

CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

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28-11-22

Pope covers Ukraine, China, women, abortion, dissent in new interview



Pope Francis spoke about Ukraine, abortion, divisions within the Church, women's ordination, and the Vatican's diplomatic relations with China, in a wide-ranging interview with the editors of *America* magazine.

Asked why he has not explicitly blamed Russia for invading Ukraine, the Pope replied: "Why do I not name Putin? Because it is not necessary; it is already known."

On China he said: "With China I have opted for the way of dialogue. It is slow, it has its failures, it has its successes, but I cannot find another way."

Responding to a question about women who feel a call to priestly ordination, the Pope spoke at some length about the Petrine and Marian principles of the Church. Women cannot be ordained to priestly ministry, he explained, because "the Petrine principle has no place for that."

Pope Francis said that abortion is a pastoral problem, and insisted—as he has frequently in the past—that bishops should not politicize the issue. But he underlined his own firm stance against the practice. Science makes it clear beyond reasonable dispute, he remarked, that upon conception "there is a living human being. I do not say a person, because this is debated, but a living human being."

If we see how the Holy Spirit acts; it first causes disorder: think of the morning of Pentecost, and the confusion and mess (Ífo) it created there, and then it brings about harmony.

Vatican offers guidelines for investing in a way consistent with faith

(28-11-22) The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, an advisory body of scholars, has published *Mensuram Bonam* [Good Measure], subtitled "Faith-Based Measures for Catholic Investors: A Starting Point and Call to Action." The document was discussed at a July workshop organized by the academy.

Upon the publication of the 45-page document, Cardinal Peter Turkson, the academy's Grand Chancellor, thanked the members of a working group: Paolo Camoletto, John Della Costa, Jean-Baptiste Douville de Franssu, Father Séamus Finn, Mark Krcmaric, Pierre de Lauzun, Father Thomas McClain, Father Nicola Riccardi, Antoine de Salins, Alessandra Viscovi, Helge Wulsdorf, and Robert G. Kennedy.

The document distinguishes Catholic social teaching from ESG (environmental, social, and governance) investing and offers a non-definitive list of 24 "areas of concern or prohibition" (pp. 33-34). "The moral imperative sometimes presents clear situations in which exclusion [from investing] without exception has to be applied, such as involvement in abortion and murder," the document adds.

Cardinal Sarah: religious freedom under threat in Western nations, too

(28-11-22) Cardinal Robert Sarah warned that Christians in the Western world should be aware of threats to religious freedom, in an interview with the EWTN network.

"Countless martyrs continue to die for the faith around the world," said Cardinal Sarah. "But religious liberty is under threat in the West, too." He referred to "an implicit bias against Christianity."

The former prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship said that he wished to see the Eucharistic liturgy "more and more sacred, more and more holy, more and more silent, because God is silent, and we encounter God in silence, in adoration."

Russia imprisons two priests. Ukrainian bishop intercedes on their behalf

(28-11-22) A bishop in Ukraine has put out a plea for two Catholic priests seized by Russian authorities.

Redemptorist priests Father Ivan Levitsky – rector of the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary – in Berdiansk, and Father Bohdan Geleta – a chaplain attached to the same church – have been imprisoned on 16 Nov. at a pre-trial detention centre in Berdiansk. Russian authorities in the occupied port city in south-east Ukraine accused the two priests of terrorism-related offences.

Claims that both clergy were in possession of weapons and explosives were described as a “deliberately fabricated false accusation” by Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishop Stepan Meniok of Donetsk Exarchate. He said, “We appeal to the authorities and all people of good-will with a request to join the cause of the release of the priests, as well as for increased prayer.”

Life of Eritrean bishop at risk in notorious prison

(28-11-22) Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalim of Segheneity (Eritrea) and two priests were arrested in October. The East African nation of 6 million has been a repressive one-party state since it gained independence in 1993.

+Cardinal Richard Baawobr, MAfr, 63

(28-11-22) Just three months after Pope Francis created him a cardinal, Cardinal Richard Baawobr of Wa (Ghana) has died at the age of 63, days after being discharged from a Roman hospital, where he received treatment following surgery for heart disease.

Born in 1959, Baawobr was ordained a priest of the Missionaries of Africa in 1987 and became the order’s superior general in 2010. Pope Francis appointed him bishop of Wa in 2016, and in July he was elected president of the Symposium of Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

With Cardinal Baawobr’s death, there are now 225 cardinals, 126 of whom are eligible to take part in a papal election.



DR Congo - A march for peace: two women kidnapped by an armed group in the east of the Country

(28-11-22) Two peace-seeking activists in South Kivu, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, were abducted by an armed group led by a deserting Congolese army officer (FARDC). Sarah Atosha and Pamela Jannety Mugisha were brutally arrested in the late morning of November 26 by an armed group that broke into the village of Bigaragara in the hall where a preparatory meeting was being held for the peace march scheduled for December 1. This was reported to Fides by the citizen movement "Jeunesses Conscientes".

Responsible for the action - according to reports from "Jeunesses Conscientes - are the Twigwaneho rebels based in Kabingu less than 15 km southeast of Bigaragara. "After the attacks against the civilian population on November 10 in several villages in the Fizi territory, the two women undertook an action to mobilize the civilian population for the organization of a large-scale peaceful march to denounce these barbaric acts with tribal connotations due to community divisions", says Jeunesses Conscientes.

Uganda - Catholic journalists must only give the truth

(28-11-22) Communicators have a powerful and mysterious mission, and Catholic journalists are called to report the facts and try to act as "evangelists of our times", said the Secretary General of the Ugandan Episcopal Conference (UEC), Msgr. John Baptist Kauta.

Speaking from the local Church, Kauta said he was grateful for the great role these professionals play, also in ensuring that the ecclesial structures of the region (which includes eight West African countries), grouped together in the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), interact with each other and with the universal Church. The Secretary of the UEC insisted inviting the participants to desist from disseminating false news, only to give in to the media pathology

of sensationalism. "Even if the general public likes rumors, Catholic Journalists must only give the truth to the people".

All members of the Ugandan Bishops' Conference said they were satisfied with the work of Catholic communicators in the region and in the Church as a whole.

Filipino Methodists elect first woman bishop

(28-11-22) The leadership of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines elected a woman bishop. Human rights advocate Ruby-Nell Estrella, 57, was elected as the first woman bishop through secret ballot by church delegates on Nov. 26. It was termed a 'historic moment' for the Protestant Church. "A history maker... the long wait is over, the Philippines Central Conference delegates have spoken, garnering 362 votes during the 20th balloting, the Rev. Ruby-Nell Estrella was elected and proclaimed as the first woman Bishop of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines," the Methodists said in a statement on their webpage.

In April 2021, Estrella, together with her fellow clergymen and clergywomen, gave sanctuary to over 4,000 farmers and indigenous people after a protest for food relief and protection of their ancestral lands turned violent in Manila. "I dream of a church that will be faithful in its stewardship of temporal resources, a church that generously supports all levels of structures, the boards, and agencies, to do their respective programs to strengthen the ministries of the church," Estrella said in her thanksgiving speech. Estrella also revealed her vision of using the internet in propagating the faith and attracting young vocations to the ministry.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) congratulated Estrella.



