The poor you will always have with you

The poor you will always have with you: this passage taken from Mark the Evangelist (14:7) is the theme chosen by the Holy Father for the fifth World Day of the Poor to be celebrated on Sunday, 14 November. In his Message for this Day, established after the Jubilee of Mercy, the Pope highlights the need for conversion and for an approach that counters new forms of poverty in the world and promotes the freedom needed to live a life of fulfillment according to the abilities of each person. Jesus spoke the words at a meal in Bethany in the home of Simon the leper, a few days before Passover. A woman came in with an alabaster flask of precious ointment and poured it over Jesus’ head, causing great amazement and giving rise to two interpretations.

The first was indignation. Considering the value of the ointment, some of those present, including the disciples, felt it should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. Judas, in particular, was very vocal, "not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief" and wanted to take what was in the money box.

The second interpretation was that of Jesus who makes us appreciate the meaning of the woman’s act. He asked them to leave her alone because he saw in her act "an anticipation of the anointing of his lifeless body prior to its placement in the tomb".

Jesus was reminding them that he is the first of the poor, the poorest of the poor, because he represents all of them. It was also for the sake of the poor, the lonely, the marginalized and the victims of discrimination, that the Son of God accepted the woman’s gesture, "Pope Francis observed.

The Message for the celebration was presented at the Holy See Press Office on Monday, 14 June, by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization.

At the General Audience

Give glory to God knowing that Jesus prays for us

On Wednesday morning, 16 June, at the General Audience held in the courtyard of Saint Damasus, the Holy Father concluded his series of catecheses on prayer by turning once again to the prayer of Jesus. In the final hours of his life, Jesus’ constant dialogue with the Father becomes all the more intense, as he approaches his saving death and resurrection. In the great "priestly prayer" of the Last Supper, Jesus intercedes for his disciples and for all those who will believe through their word. In the agony in the garden, he offers his anguish to the Father and lovingly embraces his will. At the darkest hour of his suffering on the cross, Jesus continues to pray, using the traditional words of the Psalms, identifying himself with the poor and abandoned of our world. In those moments, the crucified Lord takes upon himself the burden of all the sins of the world. For our sake, he experiences the distance separating sinners from God, and becomes the supreme and eternal intercessor for all mankind. In our own life of prayer, may we always be mindful that the Lord never ceases to pray for us, uniting us to his own eternal dialogue of love with the Father in the communion of the Holy Spirit.

The Mediterranean is Europe’s largest cemetery

Anchored in the common good

Missionaries in Thailand

A coffee journey

Christ the Beggar: a sculpture by Timothy Schmalz on the steps of Santo Spirito Hospital near Vatican City

Friday, 18 June 2021
May “two life sap for one of giving glory to God in the knowledge that he prays for me to the Father, that Jesus prays for me,” Pope Francis said as he concluded his series of catechesis on prayer at the General Audience on Wednesday morning, 16 June. The following is a translation of the Holy Father’s words which he shared with the faithful gathered in the Vatican’s San Damaso Courtyard.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

We have recalled several times in this series of catecheses that prayer is one of the most evident characteristics of Jesus’ life. Jesus prayed, and he taught us how to pray. In the course of his mission, Jesus immersed himself in it because dialogue with the Father was the incandescent core of his entire existence. The Gospels testify how Jesus’ prayer became even more intense and deep at the hour of his passion and death. These culminating events of his life constitute the central core of Christian preaching: those last hours lived by Jesus in Jerusalem are the heart of the Gospel, not only because the Evangelists reserve proportionally greater space to this narrative, but because the event of his death and resurrection — like a flash of lightning — sheds light on the rest of Jesus’ life. He was not a philanthropist who took care of human suffering and illness; he was and is much more. In the moments of his deepest desolation: there is something there, there is no illusion, and not an episodic salvation — the type that might save me from an illness or a moment of despair — but total salvation, messianic salvation, which gives hope in the definitive victory of life over death.

In the days of his last Passover, we thus find Jesus fully opened to prayer. He prays dramatically in the garden of Gethsemane, as we heard, assailed by mortal anguish. And yet, precisely in that moment, Jesus addresses God as “Abba”, Father (cf. Mk 14:36). In this word, which was Jesus’ language, expression of trust, Jesus asks for the Father’s word to emerge from his lips. It is the word of trust. Just as he feels the darkness gather around him, Jesus breaks through it with that little word: Abba, Father.

