

CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

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18-4-22

Pope Francis makes Easter plea for peace in Myanmar



(18-4-22) Pope Francis has again pleaded for peace and reconciliation in conflict-torn Myanmar where millions of people including Christians have been oppressed by the brutal military junta.

During his Easter plea for peace around the world, he cited the Southeast Asian nation where violence has persisted for more than a year after the military ousted the civilian government.

His attention to the people of Myanmar comes as the world is focused on the war in Ukraine.

He has repeatedly called for military leaders in Myanmar to stop the violence, release all detained people and pursue

dialogue to seek peace and reconciliation. The junta has unleashed airstrikes, artillery shelling and burned homes forcing thousands of people including Christians to flee their homes to seek refuge in nearby forests or churches in villages and towns.

Churches and convents have been attacked while clergy and Catholic institutions remain targeted, especially in the predominantly Christian regions of Chin, Kayah, Kachin and Karen states.

At least 1,700 people have lost their lives in the brutal crackdown by the military and over 13,000 people have been detained since February 2021. The junta released around 1,600 prisoners including 42 foreigners in an amnesty to mark Burmese New Year on April 17 but there were no political prisoners among those released, according to media reports and monitoring groups.

‘They saw, they heard, they proclaimed’: Pope’s homily at Easter Vigil Mass

(18-4-22) On the night of April 16, Pope Francis preached the homily at the Easter Vigil Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica. The Pope, however, did not preside at the Mass; Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the Dean of the College of Cardinals, was the principal celebrant.

“Many writers have evoked the beauty of starlit nights,” Pope Francis began. “The nights of war, however, are riven by streams of light that portend death. On this night, brothers and sisters, let us allow the women of the Gospel to lead us by the hand, so that, with them, we may glimpse the first rays of the dawn of God’s life rising in the darkness of our world ...”

In TV interview, Pope speaks about the devil, war, women’s strength, and refugees

(18-4-22) On Good Friday, the Italian state television network RAI aired a 48-minute interview with Pope Francis.

In the wide-ranging interview, Pope Francis reflected on Christ’s Passion, human suffering, and the reality of the devil. “Someone says that I speak too much about the devil,” he said. “But he is real. I believe in him ... Every day, I pray that prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel in the morning. Every day! So that it might help me conquer the devil.”

In comments that attracted wider media coverage, the Pope said that “refugees are subdivided. There’s first class, second class, skin color, [if] they come from a developed country [or] one that is not developed. We are racists, we are racists. And this is bad.”

German bishops’ leader responds to criticism of Synodal

(18-4-22) The president of the German bishops' conference has issued a public response to a cautionary message from 70 bishops who have warned that the German "Synodal Path" is raising the danger of schism.

Bishop Georg Bätzing insisted that despite its radical proposals for change in Church teaching and discipline, the Synodal Path "in no way undermines the authority of the Church."

The German bishops' leader argued that the Synodal Path represents a necessary response to the crisis of abuse in the Church. Firing back at the more than 70 bishops from around the world who had signed the critical statement, he professed surprise that they "did not see the importance of the necessity to face the question of abuse." He added: "Euphemistic dressing up, as you try to do in your letter, does not really help."

Cardinal Bo: The Way of the Cross is still lived in Myanmar

(18-4-22) Commenting on the status of the internal conflict in Myanmar since 2021 coup d'état, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon said that "the greatest violence is perpetrated in communities where the Christian populations are greatest, both Catholic and Protestant. Already over 15 churches and convents have been desecrated or ransacked or bombed."

"In this engulfing darkness of violence and plain evil, the Church cannot support talk of vengeance and more violence," he continued. "We have consistently pleaded for reconciliation."

Papal prayer for victims of typhoon in the Philippines

(14-4-22) Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See's Secretary, has sent a telegram of condolence for the victims of Tropical Storm Megi. The storm left at least 148 people dead and 150 people missing.

Pope Francis celebrates Mass of the Lord's Supper at Italian prison

(14-4-22) Pope Francis travelled to Civitavecchia, a city 50 miles north of Rome, to celebrate the Holy Thursday evening Mass in the chapel of a new prison. There, he washed the feet of 12 inmates.