Indian clergymen booked as anti-port protests turn violent

(28-11-22) Police in the southern Indian state of Kerala has booked at least 15 Latin Catholic leaders including Metropolitan Archbishop Thomas J Netto after violent protests against Vizhinjam seaport during the past two days.

The archbishop, auxiliary bishop R Kristudas along with a dozen other priests were named in a first information report registered by the police after the months-long peaceful protests by local fishermen led by the Church against the under-construction international seaport turned violent on Nov. 27.

A day earlier, the anti-port protesters blocked the entry of trucks ferrying construction material to the port site. Police took five among them into custody and detained them at the local police station.

"At least 29 policemen have been injured and admitted to various hospitals," the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported quoting a police official. Over 1,000 agitators including women and children had gathered and police had to use teargas shells and charge with batons to disperse the agitated mob, the official told PTI.

Father Eugene Pereira, a convener of the fishermen's protests, blamed the Communist-led provincial government and Adani Group, the private firm constructing the seaport, for provoking the peaceful protesters. The bishops and priests of the Latin Rite Archdiocese of Trivandrum are spearheading the protests to protect the lives and livelihood of more than 50,000 affected fishermen.

The international port project launched in 2015 led to nearly 500 fishermen losing their homes to seawater following coastal erosion triggered by the construction activities.

Women out of picture in Myanmar synod report

(28-11-22) Tackling clericalism or ensuring a greater role for women does not appear in the Myanmar Church's national synthesis of reports from the 16 diocesan synods sent to Rome.

The Myanmar Church, headed by Salesian Cardinal Charles Bo's 15-page document, only mentions the need "to remove gaps between the clergy and laypeople." "There is an urgent need for the education and formation programs for clergy and lay people for developing a shared understanding of

synodality that is so vital for journeying together in the local Churches.” says the report. The document speaks of “some disappointment expressed” about how parishes are run or how “the parish priest makes all the decisions by himself.”

On the role and vocation of women, the report mentions people seeking greater leadership roles for women. Bishop Raymond Sumlut Gam of Banmaw diocese, which covers Kachin state, said issues “such as women’s roles mentioned in the consultation process need to be covered in the synthesis report too.” He underlined the need to acknowledge women’s roles in the Church as they can serve in many areas where men can’t.

Vatican appointee denied entry into Indian Cathedral

(28-11-22) The Vatican-appointed administrator of the Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church was denied entry to a cathedral by his opponents over an ongoing liturgical dispute.

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath arrived at the St Mary’s Basilica Cathedral Church for Sunday Mass on Nov. 27 but was stopped from entering its premises as the protesting laity from the archdiocese locked the gates.

The Administrator had earlier announced that he would be offering Mass ushering in the liturgical celebrations of Advent in the mode approved by the Synod of Bishop ignoring the opposition to it by the priests and laity who insist on the traditional mode.

Police accompanying the prelate as a precaution did not let him get out of the car and after waiting for about 10 minutes they drove away to the Archbishop’s House.



Forum seeks Korean reconciliation and peace

(28-11-22) About 100 religious leaders, diplomats, clergy, activists, and laypeople joined an annual gathering in the South Korean capital Seoul to reiterate their commitment and efforts for peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.

The Korean Peninsula Peace-Sharing Forum 2022 at the Catholic University of Korea on Nov. 26 was organized by the Committee for Korean Reconciliation of the Archdiocese of Seoul. This forum's theme this year was “Peace Awareness of the Catholic Church and Its Role for Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.”

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‘Perversion’: Russia condemns Pope’s remarks on cruelty of soldiers in Ukraine

(29-11-22) In an interview with the Jesuit periodical *America*, Pope Francis said that he has received “much information about the cruelty of the troops” in Ukraine, and that “generally, the cruelest are perhaps those who are of Russia but are not of the Russian tradition, such as the Chechens, the Buryats and so on.”

Maria Zakharova, director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, said that “this is no longer Russophobia, it’s a perversion on a level I can’t even name. We are one family with Buryats, Chechens, and other representatives of our multinational and multi-confessional country.”

‘Your pain is my pain’: Pope Francis pens letter marking 9 months of war in Ukraine

(29-11-22) In his November 25 letter to the Ukrainian people, which the Vatican has not yet released in English, Pope Francis wrote that “despite the immense tragedy they are suffering, the Ukrainian people have never been discouraged or given over to pity.”

“The world has recognized a bold and strong people, a people that suffers and prays, cries and struggles, resists and hopes: a noble and martyred people,” he added.



Pope encourages pastoral outreach of priests from Latin America

(29-11-22) On November 28, Pope Francis received members of the Pontifical Latin American College in Rome.

“Let us not forget that ‘being’ with Jesus and ‘going out’ to proclaim Him also means accompanying the poor, migrants, the sick, prisoners, the least and most forgotten in society, to share life with them and to announce God’s unconditional

love,” the Pope told the priests and seminarians. “Because Jesus is present in our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, and there He waits for us in a special way.”

‘Dream big, like John XXIII and Martin Luther King,’ Pope tells Italian schoolchildren

(29-11-22) On November 28, Pope Francis received 6,000 students and other participants in a meeting organized by Italy’s National Network of Schools for Peace.

The Pope told the students, “In fact, we always, always need to pay attention to peace! Just like we need to always pay attention to the other, to our brothers and sisters; they must be taken care of.”

Leaders of Synod’s continental stage hold 2-day meeting

(29-11-22) The meeting took place a month after the release of “Enlarge the space of your tent,” the working document of the Synod on Synodality.

Father Giacomo Costa, SJ, a consultor of the General Secretariat of the Synod, said that the fundamental question of the Synod’s current stage is “How are the local churches living and experiencing walking together, and where is the Holy Spirit leading us?”

Chinese bishops brief Hong Kong Catholics on ‘Sinicization’ campaign

(29-11-22) Catholic bishops from mainland China have been in Hong Kong this week, explaining the government’s plan for an independent Catholic Church loyal to the Communist party.

Bishop Joseph Shen Bin, the president of the Chinese episcopal conference—and vice-president of the government-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association—said that President Xi has “once again put forward the requirement of adhering to the direction of Sinicization of religion in China and actively guiding religion to adapt to the socialist society.”

Ukrainian Orthodox Church takes another step away from Moscow

(29-11-22) The Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) has decided to make its own chrism, rather than taking chrism furnished by the Patriarchate of Moscow.

The decision marks another movement toward autonomy, since the making of chrism is a sign of an autocephalous (self-governing) Church.

Belgian bishops meet Pope for their *ad limina* visit to Rome

(29-11-22) Pope Francis received the bishops of Belgium on November 25. The Western European nation of 11.8 million is 63% Christian (60% Catholic), 26% agnostic, 8% Muslim, and 2% atheist.

The meeting follows the bishops’ publication of a liturgical service for same-sex unions, in defiance of a 2021 Vatican document whose publication was approved by the Pope.

The Vatican did not issue a statement on the meeting, in contrast with the statement that followed the recent papal meeting with the German bishops.

A full online guide to the world’s Catholic hierarchy

(29-11-22) David Cheney, who describes himself as a “random Catholic dude,” has created an invaluable resource: the web site Catholic-Hierarchy.org, which provides up-to-date information about every bishop and every diocese in the world.

