

CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

(CWLW)

24-30 Oct 2022

24-10-22

Vatican renews secret accord with Beijing



(24-10-22) Confirming earlier reports, the Vatican has renewed a secret deal with China governing the appointment of new bishops. Although only six new Catholic bishops have been installed during the first four years under the agreement, and more than thirty Chinese dioceses currently have no bishop Pope Francis recently said: “The agreement is going well.” The Vatican evidently avoided criticizing Beijing for the prosecution of Cardinal Zen in order to preserve diplomatic momentum toward a renewal of the agreement.

The provisional agreement, originally made in 2018 for a two-year period, will be renewed for the second time. Apparently, the terms of the deal, which have never been disclosed, will not change.

Reject euthanasia, Pope urges French politicians

(24-10-22) In an address to a delegation of French public administrators from the Diocese of Cambrai, Pope Francis emphasized “first and foremost, the welcome of the most disadvantaged, primarily migrants – and you know how crucial this matter is, and how close it is to my heart – but I am thinking also of persons with disabilities.”

“With regard to care, I think in particular of the attention to be paid to the elderly in care homes, and people at the end of that is due to them,” he continued. “Healthcare workers, by nature, have the vocation to provide care and relief, even though they may not always be able to cure, but we cannot ask these practitioners to kill their own patients! If we kill with justification, we end up killing more and more.”

Pope to business leaders: Use gifts to promote common good

(24-10-22) On October 21, Pope Francis received members of the International Christian Union of Business Executives (UNIAPAC), who were in Rome for their 27th world congress.

“Work that cares, that contributes to the restoration of full human dignity, will help to ensure a sustainable future for future generations,” the Pope said in his address. “And this dimension of care involves, first and foremost, the workers.”

Pope encourages ‘theology of the conjugal bond’

(24-10-22) Pope Francis called on October 24 for a “theology of the conjugal bond,” to strengthen families at a time when marriage is shaken by “unprecedented turbulence.”

The Pope made these remarks to members of the Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and the Family Sciences—formerly known as the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. Originally established to focus on family issue, the Institute’s charter was broadened by Pope Francis in 2017 to include economic and social issues that might affect family life. The chancellor of the Institute is Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia.

French President Macron speaks with Pontiff about Ukraine

(24-10-22) Pope Francis met on October 22 with French President Emmanuel Macron, for a one-hour discussion that centered mainly on the war in Ukraine.

A Vatican statement indicated that the conversation also touched on other international conflicts, particularly in the Middle East.

Papal announcement: World Youth Day registration is open

(24-10-22) "Today registration opens for World Youth Day, which will take place in Lisbon in August 2023," Pope Francis said on October 23. "Dear young people, I invite you to register for this meeting in which, after a long period of staying at a distance, we will rediscover the joy of the fraternal embrace between peoples and between generations, which we need so much!"

Macron urges Russian Orthodox Church to resist Kremlin pressure on Ukraine

(24-10-22) "We know well how the Orthodox religion today is being manipulated by those in power in Russia to justify their actions," Macron said at a peace conference organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio. "Resistance is needed here."

Macron made his remarks in the presence of Metropolitan Anthony, the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

Cypriot president meets Pontiff

(24-10-22) Pope Francis met on October 24 President Nicos Anastasiades of Cyprus. A brief Vatican statement released after the meeting said that the conversation had touched on the problems of migrants and the prospects for reunification of Cyprus.

Nigeria - The floods are real, but they do not stop us from worshipping the Lord

(24-10-22) "The floods are real, but they cannot prevent us from worshipping our God", the bishop of the diocese of Minna, Nigeria, Luka Sylvester Gopep, writes to Agenzia Fides. The occasion was the celebration of World Mission Day in the diocese of Makurdi, adjacent to that of Minna, affected by heavy rains like the rest of the country.

The weather conditions have not prevented the faithful and the priest from gathering to celebrate Holy Mass and commemorate the day. In the church, completely submerged by water, the faithful are seen arranged in an orderly manner in small wooden boats, one of them leading the chants, the priest standing in front of the altar placed so that it does not shake in the flood. There is a great recollection for the solemn moment, since the priest distributes the Eucharist to the people who are about to receive it in a serene way despite the fact that the water reaches halfway up their legs, all including the celebrant.

"There is also the spiritual deluge - Bishop Luka continues-, but like the meteorological one, it must push us towards God, not distance us from Him. Whatever flood comes our way, let us take it to God, He has solutions for everyone".

Cameroon - Hostages freed; ransom payment denied

(24-10-22) Guerrillas in Cameroon have released nine hostages who had been abducted from a Catholic church on September 16.

The Catholic bishops' conference of Cameroon had refused to pay ransom to the kidnappers—who have not yet been identified—"so as not to create dangerous precedents." Ransom "is said not to have been officially paid."

Bishop Aloysius Fondong Abangalo of Mamfe confirmed the release of the hostages and thanked the faithful for their prayers asking for a positive outcome. "I take this opportunity to once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the desecration of the Church and to point out the need to protect human dignity.

Paraguay - Social Week 2022: The focus is on land rights and agricultural reform

(24-10-22) "Land ownership in Paraguay" is the theme of the "Social Week 2022" to be held from 25 to 27 October in the capital Asuncion, organized by the Episcopal Commission for Social Pastoral



Care. The chosen topic touches on a particular aspect of social life in the country, which is the cause of numerous conflicts. The rights of the indigenous peoples have therefore long been the focus of interest for the Paraguayan Church. The Episcopal Conference and individual bishops have repeatedly stressed the urgency of a project to promote agrarian reform and called on all different sectors of society to engage in genuine dialogue on land tenure and property issues. It is estimated that 85% of Paraguay's agricultural land is owned by 2% of the population.



Bangladeshi minorities demand protection of rights

(24-10-22) Minority communities in Bangladesh observed a hunger strike for their various demands and to protest political parties seeking the establishment of an Islamic state.

Leaders of the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (HBCUC) which organized a day-long hunger strike in capital Dhaka on Oct. 22 alleged that the national government led by Sheikh Hasina has compromised with the fundamentalists for political expediency causing a constrained democratic polity.

“The present government is definitely nurturing communal forces and we do not see any progress toward fulfilling the demands of minorities, not even the promises that were made in election manifestos,” said Monindra Kumar Nath, joint secretary of HBCUC.