"Each one of us," the Pope preached, "will have something that has been in our hearts for a long time, but we ask Jesus for forgiveness ... There is the Lord who judges, but it is (what may seem) a strange judgment: the Lord judges and forgives."



Do not 'take us back to war,' bishops in Sudan, South Sudan tell political leaders

(18-4-22) "We as a Church want to fall on our knees before the risen Christ and confess our weakness, inhumanity and living as if we were not baptized in his name," the bishops of Sudan and South Sudan said in their statement, issued three months before the Pope's apostolic journey to South Sudan, a largely Christian nation that is emerging from a 7-year civil war.

Holy Land: Christians resist threat posed by Ateret Cohanim

(18-4-22) The patriarchs and heads of the Churches of Jerusalem issued a statement expressing their fears in relation to the fate of the Little Petra Hotel owned by the Greek Orthodox Church but claimed by a Jewish extremist group.

The acquisition by Ateret Cohanim of the building in the Christian Quarter threatens the very survival of the Christian community and endangers the peaceful coexistence of the various religious groups that inhabit Jerusalem's Old City.

In their statement, Church leaders condemn several times the "illegitimate actions" by the group, which follow "a pattern of intimidation and violence". For the prelates, "Ateret Cohanim has committed criminal acts of break-in and trespass" by "occupying the Greek Orthodox Church's property, the Little Petra Hotel". The extremists act as "if they are above the law, with no fear of consequences."

Indian religious leaders touched by foot-washing ritual



(18-4-22) “No human being can reduce himself so much that he washes the feet of others. It is unimaginable for me,” was the reaction of a Muslim who was among the 12 whose feet were washed by the parish priest of a Bombay church on Maundy Thursday, April 14. Imran Shaikh, a 45-year-old social worker, 56-year-old Satnaam Singh, vice-president of a Sikh *gurdwara* and Shyam Auti, a 61-year-old temple priest, were among the representatives of the Non-Christian religions of India whose feet the Parish Priest Father Reginaldo Antonio Mascarenhas of St Vicent Pallootti washed.

“I was literally in tears and wanted to tell him not to do it as he is a spiritual person,” said Shaikh; “but I did not do so because I felt it would offend him.” He said he had learned how “we need to shed our egos and become selfless to serve others ... especially at a time when religious intolerance and hatred is on the rise in the country.” The reactions of other non-Christians were similar.

Indian Christians appeal for peace after communal clashes

(18-4-22) Indian Christians have appealed for peace after sectarian clashes broke out in national capital New Delhi, leaving many people and police officers injured.

Police arrested 23 suspects after violence erupted on April 16 during a Hindu religious procession in Jahangirpuri, a predominantly Muslim suburb. Residents said the situation remained tense on Easter Sunday in Jahangirpuri, the home of some 10,000 Muslim families who reportedly migrated from Bangladesh.

A parish priest from the riot-affected area appealed to the faithful to pray for peace. “Happy Easter! However, we were not able to celebrate Easter Vigil Mass as there was a clash between some groups near the church ... May the Risen Lord bring us hope. Kindly pray for us,” he said in a message. Meanwhile, New Delhi and neighboring Uttar Pradesh state in the north were put on high alert after reports of Hindu-Muslim clashes since April 10 in several states mostly ruled by India’s ruling pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Jharkhand and West Bengal in the east, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in the south, Uttarakhand in the north and Goa in the west also saw religion-related violence.

Philippine nuncio backs bishops' call for truth

(18-4-22) The apostolic nuncio to the Philippines has urged Catholics to be bearers of truth amid a culture of disinformation and fake news.

Archbishop Charles Brown echoed a pastoral statement made by the bishops’ conference on Feb. 25 criticizing falsehoods being circulated ahead of upcoming polls on May 9.

“We need to speak the truth and shun all forms of falsehood. This is our duty as Christians, as believers of Christ, who himself is the truth,” Pope Francis’ envoy said in an Easter homily on April 17.