Damascus archbishop hopes Advent will cast a light on the Syrian people's silent ordeal

(29-11-22) Maronite Archbishop Samir Nassar of Damascus spoke of the "interminable calvary" of the Syrian civil war, which began in 2011 and has claimed an estimated 500,000-600,000 lives.

Colombia - Dialogue and reconciliation: let us not lose hope if immediate results are lacking

(29-11-22) "The mission of reconciliation that we all want to take on and renew must be accompanied by a high dose of hope, and we lack this, as servants of our communities, but it is also lacking in our communities". These are the words delivered by Archbishop Luis José Rueda Aparicio of Bogotá and President of the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, in the concluding homily of the "IX National Congress of Reconciliation", celebrated from November 22 to 24 on the theme "Opening ways of dialogue and hope". The Archbishop warned of the possibility of losing hope in the absence of immediate results: "hope can be lost because sometimes we see more the negative than the positive. The Congress concluded with the missionary sending out to the approximately 450 participants in the event: each one set out with the commitment to be an "Artisan of Peace", to bring a message of reconciliation, peace and hope.

Brazil - Formation of Catechists, organization of lay people, support for biblical animation: 2022 Evangelization Campaign

(29-11-22) The 2022 Evangelization Campaign, promoted by the Brazilian Episcopal Conference (CNBB) through the dioceses and particular Churches of Brazil, aims to train and update Brazilian catechists, support the Teams of pastoral biblical animation in the 19 regions of the CNBB, to strengthen the organization of the Brazilian laity, to produce material and to promote the meetings of the National Council of the Laity of Brazil (CNLB).



The Evangelization Campaign was created by the CNBB in 1998 with the aim of raising awareness among Catholics of co-responsibility in supporting the evangelization activities of the Brazilian Church. It takes place from the Sunday of Christ the King to the 3rd Sunday of Advent. The campaign collection will take place this year on December 10 and 11.

Vietnam Catholic youth urged to go to the periphery

(29-11-22) Catholic youth from northern Vietnam have been called on to live out and present their faith in the context of Vietnamese culture.

More than 15,000 young people from 11 dioceses attended the 18th Northern Youth Gathering hosted by Hung Hoa Diocese at the national Hung Temple in Phu Tho province on Nov. 25-26. They were joined by youth groups from five southern dioceses.

Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hanoi said that returning to the ancestral land of Hung Kings Temple, they have a duty to live out and present the Catholic faith and to stick with the nation.

Archbishop Thien said that evangelization is not only to admit new members but to show a positive, lively, joyful image of the Church, making other people become interested in its teachings.

Christian persecution 'growing sharply' in India

(29-11-22) Violence against Indian Christians is growing by the day and the federal and provincial governments need to act now to arrest the worrying trend, a human rights group says.

The United Christian Forum (UCF) based in the national capital New Delhi in a press note on Nov. 26 said the growth in recorded incidents is increasing "not just year-on-year, but even month-on-month." As per data compiled by UCF through its helpline, a total of 511 incidents were reported as of Nov. 21 this year as against 505 in 2021.

"The growing incidence of violence against religious minorities is an unhappy situation which defies our Prime Minister Narendra Modi's electoral assurance of inclusive growth," UCF President Michael

Williams said. Data shows the provinces of Uttar Pradesh in the north, followed by Chhattisgarh in central India, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the south were the worst places to be for the nation's Christians. Uttar Pradesh reported 149 incidents while Chhattisgarh 115. In the south, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka reported 30 incidents each.

In almost all incidents reported from across the country, vigilante mobs comprising extremist elements were involved. Their modus operandi appeared to be to make allegations of religious conversion activities and either barge into prayer gatherings or attack individuals or small groups of Christians. The police fail to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators.



Archbishop urges Malaysian MPs to fight extremism

(29-11-22) Anglican Archbishop Melter Jiki Tais of Sabah in Malaysia has called on the country's parliamentarians to work together by shunning their differences and rejecting all forms of divisive extremism that would hurt the nation. Archbishop Tais, head of the Anglican Communion of Southeast Asia made the call in a statement on Nov. 24, shortly after the 15th national election on Nov. 19 which saw no political party emerge with a clear majority. However, thanks to support from King Sultan Abdullah, Anwar

Ibrahim, the leader of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition which won 82 seats in the 222-seat parliament, was sworn in as the new prime minister on Nov. 24.

Bangladeshi activists decry move to evict Khasi Christians

(29-11-22) Bangladeshi rights activists and civil society representatives called for an immediate halt on an alleged attempt by the Forest department to evict dozens of Christian tribal Khasi villagers through the filing of false cases of encroachment on government land.

The call was made during a press conference in the capital Dhaka on Nov. 26 organized by Kapaeeng Foundation, a national-level tribal rights group. The press meet came after a delegation of activists and civil society groups paid a visit to two Khasi *punjees* (forested villages) – Doluchhara and Muroichhara in the Moulvibazar district of northeastern Bangladesh on Nov. 23-24. Doluchhara and Muroichhara have a total of 150 Khasi villagers and the forest department has filed fabricated charges against 15 villagers to evict them, activists alleged. Illegal encroachment on government-gazetted forest areas to cut trees and smuggle cattle is alleged.

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Vatican web site hacked again

(30-11-22) Vatican officials shut down the "Vatican.va" web server on November 30, after an apparent hacking attempt.

Access to the Vatican site was gradually restored during the day, but the Vatican press office remained offline. Spokesman Matteo Bruni said that site was shut down early in the day because of "abnormal attempt to access the site."

Although there was no evidence pointing to the source of the attack, both China and Russia—nations notorious for computer hacking—have recently been annoyed by public statements from the Holy See.

Pope urges daily examination of conscience

(30-11-22) At his weekly public audience on November 30, Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to make a daily examination of conscience—a practice that he described as "the valuable effort of rereading experience from a particular point of view."

In his continuing catechesis on discernment, the Holy Father turned to the Spiritual Exercises of Jesuit founder St Ignatius of Loyola, who says we must examine our thoughts to see if they are inclined to the good in their beginning, middle, and end. If all are directed towards what is good, "It is

a sign of the good Angel,” the Pope said; while if our thoughts and intentions propose something bad, or weaken or distract our soul, it is a sign that such thoughts “proceed from the evil spirit, the enemy of our profit and eternal salvation.”

So, he continued, a patient examination of the origin and truth of our thoughts is “indispensable.” “This is why a daily examination of conscience is so important,” he said. “It is the valuable effort of rereading experience from a particular point of view.”

“Noticing what happens is important, it is a sign that God’s grace is working in us, helping us to grow in freedom and awareness.” The Pope added that genuine consolation can serve as a kind of confirmation “that we are doing what God wants of us”, that we are on the right path.

Finally, he reminded the faithful that discernment “is not simply about what is good or about the greatest possible good, but about what is good for me here and now.” Discernment can help us to see what God expects of us at this moment, helping us to choose between different possibilities “in our search for the true good.”

Pope to Bartholomew: Only dialogue and encounter can overcome conflicts

(30-11-22) A Vatican Delegation led by Cardinal Sandri visited Istanbul for the occasion of the Feast of St. Andrew the Apostle and conveyed Pope Francis’ “fraternal affection” to the Ecumenic Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew. In his message the Pope says that one of the most fruitful areas of cooperation between the Patriarchate and the Catholic Church is interreligious dialogue to promote peace.

