From the Cross
the grace of amazement

Once again Pope Francis led the celebration of Palm Sunday inside Saint Peter’s Basilica with a limited participation of the faithful due to the Coronavirus pandemic. In his homily the Pope focused his thoughts around the sense of amazement evoked in today’s liturgy and all of Holy Week, since we go from the joy of welcoming Jesus as he enters Jerusalem to the sorrow of seeing him condemned to death and crucified.

For the homily see page 8

Passover and Easter
Freedom and Responsibility

Abraham Skorka

The great lesson of the biblical account of the liberation and exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt centers on the concept of freedom. There is a biblical verse that clearly defines it. At the end of his days, Moses summons the younger generation to renew the covenant with God that had been made by their ancestors. As presented in the Book of Deuteronomy, his listeners were the people who were to overcome Canaan, settle there, and establish a society in which the rules and laws they had received in the desert should be implemented. They were a generation who had been born in freedom and who, unlike their parents, had not been traumatized by enslavement. Moses admonishes them to fulfill the precepts that God had commanded them, proclaiming very significantly that they have become the people of the One and Only God, who maintains covenantal fidelity with those who love God and keep the commandments of God (Deuteronomy 27:9). Freedom is not merely leaving the condition of enslavement. This is necessary but is insufficient for a fully dignified existence. There must also be a commitment to transcendent values that enable former slaves from remaining enslaved to their own passions and selfishness.

These values include serving God by caring for Creation and by respecting and loving the other human beings with whom life is shared. The covenanted people must also not idolize the deified projections of human instincts, or consecrate themselves to the ways of deified human dictators such as Pharaoh or Caesar or the despots of the last century or today. This is the challenge presented by God to those freed from the Egyptian yoke.

Among other commands, Chapter 25 of Leviticus presents laws about how resources and goods should be distributed in ancient Israel. Ownership of the ancestral family land had to be preserved. When someone fell into poverty and had to serve another for their livelihood, his relatives and friends had to rescue him from such a situation. The basis for all such laws is found in the last verse of the chapter: “Because the Children of Israel are servants to Me, My servants whom I have freed from the land out of Egypt. I the Lord am your God.”

The Bible recounts that after...
general audience

Pope Francis’ catechesis on the Easter Triduum

The sick, the poor and the rejected are the crucified of our time

In the spirit of Jesus’ concern for the poor and the rejected, let us look again at the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. And Already immersed in the spiritual journey of the Congregation for Bishops, we will be as servants to one another, as he did in washing the disciples’ feet, a gesture that anticipates his bloody abdication on the cross. And, indeed, the Master and Lord will die on the next day to purify not the feet, but the whole body of the church as his disciples. It was an oblation of service to us all, because with that service of his he sacrificed himself and us. Good morning!

Thursday, 25 March

H.E. Mr. Dennis Shmyhyr, Prime Minister of Ukraine, and entourage Archbp Andrei Card. Krysiak, titular Archbishop of Boma, Apostolic Nuncio to Ukraine Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops of the Vatican Covid-19 Commission. Deacon for the Evangelization of Peoples Archbp James Patrick Green, titular Archbishop of Alum, Apostolic Nuncio to the Republics of Sweden, Iceland, Denmark, Finland and Norway Bishop Hanna G. Abaw, tit., titular Bishop of Sursa for Manumis, Bishop of the Curia of Antich for Manumis, President of the Congregation for the Missionary Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary Members of the Community of the Pontifical Filipino College

Wednesday, 24 March

The College of Prelate Auditor of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota

Saturday, 27 March

 Lorenzo, Iran Be Allos, Prior of Taizé

Friday, 26 March

Members of the Vatican Covid-19 Commission

Chances in Episcopate

The Holy Father accepted the resignations presented by Bishop D’Enrico Wato, from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Bafoussam, Cameroon (25 Mar.) The Holy Father accepted the resignations presented by Bishop Nguyen Thi Ha, from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Ha Tinh, Vietnam (23 Mar.) The Holy Father accepted the resignations presented by Bishop Cyril Muska, CICM, from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Boma, Democratic Republic of the Congo (29 Mar.) The Holy Father appointed Pr. José Card. Guedes, Bishop of the Diocese of Boma. Until now he has served as rector of the Grand Séminaire de France, an apostolic congregation in the Apostolic See of France, and as pastoral vicar for the laity (29 Mar.).

