as the vision of the human person, the nature of marriage and the family, the proper distinction between the religious and political spheres, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, and many others.

How, then, can communication be at the service of an authentic culture of encounter? What does it mean for us, as disciples of the Lord, to encounter others in the light of the Gospel? In spite of our own limitations and sinfulness, how do we draw truly close to one another? These questions are summed up in what a scribe – a communicator – once asked Jesus: “And who is my neighbour?” (*Lk 10:29*). This question can help us to see communication in terms of “neighbourliness”. We might paraphrase the question in this way: How can we be “neighbourly” in our use of the communications media and in the new environment created by digital technology? I find an answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is also a parable about communication. Those who communicate, in effect, become neighbours. The Good Samaritan not only draws nearer to the man he finds half dead on the side of the road; he takes responsibility for him. Jesus shifts our understanding: it is not just about seeing the other as someone like myself, but of the ability to make myself like the other. Communication is really about realizing that we are all human beings, children of God. I like seeing this power of communication as “neighbourliness”.

Whenever communication is primarily aimed at promoting consumption or manipulating others, we are dealing with a form of violent aggression like that suffered by the man in the parable, who was beaten by robbers and left abandoned on the road. The Levite and the priest do not regard him as a neighbour, but as a stranger to be kept at a distance. In those days, it was rules of ritual purity which conditioned their response. Nowadays there is a danger that certain media so condition our responses that we fail to see our real neighbour.

It is not enough to be passersby on the digital highways, simply “connected”; connections need to grow into true encounters. We cannot live apart, closed in on ourselves. We need to love and to be loved. We need tenderness. Media strategies do not ensure beauty, goodness and truth in communication. The world of media also has to be concerned with humanity, it too is called to show tenderness. The digital world can be an environment rich in humanity; a network not of wires but of people. The impartiality of media is merely an appearance; only those who go out of themselves in their communication can become a true point of reference for others. Personal engagement is the basis of the trustworthiness of a communicator. Christian witness, thanks to the internet, can thereby reach the peripheries of human existence.

MESSAGE FOR THE 48TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY
FRANCIS
24 January 2014

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20140124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

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EVANGELIZATION INTENTION – JULY

Let us pray that priests, who experience fatigue and loneliness in their pastoral work, may find help and comfort in their intimacy with the Lord and in their friendship with their brothers and sisters.



Paul, John the Baptist, and Maximilian Kolbe — along with many other shepherds throughout the ages — not only lived out solitude, abandonment, and persecution, but also the “nearness of the Lord”, especially in moments of trials. In his homily during Mass on Tuesday, 18 October in the chapel at the Casa, Pope Francis reflected on the invitation to rediscover the presence of God always, even in times of suffering and illness.

In his meditation, Francis centred on the passage in the day’s reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy (cf. 4:10-17). “Paul is in Rome, imprisoned in a house, in a room, with some freedom, but waiting for he knows not what”, the Pope explained. “In that moment Paul feels alone”: it is “the solitude of the shepherd when there are difficulties, but also the solitude of the shepherd when approaching his end: stripped, alone, and a beggar”. And thus the Apostle writes to Timothy: “Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. When you come, bring the cloak, as well as the books” (2 Tim 4:11, 13). Therefore, Paul is “alone and a beggar: he begs Timothy for his few belongings since they might be of use to him”.

The apostle is also the “victim of rage”, the Holy Father said, to the extent that someone says of him: “He is enraged by our preaching!”. Paul is “alone, begging, a victim of rage”. Moreover, “he speaks that very sad word: ‘all deserted me’”. During the trial, he is left without help, recognizing that “only the Lord Jesus stood by me”.

Although the Apostle is "alone, a beggar, a victim of rage, deserted", Francis explained, "he is, however, the great Paul, the one who heard the voice of the Lord, the call of the Lord; the one who went from one place to another, who suffered many things and many trials for the preaching of the Gospel, who made known to the Apostles that the Lord also wanted the Gentiles to join the Church". He is "the great Paul who, in prayer, was lifted to the seventh Heaven, and felt things no one had felt before".