New lay leader for Vatican Economics secretariat

(30-11-22) Pope Francis has named a Spanish layman, Maximino Caballero Ledo, to head the Secretariat for the Economy, after the resignation of Father Juan Antonio Guerrero, who had held that post since 2019.

The Vatican announced only that Father Guerrero was stepping down “for personal reasons.” But in a message to his staff, the Jesuit priest explained that he has been very sickly these days. Caballero has been secretary-general of the Secretariat, the second-ranking official in the office, since 2020. He previously had a long record of corporate leadership.

Cardinal Becciu meets Pope Francis to ‘clarify’ secret recording amid mounting scandals

(30-11-22) A prosecutor revealed during the Vatican financial trial that Cardinal Angelo Becciu had secretly recorded a phone call with Pope Francis. Becciu then met the Pope to “clarify” matters. Becciu oversaw the internal affairs of the Roman Curia as Substitute (Sostituto) of the Secretariat of State from 2011 to 2018. Pope Francis created him a cardinal in the 2018 consistory and named him Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. In 2020, Becciu resigned from the “rights connected to the cardinalate.”

Chinese government spokesman speaks of ‘friendly consensus’ amid Vatican complaints



(30-11-22 AP) Without Vatican consent, the Chinese government recently transferred Bishop Peng Weizhao, by Pope Francis’s appointment the underground bishop of Yujiang, to Jiangxi, where he will serve officially as an auxiliary bishop. A statement from the Vatican press office expressed “surprise and regret” at the event.

Zhao Lijian, the deputy director of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Department, told reporters that “China is willing to continuously expand the friendly consensus with the Vatican side and jointly maintain the spirit of our interim agreement.” He added

that he was unaware of the specifics of Bishop Peng’s transfer.

Pope grieves for ‘wise and gentle pastor’ Cardinal Baawobr

(30-11-22) Cardinal Richard Baawobr of Wa (Ghana) died on November 27 at the age of 63. "I willingly join the faithful in praying that our merciful Father may grant to this wise and gentle pastor the reward of his labours and welcome him into the light and peace of heaven," the Pontiff wrote in a telegram of condolence.

Christians now a minority in England and Wales

(30-11-22 AP) 46.2% of residents of England and Wales described themselves as Christians on the 2021 census—down from 59.3% in 2011.

In 2021, 6.5% said they were Muslim, and 1.7% said they were Hindu; 37% said they had no religion, up from 25% in 2011.



Videos highlight faithful with disabilities' participation in Synod

(30-11-22) The Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life is releasing four videos devoted to the Vatican's synod listening session with 30 persons with disabilities.

The four videos are entitled "Co-Responsibility," "Rise up and walk!," "Magisterium of frailty," and "A wonderful process."

Burkina Faso - More and more women in migratory flows: a conference in Ouagadougou

(30-11-22) More and more women are part of the migratory flows from Africa. This is what emerges from the conference "Women, gender and migration" which is being held in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso. The conference is organized by the Catholic Organization for Development and Solidarity (OCADES, Caritas of Burkina Faso) and the German NGO Welthungerhilfe.

Malaysia - The service of Catholic schools in the education system: a contribution to the new generations

(30-11-22) "The way in which teachers continue to transmit knowledge using all means, even the mass media, and the perseverance they show in continuing to serve children in difficult times is admirable". What John Wong Soo Kau, Archbishop of Kota Kinabalu, said to the teachers of the St. Francis Convent Primary School, thanking them "for their commitment, generosity and above all for their love towards the school and the pupils, whom you consider as your children", reflects the approach of the educational service rendered by Catholic structures in the nation, to students without distinction of ethnicity, culture, religion.

Catholic schools in Malaysia have been known for their educational contribution to the country since they were first established in 1852 by the De La Salle Brothers and Sisters of the Child Jesus in Peninsular Malaysia and in East Malaysia (the provinces on the island of Borneo) by the Fathers of Mill Hill in 1881.

Bolivia - After the strike: "so many brothers have been injured, a people have been injured, it will take a long time to heal"

(30-11-22) After the approval of the Chamber of Deputies over the weekend, the Bolivian Senate also approved on 30 Nov. the law on population and housing census, which must now be promulgated. "Thirty-five days of strikes and conflicts in the country have passed, certainly these days there will be an apparent serenity and normality, but the question arises: will what has been promised be true? How long will this apparent serenity last?" asked Bishop Aurelio Pesoa, O.F.M., Bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Beni, President of the Episcopal Conference of Bolivia, in his homily at Mass for the first Sunday of Advent.

Referring to the season of Advent, he continued: "In these times of conflict that we live in the country, words are repeated that do not build or respect, but which are insulting, disqualifying and even aggressive. With such an attitude, so many brothers have been hurt, a people has been hurt, a wound

that will take a long time to heal. For a predominantly Catholic people, this is not the way to wait for the Messiah".

Film on St. Andrew Kim hits Korean theaters

(30-11-22) A biographical film on Korea's first Catholic priest and martyr St. Andrew Kim Tae-gon hit the screens across the East Asian nation on Nov. 30 to mark his 200th birth anniversary. The film "Birth" is co-produced by the Korean Catholic Cultural Centre and is written and directed by Korean filmmaker Park Heung-Shik. Korean actor Yoon Shi Yoon played the role of St. Andrew Kim. Before the launch in South Korea, the movie had its grand premiere on Nov. 16 at the new Synod Hall at the Vatican. On the same day, Pope Francis met the cast and crew members in the audience room in Pope Paul VI Hall.



Alarm over Myanmar junta's new NGO law

(30-11-22) New rules regulating the registration of non-profit organizations (NGOs) imposed by the junta in conflict-torn Myanmar have raised alarm among the United Nations and aid workers as it will impact humanitarian assistance to millions of displaced people.

The State Administration Council on Oct. 28 imposed a law that makes registration compulsory for both national and international NGOs and associations. Under the new law, organizations that fail to comply will face punishments including jail terms of up to five years.

The UN Human Rights Office for Southeast Asia (OHCHR) said it was deeply concerned about "the potential negative impact on civic space and human rights" of the new rules on the registration of NGOs in Myanmar.

Bangladesh urged to do more to check sexual harassment

(30-11-22) Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), a leading women's rights group in Bangladesh has called for the formation and effective functioning of committees in all educational institutes and workplaces to address rising cases of sexual harassment of women and girls in the country.

Indian govt pitches for law against religious conversion

(30-11-22) The Indian government has come out in support of a demand for enacting legislation to contain forced and fraudulent religious conversions in a written submission before the country's top court.

The Federal Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), in an affidavit filed before the Supreme Court on Nov. 28 in response to public interest litigation seeking legal measures to prevent conversion, said that "it is cognizant of the gravity and the seriousness of the issue."