Indonesian Bible reader dies during Good Friday service

(18-4-22) A woman who served as a lector during a Good Friday service on Indonesia’s Catholic-majority island of Flores suddenly collapsed and died while reading from the holy book, prompting a priest to call her death a “blessing from God.”

Regina Dominika Hiwan, 45, and mother of three children, fell ill in the pulpit at Saint Maria Reinha Rosari Chapel at Waemasa Mission Station in Ruteng Diocese before being declared dead by medics.

Her husband, Serfasius Gaya Selasa, who also served as a lector at the service, told UCA News on April 18 that his wife was “just about to finish the first reading when she suddenly fell to the ground.” The tragedy occurred about 15 minutes into the afternoon service.

Sri Lankans demand justice for Easter attack victims

(18-4-22) Sri Lankans of all hues stood united in their demand for justice for victims of the 2019 Easter attack while also pressurizing the government to quit for the economic good of the beleaguered island nation. Several events were held in memory of those killed in the terrorist atrocity, including a non-violent protest in front of the presidential secretariat in Colombo, on April 17. Former cricketer Dhammika Prasad fasted for 24 hours as part of a *Satyagraha* (a non-violent protest seeking truth) demanding punishment for the real perpetrators of the Easter attack at a protest ground in Colombo. A group of Sri Lankan men and women dressed as the dead staged a peaceful protest walk from Aluthkade to Galle Face while the Young Catholic Association of the Archdiocese of Colombo held a march from St. Lucia's Cathedral to St. Anthony's Shrine in Kochchikade, one of three churches attacked in 2019 during an atrocity that killed 269 people and injured more than 500. Buddhist monks and other religious leaders too participated in events throughout the day.



19-4-22

Be courageous and proclaim the joy of Easter, Pope tells pilgrims

(19-4-22) On April 18, Pope Francis delivered the customary Easter Monday Regina Caeli address to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square.

"Let us place our own darkness and falsehoods before the light of the Risen Jesus," he concluded.

"He wants to bring hidden things to light to make us transparent and luminous witnesses to the joy of the Gospel, of the truth that will make you free. May Mary, Mother of the Risen One, help us overcome our fears and give us passion for the truth."

Pope says journalists accusing him of pro-Russian stance take pleasure in excrement

(19-4-22) Responding to a letter by Argentine reporter Gustavo Sylvestre, Pope Francis said that journalists who accuse him of being pro-Russian have fallen into "disinformation, slander, defamation, and coprophilia," according to a handwritten letter, dated April 7, that Sylvestre posted on his blog.

Sri Lanka: Catholic Church backs Galle Face protests

(19-4-22) Galle Face, a promenade in Sri Lanka's capital, Colombo, is the site of protests against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. According to the report, the priest who leads the National Catholic Centre for Social Communications called for the president's resignation.

Monasteries, churches are not spared from Myanmar's conflict

(19-4-22) Although Myanmar is only 8% Christian, over three-quarters of the religious buildings destroyed since the 2021 coup d'état have been Christian, according to the report.

Ukrainian Catholic leader: 'Today Christ comes to eliminate our fear of the enemy'

(19-4-22) On April 17, Eastern-rite Ukrainian Catholics celebrated Palm Sunday according to their liturgical calendar.

Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, preached that "today Christ comes to eliminate our fear of the enemy, his various armies and weapons. We feel that we stop being afraid. We feel the foretaste of victory in Easter procession of Christ himself." The Major Archbishop added, "Today we are especially praying for our Mariupol. We plead: Lord, where we, people, cannot enter to reach out to our brothers and sisters in the occupied territories,

where we cannot open green humanitarian corridors, You enter and with Your strength, victory, stronghold—strengthen the heroic defenders of Mariupol!”

Catholic missionary expelled from Moscow

(19-4-22) Russian authorities ordered Father Fernando Vera, a Mexican Opus Dei priest who ministers at a Moscow parish, to leave Russia within 24 hours.