VATICAN BULLETIN

Changes in Episcopate

Vatican Bulletin

The College of Prelate Auditor of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota

Sunday, 27 March

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contd from page 1
Absolute transparency in the economic and financial field

No privileges during trials: equal dignity for all members of the Church

On Saturday morning, 27 March, Pope Francis participated in the inauguration of the judicial ‘functions of the Tribunal of Vatican City State in the Hall of Benedictions. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s address to participants in the ceremony.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to meet you for the inauguration of the judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Vatican City State. I extend my cordial greetings to you all, to Cardinal Pignatone and Professor Milano, and I am grateful to the Prime Minister of the Italian Government, Mario Draghi, for his presence. And I cannot omit to men-

tion the late Professor Giuseppe Dalla Torre, who left us last year.

The demands of the pandemic have led to today’s ceremony being held in this “Hall of Benediction”, located between Saint Peter’s Basilica and the Square. It is from here that the Popes imparte the Urbi et Orbi blessing to the faithful, to Rome and to the world, on the main solemnities. On the opposite side, the Hall overlooks the central nave of the Basilica, in the visual perspective of the glory of the Holy Spirit, which illuminates the apse. A central position – physically and spiritually – between the open air and the same time enclosed space of Bernini’s Colonnade, and that of the professed and celebrated faith around the tomb of Peter. And I am reminded of Pius XI’s courage in wanting to return to this bal-

cany to give the blessing, because there was a warehouse between the curtains and the balcony, and when he asked to give this bless-

ing, they had to wait to clear this warehouse for a little more than 70 years, so that the Popes could look out over the square.

In this singular position one might see the meaning and the task of the Church transmitted and sent by Christ the Lord to carry out the mission of upholding the truth and – as the Vatican Council teaches – to “proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice” (Constitution, Lumen Gentium, 8), with God’s own style, closeness, compas-

sion and goodness.

With this mandate the Church enters history and becomes a place of encounter between peoples and of recon-

ciliation between men and women, to lead them, with the Word and the Sacraments, with Grace and the examples of life, to the faith, freedom and peace of Christ (cf. Breve dicata, 3).

This is the second consecutive year that I have participated in the opening of the judicial year. I am moved by a feeling of gratitude and recognition, because I know how demanding, sometimes ardu-

ous, your work is, which you carry out day by day to foster the order of interpersonal and social relationships, which find balance in the work of justice.

The normative changes to which the Promoter of Justice re-

ferrer have tipified the Vatican system in recent years. These changes will be effective to the extent that they will be accom-

panied by further reforms in crim-

inal law, especially in the fight against economic crime, and by the intensification of other activities aimed at facilitating and speeding up international cooperation between Vatican investigative bodies and their counterparts in other countries, as well as by the initia-

tives taken by the Judicial Police of our State.

In this regard, it is now ap-

parent that [we] cannot propose identifying and introducing, by means of appropriate regulations or memoranda of understanding, new and more incisive forms of co-

operation, as requested by financial market supervisory institu-

tions active at the international level. In this context, I hope that we will soon be able to have a con-

vention at the competent level, in order to make cooperation more rapid and effective. The results achieved so far encourage us (as) to continue the work undertaken, in order to overcome practices that do not always meet the need for promptness required by the dyn-

amics of investigation.

I urge everyone to support these initiatives and those to be undertaken for the absolute transparency of the insti-
tutions of the Vatican State, especially in the economic and financial field, may always be inspired by the founding prin-
ciples of ecclesial life and, at the same time, take due account of the parameters and “good practices” current at the international level, and appear exemplary, as is re-

quired of a reality such as the Catholic Church.

All the workers in this field, and all holders of institutional offices, should therefore conduct themselves in a way that, while denot-
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sary – with regard to the past, is also inappropriate and exemplary for the present and the future.