The writ petition has been filed by a lawyer, Ashwini Upadhyay, who is associated with India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the ministry stated enactment of a law is necessary for protecting the rights of vulnerable sections including women, and economically and socially backward classes. The MHA said that Article 25 of the Indian Constitution enshrined the right to profess, practice, and propagate religion to all citizens, but does not guarantee the "right to convert" others. "It is submitted that the right to freedom of religion does not include a fundamental right to convert other people to a particular religion. The said right certainly does not include the right to convert an individual through fraud, deception, coercion, allurements, or other such means," the government said in its affidavit. The ministry referred to a previous Supreme Court judgment saying that "the word propagate does not envisage the right to convert a person, rather [it] is in the nature of the positive right to spread one's religion by exposition of its tenets."



Senior journalist A. J. Philip in an open letter to Justice M. R. Shah, who headed the Supreme Court bench, pointed out that the petitioner is a member of the ruling BJP and “forced conversion has been his pet theme.” Philip said Upadhyay had earlier filed a similar petition before the top court but was compelled to withdraw it after Justice Rohinton Nariman, who has since retired, said he was “perturbed” by its “frivolousness.” Philip further argued that if the allegations of forceful and fraudulent conversions were true then there would have been more adherents of the faith in India. Christians make up 2.3 percent of the nation’s 1.4 billion people.

Jesuit Father Cedric Prakash, a human rights activist from western Gujarat state, also questioned the growing concerns over conversions in a published article. “There is no hard data to prove any so-called ‘forced’ conversions; nor is there any substantial information on cases filed under laws [enacted by many provincial governments] and convictions made by courts of law and upheld by higher courts,” he wrote. The priest said many cases of forced conversion were registered but there was no conviction barring one in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, that too by a lower court.

Meanwhile, Upadhyay when questioned about the basis for his petition by a top television news channel NDTV failed to provide any facts or figures supporting his claims on conversions. Agitated by the news anchor’s persistent queries, he walked out of the programme.

Many Church leaders believe that the main objective of the petition is to harass and hinder Christians and their institutions from serving the common people.

The Supreme Court has scheduled the next hearing for Dec. 5.

1-12-22

Sunday Mass attendance in Belgium falls to 2.5%

(30-11-22) Average Sunday Mass attendance in Belgium fell from 241,029 in 2019 to 166,785 in 2021, according to a report released by the nation’s episcopal conference on November 30. The Sunday Mass attendance rate has fallen from 42.9% in 1967 to 2.5% in 2021.

In 2021, there were 36,834 baptisms (162 of them adult baptisms), 41,751 First Communions, and eight priestly ordinations. 5,237 Catholics requested that their names be removed from baptismal registries.

Déjà vu in Vatican as ‘Vatileaks’ defendant cited at trial

(1-12-22) “The Vatican tribunal hearing a financial crimes case had something of a déjà vu [on November 29] when a high-profile defendant in a previous trial over leaked documents emerged as a key figure in advising the prime prosecution witness to cooperate with prosecutors,” the report begins. “Prosecutor Alessandro Diddi announced he had received a series of 126 text messages over the weekend that explained how key prosecution witness Msgr. Alberto Perlasca decided to change his story and cooperate with the investigation into the Vatican’s bungled investment in a London property.”

‘Amid scandals and politics, Poland’s youths lose faith in Catholic Church’

(1-12-22) “Only about a quarter of young Poles now regularly go to church, less than half the level of three decades ago,” according to the report, which focuses on Bydgoszcz, a city of 350,000.

Norwegian bishop: Catholic life leads ‘to persecution to some degree in this fallen world’

(1-12-22) Bishop Erik Varden, OCSO, of Trondheim (Norway) recalled the 500th anniversary of the death of his predecessor, Archbishop Erik Valkendorf, a figure reminiscent of St. Thomas Becket.

Niger - Zanke Handuriya: the children’s star, a small light of hope for blind children

(1-12-22) Inspired by his visit to a home for the blind in Gaya in Gaya by a volunteer Catholic group called CIER Niger, Fr Rafael Casamayor, a member of the Society for African Missions, started a similar home in Dosso, the place of his mission. The mission for the visually impaired which he aptly named Zankey Handuriya, the star of the children, is an inclusive school overflows with affection and joy which the children radiate when they feel valued and loved. Thanks to the work of this group, the children awaken to social life with great enthusiasm. An additional feature here is the team takes care of the children's transportation from their villages and gives them lunch, so that there are no drop-outs in the school.

During the summer, the group organized work meetings, training and learning to weave chairs, mats, knitwear, perfumery, Braille writing exercises, mobility and orientation. The objective was to teach them to use their hands to achieve a little more autonomy and not depend on the help of others.

Bangladesh- Talitha Kum Network: Save girls through knowledge and prevention

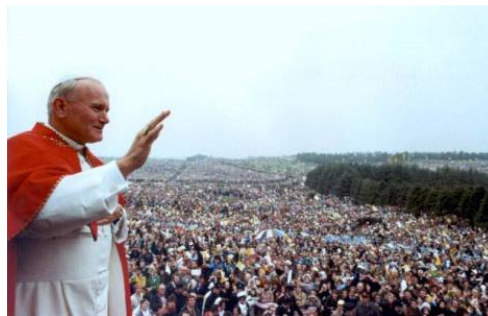
(1-12-22) "Bangladesh girls become easy victims for human traffickers", explains to Fides Sister Josephine Rozario, religious of the Salesian Sisters of Mary Immaculate, coordinator in Bangladesh (with Fr. Liton Gomes) of the "Talitha Kum Network", the international network that fights against human trafficking. In her commitment, the nun directly saved at least ten girls and indirectly many others.

The Catholic sisters, volunteers and teachers of "Talitha Kum" carry out awareness-raising and educational work in schools, parishes and communities in order to make young girls aware of the existence of social phenomena such as early marriage, forced marriage and human trafficking in Bangladesh and thus combat these phenomena. In recent days, in Toomila parish in Gazipur, near Dhaka, sisters and teachers held a seminar to talk about violence against women and human trafficking, organized by Talitha Kum Network Bangladesh.

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Cuba – It's 25 years since Christmas has returned to being a public holiday in Cuba, which is preparing to commemorate the historic visit of John Paul II

(1-12-22) The 25th anniversary Christmas as a public holiday in anniversary of the visit to the John Paul II, are the events Bishops in their message in released on November 30th. announcement of the official visit to Cuba, from January 21 to announced on December 13 the



of the recognition of Cuba and the 25th island of the Holy Father mentioned by the Cuban preparation for Christmas, Coinciding with the program of John Paul II's 26, 1998, Fidel Castro reinstatement of the

Christmas holidays for 1997. It was the Pope himself, during Castro's visit to the Vatican in autumn 1996, who asked for it as a gesture of goodwill, echoing the desire of the local Church.

Christians hail Indian president's concern for prisoners

(1-12-22) Christian leaders have lauded a call by Indian President Droupadi Murmu for the federal government and the judiciary to address the issue of overcrowding in the country's prisons. Speaking at a National Law Day celebration organized by the Supreme Court in New Delhi on Nov. 26, President Murmu questioned whether India is moving towards progress as a society with a plan to build more jails.

She recalled her own experience as the governor of a province and a political activist to highlight the problem of a growing number of people awaiting or on trial who were languishing in jails and the excessive cost of litigation, which was a major impediment in the delivery of justice.