Jesu prayed on the cross, obscurely absolved in God’s silence. And yet once again the word “Father” emerges from his lips. It is the word of trust. “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” (v. 39). He felt forsaken. He felt forsaken me? No, he is imitating God’s Abba into his lips. It is the word of trust, that Jesus prays for everyone. He prays for everyone, even for those who have condemned him, with no one, apart from a poor delinquent, taking his side. Everyone was against him or indifferent, only that criminal recognized the power. “Father, forgive them,” for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). In the midst of the tragedy, in the excruciating pain of soul and body, Jesus prays with the words of the psalms; with the psalms of lament, especially those forgotten by all. He pronounces the tragic words of Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (v. 1). He felt abandoned, and he prayed. On the cross is the fulfillment of the gift of the Father who offers love, that is, our salvation is fulfilled. And also, once, he calls him “My God”, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” (v. 39). The words of trust, the words of every prayer are the words of the cross. Jesus therefore prays in the decisive hours of his passion and death. And with the resurrection, the Father will grant Jesus’ prayer. Jesus’ prayer is intense, Jesus’ prayer is unique, and it also becomes the model for our prayer. Jesus prayed for everyone: He even prayed for me, for each of you. Every one of you can say “Jesus, on the cross, prayed for me.” He prayed. Jesus can say to every one of us who has ever been at the Last Supper, and on the wood of the cross: “I am praying for you.” Even in the most painful of our suffering, we are never alone. Jesus’ prayer is with us. “And now, Father, here, we who are listening to this, does Jesus pray for us?” Yes, he continues to pray so that his word may help us keep going forward. But also, and then he remembers that he prays for us. And this seems to me the most beautiful thing to re- members today: this is the final catechesis of this series of prayer: to remember the grace that not only we do not pray, but that to speak, we have been “prayed for.” We have already been welcomed into Jesus’ dialogue with the Father in communion with the Holy Spirit. Jesus prays for everyone. Everyone can carry this in their heart. We must not forget this. Even in the worst moments. We are already welcomed into Jesus’ dialogue with the Father, in communion of the Holy Spirit. It were we filled by Christ Jesus, as it is in everyone who prays a passion, death and resurrection. We are always welcomed into Jesus’ dialogue with the Father, even in moments of our suffering. And so, with prayer and with life, all that remains is on- ly our word, to say this word, to pray, and, with this courage and hope, to deeply feel Jesus’ prayer and to keep on going. Let our life be one of going to glory in God in the knowledge that he prays for me to the Father, that Jesus prays for me.

Special greetings

I cordially greet the English-speaking faithful. In union with the Lord Jesus, our intercessor before the Father, may we pray perseveringly for the conversion of hearts and the salvation of the world. Upon you and your families I pray, in particular, for the faithful of our dear and loving Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Lastly, as usual, my thoughts turn to the elderly, to young people, to the sick, to the poor, to all who are in need. If you have any hope that summertime will be a time of silence and a beautiful opportunity to contemplate God in the masterpiece of his creation. My blessing to all of you.
Anchored in the common good, friendly to ethics and respectful of the environment

Pontif’s video message to GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum

Convert death into life, weeps into food

See “judge – act.” This was the “trinitarial method.” Pope Francis prepared his video message to participants in the GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum, which was held in the Slovakian capital on 15-17 June, with the theme “Rebuild the World Back Better.”

I greet you, all the organizers and participants in this conference. I would like to express my gratitude for the platform that the Bratislava Forum offers to the important discussion on the rebuilding of our world after the experience of the pandemic, which forces us to confront a series of serious interrelated socio-economic, ecological and political issues.

In this regard, I would like to propose a few ideas inspired by the trinitarial method see – judge – act.

See

A serious and honest analysis of the past, which includes reflections of systematic shortcomings, mistakes made and lack of responsibility toward our Creator, our neighbour and creation, seems indispensable to us to develop an idea for recovery that aims not only to rebuild what was, but to correct what was not working even before the arrival of the coronavirus. And that helped worsen the crisis. Those who wish to pick themselves up back after a fall must confront the circumstances of their collapse and recognize the elements of responsibility.

Thus, I see a world that has been deceived by an illusive sense of security based on profit and creation, seems indispensable to me to develop an idea for recovery that aims not only to rebuild what was, but to correct what was not working even before the arrival of the coronavirus. And that helped worsen the crisis. Those who wish to pick themselves up back after a fall must confront the circumstances of their collapse and recognize the elements of responsibility.

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To judge

I see a model of economic and social life characterized by much inequality and egoism, in which a slim minority of the world’s population possesses the majority of goods, often not hesitating to exploit persons and resources.