On this point, it will be neces-

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Introduction

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. R/ Amen

Dear Jesus,

You know that we children also have crosses to carry. Crosses that are no lighter or heavier than those of adults, but are still real, crosses, crosses that weigh us down even at night. Only you know what they are, and take them seriously. Only you.

Only you know how hard it is for me to learn not to be afraid of the dark, so I don’t fall and hurt myself. Only you know how hard it is to wake up every morning after waking the little ones.

Only you know how hard it is to think quickly and to learn grammar and math.

Only you know how hard it is to see my parents fight and slam the door and not talk to each other for days.

Only you know how hard it is to be made fun of, and not be invited to your friend’s home.

Only you know how hard it is to feel ashamed. I am sorry for what I did. I could have helped my friend; I could have told the truth and made things right. Instead, I acted like Pi- late and decided to keep quiet. I chose the easier way and wavered in my hands of it. Now, I am so sorry for what I did. If I had a bit of courage, followed my heart and helped my friend in need.

So I listen to the voices of those who think and do evil, while doing what is right is like an uphill road, full of obstacles and pitfalls, and we have Jesus at our side, always ready to support and help us.

Children’s Prayer

Jesus, give me a simple and sincere heart. That way I will have the courage and strength, even when it is hard, to do what is right. For you are me with a pen, and I write with your heart.

Prayer

Lord, loving Father, fill us with your Holy Spirit and grant us the ability to recognize in this way we will find the courage to bear all our suffering, to speak the truth, which is the path to justice and reconciliation. JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Second Station

JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

Now the new who were holding Jesus mocked him and beat him, they also blind- folded him and asked him, “Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?” And they spoke many other words against him, teasing him (Lk 23:33-41).

Prayer

Lord, you took upon yourself our sufferings and shared in them, even carrying to the cross, its burden and its humiliation. Do not abandon us under the weight of our own crosses that sometimes seem all too heavy for us to bear. Who love and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Meditation

In class, we take turns reading the book The Queen and the Cat. When it was Martina’s turn, she began to mix up the letters and so none of it made sense. At every word, I would laugh, and the others with me. I still realize that it is a man or a woman. Then, slowly, we begin to make out the details of their face. But only when we see him or her as a brother or a sister, do we open our hearts to Jesus.

Children’s Prayer

Jesus, help me to welcome with love our brothers and sisters who feel lonely and excluded, whenever I happen to meet them.

Prayer

Lord, enable us to recognize you in the poor whom we encounter on the road. Give us the courage to give food to the hungry, to sit down with the thirsty, to welcome strangers, to clothe the naked and heal the sick, to see and welcome you in each of our brothers and sisters. You love and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Meditation

When I think of my mother, I see her gentle face, I feel the warmth of her embrace and I realize how much she has for me. She takes me everywhere: to foot- ball practice, to language classes and to catechism on Sunday mornings. In the evening, even if she is tired, she helps me do my homework. When I have nightmares, she sits with me, calms me down and waits for me to go back to sleep.

Children’s Prayer

Jesus, make us experience the love and presence of Mary, our Mother in heaven.

Prayer

Lord, loving Father, may we feel the grace of the Mother of Jesus, realizing that we are no longer alone, each of us so deeply in the maternal embrace, for she embraced and loved everyone in Jesus, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Fifth Station

SIXTH STATION

A Woman wipes the face of Jesus

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you in prison or visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me” (Mt 25:36-40).

Meditation

That day, I was playing in the most important game of the champi- onship. It was a chance to display all my talent. In the locker room, I was nervous and on edge but, on entering the field, I saw among the spectators, Marozzo, my best friend. Although he did not like football, he had come to support me. It was the first time he had ever come to see me play, unfor- tunately, we lost.

While taking a shower, I was sad and discouraged, but, after leaving the locker room, there was my friend, holding a soft drink and waiting for me. We spent some time together. That time together, and that little gift, made everyone feel more as a family. Losing the game became less of a bad memory.
An encounter, a look, a small gesture can change our day and warm our hearts. In the face of a friend, or even a stranger, who is upset, we can see the face of Jesus walking alongside us. Will I have the courage to get close?

Prayer

Jesus, may my eye meet yours in times of difficulty, so that I can find comfort in your love.