“We are glad that the issue was raised by none other than the Indian president. We welcome it and thank her for the concern for the poor and downtrodden people in our country,” Father Francis Kodiyan, co-founder of the Church-run Prison Ministry India (PMI), told UCA News on Nov. 30. Father Kodiyan said prisons in India are very overcrowded and lack adequate health and hygiene facilities among other things.



Catholic bishops seek mining ban in southern Philippines

(1-12-22) Catholic bishops from four dioceses in the southern Philippines have called on the country’s lawmakers to draft a law to impose a ban on mining across the entire Mindanao region. In a joint statement on Nov. 28, the Archdiocese of Davao and the Dioceses of Digos, Tagum, and Mati urged lawmakers to revoke 39 mining licenses in the region to protect the environment and public health. Firms are accused of displacing tens of thousands of indigenous peoples and devastating the environment.

India’s Hindu nationalists join port fray

(1-12-22) A Catholic archdiocese-led fishermen’s protest against a multi-billion-dollar international mega seaport in India’s Kerala state has turned communal after a right-wing Hindu group marched in support of the project.

The Hindu Aikya Vedi (Hindu United Front), a Hindu nationalist organization, staged a march in support of the megaproject on Nov. 30, openly defying a police restriction against any such march in and around the port protest venue.

The agitated members of the nationalist Hindu organization who took part in the march shouted slogans in support of the Adani Vizhinjam Seaport, promoted by Gautam Adani, India’s richest man who has very strong support from the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party. Their demands include completion of the port construction at the earliest and actions against those behind the violent attack on the Vizhinjam police station on Nov. 27 night in which 90 protesters and 36 police personnel were wounded.

2-12-11

Pope to visit war-torn African countries soon

(2-12-22) Pope Francis will travel to Africa in January, spending a week in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in South Sudan—making a trip that he had been forced to postpone in July because of his health problems.

The Pope will leave Rome on January 31, flying to Kinshasa, and remain there for three days before continuing on to Juba in South Sudan. There he will join the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland in an ecumenical pilgrimage for peace.

Pope: Migration essential for the Mediterranean’s well-being

(2-12-22) Pope Francis addressed participants at the 8th Rome MED Dialogues Conference in Rome which brought together political-institutional representatives, analysts, social, economic, and media figures to discuss some of the key issues for the Mediterranean.

In his address, the Pope said the inability to find common solutions to human mobility continues to result in unacceptable and almost always avoidable loss of life, especially in the Mediterranean.

Cooperation for the benefit of all was also highlighted in his speech, where the Pope reiterated that “no one is saved alone;” therefore, “the interconnectedness of the issues requires that they be examined together, in a coordinated vision that is as broad as possible.”

Ukrainian Catholic leader pleads for release of captured priests

(2-12-22) Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Church has issued an appeal to international leaders to seek the release of two priests who are being held by Russian troops.

The archbishop said that reports indicated the priests, Father Ivan Levytskyi and Father Bohdan Heleta, have been “tortured without mercy.”

He rejected reports that the priests had been hiding weapons in their church, and said: “According to classic Stalinist methods of repression, confessions to crimes they did not commit are being extracted from them.”



Ukraine imposing restriction on Moscow-allied Orthodox churches

(2-12-22) Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has announced restrictions on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC-MP) that remains allied—although tenuously—with the Patriarchate of Moscow.

The Ukrainian leader said that the policy was justified by a series of raids on Orthodox parishes and diocesan headquarters, which he said had turned up Russian propaganda.

England and Wales: no longer a Christian majority

(2-12-22) Christians no longer constitute a majority of the residents of England and Wales, the latest census data show.

Just 46.2% of the population, or 27.5 million people, identified themselves as Christians in the 2021 census. That figure has dropped dramatically, from 59.3% in 2011, and 71.7% in 2001.

The country’s Muslim (6.5%) and Hindu (1.7%) populations have grown, but the largest increase has been in the number of people who report that they have no religion: 37.2% of the population.

German Synodal Path founder says goal is ‘pressure’ on Church to change teachings

(2-12-22) One of the primary instigators of the German Synodal Path has revealed that the effort was designed to put “pressure” on the Catholic Church, to bring about changes in moral teaching, and it has advanced “much more successfully than I thought.”

Thomas Sternberg, the former president of the Central Committee of German Catholics—who worked alongside Cardinal Reinhard Marx to launch the Synodal Path—said that the initiative was intended to produce change in Church teachings on marriage, homosexuality, and the ordination of women. The organizers planned to steer just barely clear of statements or actions that would prompt Vatican disciplinary action, he said.

Pope Francis praises Benedict’s ‘hermeneutic of reform’

(2-12-22) Pope Francis praised his predecessor Benedict XVI for his theological contributions, as he met the winners of the 2022 Ratzinger Prize for excellence in theology.

Pope Francis said that Benedict, along with Pope John Paul II, helped to realize the vision of Vatican II. In particular, he said, the German Pontiff “helped us to read the conciliar documents in-depth, proposing a “hermeneutic of reform and continuity.”

This year’s Ratzinger Prize winners are Father Michel Fédou, a Jesuit expert on the Church Fathers; and Joseph Halevi Horowitz Weiler, the first Jewish recipient of the international award.

Former Colombian guerrilla leader convicted in archbishop’s assassination

(2-12-22) Luciano Marin Arango--- also known as Ivan Marquez—a former leader of FARC rebel forces, was sentenced to a 25-year prison term after being found guilty of ordering the murder of

Archbishop Isaias Duarte Cancino of Cali in 2002.

The archbishop was gunned down as he left a parish church after a wedding ceremony. Investigators eventually learned that his assassins were paid by the FARC leadership.

Marquez was sentenced *in absentia*. After accepting a peace accord with the government in 2016, he announced in 2019 that he was resuming armed resistance, and is now at large, believed to be working in alliance with drug traffickers.

Vatican 'foreign minister' urges greater European cooperation

(2-12-22) In a December 2 address to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, said that "we all have to admit that our infidelity to Helsinki began long before last February."

While the security situation in Europe has deteriorated "since Russia launched its war of aggression," the OSCE has not done enough to promote a climate of dialogue, the archbishop said. Citing the words of Pope Francis, he appealed for understanding of the plight of refugees and migrants.



FATHER OTIS YOUNG



RUTH PRATS

Crux

Retired priest, pastoral assistant slain in Louisiana

(2-12-22) Police in Covington, Louisiana, USA, have confirmed the identities of two murder victims whose burned bodies were discovered last week: Father Otis Young, a retired pastor, and Ruth Prats, a parish associate.

A man who had recently been released from prison was arrested, driving Prats' car, and charged with the crimes. Police say that his choice of victims "appears random."

Father Young had been forced to curtail his activities after suffering a stroke. Prats had been driving him to and from engagements.

Former Anglican cleric withdraws request for Catholic ordination, to continue speaking out

(2-12-22) Dr. Gavin Ashenden, the former chaplain to Queen Elizabeth II who was received into the Catholic Church in 2017 has explained that he withdrew his request for ordination as a Catholic priest "when I was told that to move forward... would require being silenced."

The former Anglican cleric said that he felt an obligation to continue speaking out:

The Church in our day was surrounded by a deep, corrosive and dangerous intellectual and moral heresy, which I thought I understood and knew needed public repudiation. And the public platforms that were being given to me day after day allowed me to do just that.