But now, "the great Paul" is "there, in that tiny room of a house, in Rome, waiting to know how the struggle between the factions in the Church will end, between the rigidity of Judaizers and those disciples faithful to him". And "so concludes the life of the great Paul, in desolation: not in resentment or bitterness, but with interior desolation".

For the rest, the Pope observed, "Jesus had told Paul he would end up like Him". Indeed, "all of the apostles ended up thus: 'When you are old, you will hold out your hands and another will fasten your belt and carry you where you do not want to go'". This, the Pontiff explained, "is the end of the Apostle".

"From this small room of Paul", Francis said, we are reminded of two great figures: John the Baptist, and Maximilian Kolbe. The first of these, "in his cell, alone, in anguish, sends his disciples to ask Jesus: 'Is it you, or must we await another?'. And then, on the whim of a dancer and the vindictiveness of an adulteress, he was beheaded: thus ends the great John the Baptist, who Jesus said was the greatest man to be born of a woman".

And even now, "closer to us", the Pope said, "we think of the cell of Maximilian Kolbe, who took apostolic action throughout the world and did many great things: he is in that cell, starved, waiting for death" in the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz.

"When he is faithful, the Apostle does not wait for any other end than that of Jesus", Francis said.

Indeed, there is the "stripping of the Apostle: he is stripped, left with nothing, because he was faithful".

This is the mindset of Paul, Francis said: "Only the Lord is my neighbour", because "the Lord does not leave him, and there he finds his strength".

Thus is "the end of Paul", he said: "After about two years, living in such a way, in uncertainty, in this anguish within the Church, two soldiers came one morning, took him, brought him outside, and cut off his head".

It is natural to ask how such an end could fall upon "so great a man, one who changed the word with his preaching, who convinced the Apostles that Jesus came even for the Gentiles, who did so much good, who struggled, who suffered, who prayed, who had the highest contemplation?".

Yet, "this is the law of the Gospel: if the seed of the grain does not die, it does not bear fruit, since this is the law which Jesus himself revealed to us with his person". However, it is with certainty that then "Resurrection comes".

"One of the first-century theologians", the Pontiff recalled, "said that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity'". In "dying as a martyr, as a witness of Jesus", one is "the seed that dies and bears fruit, and fills the earth with new Christians". And "when the shepherd lives thus, he is not disheartened: he may be desolated, but he has that certainty that the the Lord is beside him". On the other hand, when "the shepherd, in his life, is occupied by things other than the faithful — he is, for instance, attached to power, attached to money, attached to networking, attached to many

things — in the end he will not be alone; perhaps there will be grandchildren who wait for him to die in order to see what they can take with them”.

Francis shared his experience of “going to visit a nursing home for elderly priests” where, he said, “I find many of these brave priests who have given their lives for the faithful and are there, sick, paralyzed, in wheelchairs; however, one quickly sees that smile because they feel that the Lord is very close to them”. One certainly cannot forget “those bright eyes they have and which ask: How is the Church going? How is the diocese going? How are vocations going?”. These are the concerns which they have within them “until the end, because they are fathers, because they have given their life for others”.

In conclusion, the Pontiff reiterated the witness of “Paul alone, a beggar, a victim of rage, abandoned by everyone, except the Lord Jesus: ‘Only the Lord stood by me!’”. This is because, the Pope stressed, “the shepherd must have this security: if he takes the path of Jesus, the Lord will be close to him until the end”.

Thus, he invited the faithful to pray “for shepherds who are at the end of their life, and who are waiting for the Lord to carry them with Him”. We pray, he said, “that the Lord might give them the strength, consolation, and security that — although they feel sick and alone — the Lord is with them, near to them: that the Lord may give them strength”.

MORNING MEDITATION

FRANCIS

18 October 2016

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20161018_the-solitude-of-the-shepherd.html

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UNIVERSAL INTENTION – AUGUST

That any far-reaching decisions of economists and politicians may protect the family as one of the treasures of humanity.