“Father Fernando is in the habit of calling things by their name, but today this is not considered a civil virtue in our country,” an anonymous source told AsiaNews. “Even with all the necessary prudence, it is difficult today to avoid committing the offense of ‘defaming the authorities and the army’ even if one only mentions the ‘war’ going on in Ukraine. While this can cost Russian citizens heavy fines or even arrest and imprisonment, for a foreign missionary it means the loss of the right to remain in his post, without even the 48 hours’ notice given to diplomats to be expelled.”

‘Stop the shelling of cities and villages’ during religious holidays, Ukrainian faith leaders plead

(19-4-22) The Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) called upon Russian forces to “stop the shelling of cities and villages in Ukraine and to slow down offensive hostilities” during the celebration of Easter (April 24 on the Eastern calendar), Passover, and Ramadan.

“We are convinced that if there is a desire and goodwill, the Russian side, within the framework of the ongoing negotiation process and in contact with competent representatives of Ukraine, could reach agreements that would provide civilians of Ukraine the opportunity to meet and celebrate the next sacred days without shelling and risk to their lives,” the UCCRO said in its statement.

The UCCRO has 16 members, including the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and the Latin-rite Catholic bishop of Kyiv-Zhytomyr.

Cardinal Ranjith disapproves of new Sri Lankan cabinet

(19-4-22) Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has rejected the newly appointed Sri Lankan cabinet of ministers, calling it a mere attempt to deceive the public.

“There is no use in changing and appointing new ministers, just misguiding the people. Changing pillows for a headache will not solve the problem,” Cardinal Ranjith remarked at a press conference in Colombo on April 18.

The new cabinet was sworn in at the President’s House in Colombo amid nationwide protests against President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his government for mismanaging the island nation’s economy. Cardinal Ranjith accused the Rajapaksha government of undermining democracy and reiterated the demand for an all-party interim government made earlier by the chief prelates.

Vietnam's indigenous order marks 75th anniversary



(19-4-22) The only congregation for ethnic women in Vietnam's Central Highlands is celebrating 75 years of bringing God's love to ethnic communities.

On April 17, Bishop Aloisius Nguyen Hung Vi of Kontum presided at a special Mass to open the jubilee year marking the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the Daughters of Miraculous Medal Congregation, the only religious order designed for ethnic minority women in the country.

Bishop Vi said the congregation based in Kontum City took the road of the Cross for decades since its establishment in 1947, when soon after the World War two and amidst

political turmoil the members suffered a severe lack of food, training, young vocations and facilities

but God offered them necessary graces to develop as they are today and bring happiness to other people.

A strong push for a Hindi-speaking, Hindu India

(19-4-22) Federal Home Minister Amit Shah, a trusted aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has come all out in support of Hindi as the official language of communication across a multilingual India. Hindi is the mother tongue of around 40 percent of Indians in the northern belt while the rest of its citizens speak over 120 other languages, with English serving as the crucial bridge.

Shah made it clear that Hindi should become an “alternative to English” and not the other Indian languages. He wants non-Hindi speakers to start using Hindi while communicating with each other. Leaders from Hindi-speaking northern India have been pushing to make Hindi the national language for a long time, hoping to further endear themselves to their voters. Shah’s political party the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believes in “one nation, one religion, one language and one culture.”

Interestingly, the BJP is part of the ruling combine in Nagaland, in north-east India which is the only Indian state with English as its official language due to the lack of a single Naga tongue. Mizoram too, another Christian majority state, opposes the imposition of Hindi.

There is strong opposition to the imposition of Hindi among the southern states too, where Dravidian languages are spoken. The Modi administration has led to the rise of the new elite who are basically provincial and unapologetically pro-Hindi and pro-Hindu.

Row over 'Christian agenda' heats up in Malaysia

(19-4-22) A legal battle between a Muslim university lecturer and a Christian lawmaker over alleged defamation of each other has once again brought to the fore the long-running anti-Christian sentiment in Malaysia.

The Sessions Court in capital Kuala Lumpur dismissed a defamation suit filed by Universiti Utara Malaysia lecturer Kamarul Zaman Yusoff against seven leaders of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) on April 11, reported Free Malaysia Today (FMT). The leaders included Hannah Yeoh, a Christian MP from Segambut constituency. But the court ruled against Yusoff, who it said, was free to file a fresh petition over his grievances.

