

CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

(CWLW)

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23-1-23



Realize the vision of *Populorum Progressio*, Pope urges

(23-1-23) Speaking on January 23 to members of an Italian group devoted to promoting world literacy, Pope Francis lamented that the message of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI in their social encyclicals of the 1960s “has *not* been received.”

In particular the Pope pointed to the teaching of *Populorum Progressio*: “Basic education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself. Lack of education is as serious as lack of food.”

Pope Francis encouraged his audience to continue their work of promoting literacy, saying that in doing so they are pursuing the vision of Pope Paul VI. “It is the dream of the Church, or better the dream of God, Who wants a world in which we can all live as brothers and sisters in full dignity.”

Ukraine’s top Catholic frowns on banning Orthodox church loyal to Moscow

(23-1-23) Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, has questioned legislation that would ban the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate).

Controversial Dominican to preach retreat before Synod of Bishops

(23-1-23) Father Timothy Radcliffe, OP, whose support for homosexuals has made him a focal point of controversy, has been chosen to lead a three-day retreat for bishops participating in the October 2023 meeting of the Synod of Bishops. Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, the relator general of the Synod, announced the choice of Father Radcliffe, the former master-general of the Dominican order. The appointment of Father Radcliffe represents a dramatic change in the Vatican’s attitude toward the Dominican preacher. In 2011, the Vatican vetoed the selection of Father Radcliffe as keynote speaker for an assembly of Caritas International, the consortium of Catholic charitable agencies.

Peru’s bishops offer mediation as political crisis escalates

(23-1-23) Following another weekend of violence in the Peruvian capital of Lima, the country’s Catholic bishops have offered to mediate the spiralling political and social conflict.

In a Jan.20 tweet, Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos of Trujillo, president of the Peruvian Bishops Conference, said that the bishops “see with much pain the harsh political and social confrontation in our country, which has left more than 50 dead...This requires us to resolutely change the course: We want peace!” he said

In a statement the same day, the bishops offered themselves to help mediate and “build bridges of encounter” amid the turmoil, saying it is the Church’s duty to be a sign of solidarity “with all of humanity and with its history.” “Enough promoting polarizations! Let’s stop hurting each other! No more fighting! This situation requires dialogue, listening, and decision,” they said, saying it is time for authorities and political actors to “commit themselves responsibly” to finding a common and agreed-upon path out of the current crisis. Pope Francis on Sunday at the Angelus prayer called for special prayers for peace in Peru.

Attacks against Catholic churches in US approach 300 incidents since May 2020: report

(23-1-23) The US Conference of Catholic Bishops has documented 193 acts of vandalism, arson, and other destruction at parishes and other Catholic sites in the United States since May 2020.

A tracker from CatholicVote.org lists additional attacks.

100,000 pro-life Americans march for life in Washington

(23-1-23) This January marked the 50th year since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on *Roe* and forced states to legalize the killing of unborn babies in abortions. In June, however, the high court reversed its infamous decision and began allowing states to protect unborn babies' lives again.

Reflecting on this year's historic march, Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, said the pro-life movement has huge new opportunities to protect innocent human lives through education and legislation.

"As tens of thousands march today to remember *Roe* and the loss of life since 1973, we praise the work of pro-life people who give of their time, energy and finances to help women facing an unexpected pregnancy. Those efforts have saved millions of lives and, post-*Dobbs*, will save millions more," Tobias said.

As happens every year, people, estimated to be 100,000, from all across the country traveled to Washington, D.C. for the March for Life. Currently, 14 states protect unborn babies by limiting or banning abortions, and more are expected to do so this year. Pro-life leaders estimate these laws already have saved tens of thousands of unborn babies' lives.



Church of England apologizes for treatment of LGBTQ people

(23-1-23) "We want to apologize for the ways in which the Church of England has treated LGBTQI+ people – both those who worship in our churches and those who do not," said the leaders of the ecclesial community founded by King Henry VIII. "The occasions on which you have received a hostile and homophobic response in our churches are shameful, and for this we repent."

The statement follows a decision to permit same-sex blessings, but not same-sex marriage.

New York City becomes first US city to offer free abortion pills at sexual health clinics

(23-1-23) New York City is now offering free abortion pills at public clinics, the first city in the country to do so. The free pills will be available at four public clinics across the city, Mayor Eric Adams announced on 17 Jan. Tuesday, just days before the 50th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that granted a constitutional right to abortion. The next day, a Bronx clinic became the first to offer the pills, and they will be available at clinics in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens by the end of the year.

Niger - Migrants: the story of those who did not make it and cross the Sahel again to return home

Niger, since the 1990s, has been an important transit area for migration from West and Central Africa to Libya and Algeria and in some cases to Europe. All must face the desert before reaching their destination in North African countries or before facing the Mediterranean to try to reach Europe.

Drama within drama are the expulsions to Niger by border States. For example, from January to May 2022, Algeria sent 14,196 migrants back to Niger.

Father Mauro Armanino, a missionary of the Society of African Missions (SMA) based in Niamey, collected testimonies of migrants who failed in their attempts to migrate to find a better life and are now in Niger waiting to return home.

South Korea - Mission with the deaf, thanks to sign language videos

(23-1-23) The proclamation of the Word of God and catechesis to deaf children and adults makes use of new media tools such as videos, in which sign language is used: this is the initiative of the "Korean



Catholic Pastoral Research Institute", which has produced and distributed to communities, parishes, associations and Catholic schools the sign language version of "Catholic Video Doctrine," filmed catechesis that can and are used in pastoral care with the deaf throughout the country.

The "Korean Catholic Pastoral Research Institute," acting under the auspices of the Bishops' Conference of Korea, for this specific work commissioned the "Busan Catholic Mission for the Deaf," led by Father Cho Jo-hee, to translate and produce the videos in sign language. A number of deaf people and

volunteers participated in sign language interpretation, completing the deaf version of the 47 episodes of the "Catholic Video Doctrine," already used as an auxiliary textbook for evangelization and catechesis in all dioceses across the nation. The videos are equipped with subtitles and graphics, and were produced jointly with the "Catholic Peace Broadcasting" organization, which dealt with video shooting, graphic work, editing and technical supervision.

The Bishops' Conference of Korea says: the goal is to give the deaf the opportunity to listen to the Word of God and to reflect on it, with the presentation of the fundamental contents of the Christian faith.