Malaysia under fire for deporting Myanmar asylum seekers

(24-10-22) International rights groups have demanded Malaysian authorities stop the forced return of Myanmar nationals whose lives are at most risk in the military-ruled Southeast Asian nation. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called on the Malaysian government to immediately halt summary deportations and grant UNHCR access to asylum seekers to determine their refugee status. The rights group said since April Malaysian immigration authorities have returned over 2,000 Myanmar nationals, including military defectors, without assessing their asylum claims or other protection needs — more than half of them in the past two months.

25-10-22

Pope closes ‘Cry for Peace’ event at Rome’s Coliseum

(25-10-22) Pope Francis presided on October 25 at the 36th “Cry for Peace” event organized by the Sant’ Egidio community and held in Rome’s Coliseum.

The 3-day international gathering drew both political leaders (including Presidents Emmanuel Macron of France and Sergio Matterella of Italy) and religious leaders (including Iraqi Chaldean Catholic Cardinal Raphael Sako and representatives of Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism).

Vatican dicasteries join International Olympic Committee in plea for peace

(25-10-22) Three Vatican dicasteries have joined the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in an appeal for “world leaders to seek just and peaceful solutions to all disputes and conflicts.”

Using an image often invoked by Pope Francis, the statement decries a “world war being fought piecemeal,” and laments that “countless mothers, fathers, sons and daughters are living in fear, unable to practise their faith, pursue their dreams for a better life, or even simply to play sport.”

The statement is signed by Thomas Bach, the president of the IOC, and by Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonca, the prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education; Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life; and Cardinal Michael Czerny, the prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development.

Vatican’s UN envoy condemns arms trade

(25-10-22) The Vatican’s permanent observer at the UN condemned the international arms trade and warned against the dangers of misusing communications technology in two separate addresses.

Archbishop Gabriele Giordano Caccia questioned why it is deemed legitimate to sell deadly weapons systems to “those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society?” The only reason, he said, is for money: “Shamefully, there are those who accumulate great wealth through trafficking in the instruments of death.”

The archbishop went on to say that “our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads,” insisting that technology must be used to serve the truth and to promote human dignity.

Hong Kong court finds Jimmy Lai guilty on new charges

(25-10-22) Jimmy Lai, the Catholic publisher and human-rights activist, has been found guilty of fraud in a Hong Kong court, as Chinese prosecutors continue to pursue multiple legal charges against him. Lai—who is already serving a prison term for organizing an unlawful assembly—still faces more serious charges of conspiring against the Chinese government. If convicted he could face life imprisonment. His trial on those charges—to be heard by a special jury chosen by the government to handle national-security cases—is scheduled for December 1.

Son of Vietnamese ‘boat people’ named auxiliary bishop of Atlanta

(25-10-22) Father John-Nhan Tran, a priest of the New Orleans archdiocese, USA, has been named by Pope Francis to become an auxiliary bishop of Atlanta.

Father Tran is the son of refugees from Vietnam, who left that country in a barge in 1975, when he was nine years old.

Nigerian archbishop defends accepting government award

(25-10-22) Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Abuja, facing criticism for accepting an honor from the Nigerian government, has said that the “award is not for my personal glory.”

The archbishop was named by the government as one of 400 people commended for their “loyalty and patriotism to the country.” That citation prompted critics to observe that Church leaders have frequently criticized the government for its failure to provide security for Christians and opportunity for the poor.

In his response Archbishop Kaigama said that the award “will certainly provide an opportunity on the platform of the ‘honored’ to speak to those authorities.”



Chad - The Bishops: "unjustified violence" against peaceful demonstrators

(25-10-22) "We express our regret and our indignation" for the "unjustified violence" against peaceful demonstrators, says the Bishops' Conference of Chad, in the aftermath of the violent repression of the demonstrations on October 20. Hundreds of demonstrators had gathered to protest against the two-year extension of the "transition" of the head of the military junta, Mohamed Idriss Déby. At least 50 people were killed by the police.

Mohamed Idriss Déby took power after the sudden death of his father Idriss Deby on April 20, 2021, commanding the troops against the rebels in the north of the country. He has assumed the Transitional Presidentship of the country. But in October 20 he extended the transition period for another two years which triggered demonstrations which he repressed brutally.

In their press release, the Chadian episcopate "notes with pain and bitterness that once again the blood of Chad's daughters and sons gushed out during a demonstration that was intended to be peaceful but which was violently repressed". "We protest vehemently against these violations of human dignity", and the Bishops ask "all political actors and the defence and security forces to give priority, in all circumstances, to sincere dialogue and respect for human dignity and the sanctity of human life".

Brazil - Women and children also victims of violence in land conflicts, homicides increase by 150%, "slave labor" decreases

(25-10-22) In the first half of 2022, 759 episodes of "no-camp" conflicts were recorded in Brazil, involving 113,654 families. These episodes correspond to 601 cases of land conflicts, 105 cases of conflicts over water, 42 cases of conflicts for work reasons (41 cases of slave labor and 1 case of exploitation), 10 cases of conflicts in the period of drought and 1 conflict in the mining area. The data collected and disseminated as usual by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) through the Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Centre, also reveal that more than half of the total conflicts recorded in the period took place in the Amazon.

Another particularly worrying figure is that of murders: in 2022, so far, the CPT has recorded 33 murders, 25 of which in the first half of the year alone. Compared to the first half of 2021, the total increase in the number of homicides is 150%. The CPT draws attention to the fact that in recent years even children and adolescents have come under the crosshairs of this type of violence. Violence against people has been recorded in all areas of conflict considered by the CPT, mostly involving land conflicts. In the first half of 2022, the CPT registered 74 women victims of violence. Five women were killed, the highest number recorded since 2016. As regards the number of cases of slave labour, during the first half of 2022 (there were 41) there was a decrease compared to the same period in 2021 (61).



Spain - The "Pauline Jaricot" Prize to Sister Narváez and Father Maccalli, witnesses of the Gospel

(25-10-22) "I want to thank God, who has given me the opportunity to be born again and to return to my mission". These are the words of Sr. Gloria Cecilia Narváez, under seizure for almost 5 years, a Colombian missionary nun who was awarded the "Blessed Paulina Jaricot" Prize, established this year by the Spanish Directorate of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) on the occasion of World Mission Sunday. The award was "shared" by Sister Gloria Cecilia with the Italian missionary Pier Luigi Maccalli, who

wanted to dedicate this recognition to the people of Bomoanga and Niger, inviting them to pray for peace in the world. Both missionaries shared the experience of being kidnapped by jihadist groups in Mali and subsequently released. Sister Narváez and Father Maccalli received this award for the testimony of faith offered even during the hard moments of captivity, and also expressed by their desire to return to the mission, in the midst of their people.