In the aftermath, a tit-for-tat battle has been going in the course of which it is alleged that there is a ‘Christian agenda’ in Malaysia to make Malaysia a Christian country, that Yeoh was involved in proselytization and that Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur had said in 2014 that he had a 25-year plan against Muslims in Malaysia.

20-4-22

Pope at Audience: Elderly must be loved and honoured

(20-4-22) Pope Francis continued his series of reflections on old age during his catechesis at the General Audience on Wednesday, the first held in St. Peter's Square since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic over two years ago.

The Holy Father noted that through the Word of God (Sir 3:3-6, 12-13.16), we explore a passage on the frailty of old age, marked by “the experiences of confusion and despondency, of loss and abandonment, of disillusionment and doubt.” He explained that this experience of our frailty can occur at any stage of life. In old age, it produces less of an impression – or even annoyance, while the more serious wounds of youth and childhood, “rightly provoke a sense of injustice and rebellion, a strength to react and fight.”

The wounds of old age - even serious ones - the Pope said, are accompanied by the feeling that “life is not contradicting itself, because it has already been lived.” Love “descends,” the Pope underlined.



“It does not return to the life behind with the same force that it pours out on the life that is still before us.” Hence, the gratuitousness of love is known by all parents and the elderly.

More so, revelation opens up a way for reciprocating love by honouring those who have gone before us. This honour, intended for the elderly, is also sealed by God’s commandment to “honour thy father and mother.” In addition, dignity – the value of respecting and caring for the life of everyone – is essentially equivalent to honour.

“It is not just about one’s own father and mother. It is about their generation and the generations before, whose leave-taking can also be slow and prolonged, creating a time and space of long-lasting coexistence with the other ages of life. In other words, it is about the old age of life.”

‘Share your fears and they disappear,’ Pope tells 100,000 Italian teenagers

(20-4-22) On Easter Monday, Pope Francis presided over a prayer vigil for Italian teenagers on pilgrimage to St. Peter’s Square.

Reflecting on John 21:1-19, the Pope said that “there are moments in which life puts us to the test and makes us feel the weight of our frailty ... We should not be afraid to say: ‘I’m afraid of the dark!’”

Syro-Malabar priests in 335 of 340 churches defy cardinal’s decree

(20-4-22) Pope Francis recently exhorted the faithful of the Eastern-rite Syro-Malabar Church to obey the Syro-Malabar hierarchy’s decision on a uniform method of celebrating the liturgy in all of the church’s eparchies (dioceses).

The uniform method envisions the celebrant turning towards the faithful in the initial rites but then turning towards the altar during the Eucharistic sacrifice. In some eparchies, however, including the Major Archeparchy of Ernakulam–Angamaly, the entire liturgy has been offered facing the people in recent decades.

Cardinal George Alencherry, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church and the leading proponent of the uniform method, said that priests should begin celebrating according to the uniform method on Easter. Archbishop Antony Kariyil, the Archiepiscopal Vicar of Ernakulam-Angamaly and a leading opponent of the uniform method, said implementation could begin at Christmas. The vast major of Ernakulam–Angamaly’s priests have sided with Archbishop Kariyil.

Turkish offensive in Syria and Iraq: 1 Christian victim, churches and houses damaged

(20-4-22) Turkey attacked Kurdish forces in northern Syria and Iraq on April 19. AsiaNews reported that at least two predominantly Christian villages were attacked as part of the Turkish offensive.



India: bishop decries Good Friday arrests

(20-4-22) A Catholic bishop in India has protested the arrest of more than 20 people at an Evangelical church during Good Friday services.

After militant Hindus in the state of Uttar Pradesh surrounded the church, claiming that the Christians were violating the state’s anti-conversion law, police moved in and arrested members of the congregation. Bishop Gerald Mathias of Lucknow characterized the arrests as “illegal and entirely condemnable.” He said that the charges against the Evangelical

community were “entirely without foundation.”