Pope Francis

Lord, may the light of your face, so full of mercy, soothe the pain of the rejection and sin that afflicts us. Who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Seventh Station

Jesus falls for the second time

He committed no sin, and was guilty of no wrong. When he was scourged, he did not resist; when they afflicted him, he did not threaten; but he trusted, fully to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. (1 Pet 2:24-25).

Meditation

My brother and I were playing video games all afternoon. When evening came, Mom asked if we had done our homework. We both replied, “Yes, Mom.” I immediately went to my room and did my homework, while my brother kept watching TV on the sofa.

The next day he did not go to school. He said he was sick and claimed that he had a stomach ache.

When I came back home, I went to his room, and we talked about what had happened. It was wrong for us to lie to our mother and for my brother to pretend to have a stomach ache.

I suggested that we do our home work right away, and so he helped me catch up on what he missed the day before. Once we finished, we spent the rest of the afternoon playing video games.

Correcting a brother or sister in difficulty but necessary. It requires courage, simplicity and sensitivity.

Children’s Prayer

Jesus, you filled our hearts with sweetness and sensitivity. Help us to look after our little brothers and sisters.

Prayer

Lord, our Good Father, make us credible witnesses of your mercy. May our words and actions always be a sign of true love, freely given, for each of our brothers and sisters.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ninth Station

Jesus falls for the second time

[Ten soldiers] crossed them, and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. This was but a superficial sharing of his garments among them, for their clothing was lest they fall into the hands of the enemy. (Mt 27:35).

Meditation

On the shelves in my room I had many dolls, each one of them different. I would receive a new doll as a gift on special occasions, and I was very fond of all my little friends.

One Sunday, during the an nouncements at the end of Mass, the priest mentioned a collection for young refugees children from Kosovo. When I got back home, I looked at the doll and thought: “Do I really need them?”

Somewhat reluctantly, I chose a few of them, the oldest ones, the ones I liked the least. I prepared a box to bring them to the church the following Sunday.

That evening, however, I felt I had not done enough. By the time I went to sleep, the box was full of dolls and the shelves were empty.

Getting rid of things we don’t need lightens the soul and frees us from selfishness.

Giving makes us happier than receiving.

Children’s prayer

Jesus, watch over my heart. Free it from preoccupation to material goods. Help me to give in away only the things I do not need, but also some of those I do.

Prayer

Lord, loving Father, bridge us as givers of love, giving the gifts of your providence with all our brothers and sisters. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thirteenth Station

Jesus is taken down from the cross

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate gave it him to be given in (Jn 19:38-39).

Meditation

People jumped out of the ambulance howled as a cat, wearing protective suits, gloves, masks and face shields. They took away my grandpa. It was so depressing, getting difficulty breathing.

I was at the last time that I saw my grandfather. He died a few days later. I didn’t have time to think of how lonely he must have felt. I could not be near him physically, so I told him goodbye and to comfort him. I prayed for him every day. That way I was able to be there with him during his final journey on this earth.

Children’s prayer

We thank you, Jesus, for having given us, by your death on the cross, the power of hope.

Let us pray

Lord, loving Father, grant that we may feel your closeness as a consoling and reconciling presence, until the time when, by a gift of your prov- inces, we meet you face to face with you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fourteenth Station

Jesus is placed in the tomb

Now in the place where they crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever lain dead. He be- cause the Jews of the day of Preparation, at the tomb was kept, and they laid Jesus there (Jq 27:54-57).

Meditation

Dear Jesus, my name is Sarah and I am twelve years old. I want to thank you, because today you taught me to do good for the sake of your love. You taught me to overcome my troubles by trusting in you, to love others as my brothers and sisters, and to get up every time I fall. You taught me to serve others, to get rid of my prejudices; to recognize what is important and, above all, to unite my life to yours each day. Today, thanks to your act of infinite love, I know that death is not the end of everything.

Children’s prayer

Jesus, help us to keep praying, even when our hearts feel as heavy as the stone before your tomb.