The Korean Catholic Church also has the first deaf priest in Asia, Father Min Seo Park, who was ordained a priest in Seoul in 2007. After 14 years of commitment in Seoul, in pastoral work and apostolate with the deaf, Father Park is now a missionary in Landover Hills, Maryland (USA), where he continues in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel with the deaf.

Indian Church hails menstrual leave for girl students

(23-1-23) Christian leaders have hailed the move on Jan.19 by a communist-led state government in India to introduce menstrual leave for female students in government-run higher education institutions. They, however, were skeptical of the state government's plan to provide 60 days maternity leave to students aged 18 and above in southern Kerala state.

"No doubt, the government's decision to grant menstrual leave to college students is a highly appreciable move," said Father Jacob G Palakkappilly, spokesperson of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC), the regional bishops' forum.

Fire at South Korea's last slum displaces hundreds

(23-1-23) A deadly fire ripped through the last remaining slum in the Gangnam district of the South Korean capital Seoul leaving at least 60 homes destroyed and about 500 displaced. The fire broke out at the slum in the Guryong area, known as "a symbol of inequality" in Asia's fourth-largest economy, on Jan. 20. About 900 rescuers including firefighters and police used water cannons and helicopters to scramble in frantic efforts to douse the fire and successfully evacuated 500 residents, reported *Yonhap* news agency. No casualty was reported.

The residents described waking to the early morning fire as "chaotic."

Ukrainian deminers complete training in Cambodia

(23-1-23) Ukrainian soldiers have started returning home from Cambodia, after completing a demining training course in the Southeast Asian nation. Some 15 Ukrainian soldiers will put into use the latest Advanced Landmine Imaging System (ALIS) techniques they learned in Cambodia to remove the scourge amid Russia's 11-month-long invasion of its East European neighbour.

Cambodia remains among the world's most mined nations and is littered with explosive remnants of war (ERW) — the legacy of 30 years of conflict that ended in 1998.

India blocks BBC documentary on PM Modi

(23-1-23) India's government said it has blocked videos and tweets sharing links to a BBC documentary about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's role during deadly 2002 sectarian riots, calling it "hostile propaganda and anti-India garbage".

The British broadcaster's programme alleges that the Hindu nationalist Modi, premier of Gujarat state at the time, ordered police to turn a blind eye to the orgy of violence there that left at least 1,000 people dead, most of them minority Muslims. Kanchan Gupta, an adviser to the government, tweeted on 21 Jan. that the Indian government used emergency powers under IT rules to block the documentary and its clips from being shared on social media.

24-1-23

In communications, put God and neighbour first, Pope urges

(24-1-23) "Sometimes friendly conversations can open a breach in the most hardened of hearts," Pope Francis writes in his message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications.

In his message the Pope focuses on the theme of "speaking with the heart." He cites the example of St. Francis de Sales—whose feast the Church celebrates on January 24—who served as Bishop of Geneva during a time of heated conflict with Calvinists, yet maintained the ability for friendly conversation that touched hearts and won souls.

"We have a pressing need in the Church for communication that kindles hearts, that is balm on wounds and shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters," the Pope writes. He adds that in a world torn by conflict, there is an urgent need for "a form of communication that is not hostile," to help restore a culture of peace.

Vatican weighs in on German plan for governing 'council' of laity and bishops

(24-1-23) In a German-language letter, three ranking Vatican cardinals told the German bishops that they "are not empowered to create a governing or decision-making synodal assembly" made up of clergy and laity, the Pillar reported.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin (the Holy See's Secretary of State), Cardinal Luis Ladaria Ferrer (Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith), and Cardinal Marc Ouellet (Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops) stated that Pope Francis had approved their letter to Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg, president of the bishops' conference, *in forma specifica* (in its specific form).

Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg said that the German bishops would discuss the Vatican directive "in the near future." But he indicated that he did not see the Vatican statement as a rejection of the German plan. He said that "we still think much more intensively about the forms and possibilities of synodal consultation."

'Leave no one behind': papal message to Vatican symposium on Hansen's Disease

(24-1-23) Pope Francis has written a message to participants in the Second International Symposium on Hansen's Disease (leprosy), organized by the by the Sasakawa Leprosy Initiative, the Raoul Follereau Foundation, and the Italian association Amici di Raoul Follereau, with the collaboration of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Cardinal Hollerich: conflict can be healthy for Church

(24-1-23) Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, who will be the relator general for the Synod on Synodality, has said that Synod gathering should not divide the Church, although there will be differing opinions expressed.

"That there are different opinions in the Catholic Church is quite normal," the cardinal said. The Synod, he said, "brings people together where you have to listen to each other."



Vatican backs 'Catholic' identity of university, Dutch bishops do not

(24-1-23) The Vatican has said that Radboud University in Nijmegen should be considered a Catholic institution—although the bishops of the Netherlands declared in 2019 that the university could no longer describe itself as Catholic. After years of tension, and a series of conflicts over academic and administrative appointments, the Dutch hierarchy stripped Radboud of its “Catholic” designation after the university opened a “transgender care” facility at its medical center. Nevertheless the Vatican has informed the Dutch bishops that—while accepting the bishops’ decision—the Vatican will continue to treat Radboud as a Catholic university.

Ethiopia - Timkat, one of the holiest days in the Ethiopian Orthodox calendar

(24-1-23) The celebrations of the Orthodox Epiphany, locally known as Timkat, began on Wednesday afternoon, January 19. Following tradition, worshipers set out on Lake Ziway in canoes, motorboats and kayaks made from papyrus stalks. In turn, the priests set out from monasteries located on five promontories of the lake, flanked by clergy, dressed in red, blue, white and gold. The lake is 120 kilometers south of Addis Ababa and is the centre of the annual celebrations of the baptism of Christ, one of the holiest days in the Ethiopian Orthodox calendar. Carrying tabots, replicas of the Covenant tablets on which Christians believe the Ten Commandments given to Moses were engraved, the priests aboard boats laden with crosses and other icons arrived at the centre of Lake Ziway where, surrounded by faithful they performed the sprinkling rites. The devotees, themselves dressed in white from head to toe, gathered in all available boats, including traditional ones, known as tankwa, made from the papyrus plant. Once the procession returned to the shore of the lake, also called Tembel, the celebration began with singing, drums, bells and horns, before an all-night prayer vigil. The next day, Thursday, January 20, the priests returned to the lake to bless the water and the faithful. Some chose to dive directly into the lake, while the children played in the shallows.