Church seeks new paths for peace, dialogue in Asia

(25-10-22) The Church in Asia has started a process of searching for new ways to work for peace, dialogue and evangelization in the multi-religious continent, where masses suffer violence and poverty, says a top Asian cardinal.

"We are planning a future. We shall be taking a route, or different routes, especially in the areas of peace, dialogue and reconciliation, as a new path of a new evangelization," said Cardinal Charles Bo of Yangon, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC).

The FABC leader was speaking to the media on Oct. 24 in Bangkok, mid-way through the two-week gathering of Asian bishops, who were discussing emerging realities of Asia in their attempt to revise pastoral plans and priorities for the Church in Asia.

When listening to the delegates from all the countries of Asia, "we see the diversity, the suffering masses that challenges," said Cardinal Bo, also head of the Church in Myanmar, where violence continues as the junta government continues to suppress people's clamour for democracy.

The general conference, the first such in FABC that began on Oct 12 has some 226 delegates, which included 20 cardinals, 120 bishops, 37 priests, and 49 lay people including eight nuns.

Cardinal Bo said that new and sometimes even “different routes” are needed for Asian bishops to address the varied and widespread issues that communities face in different parts of Asia. Making a reference to the experience of Moses of the Old Testament, he said: “During the days of the meeting, we saw the burning bushes of exploitation, nuclear war, bribery, economy, holocaust, migration, war, human-made disasters.

He said the tiny Catholic population in Asia does “not discourage” the bishops because “though we are a minority our presence in the whole of Asia is very, very effective and we are going through this journey with triple dialogue with the poor, their culture, and religions.”

Except for the Philippines and Timor-Leste, Catholics are less than five percent of the population in most Asian nations with some of them having even less than one percent population, often dominated by religions such as Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, who heads the organizing of the conference, said the first such conference was inspired by CELAM, the South American equivalent of FABC that began in 1955, 15 years before the FABC began in 1970.

The CELAM developed documented pastoral plans for their continent in their decennial conferences, based on the numerous country-level and diocesan-level discussions.

“We felt that we would benefit a great deal by having a similar (CELAM-like conferences), not a plenary assembly, which takes one topic. A general conference, bigger number of bishops, greater ownership and therefore looking at the whole perspective,” Cardinal Gracias said during the press meet.

Cardinal Gracias said the Bangkok conference was “the largest gathering of Asian bishops” in the history of FABC.



Indian priest accused of sex abuse surrenders to police

(25-10-22) An Indian Catholic priest accused of sexually abusing a boy has surrendered before the police as they began a probe against Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune for allegedly attempting to cover up the crime.

Father Vincent Pereira, 55, of Pune in the western state of Maharashtra presented himself before the police on Oct 23, ending his nearly month-long efforts to evade arrest. He is alleged to have abused a 15-year-old boy at his parents' home on Dec. 4 last year.

Police said the priest had been in hiding ever since they booked him on Sept. 30 under India's stringent Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. A local court on Oct. 21 granted the priest anticipatory bail that prevented police from arresting him while directing him to cooperate with the investigators. Last week and Bishop Dabre was summoned to the Kondhwa police station to record his statement the next day.

As stated in the written complaint, Father Pereira sexually abused the boy while Bishop Dabre and Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the archbishop of Bombay, allegedly did not act against the priest despite complaints from the survivor's family members.

Filipino historians cry foul over bid to rewrite history

(25-10-22) An association of Catholic historians in the Philippines has cried foul over the alleged whitewashing of Philippine history by the country's education department.

The Catholic Historians' Association of the Philippines (CHAP) on Oct 24 criticized a module of the Department of Education that called the martial law period under late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. as “period of the New Society,” contrary to what for decades the text books described as.



Vietnamese Redemptorist forbidden to go abroad

(25-10-22) A Redemptorist priest who works to console old soldiers in southern Vietnam has been banned from flying to the United States for social safety.

On Oct. 24, Redemptorist Father Joseph Truong Hoang Vu was stopped by public security officers at Tan Son Nhat International Airport in Ho Chi Minh City while he was due to take a flight to Manila, the Philippines, and then to the US.

In a report issued by the airport's public security unit, the 45-year-old priest was not allowed to leave the country for "reasons of

social order and safety as per security law that travel abroad has to be banned for those whose leaving for foreign countries is considered to affect national defense and security by government authorities. However, Father Vu, who was accompanied by two other Redemptorists, reportedly returned home without filing a complaint about the ban.

Father Vu is in charge of the Grateful Season program which annually provides financial support for some 6,000 disabled soldiers of former South Vietnam backed by the US. The money is donated from benefactors and other former soldiers in the US and other countries.

26-10-22

Pope speaks on desolation, discernment at weekly audience

(26-10-22) In our continuing catechesis on discernment, we now consider what the spiritual masters call "desolation", those moments when we experience interior darkness, unrest and distance from God and from the consolations of faith. For our spiritual growth, it is important to confront these dark nights of the soul and to discern what the Lord wishes to tell us through them. At times, desolation can be a summons to acknowledge our sinfulness and to embrace God's offer of love and forgiveness. Saint Thomas says that our souls, like our bodies, can experience a kind of pain that makes us aware of threats to our spiritual health. At other times, the experience of desolation can be a temptation to grow slack in prayer and in the discipline of the Christian life. Here too, the great spiritual teachers urge us not to yield to this temptation, but to persevere, confident that by this testing the Lord will guide us to a fuller understanding of his gracious plan for our lives and a deeper union with him in faith, hope and love.

Pope's Concern for Congo

(26-10-22) At the end of the General Audience, the Pope expressed his horror at the violent turn of events in the DR Congo. He said, "We look on in horror as events continue to stain the Democratic Republic of the Congo with blood. I strongly deplore the unacceptable assault that has taken place in recent days in Maboya, North Kivu Province, where defenceless people, including a religious woman engaged in health care, were killed." The Pontiff invited everyone to pray "for the victims and their families, as well as for the Christian community and the inhabitants of that region who have been exhausted by violence for too long."