I see a way of life that does not take enough care of the environment. We have become accustomed to consuming and destroying without an discretion that belongs to every man and the whole man, ’ as the essential pillar to be protected and respected, adopting a methodology that includes the ethics of solidarity and ‘political charity’ (Message to St. Eusebius of Dura, Ms Audrey Azoulay, 31 March 2021).

Every action needs a vision, a vi- sion that is of the whole and of hope: a vision like that of the Biblical prophet Isaiah, who saw swords transformed into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks (cf. Is 2:4). Act- ing for the development of everyone means putting into action a work of conversion. And first and foremost, decisions that convert death into life, vices into virtues.

But we all need to undertake an ecological conversion as well. Indeed, the vision of the whole includes the concept of a creation understood as our “common home” and urgently demands action to pro- tect it.

Dear friends, encouraged by the hope that comes from God, I hope that your exchanges in these days will contribute to a recovery model capable of generating more inclusive and sustainable solutions; a develop- ment model that is founded on the recognition of the dignity of every person and on harmony with creation. Good work, and thank you!

To act

Those who do not act waste the opportunities offered by the crisis. To act, in the face of social injustices and marginalization, requires a de- velopment model that places at the centre every man and the whole man, ’ as the essential pillar to be protected and respected, adopting a methodology that includes the ethics of solidarity and ‘political charity’ (Message to St. Eusebius of Dura, Ms Audrey Azoulay, 31 March 2021).

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Fifth World Day of the Poor

"The poor you will always have with you." (Mk 14:29)

"We cannot wait for the poor to knock on our door", we need urgently "to reach them in their homes, in hospitals and nursing homes, on the streets and in the dark corners where they sometimes hide, in welfare agencies and reception centres" to "understand how they feel, what they are experiencing and what their hearts desire." This is what Pope Francis emphasized in his Message for the Fifth World Day of the Poor, dated Sunday, 13 June, Memorial of Saint Anthony of Padua. The Message was presented at the Holy See Press Office on Monday, 14 June. The Day instituted by the Pope at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy will have as this year’s theme: "The poor you will always have with you" (Mk 14:7), and will be celebrated on 24 November, the Sunday of Ordinary Time. The following is the English text of the Holy Father’s Message:

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

"The poor you will always have with you" (Mk 14:29)

1. "The poor you will always have with you" (Mk 14:29). Jesus spoke these words at a meal in Bethany, in the home of a certain Simon, known as the leper, a few days before Passover. As the Evangelist recounts, a woman came in with an alabaster jar of expensive perfumed oil and poured it over Jesus’ head. This caused great amazement and gave rise to two different interpretations. The first was indignant on the part of some of those present, including the disciples, who, considering the value of the perfume, equivalent to the annual salary of a disciple, concluded that it was waste, since it could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor. In Saint John’s Gospel, Judas takes this position: "Why was this ointment not sold and the proceeds given to the poor?" (Jn 12:6). The poor are people who are poor and have nothing and who are hungry and thirsty and without homes, in the last place and in need of our help. They are people in need of a roof over their head, of medicine and medical care, of food, of clothing, of work, of shelter, of love and protection from this world which so often treats them like unwanted objects. The poor are people, and each of us has a responsibility for the poor and can never evade it. We need to understand that to love and be loving toward the poor means to love the poor as Christ and to do it like Christ: poor, of the poor, and for the poor. We need to understand that to love the poor means to love the poor as Christ and to do it like Christ: poor, of the poor, and for the poor. We need to understand that to love the poor means to love the poor as Christ and to do it like Christ: poor, of the poor, and for the poor.

The poor you will always have with you, therefore, is the English text of the Holy Father’s Message.

2. This powerful "empathy" established between Jesus and the woman, and his own interpretation of her anointing as opposed to the scandalized view of Judas and others, can lead to a fruitful reflection on the inseparable link between Jesus, the poor and the poor.

The face of God revealed by Jesus is that of a Father, who smiled for and close to the poor. In everything, Jesus teaches that poverty is not the result of fate, but a concrete sign pointing to his presence among us. We do not find him when and where we want, but he is present in the lives of the poor, in their sufferings and needs, in the often inhuman conditions in which they are forced to live. As I never tire of repeating, the poor are true evangelizers, for they were the first to be evangelized and called to share in the Lord’s joy and his kingdom (cf. Mt 5:5).