Pra y er

O Lord, loving Father, when we encounter peaceful events along the journey of life, give us the hope of Easter, the path leading from death to resurrection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Final Prayer

Lord, merciful Father, once again this year we have followed your Son Jesus along the way of the cross. We fol- lowed him by listening to the voices and the prayers of the children whom you yourself set before us as the model for entering your kingdom.

Help us to be like them, little, in need of everything, open to life. May we regain our purity of heart and our ability to feel others as my brothers and sisters.

We ask you to bless and protect every child in the world. May all children grow in wisdom, age and grace, and so come to know and fol- low you as our Lord and Saviour.

Jesus, too all parents, and those who assist them in raising these, your children, so that they may always feel close to you as givers of love and life.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
In order to reinforce the Holy Father’s numerous appeals to ensure that no one be excluded from the Covid vaccine, the Office of Papal Charities (www.elemosineria.va) took place in the Papal Palace in the Vatican during Holy Week. The President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Conference, Cardinal John Ashley Dew, Announced a Project that has ex- pressed shame and sadness on be- half of the local Church in response to a round of redress hearings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse in Care (sexual, physical, emotional and psychological) that took place in care facilities such as orphanages, centres for disabled people and mental health insti- tutes. The hearings took place in Auckland from 9 to 19 March. The investigation of the Com- mission, established by the gov- ernment but wholly independent of it, of religious and congregant orga- nizations, examined the violence that also played itself out in ecclesi- astic space, as requested by the Church of New Zealand herself, in particular between 1950 and 1990, but including testimonies from the years that followed that time peri- od. The inquiry had the aim of ex- amining the adequacy of redress and what should be done to help victi- ms. In the first phase of hearing, which marks the autumn, the Commission had heard the testimonies of survivors, while in this second phase representa- tives of religious institutions, among them also members of the Anglican Church and the Salva- tion Army, were called to provide evidence of their testimonies. During his address, Cardinal Dew made a public apology for the Catholic Church’s responsibil- ity in the abuses, on behalf of all bishops, priests and religious persons. “We offer no excuses for their actions, or for the culture that has left you harm”, he stressed. He also called for an abuse perpetrated by bishops, priests, broth- ers from religious orders and people should have been able to trust the Cardinal said. “We have heard you and acknowledge we cannot heal your pain, hurt, and trauma, and that this continues to impact you.” Describing any kind of abuse as “unacceptable and indefensible”, and that aid to victims should be a priority, Cardinal Dew also ac- knowledged that “for some it is too late, and the culture of the Church allowed abuse to occur” and that these “must change”. Only in this way can there be a better Church, one that spares no effort to create a culture that prevents abuse and any possibility of cover-ups… a culture that prevents abuse and brings healing from you, and then acts.”


The number of permanent deacons continues to show significant and encouraging growth with an increase of 1.3% com- pared to the previous year, up from 75,034 to 75,982 worldwide. The number of deacons in- creased by 1.1% in America and Europe, where 52% of all dea- cons reside, and also in Asia where they are not quantitatively relevant such as in Oceania where the number increased by 4.1% deacons, a growth of 1.1%. The number of professed men religious (not priests) experi- enced an overall global decrease from 120,302 in 2017 to 119,346 in 2021. The decrease can be ac- counted for in Asia, Africa and Oceania. Europe and America were re- mained relatively stable at just above 2018. Meanwhile, Europe experienced a marked decrease in number, from 193,036 priests representing almost 41% of all priests in 2018, to 46 priests in 2019.

The number of priests residing in Africa increased by 2.8% globally from 61,866 in 2018 to 63,209 in 2019. Africa experienced the greatest increase at 1.1% from 76,219 to 77,054 in 2019, followed by Southeast Asia with an overall 1.6% increase, from 170,972 to 170,754. Meanwhile the presence of wom- en religious in America, Europe and Oceania experienced an overall drop. In America from 3,503 to 3,475, in Europe from 6,299 to 6,278. Priests vacated positions continued the trend, which last observed in 2015, with a reduction from 135,880 in 2018 to 135,007 in 2019, overall an 1.8% decrease. In Europe there was a 4.1% de- crease, in Asia 2.8% and in Oceania a 5.0% decrease. By contrast the number in America fell to its lowest level, from 21,712 to 21,597, in 2019. America experienced the greatest decrease at 0.5% from 21,712 to 21,597. In Asia, the number of priests rose from 230,969 in 2018 to 232,935 in 2021. Asia is the world’s largest region by number of priests in 2021, with 28.7% (27.8% in 2018) of the world’s priests. China is the country with the most priests, with 19,209 priests, followed by India with 21,339 priests. The least number of priests were recorded in Pakistan, with 2,669 priests. Asia accounts for 28.7% (27.8% in 2018) of the world’s priests.