The Wednesday midnight raid of Maboya village marks the latest of the heightened attacks perpetrated by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Congolese Islamic rebel group.

The insurgents targeted the hospital, killing patients and a staff member, stealing drugs and medical equipment, and setting the structure on fire. Among the killed was Sister Doctor Marie-Sylvie Kavuke Vakatsuraki. On 4 October, twenty Christians were killed in the village of Kainama, within the same province.

Questions on abortion stands of two more new members of Pontifical Academy for Life

(26-10-22) A newly appointed member of the Pontifical Academy for Life has declined to answer questions about her stand on abortion. And another new member from USA has been endorsed by

Planned Parenthood.

Sheila Dinotshe Tlou, a former health minister of Botswana, told Catholic News Agency that she would not answer questions on abortion until after the next meeting of the PAL in February. However, she is an outspoken advocate of contraception and serves on the oversight committee for a group that offers “supplies for safe abortion and post-abortion care.”

Another new PAL member, John Nkengasong—a native of Cameroon, now a US citizen—was appointed last year to head the President’s Emergency Plan for Aids Relief. His appointment to that post was welcomed by Planned Parenthood, with a statement promising to work with Nkengasong “to expand access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information...”

Pope Francis appointed 14 new members of the PAL earlier this month. Among those new members, two—Mariana Mazzucato and Roberto Dell’Oro—have made public statements in favour of legal abortion.

Hong Kong’s Catholic chief executive pledges renewed crackdown

(26-10-22) The Chief Executive of Hong Kong, John Lee-a-chiu has announced a coming crackdown on civil liberties. Lee, a Catholic whose appointment was approved by Beijing, assumed office in July.

13-year-old, killed during an attempted rape, is beatified in Brazil

(26-10-22) Blessed Benigna Cardoso da Silva (1928-1941) was beatified as a virgin martyr on October 24, the anniversary of her death, at an outdoor Mass in Crato, a city of 130,000 in the Brazilian state of Ceara.

The devout 13-year-old girl was slain with a machete as she resisted an attempted rape. Cardinal Leonardo Ulrich Steiner of Manaus, who presided at the beatification Mass, sought her intercession as a “defender of the dignity of women, as an icon against the sexual abuse of girls and adolescents, as the girl of mercy in [her] care for the elderly, as one who has indicated the path of purity, liberty, and sanctity.”



Vatican diplomat calls for cooperation to combat human trafficking

(26-10-22) Msgr. Lauro Lalli, chargé d’affaires of the apostolic nunciature in Jordan, said that “collaboration between Mediterranean countries is decisive in fighting human trafficking effectively.” The prelate spoke at the 2022 Mediterranean Conference of OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Bangkok conference: Asian dioceses can contribute to the whole world

(26-10-22) Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai (India) spoke at a press conference during the meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences in Bangkok.

“Many of our churches [i.e., dioceses] are young, but still have significant experiences to offer,” he said. “For us, for example, dialogue with other religions is a challenge that we have always faced and so we can also help the churches in Europe or the United States that today are wondering about its forms.”

Cardinal Gracias expressed regret that Chinese bishops were unable to attend the meeting, ostensibly because of the pandemic. “We made efforts and we hoped that they would come,” he said. “I want to say publicly that we miss their presence over here.”

Ukrainian Catholic leader laments attacks on Sacrament of Marriage

(26-10-22) In an October 25 video message, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, offered an update on the Russian invasion of his land, and discussed attacks on Ukrainian families, including abortion, contraception, and cohabitation.

“Unfortunately, the number of families that form a faithful, unbreakable union until death is steadily

decreasing throughout the world," he said. "Cohabitation without responsibilities and the coexistence of Christians without the Sacrament of Marriage is a new modern myth that destroys and ruins the Christian family.

He continued, "In such a context, obviously, without any obligations to each other, couples are in fact just trying to find some kind of mutual pleasure ... This type of cohabitation without marriage, without God's blessing, is an insult to human dignity, is a misunderstanding of true love."

Russia - "Ecumenism of blood". In Moscow the memory of martyrs unites Christians of different confessions

(26-10-22) "What has helped the faithful to remain firm in the faith in times of persecution? And can the common memory of the martyrs help to overcome confessional barriers and help one another?" These are the questions at the centre of the conference, which brought together representatives from various Christian denominations at the Jesuit-run St. Thomas Institute in Moscow to discuss the issue in an open and direct way. The event, organized on the evening of Monday, October 24, by the Department of Religious Sciences of the "Saint Filaret" Moscow Orthodox Institute, was attended by a large number of participants (live and online). The specificity of the context of the Russian Federation, where the persecutions of the Soviet era are still alive in the memories of many people, favoured joint reflection also through the exchange of stories of martyrdom experienced in person or in the family environment of origin.

Eswatini - Bishop of Manzini fears new wave of violence

(26-10-22) "We fear a second strong wave of political violence", warns Bishop José Luis Ponce de León IMC of Manzini in eSwatini (former Swaziland), where on October 18, 2022 in Manzini two police officers were killed in broad daylight. Following these last two murders, Bishop Ponce de León, in an official statement, stressed that "these murders seem to have become part of our everyday lives. "The option for death is also evident in other forms of violence: arson, destruction of property, incitement to fear, ... calls for further violence," the bishop's statement continued.

Bishop Ponce de León expressed fears of a resurgence in violence because "if there was a faint but constant violence over the past year, it now seems to be picking up again, leaving us wondering if a second wave of political violence is now underway , whose duration is unknown".

Bishop Ponce de León concludes with what he learned firsthand: "Last night, returning from a dinner with some priests, I passed a military checkpoint that stopped every vehicle entering or leaving the area. It is interesting to note that it is the army (in war gear) that is doing this and not the police who may be too scared to take to the streets as police officers are also killed in broad daylight".



Myanmar - ASEAN expresses concern about escalation of violence

(26-10-22) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) expresses its concern at the escalation of violence in the conflict in Myanmar on the eve of a special meeting of Foreign Ministers scheduled for October 27th in Jakarta (Indonesia). ASEAN calls for "an immediate cessation of fighting and the continuation of dialogue between all parties".

Filipinos urged to protect environment on All Souls' Day

(26-10-22) Filipino Catholic environmentalists have urged people to protect the environment by bringing only environmentally friendly materials to cemeteries on All Souls' Day, Nov. 2.