The poor, always and everywhere, enjoy a special concern for the poor. They do so because they discover in new ways the true face of the Father. "They have much to teach us. Besides participating in the sensus fidei, they know the suffering Christ through their own sufferings. It is necessary that we all let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to recognize the salvific power of their lives and to place them at the centre of the Church’s journey. We are called to discover Christ in them, to lend them our voice in their cause, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and share in the mystery of their witness. This witness is for the poor, but it does not exclude others. In the face of the poor there is no solicitude, but what in the Gospel is called "diligent care and solicitude" (Hebrews 13:2)." (1)

3. Jesus not only speaks to the poor; he also shares their fate. This is a powerful lesson for his disciples in every age. This is the meaning of his observation that the "poor you will always have with you." The poor will always be with us, yet that should not make us indifferent, but summon us instead to a mutual sharing in the lot of the brothers and sisters whose sufferings we should share, in an effort to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization, restore their lost dignity and ensure their necessary social inclusion. On the other hand, as we know, acts of charity presuppose a giver and a receiver, whereas mutual sharing generates a family and an integral, mutual sharing, on the other hand, is enriching. The former is forgiving those who perform it and can gratify those who perform it, whereas mutual sharing is not gratifying those who perform it and can gratify those who perform it. It requires a willingness to be set free from all that holds us back from achieving true happiness and bliss, in order to recognize what cannot be destroyed by anyone or anything. Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Mk 10:29). Unless we choose to become poor in the face of poverty, we will never be able to give our lives in love; we will live a fragmented existence, full of good intentions but ineffective for transforming the world. We need, therefore, to open ourselves decisively to the grace of Christ so that our love may be a solid basis of love and a guarantee of the boundless charity and restore credibility to our presence in the world.

5. Christ’s Gospel summons us to display special concern for the poor and to reject the various forms of moral and social disorder that are generating ever new forms of poverty. There is a growing notion that the poor are not only responsible for their situation, but that they represent an insurmountable burden for an economic system focused on the interests of a few is a privileged group of actors that bug

"L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO"

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"Amen, I say to you, whenever the Gospel is proclaimed to the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (Mk 14:9). 3. Jesus not only speaks to the poor; he also shares their fate. This is a powerful lesson for his disciples in every age. This is the meaning of his observation that the "poor you will always have with you." The poor will always be with us, yet that should not make us indifferent, but summon us instead to a mutual sharing in the lot of the brothers and sisters whose sufferings we should share, in an effort to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization, restore their lost dignity and ensure their necessary social inclusion. On the other hand, as we know, acts of charity presuppose a giver and a receiver, whereas mutual sharing generates a family and an integral, mutual sharing, on the other hand, is enriching. The former is forgiving those who perform it and can gratify those who perform it, whereas mutual sharing is not gratifying those who perform it and can gratify those who perform it. It requires a willingness to be set free from all that holds us back from achieving true happiness and bliss, in order to recognize what cannot be destroyed by anyone or anything. Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Mk 10:29). Unless we choose to become poor in the face of poverty, we will never be able to give our lives in love; we will live a fragmented existence, full of good intentions but ineffective for transforming the world. We need, therefore, to open ourselves decisively to the grace of Christ so that our love may be a solid basis of love and a guarantee of the boundless charity and restore credibility to our presence in the world.

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ing in a humanitarian sense and in social responsibility. Last year we experienced yet another scourge that multiplied the numbers of the poor: the pandemic, which continues to affect millions of people and, even when it does not bring suffering and death, is nonetheless a portent of poverty. The poor have increased disproportionately and, tragically, they will continue to do so in the coming months. Some countries are suffering extremely severe consequences from the pandemic, so that the most vulnerable of their people lack basic necessities. The long lines in front of soup kitchens are a tangible sign of this deterioration. There is a clear need to find the most suitable means of combating the virus at the global level without promoting partisan interests. It is especially urgent to offer concrete responses to those who are unemployed, whose numbers include many fathers, mothers, and young people. Social solidarity and the generosity which many, thanks be to God, have shown are, together with far-sighted projects of human promotion, making a most important contribution at this juncture.

6. Nonetheless, one question, which to be no means obvious, remains. How can we give a tangible response to the millions of the poor who frequently encounter not only the cold and hunger, but also isolation? Without a doubt, we can and must give them the things that they lack for survival, but we can also give them a different way of living, and that means creating opportunities for them that they lack. Our efforts, in other words, are aimed at improving conditions for the poor and, at the same time, improving the conditions of the entire community. 