Malaysia - Catechesis week: The focus is on passing on the faith in families



(24-1-23) The renewal of the Church and the transmission of the faith in Catholic families are the focus of the 2023 Catechetical Week, celebrated in the Catholic communities and culminating in "Catechetical Sunday" on January 29, 2023. The Week, celebrated in all dioceses, was organized and implemented by the Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC), chaired by Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim of Kuala Lumpur. The Archbishop thanked parish priests, coordinators and catechists and all those involved in catechesis at different levels. And he expresses a special thought for parents: "Parents

have the responsibility to raise their children in the faith. That is why the Church calls parents to be their children's teachers of religion. In fact, the Church always has the family as the foundation of the ministry of catechesis", stressed the Archbishop.

In the message, the Archbishop also deals with key questions: why, despite all efforts, do many young people not go to the sacraments and to the parishes? Why are so few interested in the life of faith? One wonders why young people, having gone through the catechism in preparation for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation, often no longer participate in community life and sometimes give up the life of faith. In this context, the Archbishop stressed the importance of "building an intimate relationship with the Lord" and instilling in young people a genuine sense of communion and fraternity, centered on love for God.

"We all need to work together to support families and young people in living their faith", says the Archbishop.

The Catechetical Commission intends to publish materials specifically for parents, which will not only emphasize the importance of family catechesis, but will also help parents on their journey of proclamation and formation of faith with their children, giving form and substance to family spirituality.

The text is intended to give parents practical tools and ideas for cultivating the Catholic faith in the family, starting with prayer.

Dominican Republic - The synodal path is not just "walking together", but with Jesus, in Jesus, from Jesus and toward Jesus

(24-1-23) The Dominican Bishops' Conference (DBC) dedicates its annual pastoral letter to the theme "Synodality, the path of ecclesial identity", pointing out individualism as the root of many of the ills of society that destroy life, and the excessive ambition of wealth leads to the disproportionate exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of the environment.

The document was published on the solemnity of Our Lady of Altigracia, the Patron Mother of the Dominican people, on January 21, 2023. Speaking of "Synodal Spirituality", the Bishops say: Synodal spirituality requires a profound change of mentality, at a personal, community and structural level, a deep conversion process, which makes us abandon the past to go out to meet others and walk with them. "This Christian synodal path is a very particular walk, with Jesus, through Jesus, in Jesus, from Jesus and towards Jesus."

The Bishops urge to live synodality in the celebration of the sacraments and the liturgy, as well as in discernment, "which cannot be a solitary process", and reaffirm the need for pastoral conversion in order to be a synodal Church, which, as such, be a sign of fraternity among nations marked by divisions and conflicts of interests.

Concern in Goa as Hindu group storms Catholic college

(24-1-23) Church leaders in Goa, a former Portuguese colony in western India, have expressed concern over the ruling pro-Hindu party's push to infiltrate Catholic educational institutions.

"Our Catholic educational institutions are getting more and more communalized," with the backing of the ruling pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the state and at federal level, says Jesuit Father Anthony Da Silva, director of Xavier Centre of Historical Research in Goa. The aim is to push forward the pro-Hindu ideology on Christian educational campuses, the Jesuit priest alleged.

Father Da Silva was particularly referring to a recent incident in which some members of BJP's student wing created tension in the Church-run St. Xavier's College by shouting slogans and disrupting classes. The college comes under the archdiocese of Goa and Daman.

The members of ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad or All Indian Students Forum) were protesting the college authorities' refusal to induct the new Student Council in the college after the pro-Hindu students' wing won the council elections held in December for the academic year 2022-23.

College principal Blanche Mascarenhas refused to meet the unruly protesters and the management asked them to disperse. But protesters refused, forcing the management to call the police.

The protestors also refused to follow police directions, and the college management sought the help of the deputy collector to bring the situation under control, Father Salema said in a statement.

More than 2,000 students currently study in the college, set up in 1963, two years after the 450-year Portuguese rule ended in Goa.

War with China not an option, Taiwan tells Pope Francis

(24-1-23) A war between Taiwan and China is not an option and it is more important to develop cross-strait relations, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said in a letter to Pope Francis.

President Tsai sent the letter to the pope on Jan. 23, in response to the pontiff's message on the 56th World Day of Peace on Jan. 1, according to a press note on the Taiwanese President's website.

President Tsai stressed bilateral dialogue to bring peace and stability to the region. "In my 2022 National Day address, I underscored that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait are the basis for the development of cross-strait relations," the letter read.



Tsai stated in her letter that absolutely not an option,” resolve to end the conflict with means. “Only by respecting the Taiwanese people to our and freedom, can there be a constructive interaction across added.



“armed confrontation is underlining Taiwan’s China through peaceful commitment of the sovereignty, democracy, foundation for resuming the Taiwan Strait,” Tsai

“We will collaborate with the Holy environmental projects, which agriculture, solar energy systems, and electric vehicles,” the letter read. The year 2022 marked the 80th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Taiwan and the Holy See. The Vatican is the only state in Europe that maintains full diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

See on numerous include promoting smart

Indian state's plan to teach Hindu texts in schools criticized

(24-1-23) Church leaders and opposition party members have criticized the move by the head of a central Indian state to introduce the teaching of Hindu scriptures in government schools.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced on Jan. 23 that Hindu religious texts such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagwad Gita will be taught to impart moral values to students in government schools.

“Ancient epics are invaluable holy texts and they help in building the moral character of human beings,” said Chouhan, a leader of the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), according to a report in *The Hindu* daily. His opponents from Congress said the move aims to woo Hindu voters with state elections expected later this year.

Father Maria Stephan, public relations officer of the Catholic Church in the state, said there was nothing wrong in teaching religious scriptures, but then all major religions must be taught.

“It is nothing but a political move to garner radical Hindu vote for his [Chouhan’s] party (in the upcoming state election),” Jerry Paul, state secretary of the opposition Congress party said.

Indian Christians demand halt to police survey

(24-1-23) A Christian group in northeast India's Assam state has demanded a halt to a clandestine survey by police to gather details on the community, their churches, other institutions, and so-called religious conversion activities.

The United Christian Forum (UCF) in Golaghat district wrote to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Jan. 20 urging him to issue a directive to the district’s police to stop harassing Christians.

Police denied undertaking any such survey with Dipak Tamuly, deputy superintendent of police, Golaghat district, telling local media that “no survey of Christians or their churches is underway.”