The campaigners on Oct. 25 called on millions of Catholics ready to flock to cemeteries to bring only biodegradable materials.

"We urge our fellow Christians to be mindful of the environment during our visit to the graves of our deceased relatives and loved ones. We know everyone is excited but let us be mindful of the waste

we will leave in the cemetery,” Jovert Donglao, executive director of Group for the Environment, told UCA News. Donglao was referring to the Filipino tradition of camping out in graves while eating and drinking with the entire family.

Church welcomes Pakistan's removal from money watch list

(26-10-22) Church leaders expressed happiness as Pakistan was taken off a global money laundering watchlist, a move they hope will ease the financial crunch in the development and relief sector of the beleaguered nation.

In an interfaith press conference held on Oct. 24, Archbishop Sebastian Shaw of Lahore congratulated the whole nation and hoped the development will help steer the country out of the multiple crises it was facing. “It’s a fruit of our coordination with leaders of different faiths in addressing the hate and extremism at ground level. It’s a combined effort,” Archbishop Shaw said.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international money-laundering watchdog, had put Pakistan on its so-called gray list in June 2018, after Islamabad failed to implement policies aimed at stamping out money laundering and the financing of international terror groups.

Christian development agencies hope much-needed funds will start flowing for flood relief work, stopped by Government’s 2019 revocation of licences.

Bangladesh assesses damage as cyclone death toll hits 35

(26-10-22) The government and aid agencies have rushed to assist victims and assess the damage after Cyclone Sitrang lashed Bangladesh, killing at least 35 and leaving a trail of destruction. The cyclone, packing wind speeds of about 90 kilometers per hour slammed into Bangladesh late on Oct 24 and impacted 13 districts in the southern coastal region, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Office. In the coastal region, thousands of houses were destroyed or damaged and roads and villages were flooded due to heavy rain and tidal surges. Television footage showed people frantically heading to cyclone shelters as strong winds coupled with torrential rain hit coastal communities.

Myanmar mourns victims of air attack on concert, volunteers reach victims with rice

(26-10-22) People from all walks of life in Myanmar are mourning the death of scores of people killed in the junta’s aerial bombing of a concert in Christian-majority Kachin state.

At least 80 people including leading Kachin musicians were killed at the concert in A Nang Pa, a village in Hpaknat township, when it was attacked by three fighter jets on Oct 23, according to media reports. The day marked the anniversary of the Kachin Independence Movement.

Meanwhile, volunteers from Myanmar's Diocese of Hpa-an take great risks and transport relief material along Salween River to a point where it can be offloaded. The rice is then transported on the backs of volunteers, who walk circuitous forest paths that take them far from military checkpoints along the roads. Some routes take up to two-and-a-half days. Food, medicines and shelter materials from Thailand that come through the river reach 43 separate groups of people displaced by the brutal Junta violence. During one recent trip, volunteers carried in one month's supply of rice to 429 families living in one displaced settlement.



27-10-22

New Synod document calls for more inclusive Church

(27-10-22) The Vatican has released a new working document for the Synod on Synodality, summarizing the results of national consultations and preparing for the “continental stage” of the continuing Synod process.

In a 44-page document, entitled “Enlarge the space of your tent,” the document calls for “a Church capable of radical inclusion,” and stresses the need to reach out to those who feel alienated from, or marginalized by, the Church. In particular, the text calls for greater efforts to include women in decision-making roles, and to reach out to homosexuals, divorced and remarried couples, single parents, young people, and victims of racism and abuse.



“It is a working document that seeks to bring out the voices of the People of God, with their insights, their questions, their disagreements,” Vatican News explained. The bishops of the world will now be invited to offer their responses to this document, which will in turn be used in discussions at the “continental stage” to produce yet another summary, to become the basis for discussion at the October 2023 meeting of the Synod of Bishops.

‘Let us never grow resigned to war,’ Pope Francis pleads

(27-10-22) The Vatican press office has published the remarks made by the Pope at the 36th “Cry for Peace” event organized by the Sant’ Egidio community and held in Rome’s Coliseum.

“This year our prayer has become a heartfelt plea, because today peace has been gravely violated, assaulted and trampled upon, and this in Europe, on the very continent that in the last century endured the horrors of two world wars – and we are experiencing a third,” the Pope said. “Let us never grow resigned to war; let us cultivate seeds of reconciliation. Today let us raise to heaven our plea for peace.”

Pope calls upon priests to be close to the people, warns against pornography

(27-10-22) “it is important to maintain contact with the people, with God’s faithful people, because there is the anointing of God’s people: they are the sheep,” Pope Francis said in a conversation with seminarians and priests studying in Rome.

The Pope also warned the priests and seminarians that pornography “weakens the priestly heart.”

Slain journalist’s family meets Pope at the Vatican

(27-10-22) Shireen Abu Akleh, a leading Palestinian-American journalist and a Melkite Greek Catholic laywoman, was killed on May 11. The Vatican envoy and local Church leaders strongly condemned the Israeli police’s use of force at her funeral.

“For our family, for us who are Christians, the closeness of the Pontiff” is “very important,” said her brother. “Those responsible must answer for their actions.” “My sister was killed by an Israeli sniper,” he added. “The [Israeli] army and its soldiers have benefitted from a widespread climate of impunity.”

Two European bishops’ conferences choose lay secretary-generals

(27-10-22) The Catholic episcopal conferences of Germany and Belgium have chosen lay people as their secretary-generals. The German bishops chose Beate Gilles, a theologian, as the first woman to be the administrative leader of their conference. The Belgian bishops chose Bruno Spriet as secretary general.

Aragon governor invites Pope Francis to Spain, asks for reappraisal of antipope

(27-10-22) On October 26, Pope Francis met for 20 minutes Javier Lambán, the president of Aragon in Spain. Lambán invited the Pope to Aragon and asked for a renewed appraisal of the antipope Benedict XIII (Pedro de Luna), who hailed from Aragon. Lambán, who praised Pope Francis for his

simplicity and moral stature, described the antipope as one of the “wisest and most cultured men of his time, with outstanding intelligence.”

‘We don’t want to live in war,’ says bishop in violence-plagued Mexico

(27-10-22) “It seems that we’re in a ‘state of war,’ where there’s a ‘curfew,’ ‘suspension of classes,’ ‘businesses closing,’ ‘don’t go out on the street,’” Bishop Juan Manuel González Sandoval of Tarahumara, Chihuahua, said of clashes between government security forces and organized crime. “Why don’t we have the rule of law, where as citizens we’re given our individual guarantees?”