7. For this reason, a different approach to poverty is required. This is a challenge that governments and world institutions need to take up with a far-sighted social model capable of countering the new forms of poverty that are now sweeping the world and will decisively affect coming decades. If the poor are marginalized, as if they were to blame for their condition, then the very concept of democracy is jeopardized and every social policy will prove bankrupt. With great humility, we should confess that we are often inefficient when it comes to the poor. We talk about them in the abstract; we stop at statisticians and we think we can move people’s hearts by filming a documentary. Poverty, on the contrary, should motivate us to creative planning, aimed at increasing the freedom needed to live a life of fulfillment according to the abilities of each person. It is an illusion, which we should reject, to think that freedom comes about and grows through the possession of money. Serving the poor effectively moves us into action and makes it possible to find the most suitable ways of raising and promoting this part of humanity that too often is anonymous and voiceless, but which has imprinted on it the face of the Saviour who asks for our help. “The poor you will always have with you” (Mk 14:7). This is a summons never to lose sight of every opportunity for good. Behind it, we can glimpse the ancient biblical command. “If one of your brothers and sisters... is in need, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to them in need. Instead, you shall open your hand to them and freely lend them enough to meet their needs... For the Lord, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings. For the needy will never be lacking in the land...” (Deut 15:10). In a similar vein, the Apostle Paul urged the Christians of his communities “to come to the aid of the poor of the first community of Jerusalem and to do so without sadness or complaint, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7). It is not a question of easing our conscience by giving alms, but of opposing the culture of indifference and injustice we have created with regard to the poor.

8. In this context, we do well to recall the words of Saint John Chrysostom: “Those who are generous should not ask for an account of the poor’s conduct, but only improve their condition of poverty and satisfy their need. The poor have only one plea: their poverty and the condition of need in which they find themselves. Do not ask anything else of them, but even if they are the most wicked persons in the world, if they lack the necessary nourishment, let us free them from hunger.... The merciful are like a harbou for those in need: the harbour welcomes and frees from danger all those who are shipwrecked; whether they are evildoers, good persons, or whatever they may be, the harbour shelters them within its inlet. You, too, therefore, when you see on land a man or a woman who has suffered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge, do not ask for an account of their conduct, but deliver them from their misfortune” (Deaconesses in the Poor Men Lazarus, II, 3).

9. It is crucial that we grow in our awareness of the needs of the poor, which are always changing, as are their living conditions. Today, in fact, in the more economically developed areas of the world, people are less willing than in the past to confront poverty. The state of relative affluence to which we have become accustomed makes it more difficult to accept sacrifices and deprivation. People are ready to do anything rather than to deprive of the fruits of easy gain. As a result, they fall into forms of resentment that spasmic nervousness and demands that lead to fear, anxiety and, in some cases, violence. This is no way to build our future; those attitudes are themselves forms of poverty which we cannot disregard. We need to be open to reading the signs of the times that ask us to find new ways of being evangelizers in the contemporary world. Immediately assistance is responding to the needs of the poor must not prevent us from showing foresight in implementing new signs of Christian love and charity as a response to the new forms of poverty experienced by humanity today.

10. It is my hope that the celebration of the World Day of the Poor, now in its fifth year, will give rise in our local Churches and inspire a movement of evangelization that meets the poor personally wherever they may be. We cannot wait for the poor to knock on our door; we need urgently to reach them in their homes, in hospitals and nursing homes, on the streets and in the dark corners where they sometimes hole, in shelters and reception centres. It is important to understand how they feel, what they are experiencing and what their hearts desire. Let us make our own the heartfelt plea of Father Primo Mazzolari: “I beg you not to ask me if there are poor people, who they are and how many of them there are, because I fear that those questions represent a distinction or a pretext for avoiding a clear appeal to our consciences and our hearts... I have never counted the poor, because they cannot be counted: the poor are to be embraced, not counted” (“Adesso” n. 7-15 April 2013). The poor are present in our midst. How evangelical it would be if we could say with all truth: we too are poor, because only in this way will we truly be able to recognize them, to make them part of our lives and an instrument of our salvation.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 13 June 2021

Left: Marko Ivan Rupnik, “The Answering at Bethany” (mosaic in the chapel of the Casa DON per Crisìoni in Cyroggia Astorica, Italy). Below: A Rohingya refugee boy walks among the remnants of a No Name village camp destroyed by fire (AFP).
Where do we stand with ‘Amoris Laetitia’?

The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life has issued a General Decree – The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life – regulating mandates and representativeness in international associations of the faithful.

**General Decree – The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life**

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**Regulating mandates and representativeness in international associations of the faithful**

**To promote ‘a healthy renewal’ in governing positions**

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**Where do we stand with ‘Amoris Laetitia’?**

The question you ask yourselves – “Where do we stand with the application of Amoris Laetitia?” – is intended to stimulate a fruitful ecclesial discernment on the style and the aims of family pastoral care from the perspective of new evangelization. The Charism of Jesus is a healthy renewal in governing positions, a particular urgency exists to involve them as subjects of pastoral care. It is necessary to set aside any “merely theoretical message without connection to people’s real problems”.