WCC urges Patriarch Kirill: ‘Ask publicly for a ceasefire during the Resurrection service’

(20-4-22) 350 Protestant and Orthodox communities are members of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. Its interim leader—Father Ioan Sauca, a Romanian Orthodox priest—has asked the head of the Russian Orthodox Church to call for

a ceasefire on the night of April 23-24, during the celebration of the Easter Vigil according to Eastern liturgical calendars.

Researchers rediscover original medieval altar of Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre

(20-4-22) The Catholic Church, Greek Orthodox Church, and Armenian Apostolic Church share the basilica, built over the site of our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection.

The medieval altar "was inlaid with pieces of precious marble, pieces of glass, pieces of small, finely made marble," said Amit Re'em of the Israel Antiquities Authority. "It was shining, and this was a really amazing artifact."



Times of Israel

Ethiopia - "Intentional mass starvation": humanitarian truce in Tigray is at stake

(20-4-22) Hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans are dying of hunger. The humanitarian truce that began on March 24 is already at stake. The government has allowed only one aid convoy to enter Tigray, the first since mid-December 2021, and has refused any permission until the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has withdrawn to the region. The TPLF wants aid to flow freely before withdrawing completely, along with the withdrawal of Amhara forces from western Tigray. "Without a breakthrough to ease the blockade, the horror of ethnic cleansing will be accompanied by an equally grotesque abuse: deliberate mass starvation". This is what emerged from an in-depth investigation by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Amnesty says that the authorities in the Amhara region have systematically killed or expelled hundreds of thousands of people of Tigrayan origin from the territory seized by Tigray since the beginning of the war.

Africa - The Comboni Missionaries: 150 years of love for the mission

(20-4-22) "The Congregation of the Pious Mothers of Nigrizia, now known as the Comboni Missionary Sisters, took its first steps on January 1, 1872. The day before, Maria Caspi had crossed the threshold of the house that Luigia Zago and Isabella Zadrich had in part made available in Montorio, a town near Verona, to prepare young people 'who follow in the footsteps and fulfill the functions of the pious women of the Gospel', as Daniel Comboni clarified in referring to the missionaries who would work alongside him in Central Africa". This is what the Provincial Superior of the Comboni Sisters in Spain, Sister Angela Colombi, says in a video message, speaking of the 150th anniversary of the institute, which falls in 2022.

Russia - Easter in Siberia: a community experiences the Eucharist and prays for peace

(20-4-22) An Easter lived in the intensity of prayer and with the "certain hope" of the Resurrection: this is how the community of the faithful of the diocese of the Transfiguration in Novosibirsk, in the Russian region of Siberia, lived the days of Holy Week and continues to live the Easter season. The Eucharist, they say, was the "source and summit" of the celebrations, because during Holy Thursday Mass, after an appropriate period of preparation, 17 young people received the sacrament of First Communion, feeding for the first time of Christ present in the consecrated bread after having been previously baptized.

Colombia - Violence in Arauca even at Easter: four people killed, including two children

(20-4-22) "Every death afflicts us. But even more the death and injury of children, our children, who are completely innocent of this crazy wave of violence to which the region has been subjected, especially this year", said the Bishop of Arauca, Monsignor Jaime Cristóbal Abril González, in a video message in which he expressed his total rejection of the acts of violence that were recorded on

Easter Sunday, April 17. In the rural area of Tame, Arauca, four people were killed, including two children aged 9 and 4. Armed persons opened fire on a vehicle in which there were nine people.



Bolivia - Franciscan religious killed in church after the Easter vigil

(20-4-22) "Given the news of the robbery in the convent of San Francisco in the city of Santa Cruz and the violent murder of Friar Wilberth Daza Rodas OFM, our Church is in mourning and dismayed by the events that have occurred", writes the Bolivian Episcopal Conference in the statement published on April 17. The bishops

denounce "the culture of violence that is growing in Bolivia" and ask for a clear and precise investigation.