The UCF petition signed by its president, Jiden Aind, and secretary, Leader Toppo, alleged that some police officers were involved in collecting information about churches, their leaders and conversion activities in the district. The information has been collected since Jan. 2 through personal visits, or through messages sent on cell phones, which has left Christians in Golaghat “confused and disturbed,” they added. “Therefore, we humbly request you to kindly intervene and address our grievances. As a peace-loving and serving community we ask you to abide by the constitutional guarantees,” they said in the petition to the chief minister.

Local media carried reports saying police were also harassing Church leaders in Majuli, an island in the Brahmaputra River, seeking information on “Church formations” and “religious conversions.”

Allen Brooks, the spokesman of the Assam Christian Forum, said that this sort of harassment has been reported across the state, especially in rural areas. “This was despite an assurance given to us by the chief minister on Dec. 23 last year that his government is against such intimidation,” he told UCA News. Brooks said the UCF petition sent to the chief minister is a manifestation of the pain and anguish felt by the state's Christian community.

Chief Minister Sarma who belongs to the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party said his administration did not want any survey of Christian activities. "I completely dissociate myself from the [police] circular," Sarma told reporters when asked about the circular, issued by the police department in Assam on Dec. 16 which required police across all districts in the state to complete the survey by Dec. 22.

Catholic charity empowers rural women in Pakistan

(24-1-23) The Association for Women's Awareness and Rural Development (AWARD), a non-government organization (NGO) based in Faisalabad helps low-income women from disadvantaged rural communities to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Some entrepreneurs who run a successful business along with record keeping, regular attendance at group meetings and training programmes are shortlisted for additional support of 25,000 rupees, which is used to develop their enterprises further.

The non-profit organization which began in 1994 is presently managing 22 women's entrepreneurship groups in Punjab province, most of them for uneducated rural women. 4,500 of the organization's beneficiaries are spread over 100 villages across Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. They are helped in starting small ventures like growing vegetables, livestock care, poultry farming, tailoring units, grocery shops, beauty parlors and mobile repair.

AWARD also provides vocational training for girl dropouts from schools and some 7,000 have benefited so far from its 130 vocational training centres. It also organizes training sessions in micro-credit, business development and marketing of products.

25-1-23

Pope Francis prepares to travel to strife-torn DR Congo and South Sudan

(25-1-23) Matteo Bruni, the director of the Holy See Press Office, briefed reporters on January 24 about the Pope's upcoming apostolic journey to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

The Vatican also released statistics on the Church in the two countries. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, a nation of 105.2 million, is 49.6% Catholic; there are 1,637 parishes, 6,162 priests, 10,525 professed women religious, and 4,123 major seminarians. South Sudan, a nation of 13.8 million, is 52.4% Catholic; there are 124 parishes, 300 priests, 218 professed women religious, and 189 major seminarians.

Papal message to Havana conference, delegate for John Paul II visit 25th anniversary

(25-1-23) Pope Francis has sent a Spanish-language message to the 5th International Conference for World Balance, an event taking place in Havana. The event is devoted to José Martí (1853-1895), the Cuban patriot and writer.

The Pope's message, dated January 20, was released on January 24.

Meanwhile, Pope Francis has sent Cardinal Beniamino Stella, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, as his envoy to Cuba to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Pope St. John Paul II's apostolic journey to Cuba.

Closeness to the Lord fires missionary spirit, Pope writes

(25-1-23) In his message for World Mission Day, Pope Francis says: "In missionary activity, the Word of God illumines and transforms hearts."

In his message the Pontiff points to the way Jesus brought understanding and joy to the "confused and dismayed" disciples he met on the road to Emmaus. His presence enabled them to understand



the message of the Scriptures and the reality of the Resurrection. As a result, their hearts were on fire and they “set out in haste” to bring the good news to other believers.

Pope encourages inter-faith solidarity in Ukraine

(25-1-23) Meeting on January 25 an inter-faith group from Ukraine, Pope Francis set aside his prepared text to say that their work is “not so much about Jewish Ukraine, Christian Ukraine, Orthodox Ukraine, Catholic Ukraine, Islamic Ukraine..., no, it is about Ukraine, mother’ Ukraine, and all together!”

Jordanian, Israeli leaders discuss access to holy places

(25-1-23) King Abdullah of Jordan met on January 24 with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to talk about access to the religious shrines of the Holy Land.

The talks—the first such meeting since 2018—come amid mounting tensions over confrontations at the al-Aqsa mosque, located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.



Nigeria - The Nigerian Bishops' Conference: 'Published figures of priests killed or abducted are incorrect'

(25-1-23)"According to the information we have, the data is not entirely correct". Thus Father Zacharia Nyantiso Aya Samjumi, secretary general of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), when questioned by Fides, denies what was incorrectly reported by a publication ("Sahara Reports") according to which 145 Catholic priests were killed in Nigeria in 2022.

In reality, this figure results from an incorrect reading data from a report by Nigerian intelligence firm SB Morgen Intelligence, SBM, released on January 23, that 39 Catholic priests were killed in 2022 while another 30 were kidnapped last year.

The report also stated that 145 attacks on Catholic priests were recorded in 2022.

The intelligence report goes into great lengths in rattling off figures on attacks and alleged murders of Catholic priests in different areas of Nigeria, crimes which were perpetrated by bandits, Fulani herdsmen, and Biafra Independents (IPOB).

SBM Intelligence is an organization that researches, collects and analyzes data on events in Nigeria.

Ethiopia - The slow peace process in Tigray: still violence and too many restrictions for humanitarian aid

(25-1-23) The slow implementation of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), signed in Pretoria on November 2, 2022, continues to fuel concern over the continued violation of human rights in the northern region of the country.

An open letter addressed to the members of the African Union is added to the rumors concerning this still very serious situation. Released by local sources, the note denounces executions of civilians, abductions of young Tigrayans, sieges, looting and destruction of property.

Almost three months have passed and the main promises contained in the agreement still seem to be on stand-by. Eritrean and Amhara forces, which retain control of most areas of Tigray, continue to claim civilian casualties and loot what remains.

Regarding access to humanitarian aid, Tigrayans in need have received only two months of rations in the past 13 months. People living in villages far from main roads, that is the majority, are still inaccessible because distribution is mainly limited to residents or those arriving in settlements adjacent to main roads. Many of the humanitarian agencies, including those of the UN and NGOs operating in the territory, are unable to cross areas held by armed groups.