On the occasion of the *Festival of the Family* scheduled in Riva del Garda on the theme "The Ecosystem Life and Work. Women's Employment and Fertility, Prosperity and Economic Growth", I would like to greet and express my appreciation to the organizers, the relators and to all the participants for their commitment to promoting the family. In these days, as citizens, as Christians, as families and associations of families, coming from different professions and backgrounds, you sharing your experiences, concerns and plans. I wish you a successful meeting!

The theme being addressed, which continues and concludes a series of reflections on other aspects that you have discussed in previous sessions, is very important. You aim to provide points for reflection and operational paths in order that the family may play an increasingly active role in the social, cultural and political contexts of the country. Indeed, you are well aware of the irreplaceable and fundamental position that the family holds, both in civil society and in the ecclesial community. The future of humanity passes through the family, and for this reason it necessary to allow it is to play its proper role. However, it does not suffice to re-emphasize the importance of the family and affirm its rights: it is necessary to consider in a practical way how the duties of the family and those of society can be articulated, especially with respect to the relationship between professional and family life.

The family has its own mission, at the service of its members, of its own development, of life; the family has rights and thus needs support and guarantees that enable it to exercise them. On the

other hand, the family also has duties to society; in other words, the family must offer its cooperation in service to the community. This is a privileged sphere in which to practice harmonious solidarity and subsidiarity, that is to say synergy between public and private, between business and family. Precisely because of the commitment and responsibility which having and educating children requires, families need appropriate assistance from public bodies and from businesses, from the standpoint of mutual cooperation. The troubling demographic trend requires, an extraordinary and courageous policy to promote the family by all the interested parties. The country's economic recovery can also begin here. The scourge of unemployment, especially of young people, should also be considered and resolved in this perspective. The shortage of employment disheartens the person, who feels worthless in his own eyes, and impoverishes society, which lacks the contribution of a viable and willing work force.

I am thinking of the development of family policies, of all that concerns the legal and social status of families in general and the assistance that must be offered to those who are materially and morally disadvantaged. In particular, attention must be given to women's employment. Many women feel the need to be better recognized with respect to their rights, to the value of the tasks they normally carry out in the various sectors of social and professional life, and with respect to their aspirations within the family and within receiving society. Some of them are weary and nearly crushed by the volume of duties and tasks, without sufficient help and understanding. Provision must be made to ensure that no woman, due to economic need, not be forced into a job that is too hard with hours that are overly burdensome, on top of all adds to all her responsibilities as homemaker and educator of the children. But above all, it must be considered that the woman's commitments, on all levels of family life, also constitute an incomparable contribution to the life and future of society.

Dear friends, I hope that the *Festival of the Family* bears the hoped-for fruit and, while I assure you of my remembrance in prayer, I willingly impart the Apostolic Blessing, in support of every proposal and project for good in support of family institutions, which has always been and continues to be the living cell of society.

MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING MEETING OF THE 3rd EDITION
OF THE FAMILY FESTIVAL IN RIVA DEL GARDA
FRANCIS
2 December 2014

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141202_messaggio-festival-famiglia.html

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Other text:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150112_corpo-diplomatico.html

UNIVERSAL INTENTION – SEPTEMBER

That young people in Africa may have access to education and work in their own countries.



[...] Above all, it is the youth who need your witness: young men and women look to us. In Africa, the future is in the hands of the young, who need to be protected from new and unscrupulous forms of “colonization” such as the pursuit of success, riches, and power at all costs, as well as fundamentalism and the distorted use of religion, in addition to new ideologies which destroy the identity of individuals and of families. The most effective way to overcome the temptation to give in to harmful lifestyles is by investing in education. Education will also help to overcome a widespread mentality of injustice and violence, as well as ethnic divisions. The greatest need is for a model of education which teaches the young to think critically and encourages growth in moral values (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 64). An important component in this educational process is the pastoral care of students: in Catholic or public schools there is a need to unite academic studies with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 132-134).

ADDRESS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SYMPOSIUM
OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR
FRANCIS
7 February 2015

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/february/documents/papa-francesco_20150207_conferenze-episcopali-africa-madagascar.html

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EVANGELIZATION INTENTION – OCTOBER

That consecrated religious men and women may bestir themselves, and be present among the poor, the marginalized, and those who have no voice.