He also observed that since he left the Church of England, "One of the surprising developments recently has been the number of Catholic priests who have been cancelled by their bishops."

Russia - Feed the hungry. Sprouts of Franciscan mercy in the freezing Russian winter

(2-12-22) "Bring a kilo". In Russian, "Prinesi kilogramm". This is the name again this year of the food collection promoted in Moscow by the Conventual Franciscans to help people who live in need in the capital and beyond.

Finding food for the needy is becoming a frequent regular commitment for the Conventual Franciscans in Moscow, which takes place at least twice a year, before Christmas and before Easter. Also this year, the pre-Christmas campaign began on November 28, the day after the first Sunday of Advent.

The "Prinesi kilogramm" initiative has been taking place for nine years, twice a year, and continues until Christmas. Those who join the collection are invited to bring at least 1 kg of long-life food to the Convent of the Friars Minor Conventual in Moscow. Part of the food collected remains in the capital, while the rest is sent to Kaluga, a city about 200 km south of Moscow, where there is another Franciscan convent.

Ghana - Ghana, so far spared from jihadist attacks, questions the threat of terrorism in the region

(2-12-22) "Dialogue has the potential to be a continuous stimulus for a greater understanding of the truth", said Fr. Lazarus Anondee, Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana (GCBC), on the occasion of the National Forum on Trending Conflict Issues (Sahel Peace Initiative), held in Accra. The forum, organized by the GCBC in collaboration with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), brought together key stakeholders in the country interested in finding ways to protect the country from violent extremism and terrorism.

Members of the Ghana Armed Forces, Prison Service, Immigration Service, Ghana Christian Council, political parties and traditional leaders among others attended the event.

During his speech, Colonel Dr. Tim Ba-Taa-Banah, Director of the National Counter Terrorism Fusion Center of the Ministry of National Security, said that although Ghana has not yet recorded any direct terrorist attacks, it is not immune to such attacks. He therefore urged Ghanaians to remain vigilant and report any suspicious acts to security agencies.

Pakistan - Government and courts crackdown on blasphemy through social media

(2-12-22) An anti-terrorism court in Peshawar has sentenced Sana Ullah, a Pakistani citizen living in the northern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to death for committing blasphemy on social media. The court sentenced him to 21 years in prison and a fine of 1.6 million rupees at the same time. While the fine and jail sentence will be immediately enforceable, the death sentence will need to be upheld by the Peshawar High Court.

According to the verdict, handed down on December 1, all witnesses for the prosecution agree, while the Sim card of the mobile phone in his name contained several blasphemous contents, shared by the man in a group on the "WhatsApp" chat. The complaint against the man was filed on August 4, 2021 and the defendant's arrest took place the following day, as per provisions of the law.

Haiti - Missionaries heartbroken: armed gangs also attack churches and hospitals

(2-12-22) "Every year something serious happens; this year, and the year is not over yet, there have been no earthquakes or cyclones but a unprecedented violence has hit the country, generating insecurity, fear, famine, hunger and despair and, so that nothing is missing, the cholera emergency has returned, killing mainly children". This is Fr Antonio Menegon, Camillian missionary, who is "heartbroken", due to the humanitarian disaster that has struck Haiti.

"Although no media is talking about it, it is a humanitarian catastrophe", he underlines. The armed gangs which govern the country are more and more aggressive and now manage everything. The prices of primary goods, such as food, fuel and medicines, have more than tripled; violent youth destroyed, looted and burned fuel depots as well as supermarkets, churches, Caritas food depots and other international humanitarian organizations. One hospital after another is closing for lack of diesel, electricity, food and medicine".



Costa Rica - The Bishops' Advent Message: "Reflecting on the Gift of Life"

(2-12-22) In its Advent message, the Episcopal Conference of Costa Rica invites "to reflect on the gift of life". "While some sections of society despise this gift and sacred right, we live in a time of grace that allows us to appreciate the most important gift we have ever been given: life" and refer to "a time of preparation to the feast of Christmas, which makes known to mankind the coming of the Son of God".

Korea's 'Black' Christmas tree highlights climate crisis

(2-12-22) Seoul Archdiocese in South Korea has installed a Christmas tree with charred branches and logs of trees from a recent forest fire to raise awareness of environmental issues and the climate crisis.

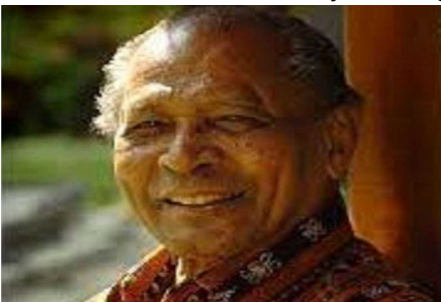
The Christmas tree was made with burnt logs and branches from the recent forest fire in Gangwon-do and lit up on Nov. 26, Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation (CPBC) reported on Nov. 29.

Catholic bishops thank Thai govt for supporting Christians

(2-12-22) Catholic Bishops in Thailand have met Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to thank him for the government's support for the church's humanitarian and spiritual activities in the Buddhist-majority Southeast Asian nation.

Cardinal Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovitvanit, Archbishop of Bangkok, led a delegation from the Catholic Bishops Conference of Thailand (CBCT) and paid a visit to the premier in the nation's capital on Nov. 29, MGR Online reported. The delegation specifically thanked the government for support during the various pan-Asian church gatherings including the 50th General Conference of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) held last month. "The Christian leaders in Asia who attended the meeting[s] were impressed with the government's warm welcome and openness to all religions in the country to co-exist peacefully amidst the diversity of religions and cultures," said the delegation during the meeting.

Another major event that occurred in the Thai Catholic Church was Pope Francis' historic visit to the country from Nov. 20-23, 2019. Earlier in August, the Thailand administration approved three Catholic Churches after a 93-year-long wait in a bid to foster religious harmony in the Buddhist-majority nation.



Indonesian Catholics seek 'hero' title for lay leader

(2-12-22) Catholics in Indonesia are fighting for the title of hero for Fransiskus Xaverius Seda, a lay Catholic figure who made great contributions to the country through his work as minister in several cabinets, founded a well-known Catholic university and is one of the key figures in the development of the local press. The effort was initiated by a committee involving Catholic religious experts and a number of Catholic universities.

Seda, who came from the predominantly Catholic island of Flores and who died in 2009 at 84, was known as a politician, minister, diplomat, presidential adviser, businessman, Church activist, university board member and founder of the economic faculty of Atma Jaya Catholic University in Jakarta.

Singapore PM hails gay sex legalization, marriage protection

(2-12-22) Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has hailed the nation's parliament for hitting a "major milestone" with new legislation to decriminalize same-sex and to protect traditional marriage. "It is a major milestone for Singapore. The outcome itself is significant. We are decriminalizing sex between men — a longstanding issue, and not just for gay Singaporeans," said Lee in his Facebook post on Nov. 29.

The premier said that he is "very happy" with parliament's approval for changes to two laws — the repeal of Section 377A in the British-colonial era Penal Code that criminalized gay sex and the constitutional amendment on the definition of marriage.

"At the same time, we are protecting the definition of marriage — as a union between a man and a woman — from constitutional challenge," Lee said and termed the decision as "balanced, wise steps forward," Channel News Asia (CNA) reported.