Amoris Laetitia provides an essential moment of dialogue between the Holy See, the episcopal Conferences and of over 30 international associations that are articulated in ecclesial communion of life and love. We need to work with other families, to help those who are weaker, to announce that, even in difficulties, Christ is present in the Sacrament of Marriage to give tenderness, patience and hope to all, in every situation of life.

It is important for you today to reflect on the future of the Church and that diocesan and national associations establish an essential and effective dialogue, that the prudential norms for the prevention of the shipwreck of 18 April 2015. May God grant you the strength and the wisdom to promote a healthy renewal! 

The General Decree – The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life incorporates an essential moment of dialogue between the Holy See, the episcopal Conferences, movements and family associations. The Holy Spirit makes it a fruitful moment for the Church, and I would like to invite you, together with the entire community of faithful, to come together to listen to the needs of families and of each other in undertaking the processes to renew the Church.

I thank the Dicastery for having taken the initiative, despite the practical difficulties due to the pandemic. I am grateful to you all for responding to the invitation: the delegates of the Family Offices of over 60 ecclesiastical Conferences and of over 30 international associations of the faithful have here linked up for this meeting.

In the panorama of the most important initiatives for the “Amoris Laetitia” Forum, the General Decree – The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life – presents an essential moment of dialogue between the Holy See, the episcopal Conferences, movements and family associations. The Holy Spirit makes it a fruitful moment for the Church, and I would like to invite you, together with the entire community of faithful, to come together to listen to the needs of families and of each other in undertaking the processes to renew the Church.

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Cardinal Marx in ‘a spirit of obedience’

The Pope’s decision represents a great challenge.

ANDREA MONDA

The letter was sent to Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the Archbishop of Freising (Germany), to announce his decision to resign as pastor of Munich and Freising. Pope Francis, re-Porting on Thursday, June 17, the Cardinal immediately expressed his assent to the Pope’s will. ‘I was not counting on such a quick reaction’, wrote Cardinal Marx in the text published on the Archdiocese of Freising’s website, ‘nor was I expecting the decision that I should come to service in my presence’. He adds that he was struck by the ‘fraternal tone’ of the Pope’s words, by the perception of having been understood with regard to the request that led to his resignation, a request that was based on the tragedy that the German Church is going through due to the abuse crisis. Reiterating his acceptance of the Pope’s decision, the German Arch- bishop referred to what he expressed in his letter, and stressed the need to ‘seek new paths’ to follow, also in view of a history of multiple failures, to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel.

For Cardinal Marx, now is a time for reflection on how to ‘contribute even more to the renewal of the Church’, starting with the important insight that Francis offers in his letter. However, the Cardinal underlines that ‘what I have stressed in my statement remains valid namely that I myself must assume personal and also institutional responsibility’, particularly with regard to the victims. ‘The Pope’s decision, Cardi- nal Marx acknowledges, represents a great challenge for me’, and therefore, he concludes, returning ‘simply from the episcopate’, ‘I cannot be the way forward, nobody else can nor for the Archdiocese’.

The Pope in the reform of the Church

Valuable indications in the letter rejecting Cardinal Marx’s offer of resignation