[...] 1. That the old saying will always be true: "Where there are religious, there is joy". We are called to know and show that God is able to fill our hearts to the brim with happiness; that we need not seek our happiness elsewhere; that the authentic fraternity found in our communities increases our joy; and that our total self-giving in service to the Church, to families and young people, to the elderly and the poor, brings us life-long personal fulfilment.

None of us should be dour, discontented and dissatisfied, for "a gloomy disciple is a disciple of gloom". Like everyone else, we have our troubles, our dark nights of the soul, our disappointments and infirmities, our experience of slowing down as we grow older. But in all these things we should be able to discover "perfect joy". For it is here that we learn to recognize the face of Christ, who became like us in all things, and to rejoice in the knowledge that we are being conformed to him who, out of love of us, did not refuse the sufferings of the cross.

In a society which exalts the cult of efficiency, fitness and success, one which ignores the poor and dismisses "losers", we can witness by our lives to the truth of the words of Scripture: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

We can apply to the consecrated life the words of Benedict XVI which I cited in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: "It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but by attraction" (No. 14). The consecrated life will not flourish as a result of brilliant vocation programs, but because the young people we meet find us attractive, because they see us as men and women who are happy! Similarly, the apostolic effectiveness of consecrated life does not depend on the efficiency of

its methods. It depends on the eloquence of your lives, lives which radiate the joy and beauty of living the Gospel and following Christ to the full.

As I said to the members of ecclesial movements on the Vigil of Pentecost last year: "Fundamentally, the strength of the Church is living by the Gospel and bearing witness to our faith. The Church is the salt of the earth; she is the light of the world. She is called to make present in society the leaven of the Kingdom of God and she does this primarily by her witness, her witness of brotherly love, of solidarity and of sharing with others" (18 May 2013).

2. I am counting on you "to wake up the world", since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: "Radical evangelical living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way." This is the priority that is needed right now: "to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth... a religious must never abandon prophecy" (29 November 2013).

Prophets receive from God the ability to scrutinize the times in which they live and to interpret events: they are like sentinels who keep watch in the night and sense the coming of the dawn (cf. *Is* 21:11-12). Prophets know God and they know the men and women who are their brothers and sisters. They are able to discern and denounce the evil of sin and injustice. Because they are free, they are beholden to no one but God, and they have no interest other than God. Prophets tend to be on the side of the poor and the powerless, for they know that God himself is on their side.

So I trust that, rather than living in some utopia, you will find ways to create "alternate spaces", where the Gospel approach of self-giving, fraternity, embracing differences, and love of one another can thrive. Monasteries, communities, centres of spirituality, schools, hospitals, family shelters – all these are places which the charity and creativity born of your charisms have brought into being, and with constant creativity must continue to bring into being. They should increasingly be the leaven for a society inspired by the Gospel, a "city on a hill", which testifies to the truth and the power of Jesus' words.

At times, like Elijah and Jonah, you may feel the temptation to flee, to abandon the task of being a prophet because it is too demanding, wearisome or apparently fruitless. But prophets know that they are never alone. As he did with Jeremiah, so God encourages us: "Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you" (*Jer* 1:8).

3. Men and women religious, like all other consecrated persons, have been called, as I mentioned, "experts in communion". So I am hoping that the "spirituality of communion", so emphasized by Saint John Paul II, will become a reality and that you will be in the forefront of responding to "the great challenge facing us" in this new millennium: "to make the Church the home and the school of communion."^[5] I am sure that in this Year you will make every effort to make the ideal of fraternity pursued by your founders and foundresses expand everywhere, like concentric circles.

Communion is lived first and foremost within the respective communities of each Institute. To this end, I would ask you to think about my frequent comments about criticism, gossip, envy, jealousy, hostility as ways of acting which have no place in our houses. This being the case, the path of charity open before us is almost infinite, since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual, fraternal correction and respect for those who are weak ... it is the "mystique of living together" which makes our life "a sacred pilgrimage".^[6] We need to ask ourselves about the way we relate to persons from different cultures, as our communities become increasingly international. How can we enable each member to say freely what he or she thinks, to be accepted with his or her particular gifts, and to become fully co-responsible?