The 42-year-old Franciscan religious was murdered on the night between Holy Saturday, April 16, and Sunday 17, Easter, by thieves who entered the church after the Easter vigil. They did not hesitate to hit Friar Wilberth with a blunt object and kill him. His body was found on Easter morning by a parish worker.

Hundreds of Rohingya escape Malaysia detention, six dead

(20-4-22) Hundreds of Rohingya migrants from Myanmar escaped a detention center in Malaysia on April 20 after a riot broke out, with six killed on a highway as they fled, authorities said.

Many Rohingya arrive in Malaysia by boat after enduring harrowing, months-long sea journeys. Those who are caught are often sent to detention centres, which rights groups say are typically overcrowded and filthy.

A total of 528 people from the Muslim minority group fled a centre in northern Kedah state at 4.30am, said Khairul Dzamee Daud, the country's immigration chief. Many were recaptured quickly but 176 were still at large, according to police.

Christians bear brunt of junta violence in Myanmar

(20-4-22) Christians in Myanmar have borne the brunt of violence with around 75 churches being severely or partially destroyed in attacks by the junta since the military coup on Feb. 1, 2021.

Soldiers regularly raid church institutions including places of worship under the pretext of looking for suspected rebels and often resort to violent destruction.

Christian-majority Chin state in western Myanmar has had 62 religious structures destroyed. At least 8,262 houses and other civilian properties, including churches, monasteries, schools and markets, have reportedly been either burned down or destroyed through airstrikes and heavy artillery in Chin and Kayah states (with about 90,000 Catholics in Kayah state) and Sagaing and Magway regions, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

At least 1,700 people have lost their lives in the military crackdown and over 13,000 people have been detained since February 2021.

Indian Christians arrested for attending Maundy Thursday service

(20-4-22) Police in northern India's Uttar Pradesh state charged 55 Christians who took part in a Maundy Thursday service of an Evangelical church with violating a law that criminalizes religious conversion following complaints by right-wing Hindu groups. Among them, 26 people were arrested and later released on bail, but police say they are searching for others included in the first information report (FIR).

Some 70 believers of the Evangelical Church of India gathered at their church in Fatehpur in Harihar Ganj district for the service on 14 April to commemorate the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples before he was crucified, which police, on complaint, took as a conversion activity.

Ramos-Horta returns as president of Timor-Leste

(20-4-22) Independence leader and Nobel laureate Jose Ramos-Horta has won a second term as president of Timor-Leste. Ex-guerrilla fighter President Francisco "Lu-Olo" Guterres lost the election.

Ramos-Horta was supported by Xanana Gusmao's party. 72- President 2007-2012.

Building good relations with all poverty-elimination and the nation will be his priority 21-4-22



by the country's most popular leader year- old Ramos-Horta served as

political parties including Guterres, bringing about unity and integrity of said the president-elect.

Pope at Audience: Elderly must be loved and honoured

(21-4-22) Pope Francis continued his series of reflections on old age during his catechesis at the General Audience on Wednesday, the first held in St. Peter's Square since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic over two years ago.

The Holy Father noted that through the Word of God (Sir 3:3-6, 12-13.16), we explore a passage on the frailty of old age, marked by "the experiences of confusion and despondency, of loss and abandonment, of disillusionment and doubt." He explained that this experience of our frailty can occur at any stage of life. In old age, it produces less of an impression – or even annoyance, while the more serious wounds of youth and childhood, "rightly provoke a sense of injustice and rebellion, a strength to react and fight."

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More so, revelation opens up a way for reciprocating love by honouring those who have gone before us. This honour, intended for the elderly, is also sealed by God's commandment to "honour thy father and mother." In addition, dignity – the value of respecting and caring for the life of everyone – is essentially equivalent to honour.

"It is not just about one's own father and mother. It is about their generation and the generations before, whose leave-taking can also be slow and prolonged, creating a time and space of long-lasting coexistence with the other ages of life. In other words, it is about the old age of life."

Vatican joins UN in plea for Easter truce in Ukraine

(21-4-22) The Vatican has given enthusiastic support to an appeal for an Easter truce in Ukraine. Antonio Guterres, the secretary-general of the UN; and Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, issued the plea for a truce to honour the Orthodox observance of Easter on April 24.