Earlier in August the Archdiocese of Singapore issued a statement reiterating its stand on the dignity of LGBTQ individuals and its call to keep the definition of the family intact.

Philippine law to protect religious freedom

(2-12-22) The Philippine Congress passed the Magna Carta of Religious Freedom Act on Dec. 1 which lawmakers say aims to protect every citizen's right to religious freedom.

The new law will guarantee the implementation of rules and regulations on how the state, including all government agencies, would respect the right of Filipinos to choose their religion.

"With this bill, Filipinos will be encouraged to pursue spiritual growth by affording them the freedom to conduct their lives in accordance with their faith or religious belief without the fear of persecution, threat, or punishment," lawmaker Eddie Villanueva said in a speech endorsing the law.

Asia Bibi seeks safety for Pakistan's blasphemy victims

(2-12-22) Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Catholic woman who escaped death for alleged blasphemy and now lives in Canada, has appealed for the protection of victims of blasphemy laws in her country.

In her first on-camera interview since she was acquitted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2018 before leaving the country, Bibi urged government agencies to "thoroughly" investigate blasphemy-related offenses.

"Protect the innocent instead of beating them in police stations. The innocent must be freed. Long sentences for something without proof are a great injustice in our country," she said in her Dec. 1 online interview. "The clerics don't understand Bible and Quran despite studying them. For God's sake, have mercy in your hearts. Pakistan is not for Muslims alone. I feel angry when good Muslims are targeted for sympathizing with poor religious minorities," Bibi added.

Bibi said that since she has no formal education, she is doing a menial job for survival. She also lamented that she faces many problems including the language barrier in her adoptive country. She lives in a rented house and regretted that she did not receive the royalties for her autobiography, "Free at Last," by French writer Anne-Isabelle Tollet. "I only received the airfare to France. They never contacted me again. People benefitted a lot from my name but I didn't get anything. Our community should have helped us. People think we are earning a lot after the asylum. The Canadian government only supported us for a year," she said.



3-12-22

Ethiopia - In Tigray, disarmament is ready, but subject to the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces from the region

(3-12-22) While efforts continue in Ethiopia to try to normalize the situation in Tigray after the signing of the peace accords on November 3, there are difficulties for a real disarmament of the parties in conflict.

The 'most problematic factor in the process of implementing the peace agreement' is the presence of Eritrean forces in Tigray. This is what the Tigray authorities told the African Union delegation.

Despite the humanitarian and political commitment, a likely threat to peace, according to Tigrinya testimonies, is the continued attacks by Eritrean troops against the civilian population.

According to the Tigray government's emergency coordination center, between November 17 and 23, 2022, Eritrean forces killed 111 people.

DR Congo - National mourning for the massacre in a village in the east of the country; Sunday march for peace convened by the Bishops

Three days of national mourning starting today, December 3, have been announced by Félix Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to commemorate the victims of the massacre in the village of Kishishe, in the territory of Rutshuru, 70 kilometers from Goma, capital of North Kivu, in the east of the country.

The government of Kinshasa accuses the M23 (March 23 Movement) rebels of having "cowardly

killed" at least 50 civilians in Kishishe on November 29. The M23 has denied having perpetrated the massacre.

The national mourning coincides with the procession called for Sunday, December 4, by the Bishops of the DRC in all the Congolese dioceses to draw everyone's attention to the deterioration of the security situation in the country in general and in the east in particular, and to put an end to "the balkanization of the DRC". In other words, that process of latent dismemberment of the country operated by armed groups supported from outside.

America - More than 7 million people forced to flee their countries in Latin America: a joint effort by Red Clamor and UNHCR is needed



(3-12-22) More than 7 million people are forcibly displaced and seeking asylum in Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Venezuela have seen a sharp increase due to, among other things, the influence of organized crime, outlaw groups and the economic effects of political systems. It is against the backdrop of these estimates provided by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) that the Latin American Meeting of Migrant Houses, which ends December 3, is taking place. Organized by "Red Clamor" (linked to CELAM) and the UNHCR, the meeting brings together the

heads of 23 migrant houses from 13 countries on the continent, who, among other objectives, intend to develop a global protocol for assistance to migrants and refugees in Church-run temporary houses in Latin America and the Caribbean, and share good practices in providing humanitarian assistance to migrants and refugees.

Pope: Inclusion of disabled people must not remain a slogan

(3-12-22) "Welcoming people with disabilities and responding to their needs is a duty of the civil and ecclesial communities," Pope Francis said during an audience on Saturday with a group of disabled people from Italy in the Vatican on the occasion of the annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD), which is celebrated on December 3.

Pope Francis expressed his wish that "belonging" and "inclusion" become "an objective of ordinary pastoral action" and not just empty words.

Pope: We are all part of the same vulnerable humanity

(3-12-22) In his message for the International Day of Persons With Disabilities, Pope Francis invited people to "be mindful of the sufferings of all those women and men with disabilities who live in the midst of war, or have been themselves disabled as a result of warfare." He called for special attention toward them, specifically their access to humanitarian aid, which should be "facilitated in every possible way."

Pope Francis noted how the Synod "can help us understand how in the Church – also with regard to the disabled – there can be no "us" and "them," but a single "us." A new awareness, founded "on the fact that we are all part of the same vulnerable humanity assumed and sanctified by Christ."

He insisted on the fact that nothing "can detract from our certainty that no disability temporary, acquired or permanent – can change the fact that we are all children of the one Father and enjoy the same dignity.

Pope: We must rediscover the true richness of Christmas

(3-12-22) Addressing the delegations from Sutrio, Rosello and Guatemala, who have gifted this year's tree and nativity scenes in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis drew attention to the true meaning of Christmas.

"To meet God we must reach Him where he is; we need to lower ourselves, to make ourselves small", like Jesus did by coming to birth in a stable.

The two crèches, installed in St. Peter's Square and in the Paul VI Audience Hall, were unveiled on 3 Dec. afternoon during the traditional Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony.

4-12-22

Pope at Angelus: With Jesus, we can always begin anew

Speaking to pilgrims gathered for the Angelus on the second Sunday of Advent, Pope Francis spoke about the role of John the Baptist as recounted in the Gospel in inviting everyone to conversion. He underscored the way of humility as essential in our lives, in recognizing our weaknesses and failings, and asking for the Lord's forgiveness. And with Jesus, we can always begin anew in returning to God and welcoming His boundless love.

When the Pharisees and Sadducees, known for their hypocrisy, approached John the Baptist, he would challenge them. Hypocrisy presents the greatest danger, the Pope said, because it can ruin even the most sacred realities.

"Advent is a moment of grace to take off our masks and line up with those who are humble, to be liberated from the presumption of the belief of being self-sufficient, to go to confess our sins and to welcome God's pardon, to ask forgiveness from those whom we have offended." Pope Francis reminded the faithful: "Jesus as the Saviour...comes for us just as we are, with our poverty, misery and failings, above all with our need to be raised up, forgiven and saved."

Prayer for Peace: Following the Angelus prayer, the Pope recalled that this Thursday 8 December we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and that we might entrust to her intercession our prayers for peace, especially for the suffering people of Ukraine.