I also hope for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes. Might this Year be an occasion for us to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels, on projects involving formation, evangelization, and social action? This would make for a more effective prophetic witness. Communion and the encounter between different charisms and vocations can open up a path of hope. No one contributes to the future in isolation, by his or her efforts alone, but by seeing himself or herself as part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance. Such a communion inoculates us from the disease of self-absorption.

Consecrated men and women are also called to true synergy with all other vocations in the Church, beginning with priests and the lay faithful, in order to "spread the spirituality of communion, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries".[7]

4. I also expect from you what I have asked all the members of the Church: to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries. "Go into all the world"; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. *Mk* 16:15). A whole world awaits us: men and women who have lost all hope, families in difficulty, abandoned children, young people without a future, the elderly, sick and abandoned, those who are rich in the world's goods but impoverished within, men and women looking for a purpose in life, thirsting for the divine...

Don't be closed in on yourselves, don't be stifled by petty squabbles, don't remain a hostage to your own problems. These will be resolved if you go forth and help others to resolve their own problems, and proclaim the Good News. You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.

I ask you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize, to proclaim the Gospel and to teach others how to pray. Consequently, I would hope that structures can be streamlined, large religious houses repurposed for works which better respond to the present demands of evangelization and charity, and apostolates adjusted to new needs. [...]

APOSTOLIC LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS
TO ALL CONSECRATED PEOPLE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE
FRANCIS
21 November 2014

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_lettera-ap_20141121_lettera-consacrati.html

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UNIVERSAL INTENTION – NOVEMBER

That the language of love and dialogue may always prevail over the language of conflict.



A broken world

2. While the last century knew the devastation of two deadly World Wars, the threat of nuclear war and a great number of other conflicts, today, sadly, we find ourselves engaged in a horrifying *world war fought piecemeal*. It is not easy to know if our world is presently more or less violent than in the past, or to know whether modern means of communications and greater mobility have made us more aware of violence, or, on the other hand, increasingly inured to it.

In any case, we know that this “piecemeal” violence, of different kinds and levels, causes great suffering: wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment. Where does this lead? Can violence achieve any goal of lasting value? Or does it merely lead to retaliation and a cycle of deadly conflicts that benefit only a few “warlords”?

Violence is not the cure for our broken world. Countering violence with violence leads at best to forced migrations and enormous suffering, because vast amounts of resources are diverted to military ends and away from the everyday needs of young people, families experiencing hardship, the elderly, the infirm and the great majority of people in our world. At worst, it can lead to the death, physical and spiritual, of many people, if not of all.

The Good News

3. Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart: for “it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions

come" (*Mk* 7:21). But Christ's message in this regard offers a radically positive approach. He unfailingly preached God's unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He taught his disciples to love their enemies (cf. *Mt* 5:44) and to turn the other cheek (cf. *Mt* 5:39). When he stopped her accusers from stoning the woman caught in adultery (cf. *Jn* 8:1-11), and when, on the night before he died, he told Peter to put away his sword (cf. *Mt* 26:52), Jesus marked out the path of nonviolence. He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility (cf. *Eph* 2:14-16). Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God's mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation. In the words of Saint Francis of Assisi: "As you announce peace with your mouth, make sure that you have greater peace in your hearts".[3]

To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence. As my predecessor Benedict XVI observed, that teaching "is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness. This '*more*' comes from God".[4] He went on to stress that: "For Christians, nonviolence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who is *so convinced of God's love and power* that he or she is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone. Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution'".[5] The Gospel command to *love your enemies* (cf. *Lk* 6:27) "is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian nonviolence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil..., but in responding to evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12:17-21), and thereby breaking the chain of injustice".[6]

More powerful than violence

4. Nonviolence is sometimes taken to mean surrender, lack of involvement and passivity, but this is not the case. When Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she clearly stated her own message of active nonviolence: "We in our family don't need bombs and guns, to destroy to bring peace – just get together, love one another... And we will be able to overcome all the evil that is in the world".[7] For the force of arms is deceptive. "While weapons traffickers do their work, there are poor peacemakers who give their lives to help one person, then another and another and another"; for such peacemakers, Mother Teresa is "a symbol, an icon of our times".[8] Last September, I had the great joy of proclaiming her a Saint. I praised her readiness to make herself available for everyone "through her welcome and defence of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded... She bowed down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity; she made her voice heard before the powers of this world, so that they might recognize their guilt for the crimes – the crimes! – of poverty they created".[9] In response, her mission – and she stands for thousands, even millions of persons – was to reach out to the suffering, with generous dedication, touching and binding up every wounded body, healing every broken life. [...]