The statistics reveal that, in 2021, there were 630,099 diocesan priests worldwide, the same figure recorded in 2018. The number of women religious increased from 641,661 in 2018 to 653,439 in 2021, an overall increase of 1.8% from 2018’s figure of 641,661. In Europe, America and Oceania, the decrease in the number of religious was more than compensated by an overall increase in the number of religious in other regions, especially Asia, Africa and Oceania. In 2021, there were 635,883 religious worldwide, a 0.1% increase compared to 2020. The number of religious in Europe and America remained stable, with little change from 2018, while in Asia, Africa and Oceania there was an overall increase of 2.5% compared to 2018. In Asia, the number of religious increased by 0.7% in 2021, from 194,971 in 2020 to 196,473 in 2021. In Africa and Oceania, the number of religious increased by 3.5% and 4.2% in 2021, from 101,803 to 105,021 and from 59,685 to 62,037 in 2021 respectively. In Europe, there was an increase of 1.2% in 2021, from 32,979 to 33,436.

In 2021, there were 630,099 diocesan priests worldwide, the same figure recorded in 2018. The number of women religious increased from 641,661 in 2018 to 653,439 in 2021, an overall increase of 1.8% from 2018’s figure of 641,661. In Europe, America and Oceania the decrease in the number of religious was more than compensated by an overall increase in the number of religious in other regions, especially Asia, Africa and Oceania. In 2021, there were 635,883 religious worldwide, a 0.1% increase compared to 2020. The number of religious in Europe and America remained stable, with little change from 2018, while in Asia, Africa and Oceania there was an overall increase of 2.5% compared to 2018. In Asia, the number of religious increased by 0.7% in 2021, from 194,971 in 2020 to 196,473 in 2021. In Africa and Oceania, the number of religious increased by 3.5% and 4.2% in 2021, from 101,803 to 105,021 and from 59,685 to 62,037 in 2021 respectively. In Europe, there was an increase of 1.2% in 2021, from 32,979 to 33,436.

The number of permanent deacons continues to show significant and encouraging growth with an increase of 1.3% com- pared to the previous year, up from 75,034 to 75,982 worldwide. The number of deacons in- creased by 1.1% in America and Europe, where 52% of all dea- cons reside, and also in Asia where they are not quantitatively relevant such as in Oceania where the number increased by 4.1% deacons, a growth of 1.1%. The number of professed men religious (not priests) experi- enced an overall global decrease from 120,302 in 2017 to 119,346 in 2021. The decrease can be ac- counted for in Asia, Africa and Oceania. Europe and America were re- mained relatively stable at just above 2018. Meanwhile, Europe experienced a marked decrease in number, from 193,036 priests representing almost 41% of all priests in 2018, to 46 priests in 2019.

The number of priests residing in Africa increased by 2.8% globally from 61,866 in 2018 to 63,209 in 2019. Africa experienced the greatest increase at 1.1% from 76,219 to 77,054 in 2019, followed by Southeast Asia with an overall 1.6% increase, from 170,972 to 170,754. Meanwhile the presence of wom- en religious in America, Europe and Oceania experienced an overall drop. In America from 3,503 to 3,475, in Europe from 6,299 to 6,278. Priests vacated positions continued the trend, which last observed in 2015, with a reduction from 135,880 in 2018 to 135,007 in 2019, overall an 1.8% decrease. In Europe there was a 4.1% de- crease, in Asia 2.8% and in Oceania a 5.0% decrease. By contrast the number in America fell to its lowest level, from 21,712 to 21,597, in 2019. America experienced the greatest decrease at 0.5% from 21,712 to 21,597. In Asia, the number of priests rose from 230,969 in 2018 to 232,935 in 2021. Asia is the world’s largest region by number of priests in 2021, with 28.7% (27.8% in 2018) of the world’s priests. China is the country with the most priests, with 19,209 priests, followed by India with 21,339 priests. The least number of priests were recorded in Pakistan, with 2,669 priests. Asia accounts for 28.7% (27.8% in 2018) of the world’s priests.
The Pope in Iraq: a sign of hope for all minorities