Peru - Curfew in Puno extended: bishops call for immediate solution

(25-1-23) By decree, the Peruvian Government has extended the curfew in the Puno region by ten days, which will be in effect from January 25, from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Concerned about the acts of violence during the protests in the south of the country and about the suffering of the population, the bishops of the Peruvian highlands are now making a joint appeal to the members of the congress "so that they can find an immediate solution to the demands of our brothers and sisters, thereby preventing more serious events that could result in loss of life, injury, and attacks on public and private property."

Indonesia - Indian Jesuit Father has been living in Sumatra for 50 years: a life marked by devotion to Mary and love of God

(25-1-23) On the Indonesian island of Sumatra, inhabited mainly by indigenous groups and where traditionalist Islam is widespread, there lives a missionary who has become a well-known and respected personality in Medan, the capital of the province of North Sumatra: he is Indian Jesuit Father James Bharataputra, who is known for the construction of the Marian shrine "Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni" in Medan.



84-year-old Father James from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, now an Indonesian citizen with an added name Bhartapura, has been active in Medan for 50 years.

In the Indonesian Church, Father James is known as the founder, initiator and still Rector of the Marian Shrine "Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni" in Medan. The shrine was the culmination of his missionary journey: realizing that the population of Medan lacked adequate education, the priest first started an educational project and rebuilt a primary school. Then, he says, "I felt that a shrine would attract many pilgrims from all walks of life and help them to encounter God. At the same time, a shrine reminds pilgrims that they are all children of the one God. It teaches them to respect and love one another as brothers and sisters because they are all children of the same Heavenly Father". And so, he built the church in honour of Our Lady of Vailankanni, which is a famous Marian Shrine in the Tamil speaking area of India. Designed by him in a unique style it has a community hall with a Church in the upper floor with paintings that teach the Sacraments and the meaning of the Mass.

As Fr. Sindhunata, an Indonesian Jesuit writes: "The shrine is a place where heaven and earth meet, where the divine and the human embrace, where God meets His people, regardless of ethnicity, creed or language."

Hepatitis grips Christian colony in Pakistan

(25-1-23) Youhanabad is the largest squatter settlement of 150,000 poor Christians in Lahore, Pakistan, whose residents are very badly affected by water-borne diseases like hepatitis, jaundice, loss of appetite and abdominal discomfort. While most of the men are factory workers, the women are mostly house maids in this 'kacchi abadi' or squatter population. Their water needs are fulfilled through two tube wells managed by the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) set up by the Lahore Development Authority. Exposed constantly to chemical substances and contaminated water the population becomes an easy target to afore-mentioned diseases, even causing deaths, thanks to a layer of black sludge settled at the bottom of the plastic tubs in the bathroom. They cannot afford to have the water filtered.

There are no health centers, children's parks, or vocational centers in the locality.

Despite repeated complaints, the WASA workers refuse to do anything except clean the sewers with a vacuum laden on a truck. WASA takes care of maintaining the main line but the network of user connections is left unattended. When government allots money to rectify the problem, it is spent on resurfacing the main streets and bylanes.

As a precaution, the parish house, thanks to Father Akram Javed, parish priest of St. John's Church, has started serving only homemade meals and parishioners are reminded daily after morning Mass to equip their school-going children with water bottles and avoid street food.

Bangladesh court recognizes mother as guardian

(25-1-23) Child rights activists have welcomed an order from the Bangladesh Supreme Court allowing children to mention the name of their mother or any legal guardian on school and government documents in absence of a father.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (women's council) General Secretary Maleka Banu said that children without legal fathers can now enjoy their basic right to education.

"It is now safe to say that children like the children of sex workers, whose fathers are unknown, can fill the school form with their mothers' names," Banu said. The move is to ensure the education of all.



Indian Left party demands action on anti-Christian attacks

(25-1-23) The attack on Christians in central India is part of a political agenda and not linked to religious conversion, says a communist party delegation after visiting the violence-hit areas of Chhattisgarh state and meeting victims of the violence, besides police and district officials.

"The propaganda of forcible conversions is not borne out by facts. According to officials, there is not a single case of forcible conversion reported," the delegation of the Communist Party of

India-Maxist (CPI-M) stated in a memorandum to the state's Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Not a single case of forcible religious conversion is reported in the central state, where Hindu nationalist mobs are using it as a handle to unleash violence against tribal Christians, the delegation said. Contrary to government claims, there were many forced to seek accommodation in the houses of their relatives or seek shelter inside churches, the delegation said.

The memorandum said that there clearly seemed "a political agenda behind these attacks, given the schedule for elections to the state assembly later this year." The CPI-M delegation accused leaders of the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party of instigating the mobs and perpetrating heinous acts of violence against Christians in Chhattisgarh. They told Chief Minister Baghel to "take the required steps to address the issues" afflicting the minority community.

26-1-23

Cardinal Maradiaga resigns—but remains in key Vatican post?

(26-1-23) Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Cardinal Oscar Maradiaga as Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, one of his closest allies.

But the Vatican announcement of that resignation gives no indication that the Honduran cardinal will step down from his post as chairman of the Council of Cardinals.

At the age of 80, Cardinal Maradiaga is five years past the point at which bishops and officials of the Roman Curia are required to submit their resignations, under the terms of rules established by Pope Francis in 2018. The Pope is not required to accept a prelate's resignation, however, and Pope Francis chose to leave Cardinal Maradiaga in office as head of the Tegucigalpa archdiocese.

Pope appoints longtime diplomat to lead Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy

(26-1-23) Pope Francis has appointed Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio (70), a longtime apostolic nuncio, to lead the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, where priests are trained to become Vatican diplomats.

Ordained a priest of the Diocese of Aversa (Italy) in 1976, Archbishop Pennacchio entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1979. He was the apostolic nuncio in Rwanda (1998-2003), Singapore and Cambodia (2003-2010), India and Nepal (2010-2016), and Poland (2016-2023), among other positions.

Papal condolences for Monterey Park shooting

(26-1-23) Eleven people were murdered and nine were injured during the Monterey Park shooting in California.

"His Holiness joins the entire community in commending the souls of those who died to almighty God's loving mercy, and he implores the divine gifts of healing and consolation upon the injured and bereaved," Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's Secretary of State, said in a telegram of condolence.