To the one who seeks and the reform of the Church

The Pope’s legacy

ANDREAS DE CAROLIS

The Pope’s legacy

Pe t e r ‘ s legacy

Alessandro De Carolis

The letter was sent to Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the Archbishop of Freising, dressed to everyone, and to all the bishops in our country and in the world. Today it is easy to predict that this brief letter will be one of the most important texts of Pope Francis’ Pontifi- cate. Once again Pope Bergoglio has freely and autho- rously expressed his father- hood with one of his sons (whom he calls a “brother” who ‘he loves’), through a let- ter that goes well beyond a formal reply to a bishop who has offered him his resigna- tion. The scope of this letter is truly long-lasting. It is a text that amplifies Pope Francis’ already rich legacy. A lega- cy which adds to that two thousand-year history of the Church that begins with that of Peter, which the Pope de-scribes with poignant pres- ision in the letter (the most in- tense and touching expression in the entire text). “It is the path of the Spirit that we must follow, and the starting point is the humble confession: we were wrong, we have sinned. We will not be saved by in- quiries nor by the power of in- stitutions. We will not be saved by the prestige of our Church which tends to con- dominiate, not nourished by the power of money or the opinion of the most. We will have a need to be the door of the only One who can do it, and by confessing our nakedness: ‘I have sinned’, ‘we have sinned’, and by crying and by sta- nding to the best of our abil- ity ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinner’. And this is the first letter the Pope left to the Bishops and the Church of the reform. And then we will feel that healing shade that opens the doors to the compassion and tender- ness of the Lord who is always near us’. Crying and stammering our nakedness, that is the legacy of Peter, which Francis makes his own and brings to the attention of every faithful Catholic. Every true reform of the Church also passes here. The Pope recalls it as he im- plicitly mentions the wake of its predecessors who already assumed the legacy of the first Pope, the fisherman of Capernaum: “More than once, we have offered a ‘meta culpa’ for so many historical errors of the past even if we did not personally participate in that historical circumstance. And this same attitude is asked of us today. A reform is demanded of us, which in- volves a change of heart, words but in attitudes that have the courage to enter into the crisis, to accept reality whatev- er the consequence. And every reform begins with oneself. The reform in the Church has been carried out by men and women who were not afraid to enter into the crisis and allow themselves to be reformed by the Lord. It is the only way, otherwise we will nothing more than ‘ideologues of re- form’ who do not put their own flesh on the line’. On 12 March 2020, during the year of the Great Jubilee, the Church pronounced a solemn ‘meta culpa’ through the encyclical ‘Amoris Laetitia’ (24 November 2013), 120. Pope Francis II, and asked forgiveness for the many sins committed throughout history, saying among other things: ‘We must ask forgiveness for the part which each of us has had in these evils by our own ac- tions, as well as by not helping to dis- tinguish the face of the Church’. At that time too there were those who disputed this re- action, just as there were criticisms with respect to the ‘meta culpa’ un- dertaken by Benedict XVI as the abbot of the English in various parts of the world, the long path that Francis is fol- lowing. A path that coinci- des with the ‘path of the Spirit’. Those who today as then do not understand and who argue are ‘ideologues’ those who have projects of reform and forget the true reform, the only possible one, as Pope Francis explains clearly: ‘The Lord never agreed to carry out the reform (allow me the ex- pression) neither with the pro- ject of the Pharisees, nor with that of the Sadducees or Zealots or Essenes. But he did so with his, with his, with his flesh on the cross’. ‘Thus Francis explains clearly to the Church: the cross, the only road to salvation, that as King and as the Son of God. This is our legacy as children of God, this is our legacy as the successor of Peter.'
The pastoral work, initially administered by the point of view of the buildings and existing structure, both from the ethnic groups: Akha, Lahu, scattered over a mountainous pastoral care of 40 villages, mostly comprises an area of over 3,000 square meters. In 2008 and 2010, Fr Attilio De Battisti and Fr Gabriele Biasion, from the Diocese of Verona. To complete the group, Fr Bruno Rossi and Fr Gabriele Biasion, from the Diocese of Padua, and four years later by Fr Giuseppe Beri, from the Clergy of Venice. To complete the group from Triveneto, Italy, which belongs to the Diocese of Vicenza, began their pastoral care of 40 villages, mostly comprised of issues described in Pope Francis’ Encyclical Laudato Si’, even before its publication.

The origins of the mission

The mission in Chae Hom, which belongs to the Diocese of Chiang Mai, arose from the wish to start missionary cooperation between the dioceses in the ecclesiastical region of Triveneto, Italy, which was voiced for the first time at the ecclesial Conference of Aquila (Udine), in April 1999. The suggestion was confirmed a few months later, in December of the same year, with the publication of Saint John Paul II’s En cyclical Redemptoris Missio, which indicated the Asian continent as one of the territories to be given preference.

Seven years later Fr Pietro Mellone, and Fr Gabriele Gastaldello, of the diocesan clergy of Vicenza, began their pastoral care in Chae Hom, accompanied by Bishop Antonio Martorana at that time Bishop of Pada. In 1999, they were joined by Fr Bruno Rossi and Fr Lorenzo Biasion, from the Diocese of Padua, and four years later by Fr Giuseppe Beri, from the Clergy of Venice. To complete the group from Triveneto, Italy, which belongs to the Diocese of Vicenza, began their pastoral care of 40 villages, mostly comprised of issues described in Pope Francis’ Encyclical Laudato Si’, even before its publication.

Activities in the centres

Among the first necessities that the missionaries at the Mary Queen of Peace Centre had to face, was that of providing access to schooling to the children and young people living in the villages. The uneven, disconnected path between the mountains and the plains, the rainy season and the lack of qualified staff had deprived the youngest, for a long time, of the opportunity to attend any form of schooling. Thus, four centres were opened in which hundreds of young people from more than 40 villages and seven different tribes, found a point of reference and hospitality. To date, only two of them are open”, the parish priest, Fr Bruno Rossi, explained, “a sign that the travelling conditions to reach the schools independently have improved”. Much of the parish’s work, which also consists in giving spiritual assistance in the villages and the formation of local catechists, has enabled the missionaries to contact people from different tribes, cultures, languages and traditions.