US State Department decries Hong Kong conviction of Jimmy Lai

(27-10-22) The US State Department has issued a statement denouncing the conviction of Catholic human-rights activist Jimmy Lai by a Hong Kong court.

The State Department said that Lai was found guilty of “spurious fraud charges,” and went on to express deep concern “about the deterioration in protection for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong.” The Vatican has not commented on the Lai trial.

Exiled Nicaraguan priests speak out

(27-10-22) “Defending the wounded, the imprisoned, protecting them, supporting their families became ‘terrorism’ for the government, so we started getting persecuted,” said Father Rafael Bermúdez, an exiled Nicaraguan priest.

Daniel Ortega, a leader of the Marxist Sandinistas who overthrew the authoritarian regime of Gen. Anastasio Somoza Debayle, ruled Nicaragua from the 1979 Sandinista takeover until his loss in the 1990 presidential election. He returned to power in 2007, and his regime has intensified its persecution of the Church.

Israeli researchers say magnetic fields provide way to securely date biblical events

(27-10-22) “Radiocarbon dating, which is generally reliable, is less useful for much of the biblical narrative’s span due to a calibration issue covering circa 800-400 BCE, known as the Hallstatt plateau,” according to the article. “The archaeomagnetic dating technique, used by Earth scientists to reconstruct the globe’s historical magnetic field, could make up for that shortfall and eventually serve as a normative, complementary dating tool in every biblical archaeologist’s toolbox.”



Malawi - Protests against corruption

(27-10-22) In the main cities of Malawi, including Blantyre and Zomba, demonstrators have taken to the streets to protest against corruption and the rising cost of basic services. The civil society activist group Action Against Impunity (API) has called for the demonstrations against the government's actions.

In a communiqué published on October 10th, the bishops of Malawi pointed out the serious situation of instability in the country and expressed their concern about increasing corruption and the high level of poverty. In this context, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malawi gives voice to the feelings of disappointment of the population at the failure of the current political leadership to keep their election campaign promises.

The bishops' conference is therefore calling on the government to draw up and implement new anti-corruption laws and on officials to carry out their work conscientiously for the public good. It was

recently revealed that President Chakwera had to sack Agriculture Minister Lobin Lowe and his deputy Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima over a fertilizer procurement scandal.

Pakistan - After the flood disaster: parish priest visits victims and organizes emergency aid



(27-10-22) In Taunsa, on the border between the provinces of Punjab and Balochistan, more than 100 Catholic families (a total of about 5,000 people) are in need and face abandonment and despair after severe floods inundated their homes and fields and swept away their cattle. This is what Father Emmanuel Parvez, 70 years old, parish priest in Pansara, a town in the diocese of Faisalabad, tells Fides after visiting these families in recent days and providing humanitarian aid such as tents, food, rice, oil, cereals.

In response to the current emergency situation and, in cooperation with Caritas Pakistan, to provide 4,500 affected families for three months in order to improve their living conditions through shelter and food. It is also expected to provide health care to 10,000 people and educational opportunities for over 300 children.

Holy Land - Commemoration of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh in Rome: "Shining testimony of truth"

(27-10-22) Death "does not put an end to human life", and it can also become a "shining witness in the Risen Christ". This was reiterated by Archimandrite Chihade Abboud, Procurator of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church to the Holy See, in his homily of the Eucharistic Liturgy celebrated in the Roman church Santa Maria in Cosmedin to commemorate Palestinian reporter Shireen Abu Aqleh, killed on May 11 while she was documenting the Israeli army raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. The commemoration was attended by Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, and the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, as well as the journalist's family members, who met Pope Francis on the sidelines of the general audience in the morning. Shireen bore witness to the truth, following her calling as a reporter, the archimandrite said.

India deports 3 Swedes for preaching Christianity

(27-10-22) Indian authorities arrested and deported three Swedish nationals for participating in Christian religious activities while visiting the northeastern state of Assam on a tourist visa. Hannah Mikaela Bloom, Marcus Arne Henrik Bloom and Susanna Elisabeth Hakansson were sent back to Sweden on Oct 28 after being arrested by police in Dibrugarh city on suspicion of being involved in religious conversions, according to police officials.

The trio was attending an Oct 25-27 faith healing and prayer programme in Naharkatia in Dibrugarh district organized by the United Churches Fellowship and the Bless Assam Mission Network. "The allegation of religious conversions is baseless. There is no truth in it as the organizers had obtained prior permission from the district administration and local police officials and the programme was attended by only Christians, so where is the question of converting anyone," Allen Brooks, the spokesman of the Assam Christian Forum, told UCA News.

Karen network seeks funds for displaced in Myanmar

(27-10-22) Border-based Karen community groups are seeking funds from donors to provide urgent aid for the rising number of displaced people in Myanmar's Karen state.

The Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN), the largest network of Karen civil society groups in Myanmar, said the conflict which followed the February 2021 coup has caused the displacement of over 340,000 villagers and a new humanitarian emergency in southeast Myanmar.

In a report released on Oct 27, the group revealed funding shortfalls from international donors despite the deepening crisis in the conflict-torn nation.

“International funding is predominantly on an ad hoc basis, with only 1-3 months of food assistance provided to communities in response to attacks. There is a clear need now for longer-term support to address food shortages caused by farmers’ inability to plant rice crops due to the conflict,” the KPSN said.

Cardinal Zen back in court for Hong Kong trial

(27-10-22) Hong Kong’s outspoken along with five activists have their trial resumed to hear closing alleged failure to register a now-fund for pro-democracy protesters. Cardinal Zen, 90, former bishop of Asia’s most senior Catholic clerics, the West Kowloon Magistrate’s reported Hong Kong Free Press.



Cardinal Joseph Zen appeared in court after arguments over their defunct humanitarian

Hong Kong and one of attended the hearing at Court on Oct. 26,

His co-defendants are Barrister

activist Denise Ho, former legislator Cyd Ho, scholar Hui Po-Keung, and Sze Ching-wee. The six former trustees face the charge of not properly registering the "612 Humanitarian Relief Fund" under the Societies Ordinance, a British colonial-era law from 1911. The trial was adjourned until Oct 31 for the court to hear closing arguments from the defence.