Peruvian curfew extended; bishops call for immediate solution

(26-1-23) "Nearly seven weeks after Dina Boluarte ascended to Peru's presidency in the wake of her predecessor Pedro Castillo's chaotic removal, the protests that have roiled the country's south have metastasized, spreading to the capital Lima where they have met fierce repression," Al Jazeera reported.

Peruvian bishops called on lawmakers to "find an immediate solution to the demands of our brothers and sisters, thereby preventing more serious events that could result in loss of life, injury, and attacks on public and private property."

Patriarch Pizzaballa: Christians must offer word of 'hope and truth' in Holy Land conflicts

(26-1-23) "We all are involved in a conflict that wears down the lives of our faithful, who are awaiting from us a word of hope, of consolation, but also of truth," the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem preached in a homily for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

"A truly difficult and never definitive discernment is required here," he continued. "Taking a stand, as we are often asked, however, cannot mean engaging in confrontation, but must always translate into words and actions on behalf of those who suffer and weep."

RD Congo - In the east of the country: postulants of the Comboni missionaries attacked by rebels

(26-1-23) in the province of North Kivu, Mai-Mai rebels in North Kivu attempted to assassinate on Sunday Jan.22 a group of postulants from the Comboni Missionaries.

Fortunately, no one was killed in the attack.

"The rebels attacked the vehicle in which the four postulants were returning from a camp with their formator, Brother Jacques Eluma. They attackers shot at the vehicle without hesitation", reported Father Léonard Ndjadi Ndjate, Provincial Superior of the Comboni Missionaries. The only one injured was taken to the hospital

"This is a barbaric and criminal attack against innocent people," he said. "We regret the inability of the security forces to protect the people in the East." The situation in this part of Congo remains tense. Numerous rebel groups are active in the region. and there is tension between the Democratic Republic and Rwanda. Pope Francis will travel to the country on January 31, but for security reasons will not travel to eastern Congo.



China - Grief not removed and hope cherished. Letters and gestures of communion in the Chinese Catholic community at the beginning of the "Year of the Rabbit"

(26-1-23) The Chinese New Year – the year of the Rabbit - celebrations continue. But loved ones begin to say goodbye, and slowly people begin to return to their ordinary occupations. For many, in recent weeks, moments of joy and forgetfulness have mingled with worried thoughts about what happened during the last pandemic outbreak, and the painful memory of the many elderly people swept away by Covid-19. In many cities, the best-selling flowers on holidays were chrysanthemums, the flowers for the dead.

In the Chinese Catholic communities scattered throughout the country, the simplest gestures of faith have kept the memory of so many awake and alive before reality, preserving them from the social

mechanisms of artificial removal of grief. The dead were commemorated in the Masses, and the faith of the communities did not hide but embraced the physical and spiritual sufferings experienced by the Chinese people over the past three years.



Pakistan - Forced religious conversion: may the government accept the appeal submitted to the UN

(26-1-23) Christian communities, Hindus, and civil society organizations in Pakistan have welcomed the recent statement submitted to the UN Human Rights Council on the phenomenon of abduction, forced religious conversion and forced marriage of girls belonging to religious minorities, especially Christians and Hindus. In an appeal presented in Geneva on January 16, a group of independent experts and special rapporteurs, including the UN

Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, "expressed their concern over the increasing cases of forced religious conversion of underage girls and young women belonging to religious minorities" in Pakistan, calling for "immediate measures to address these cases and justice for the victims."

The group noted the increase in cases of abductions of girls forced to marry and convert to Islam in the country and -reporting this before the Human Rights Council - cited reports of the involvement of religious authorities as well as the complicity of the security forces and the judiciary. Pakistani courts, in fact, often approve such practices by accepting "fraudulent evidence."

Colombia - Resumption of peace talks in a climate of hope, also with the support of OHCHR

(26-1-23) "In my meeting with President Gustavo Petro, I welcomed his government's new 'total peace' policy, including the commitment to fully implement the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC-EP. I also appreciated the resumption of talks with the National Liberation Army (ELN). The government can count on the specific expertise of my office to accompany the negotiations and advise on human rights issues, including victims' rights". These are the words of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Volker Türk, delivered on 25 Jan. evening at a press conference at the conclusion of his two-day official visit to Colombia, during which he signed a new agreement for his office's presence in Colombia until 2032.

27-1-23

Being homosexual is not a crime: Pope

(27-1-23) Pope Francis has condemned the criminalisation of homosexuality and backed the repeal of such legislation in countries where it exists, saying that the Catholic Church must work towards an end to what he described as "unjust" laws.

"Being homosexual is not a crime," he said in an interview with the Associated Press released on 25 Jan. "It's not a crime. Yes, but it's a sin. Fine, but first let's distinguish between a sin and a crime." Francis said that bishops in countries that support criminalising homosexuality "have to have a process of conversion," and apply "tenderness, please, as God has for each one of us."

More than 60 countries and jurisdictions criminalise consensual same-sex sexual activity, with 11 allowing for the death penalty for violating such laws.

In the new interview, the Pope referred to the official Catechism of the Catholic Church, which says gay people should not be marginalised or excluded from society. Since the start of his papacy, Francis has walked a tightrope on LGBTQ issues, repeatedly saying that the Church should offer greater welcome to gay people, while at the same time approving a 2021 Vatican decree forbidding priests from blessing gay couples.

'Admonishment and change': Pope concludes Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

(27-1-23) Pope Francis concluded the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with the celebration of Vespers on the January 25 at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls (video, booklet).

“The theme of this Week of Prayer was chosen by a group of Christians from Minnesota, conscious of the injustices perpetrated in the past against native peoples and in our own day against African-Americans,” the Pope preached.

“Before the various forms of contempt and racism, before indifference, lack of understanding and sacrilegious violence, the word of God admonishes us: ‘learn to do good, seek justice’ (Is 1:17),” he continued. “It is not enough to denounce, we need also to renounce evil, to pass from evil to good. In other words, admonishment is meant to change us.”



Rediscover marital bond, Pope says in address to Vatican tribunal

(27-1-23) “The permanent reality of marriage needs to be rediscovered, and it is marriage as a bond,” Pope Francis said in a January 27 address to the tribunal of the Roman Rota, which is opening its judicial year.

The Pope spoke of “a strong need to rediscover the meaning and value of the conjugal union between man and woman on which the family is based.” He emphasized that the Church should strive to help couples having difficulties in their marriages, to strengthen and protect the bond.

‘War is a failure of politics, a failure of humanity,’ Pontiff tells scholars

(27-1-23) On January 26, Pope Francis addressed a delegation from the European Institute of International Studies, based in Salamanca, Spain.