The Nobel Peace Prize winner speaks with Vatican Media on Pope Francis’ visit to the war-torn country, the lipsy for a peaceful future and the Yazidi people’s struggle for survival.

With her immense courage she became a symbol for her people, the Yazidis, and for all women who are victims of violence, whether or not in war. In 2014, Nadia Murad was enslaved by men of ISIS, who either exterminated or imprisoned thousands of Yazidis in northern Iraq, including many of her family members. A victim of unacceptable acts of violence, Nadia did not let evil defeat her, and today is a source of hope for others still living in dire circumstances.

The Pope’s visit to Iraq historic in itself, but also comes at a critical time for the people, as they refuse from genocide, religious persecution, and decades of conflict. The Pope’s visit shines a light on the potential for peace and religious freedom. It symbolizes all Iraqis — no matter their faith — equally deserving of dignity and human rights. His Holiness also sent a clear message that restoring justice is not just for fathers, in a world in crisis and in need of being re-understood and realized.

In the succession of the appointments in the column, we will be guided by the text of Pope Francis to “make Joseph of Nazareth dialogue” with the fathers of our time. So every month — starting from April and until next October — the text of each chapter will be re-proposed, published in its entirety or in large excerpts (in the daily edition of L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO).

For the launch of the column, we propose the introduction of the Letter again:

The chapters titles themselves will give the titles of the column, and will give direction to the column.

Freedom and Responsibility

Interview with Nadia Murad

The Nobel Peace Prize winner speaks with Vatican Media on Pope Francis’ visit to the war-torn country, the lipsy for a peaceful future and the Yazidi people’s struggle for survival.

In an attempt to

... we need to establish a culture of peace, to fight for our rights, change will be unstoppable.

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number 14, Friday, 2 April 2021 page 7

With a father’s heart

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Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

With our gaze upon the Cross to receive the grace of amazement

On Sunday morning, 18 March, in the Vatican Basilica, Pope Francis celebrated Holy Mass for Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord. The following is a translation of the Angelus recited this morning.

Dear brothers and sisters,

We have begun Holy Week. For the second time we will live it within the context of the pandemic. Last year we were more shocked; this year we are more sorely tried. And the economic crisis has become severe. In this historical and social situation, what is God doing? He takes up the cross. Jesus takes up the cross, that is, he takes on the evil that this situation entails, the physical and psychological evil — and above all the spiritual evil — because the evil one takes advantage of the crisis to sow distrust, despair, and discord.

And we? What should we do? The Virgin Mary, Jesus’ Mother, who is also his first disciple, shows us: she followed her Son. She took upon herself her own portion of suffering, of darkness, of confusion, and she walked the way of the passion, keeping the lamp of faith in her heart. With God’s grace, we too can make this journey. And, along the daily way of the cross, we meet the faces of so many brothers and sisters in difficulty: let us not pass them by, let us allow our hearts to be moved with compassion, and let us draw near. At first, like the Cyrenean, we might think: “Why me?” But then we will discover the gift that we have received, without our own merits.

Let us pray for all the victims of violence, in particular for the victims of this morning’s attack in Indonesia, in front of the Cathedral of Makassar. May Our Lady, who always preceeds us on the path of faith, help us.

Holy Week which leads up to the Easter Resurrection, precisely those infinitely small olive leaves, symbols of true peace, in the hands of the Successor of Peter are a sign of a hope that does not die. A sign of resurrection. Francis, according to the most purist popular Christian tradition, took home with him a twig — a relic — of the Lord’s Passion and also of the passion of many — to keep close to him during this particularly intense time of prayer.

Before the Marian prayer

Prayers for the victims of the attack in Indonesia

Palm Sunday Angelus