Cardinal Zen and the other five were initially accused of “colluding with foreign forces” but are not yet charged with a national security offence, which can carry a sentence of life in prison.

Margaret Ng, singer-

28-10-22

Pope urges religious sisters to put relationship with Christ first

(28-10-22) Pope Francis received participants in the general chapters of two women’s religious institutes: the Order of the Most Holy Saviour (Bridgettines) and the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

“I urge you to devote yourselves in particular to prayer of adoration: this is important,” Pope Francis said to the Bridgettines, founded by St. Bridget of Sweden. “To worship, to immerse yourselves in divine love and give it to those you meet on your path. It is beautiful to worship in silence before the Blessed Sacrament, to be in the consoling presence of Jesus and there to draw the apostolic impetus to be instruments of goodness, tenderness and welcome in the community, in the Church and in the world.”

“In listening to the Holy Spirit, I propose to you to find new ways of evangelization and proximity,” the Pope said to the Comboni Missionary Sisters, founded by St. Daniele Comboni in 1872. “Imitating compassion and tenderness – proximity, compassion, tenderness, the style of God – of your Founder, you know how to put yourselves at the service of the victims of modern slavery, which as social scourges continue, unfortunately, to be present on a large scale throughout the world.”

Unity and closeness to Christ bring true joy, Pope tells priests, religious from Madagascar

(28-10-22) On October 27, Pope Francis addressed priests and consecrated persons from Madagascar who are living in Rome.

“Pursuing personal interests, this ‘virus of selfishness’, threatens peaceful coexistence between peoples, as between the sons and daughters of the same country,” the Pope said. “I therefore encourage you always to walk together and to make your presence here in Rome a precious opportunity to enrich and renew your faith in the footsteps of the great figures of saints and holy men and women who have preceded you here.”

Russia is 'willing' to speak with Pope Francis about the war in Ukraine, Putin's spokesman says

(28-10-22) Dmitry Peskov, press secretary for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said that "we are willing to discuss all this [the situation in Ukraine] with the Americans, with the French, and with the Pontiff."

Since the Russian invasion began, Pope Francis has expressed his willingness to speak with, and meet, the Russian leader.

Papal tweet: 'Women must be entrusted with greater positions and responsibilities'

(28-10-22) "Women must be entrusted with greater positions and responsibilities," Pope Francis said in an October 27 tweet. "Many calamitous decisions might have been avoided, had woman been directly involved in decision-making! We are committed to ensuring women are increasingly respected, acknowledged and involved!"

The Pope referred to @iamcaritas (Caritas Internationalis), which was hosting a conference on women in leadership.

Mother of Blessed Carlo Acutis discusses the 'secret of my son'

(28-10-22) Antonia Salzano, the mother of Blessed Carlo Acutis, has published a book, *Il segreto di mio figlio* [The Secret of My Son]. Salzano did not grow up in a devout family: "my first Mass was my First Communion, my second Mass was my Confirmation, and my third Mass was my wedding," she recalled. "I say this to emphasize that it was my son Carlo who taught me everything."



Canada's Catholic population in decline

(28-10-22) The number of Catholics living in Canada has dropped sharply over the past decade, new census figures show.

In 2021, the Catholic population of Canada was 10.9 million: down from 12.8 million ten years earlier. Catholics now account for just under 30% of the country's people. The decline was steeper in Quebec, which was once an overwhelmingly Catholic province. In 2011, Catholics were 75% of the Quebec's population; in 2021, just 54%. Canada has also seen a decline in the number of residents who identify themselves as Christians: from 77% of the population in 2001 to 67% in 2011 and 53% in 2021.

Lansing church vandalized with anti-Christian symbols and foul words

(28-10-22) The vandalism at the Church of the Resurrection in Lansing, Michigan, USA, is one of at least 170 acts of vandalism, arson, and other destruction at parishes and other Catholic sites in the United States since May 2020.

Cardinal Parolin at Caritas conference: 'Much still to be done to empower women'

(28-10-22) Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's Secretary of State, delivered the keynote address at a conference devoted to women in leadership.

The prelate called for greater government spending on the education of women. "It is on these processes that States should have the courage to invest," he said, "thus reversing the embarrassing and asymmetrical relationship between public spending on education and the funds allocated to armaments."

Theme announced for 2024 International Eucharistic Congress

(28-10-22) In 2021, the Vatican announced that the 53th International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Quito, Ecuador, in 2024.

The Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses has now announced the congress's theme: "Fraternity to heal the world: you are all brothers" (Matthew 23:8).

Vatican 'foreign minister' visits Algeria

(28-10-22) Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Holy See's Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, traveled to Algeria to mark 50 years of diplomatic relations. He received a "warm welcome," according to Vatican News.

The North African nation of 43.6 million (map) is 98% Muslim (predominantly Sunni), and Islam is the official religion. The government recently ordered that Caritas, the Church's charitable agency, cease operating there; that order remained in effect as the prelate's visit drew to a close.

Benin - Insecurity and climate change endanger social peace: bishops express concern



(28-10-22) "Thefts, robberies, vandalism are the order of the day. We ask for urgent measures to ensure the safety of our citizens", said the Bishops of Benin at the end of their Plenary Assembly held from 16 to 19 October in Dassa-Zoumé.

"In addition to ordinary crimes," the bishops said, "there are also alarming situations of insecurity that lead to loss of life". The bishops are thus making a clear allusion to the jihadist infiltrations from neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso, which are also leading to violence and instability in Benin.

Somalia - Impending famine: Church relief organization calls for immediate action

(28-10-22) "What we are seeing is devastating, people are suffering, children are dying. Hunger is claiming more and more victims. The alarm bells have been ringing for months, but the international community and governments have not responded adequately. How many people have to die before the world acts?" reads a statement from the Irish Catholic charity Trócaire, a member of Caritas Internationalis.

"Immediate action must be taken without waiting for the famine to be officially declared," said Paul Haley, director of Trocaire Somalia, appealing to the entire international community.

Philippines - Mindanao: "Emmaus College" aims to promote spirituality of dialogue

(28-10-22) "The Emmaus Theological College, built in the city of Zamboanga with specialization in interreligious dialogue, welcomes 40 young students who, inspired by the spirituality of life in dialogue, can undergo training to serve the Church and society in the spirit of human brotherhood," explains the Italian missionary Father Sebastiano D'Ambra of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), who has been active in the south of the Philippines for 45 years. He talks of the founding of the new institution, as part of the Catholic "Emmaus" movement. The Emmaus Movement originated as an association of lay faithful and was recognized by the Archdiocese of Zamboanga on the Philippine island of Mindanao.