Women are ‘a path towards peace,’ Pope tells interreligious conference

(27-1-23) On January 26, Pope Francis received participants in Women Building a Culture of Encounter Interreligiously, a conference organized by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue and the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations. Adherents of 12 religions are participating in the event.

Cardinal Kasper backs German laity’s effort to block Synodal Path

(27-1-23) Cardinal Walter Kasper has given his support to an initiative by German lay Catholics to reject the German bishops’ bid to form a permanent “Synodal Council,” in defiance of Rome. “I fully agree with the statement of the lay initiative New Beginning (*Neuer Anfang*),” said Cardinal Kasper. The group had protested a statement by Bishop Georg Bätzing, the president of the German bishops’ conference, downplaying the importance of a letter from Pope Francis warning against the establishment of the Synodal Council.

Bishop Bätzing indicated that the German hierarchy would move forward with the initiative, awaiting clarification. The New Beginnings group insisted that the papal directive itself was quite clear in saying that the Church did not allow for diocesan bishops to surrender their proper authority to a committee.

Cardinal Kasper agreed, saying: Each bishop was conferred the pastoral office in his diocese at his episcopal ordination in the succession of the apostles. He cannot subsequently renounce the exercise of this sacramentally conferred authority, in whole or in part, by self-commitment to a Synodal Council, without violating the responsibility conferred upon him personally.

Cardinal Kasper said that efforts to reconcile the Synodal Council proposal with the bishop’s authority relied on “dishonest and self-contradictory trickery.”

Mass attendance is highest in Nigeria, lowest in Netherlands

(27-1-23) The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) has published data on Mass attendance in three dozen nations, ranging from Nigeria (where 94% of Catholics attend Mass at least once a week) to the Netherlands (7%).

Immigrant arrested after machete attacks on churches in Spain

(27-1-23) A Moroccan man was arrested by Spanish police on January 26 and charged with two attacks on Catholic churches, which left one man dead another wounded.

Wielding a machete, the suspect—who had been living under a deportation order for months—wounded a priest at one parish church in the city of Algeciras. He then went to another church, jumped on the altar, and chased a carekeeper out of the church, killing him in the town square.

Search for truth with courage and freedom: papal encouragement for journalists

(27-1-23) “On the hundredth anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Francis de Sales as patron of journalists, let us pray together that journalists might be inspired by this saint toward tenderness, toward the search and narration of truth with courage and freedom,” Pope Francis tweeted on January 26.

Seven killed by gunman at Jerusalem synagogue

(27-1-23) Seven people were killed and ten others wounded when a lone attacker opened fire on a synagogue in Jerusalem on January 27: Holocaust Remembrance Day. Police shot and killed a Palestinian man, the suspected gunman.



South Sudan - Pope's visit: "Ecumenical journey" to pave the way for peace

(27-1-23) As part of an ecumenical visit, Pope Francis will visit South Sudan together with the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Primate of the Anglican Communion, and Pastor Iain Greenshields, President of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. In the African country, affiliation to different faith communities also represents a unifying factor in the fabric of society and social life in a context that has been devastated and shattered by decades of civil

wars. This affiliation often also has a role in bridging ethnic differences that fuel conflict. For this reason, leaders of the various faith communities have advocated for peace negotiations over the years.

This is the terrain on which the "ecumenical journey" planned by Pope Francis, Archbishop Welby and Pastor Greenshields moves, which sees itself as a sign and an opportunity, the desire for peace and goodness that dwells in the hearts of many who have been paying the price for pointless conflicts for decades.

Myanmar - A new parish in Kachin state, in the midst of conflict

(27-1-23) The Catholic population of the Burmese state of Kachin, in northern Myanmar, has a new parish: it was inaugurated in recent days, in the diocese of Myitkyina, the state capital, with a solemn popular celebration, in the presence of more than a thousand enthusiastic faithful and Monsignor Peter Hka Awng Tu, sent as the representative of Cardinal Charles Bo, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Myitkyina.

The new church and its permanent Catholic presence is located in the village of Zang Yaw and encompasses an area that altogether includes 11 villages, totaling about 500 souls.

It is considered one of the frontier mission sites, being close to the Chinese border, and in the past Catholic priests were rarely allowed to travel there to celebrate the sacraments or visit the local faithful.

Brazil - Work never becomes an opportunity to violate the dignity of the person

(27-1-23) From 1995 to the present, about 60,000 people have been rescued from labour slavery in Brazil. According to the latest data published by the Ministry of Labour, the year 2022 ended with the number of 2,575 people rescued. The figures, released on the occasion of the National Day to Combat Slave Labour, which is celebrated in Brazil on January 28, represent an all-time record compared to the numbers recorded over the past nine years.

This is noted in the joint note signed by three Commissions of the Brazilian Bishops' Conference (for the fight against human trafficking, for socio-transformative action and for the pastoral care of the Earth), signed by 103 ecclesial and civil society entities and realities engaged on this front. They launch an appeal to all Christians and people of good will to make this day "a milestone in the fight against contemporary slavery".

Indian parishioners stage stir to reopen Cathedral

(27-1-23) Some 300 Catholics demonstrated demanding the reopening of a cathedral in southern India on Jan. 26, more than a month after police closed it following a violent clash between rival Catholics over a longstanding liturgy dispute.

Police sealed the St Mary's Cathedral Basilica in Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese in the Eastern rite Syro-Malabar Church in Kerala last Christmas eve. The violence occurred when priests of both groups simultaneously tried to offer Mass at the Cathedral altar. The violence on the altar of the cathedral resulted in the desecration of consecrated holy host and wine and police had to intervene, church officials said.

"Our Church is closed and we have to go to nearby parishes for attending holy Mass and availing other sacraments," says Thankachan Perayil, convener of Basilica Community, a group of cathedral parishioners, who protested. Perayil blamed Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, apostolic administrator of the archdiocese, and Father Antony Poothavelil, administrator of the Cathedral, for the violence. Archbishop Thazhath appointed the administrator after he faced a boycott by the majority of priests and faithful in the archdiocese due to his insistence on implementing the uniform mode of Mass in the archdiocese. The parishioners and priests in the archdiocese want the Mass with celebrants facing the people, and they rejected the Church Synod-approved Mass, in which the celebrant faces the altar during Eucharistic prayer.