MESSAGE FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE
FIFTIETH WORLD DAY OF PEACE

FRANCIS

8 December 2016

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html

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EVANGELIZATION INTENTION – DECEMBER

That people, who are involved in the service and transmission of faith, may find, in their dialogue with culture, a language suited to the conditions of the present time.



41. [...] today's vast and rapid cultural changes demand that we constantly seek ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness. "The deposit of the faith is one thing... the way it is expressed is another".^[45] There are times when the faithful, in listening to completely orthodox language, take away something alien to the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ, because that language is alien to their own way of speaking to and understanding one another. With the holy intent of communicating the truth about God and humanity, we sometimes give them a false god or a human ideal which is not really Christian. In this way, we hold fast to a formulation while failing to convey its substance. This is the greatest danger. Let us never forget that "the expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning".^[46]

73. New cultures are constantly being born in these vast new expanses where Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus. A completely new culture has come to life and continues to grow in the cities. The Synod noted that today the changes taking place in these great spaces and the culture which they create are a privileged locus of the new evangelization.^[61] This challenges us

to imagine innovative spaces and possibilities for prayer and communion which are more attractive and meaningful for city dwellers. Through the influence of the media, rural areas are being affected by the same cultural changes, which are significantly altering their way of life as well.

74. What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities. Cities are multicultural; in the larger cities, a connective network is found in which groups of people share a common imagination and dreams about life, and new human interactions arise, new cultures, invisible cities. Various subcultures exist side by side, and often practise segregation and violence. The Church is called to be at the service of a difficult dialogue. On the one hand, there are people who have the means needed to develop their personal and family lives, but there are also many “non-citizens”, “half citizens” and “urban remnants”. Cities create a sort of permanent ambivalence because, while they offer their residents countless possibilities, they also present many people with any number of obstacles to the full development of their lives. This contrast causes painful suffering. In many parts of the world, cities are the scene of mass protests where thousands of people call for freedom, a voice in public life, justice and a variety of other demands which, if not properly understood, will not be silenced by force.

158. [Paul VI](#) said that “the faithful... expect much from preaching, and will greatly benefit from it, provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted”.^[125] Simplicity has to do with the language we use. It must be one that people understand, lest we risk speaking to a void. Preachers often use words learned during their studies and in specialized settings which are not part of the ordinary language of their hearers. These are words that are suitable in theology or catechesis, but whose meaning is incomprehensible to the majority of Christians. The greatest risk for a preacher is that he becomes so accustomed to his own language that he thinks that everyone else naturally understands and uses it. If we wish to adapt to people’s language and to reach them with God’s word, we need to share in their lives and pay loving attention to them. Simplicity and clarity are two different things. Our language may be simple but our preaching not very clear. It can end up being incomprehensible because it is disorganized, lacks logical progression or tries to deal with too many things at one time. We need to ensure, then, that the homily has thematic unity, clear order and correlation between sentences, so that people can follow the preacher easily and grasp his line of argument.

159. Another feature of a good homily is that it is positive. It is not so much concerned with pointing out what shouldn’t be done, but with suggesting what we can do better. In any case, if it does draw attention to something negative, it will also attempt to point to a positive and attractive value, lest it remain mired in complaints, laments, criticisms and reproaches. Positive preaching always offers hope, points to the future, does not leave us trapped in negativity. How good it is when priests, deacons and the laity gather periodically to discover resources which can make preaching more attractive!

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION “EVANGELII GAUDIUM”

FRANCIS

24 November 2013

See full message:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

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