In Thailand, only 0.5% of the population is Catholic. Most of the population is Buddhist and in the local context, there is a further division into various municipalities. “Our parish”, Fr Bruno continued, “is closely linked to the service the educational centre offers to minors and teens. The first thing we take into consideration when a person approaches us is his/her state of need, apart from any membership. We are all children of God, therefore in our daily work we try to help and love everyone, without reserve. The itineraries of evangelization, then, constitute a clear, open proposal to all. Those who wish to approach us may do so freely, perhaps by asking some questions arising from having met our community.”

A response to pollution

A Report by the Air Quality Life Index of Chicago, published in 2019, stated that life expectancy may be shortened by a couple of years due to air pollution for days, during the monitoring period. Chiang Mai was the most polluted city in the world, far exceeding the maximum levels of pollution foreseen by international standards. One of the main causes of these excessive levels is the custom of burning off, mostly in the cultivation of maize, namely the burning of agricultural residue to increase fertility and prepare the soil for the next harvest. The pesticides and chemical fertilizers used to spray the various crops, which then drain into the waterways in the rainy season, contribute to the environmental pollution. Some practices also had serious consequences on those who came to the Parish of Mary Queen of Peace in Chae Hom. “When the faithful approached the altar to receive the Eucharist”, Fr Bruno Rossi explained, “we noticed that their hands had red dust on them, the residue of pesticides. That was a turning point for us: we realized that we were distributing the Body of Christ, a gesture of full spiritual communion, with the residue of pesticides.”

The missionaries then suggested that the coffee plantations in the mountainous parts of the country be extended to the hilly areas in the valley. Fr Bruno told us how the idea to start organic farming began from tasting some beans grown by the families of students who lived in the parish. The quality of the product was good but the local population’s method of roasting it did not produce the aroma to which the missionaries were accustomed in their homeland. Thus, in 2012 with the arrival of the first roasting machine and thanks, to subsequent improvements, we were able to begin a process of organic production and sale capable of respecting a high quality resource and of safeguarding nature and people’s health. The competitive sale price has made it possible to restore dignity and relaxation to the farmers who live in the villages in Chae Hom and to finance scholarships for students. Moreover, the work is regulated by the non-profit institute called Laudato Si’ Social Enterprise created with the aim of contributing to the common good in full compliance with the law and State regulations and inspired by the values contained in Pope Francis’ Encyclical of 2015.

Forcemeet of Laudato Si’

The production of Caffè Bruno began more than ten years ago, even before the publication of Laudato Si’, but the principles that inspired the action of the missionaries and their co-workers can be found fully in the words of Pope Francis delivered in the document that includes the care of the ‘common home’. “We have tried to protect work and rest”, Fr Bruno Rossi said, “as well as the communities’ wish to live in a healthy, safe environment. We have also tried to take care of our ‘common home’, by respecting nature and harmonizing man’s work with it. It is a need that springs from the depths of the spirit, an attention whose values are also fully in accord with Asian culture. A spontaneous orientation, that we then found, described and systematized in Pope Francis’ Encyclical, which expressed and strengthened our action. Nature, for us Christians, can also be an important vehicle for getting closer to God, as Saint Francis taught and as Laudato Si’ reaffirms: it offers us support and we should learn to respect it in order to trigger a virtuous cycle.” Fr Bruno jokingly compared his parishioners to coffee beans: one different from the other, each with its own unique and irreparable story. What makes the difference, then, is the roasting, or the ability to extract the best from each one, just like a good teacher does with his or her pupils. “We are able to produce around 800 kilos of roasted coffee per month, packaged and shipped throughout Thailand. The biggest orders generally come from hotels”, the parish priest said, “and from tourists who are curious to taste coffee roasted, Italian-style. The pandemic has created many difficulties linked to the lack of tourists, but this does not mean that the project has stopped. Instead, our aim is to encourage the cultivation of indigenous tea plants and we are continuing to work on a recently-started project that involves the cultivation and processing of cocoa. It can grow equally well in the plains, and provide support to the parishioners who live there and cannot grow coffee.”

Cafè Radio – Salesian University Institute of Asia and Bruma

The parish stands on a pre-existing structure, both from the point of view of the buildings and the pastoral work, initially admin-