Asian churches to hold continental gathering on synodality

(27-1-23) Asian Church leaders and delegates will gather in the Thai capital Bangkok for a continent-level assembly on the Synod on Synodality in the final week of February, says an official press release.

"The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) has scheduled February 24-27 for holding the continental assembly at Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Centre, Bangkok, Thailand," reads the release from Salesian Father George Plathottam, executive secretary of the FABC's Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC).

The gathering has been planned as per instructions from the Vatican which wants synodal consultations to be held from the parish, diocese, national and continental levels before the church leaders meet in Rome for the Synod on Synodality on October 4-29, 2023 for the first part and in October 2024 for the second one.

Churches across the world have completed the synodal talks up to national levels. At the continental stage, the assemblies will be held in seven locations on each of the continents – For Asia, it is Bangkok.

28-1-23

Kenya - Drought wipes out livestock. Millions of children and elderly under nightmare of hunger



"Many elderly people, the most vulnerable segment of the population, are dying, while children's malnutrition is getting worse by the day, because they no longer even have milk that used to be provided by goats". This was stated by Sister Ligia Girón, a missionary of the Congregation of Hermanas Misioneras Sociales de la Iglesia, which coordinates 12 nursery schools in the northern region of Kenya inhabited by the Turkana, a tribe of nomadic shepherds.

Due to a two-year drought, the Turkana have lost almost all of their livestock, their primary source of livelihood. Some families seem to accept with less sorrow "that a child dies rather than a goat, which gives them food", adds Sister Ligia. In children under 5, the rate of malnutrition has increased by 40 percent.

"The current closure of schools by the Kenyan government, has aggravated the situation. We have stopped classes, but not food distribution. Currently an untold number of children between the ages of 2 and 7 come to us", says the nun.

Guatemala - The harsh reality of migrants, social and democratic deterioration: it is necessary to "keep Christian hope alive"



(28-1-23) The situation of migrants and the new State regulations that put at risk the reception centres run by the Church, the problems highlighted by the pandemic, social and political deterioration, violence and corruption: are some of the issues addressed by the Bishops of Guatemala in recent days.

"The realities we experience remind us of our vocation as Pastors and challenge us to work in search of new paths," states the message that has just been published at the end of the Annual General Assembly

of the Guatemalan Bishops' Conference, which took place from January 23 to 27, to analyze the country's social and pastoral situation and elect a new President.

First, the bishops cite "the harsh reality of migrants," which has led to Church facilities and spaces being put at their disposal to offer welcome and comfort to thousands of people. Now, the new state regulation on hotel registration raises some concern. The bishops believe that "Migrant Houses must continue to be a service of charity, respectful and free, while the strict application of regulations will prevent this and force its closure... It is possible to promote, even under these circumstances, an honest and transparent electoral process, so that both voters and candidates seek the common good."

29-1-23

Pope at Angelus: 'Poor in spirit' requires us to overcome throwaway culture

(29-1-23) Pope Francis prayed the traditional Marian prayer of the Angelus on Sunday, and reflected on the first and fundamental Beatitude: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:1-12).

The "poor in spirit", he noted, are those who recognize that they cannot rely on themselves or remain self-sufficient. *"They live as 'beggars before God'. They feel their need for Him and recognize the good that comes from Him as a gift, as a grace."*

Pope Francis said each person is a good, independent of the gifts we have, since "every man or woman is rich not only in talents but in dignity." He lamented that over a third of the world's food production goes to waste, even as many people die of hunger.

He then said the throwaway culture uses people only so long as they are useful, after which the person is only a bother to society. Those most affected by this selfish mindset are "unborn children, the elderly, the needy, and the disadvantaged."

“People are never to be thrown out, never! Every person is a sacred and unique gift, no matter what their age or condition is. Let us always respect and promote life!”

The Pope posited a series of questions to help us assess how we live our poverty of spirit.

“Do I know how to make room for God? Do I believe that he is my good, my true and great wealth? Do I believe that he loves me, or do I throw myself away in sadness, forgetting that I am a gift? And then – Am I careful not to waste? Am I responsible about how I use things, goods? Am I willing to share things with others? Lastly, Do I consider the weakest as precious gifts whom God asks me to care for? Do I remember the poor, those who are deprived of what is necessary?”

Pope’s request for prayers for the success of his apostolic visit to DR Congo and South Sudan, for peace in Jerusalem, Ukraine and Lachin Corridor, remembers Lepers on 29 Jan.

(29-1-23) Pope Francis sets off on Tuesday as a “pilgrim of peace” to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan on 31 January – 5 February.

Ahead of his 40th Apostolic Journey abroad, the Pope read out a message to the people of the two African nations during his Sunday Angelus address.

Offering a heartfelt greeting to “those beloved peoples who await me” he noted that the DRC “suffers from armed clashes and exploitation,” especially in the east of the country.



South Sudan, he said, has been “wracked by years of war” and “longs for an end to the constant violence that forces many people to be displaced and to live in conditions of great hardship.”

In his message, the Pope recalled that he will arrive in South Sudan accompanied by Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby and Rev Dr Iain Greenshields. Pope Francis wrapped up his message with an appeal for everyone to accompany his Apostolic Journey with their prayers.

Pope Francis expressed his sorrow for the recent flareup in violence in the Holy Land on Sunday in his greetings following the noon-day Angelus prayer. “Since the beginning of the year, dozens of Palestinians have been killed in firefights with the Israeli army,” he said. The Pope recalled the death of 10 Palestinians, including a woman, during an “Israeli military anti-terrorist raid in Palestine.” He also lamented the deaths of 7 Israeli Jews who were killed, and three others who were injured, by a Palestinian as they were leaving a synagogue on Friday. *“I appeal to the two Governments and the international community to find other paths—immediately and without delay—which include dialogue and the sincere search for peace,” the Pope appealed and called for prayers for peace.*

He said the group’s prayers and commitment to peace are even more important this year as Europe witnesses the war in Ukraine. The Pope also renewed his appeal for the “grave humanitarian situation in the Lachin Corridor in the South Caucasus.”

The Lachin Corridor is Nagorno-Karabakh’s land link with Armenia, and has been blocked by Azerbaijan since mid-December as protesters keep supplies from reaching the 120,000 Armenians living in the mountainous enclave.

Separately, Pope Francis recalled the commemoration on Sunday of the 70th World Leprosy Day. He lamented the stigma attached to Hansen’s Disease, which he added continues to cause “serious human rights violations in various parts of the world.”

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