Bolivia - Concerns about the increase in violence, the Church always willing to facilitate dialogue

(28-10-22) "As Pastor of the People of God in Santa Cruz, I express my deep concern at the increase in violence that fuels more violence. It is deplorable to live in a situation of pain and suffering caused by the disagreement on the date of the Population and Housing Census, which according to common feeling, should be a reason for unity, joy, hope for better days for all". Thus writes Archbishop René Leigue Cesari of Santa Cruz, in a message released on October 27. We affirm that we will always be ready, to provide orientation, to offer criteria, to facilitate dialogue and to contribute to agreements, but not to mediate", the Bishops say.

Sri Lankan bishops seek support for needy

(28-10-22) Catholic bishops have urged devotees to provide medicines and dry rations for the needy at a time when Sri Lanka is mired in crises.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka (CBCSL) in a statement released on Oct. 28 urged people to be sensitive to those who are suffering in the country. "All expenses should be reserved for providing dry rations, milk powder for children, and medicines to the poor and needy people," said the statement issued by CBCSL president Bishop Harold Anthony Perera and secretary general Bishop J.D. Anthony Jayakody.

Christians decry lack of justice in Bangladesh

(28-10-22) Bangladesh's failure to deliver justice to religious minorities like Christians for cases of violence and killing amid lack of effort to establish the rule of law continues to tarnish the image of the country, Christian leaders say.

The reactions came as Bangladesh was ranked 127th out of 140 countries in the Rule of Law Index 2022 by Washington DC-based World Justice Project (WJP). The index was published on Oct. 26.

Bangladesh was ranked fourth among South Asian nations.

Nepal was the top performer in the region, followed by Sri Lanka and India. Afghanistan had the lowest score in South Asia.

Father Anthony Sen, a member of the Catholic bishops' Justice and Peace Commission, said Church leaders including bishops and priests need to be vocal about justice for Christians.



Tackling religious discrimination in Indonesian schools

(28-10-22) Aprilia Inka Prasasti made history when she became the first Muslim to be elected chairperson of the Intra-School Student Organization (OSIS) at St. Francis Xavier Senior High School of Ruteng in Indonesia's Catholic-majority Island of Flores.

Inka, 16, is one of only four Muslim students in the church-run school under the Ruteng Diocese founded in 1987. During the student election on Oct. 5, she defeated five candidates, all of them Catholics. She garnered support from students and teachers alike. The school has 1,147 Catholic, 19 Protestant, 4 Muslim, and 3 Hindu students.

Father Martin William, the school's principal, said Inka's victory was a "rebuke" against the existing practice that "glorifies religion and overrides rationality" while choosing leaders.

WB's poverty alleviation funds elude Pakistani Christians

(28-10-22) Some of the poorest Christians living in the ghettos of Punjab province and Scheduled Caste or former untouchable Hindus have been left out of the World Bank's targeted intervention to reduce poverty in Pakistan.

A study of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) authored by Christian researchers Asif Aqeel and Advocate Mary Gill released on Oct. 26 says the financial assistance program failed to include the poorest sections of the country's religious minorities.

29-10-22

Ethiopia - The Church in prayer for the ongoing peace talks

(29-10-22) After two years of conflict between the Ethiopian government and the separatist militias of the Tigray region, which have claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, representatives of both sides have met on Oct.25 for the first time in Pretoria (South Africa) for peace talks. This step awakened new hope among the citizens of Ethiopia. The aim is to mediate in the face of the challenges of the

second most populous country in Africa and to find a sustainable solution to the conflict. As has done the Pope, the Apostolic Vicar of Jima Bonga, Markos Ghebremedhin, said, "We pray and hope that the outcome of these talks will lead to the restoration of peace in the country so that we can rebuild our nation."

30-10-22

Pope at Angelus: 'Jesus looks at us to restore our dignity'

(30-10-22) Pope Francis prayed the Angelus on Sunday with pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square, and reflected on the day's Gospel (Lk 19:1-10), which recounts the story of Jesus inviting Himself to stay with Zacchaeus.

The Pope focused his comments on the "gaze" shared by Zacchaeus and Jesus, as the chief tax collector looked down on Jesus from a tree, a person he had not known.

Zacchaeus, who was the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho, was seeking to see "who Jesus was", but was short in stature and so had to climb a tree to see over the crowd.

Pope Francis noted that Zacchaeus, as a tax collector for the Roman occupiers of Israel, surely took advantage of his position to extort money from others. Therefore, he was hated by everyone and branded a sinner. *"Zacchaeus teaches us that, in life, all is never lost. We can always find space for the desire to begin again, to start over, to convert."*

The Gospel of Luke says Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." After all, he was sent by the Father to seek those who are lost.

Pope Francis said these words present a beautiful image of Jesus "looking up" at Zacchaeus from below. *Jesus lowered Himself to the point of washing our feet, looking at us from below and restoring our dignity to us.* This episode, added the Pope, sums up all of salvation history. "Humanity, with its miseries, seeks redemption, but firstly, God, with mercy, seeks His creature to save it," he said.

Turning his attention what this Gospel means for us, Pope Francis pointed out that God never dwells on our past with all its errors, but rather looks "with infinite confidence at what we can become."

"We Christians must have the gaze of Christ, who embraces from below, who seeks those who are lost, with compassion. This is, and must always be, the gaze of the Church," the Pope said.

Pope prays for people killed in crush at South Korea's Halloween event, also prays for victims of Somalia terrorist attack

(30-10-22) After the Angelus, Pope Francis expressed his sorrow for the 153 people killed at a Halloween street party in Seoul, South Korea's capital, as the country's Catholic Bishops call for a thorough investigation into the causes. Most of the participants at the party were young people and they suffocated to death.



The Pope also prayed for the victims of the Saturday terrorist attack in Somalia's capital Mogadishu. Twin car bomb explosions on Saturday outside Somalia's Education Ministry building killed at least 100 people, including many children, and injured more than 300 others.

The al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility for this latest outrage, which killed women, children, and several pensioners. The death toll is likely to rise. *"May God convert the hearts of the violent!"* the Pope prayed.