A Vatican announcement backing the appeal solicited prayers for the effort, noting: "Nothing is impossible for God."

'Nurture the desire for truth, goodness, and beauty,' Pope tells Catholic educators

(21-4-22) On April 20, Pope Francis received members of the Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education Project.

"In an age awash in information, often transmitted without wisdom or critical sense, the task of forming present and future generations of Catholic teachers and students remains as important as ever," the Pope said, as he called on educators to form "the head, hands and heart together ... Catholic education is also evangelization: bearing witness to the joy of the Gospel and its power to renew our communities and provide hope and strength in facing wisely the challenges of the present time."

Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem reacts angrily to police restrictions on Easter services

(21-4-22) As the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, according to its liturgical calendar, prepares to celebrate Easter in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre on April 24, Israeli police have limited the number of visitors to 1,000.

The Patriarchate said that it is “fed up with police restrictions on freedom to worship and with its unacceptable methods of dealing with the God-given rights of Christians to practice rituals and have to access their holy sites in the Old City of Jerusalem.”

“Accordingly, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem has decided, by the power of the Lord, that it will not compromise its right to provide spiritual services in all churches and squares,” the statement continued.

Mothers in Mariupol turn to Pope Francis for help

(21-4-22) Mothers in the besieged Ukrainian city wrote that papal assistance in evacuating Mariupol “will become a truly paternal act, the help of a good shepherd and a true act of mercy.”

Swedish cardinal laments riots, religious intolerance

(21-5-22) Cardinal Anders Arborelius of Stockholm spoke with Vatican News about riots that have shaken Sweden in recent days, after reports that an anti-Muslim group planned a public burning of the Qu’ran.

At least 40 people have been arrested in the riots, and Cardinal Arborelius remarked that the country has experienced a “very violent Easter.” The cardinal said that tensions have been aggravated by the fact that Muslim immigrants live apart from other groups in Swedish society, in neighborhoods troubled by poverty, unemployment, and crime. He said that the violence “makes it clear that Sweden has not been able to cope with the segregation.”

US Professor who resisted mandatory transgender pronouns reaches settlement with university

(21-5-22) Prof. Nicholas Meriwether of Shawnee State University, a public college in Ohio, “faced possible disciplinary action from the university if he declined to use the preferred pronouns of a male student who identified as a transgender woman,” according to the report. The university has agreed to pay the philosophy professor \$400,000 in damages.

+Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragán, 89

(21-5-22) Ordained to the priesthood in 1956, named to the episcopate in 1979, and created a cardinal in 2003, the Mexican Cardinal was President of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers from 1996 to 2009.

In his telegram of condolence, Pope Francis paid tribute to him as a “devoted prelate who honoured me with his friendship since 1980 and who faithfully gave his life to the service of God and the universal Church for many years.”

With Cardinal Lozano Barragán’s death, there are now 210 members of the College of Cardinals, 117 of whom are eligible to vote in a papal election.



Ethiopia - Cardinal Berhaneyesus: “Through the Cross of Christ we can conquer hatred with love”

(21-4-22) “Faith in the Resurrection of Christ gives every Christian and all humanity the strength to conquer all evil and sin”, said Cardinal Berhaneyesus in the official message delivered to all public and private media regarding the Ethiopian Easter which will be celebrated on Sunday, April 24 2022. The Ethiopian Catholic Metropolitan, who is also President of the Ethiopian Bishops' Conference, called on all people of good will to pray, especially for those affected by the war, on Ethiopian Good Friday, which will be celebrated throughout the country on April 22, 2022 in a spirit of great spirituality “Today, through the cross of Christ, we can conquer hatred with love, revenge with forgiveness, pain with joy, conflict with dialogue, perseverance with perseverance and Christian hope”, reads the note of the Catholic Secretariat of the Ethiopian Bishops' Conference.

Philippines - National missionary congress to conclude the Jubilee: sharing the gift of faith

(21-4-22) On Easter Sunday, April 17, Archbishop Jose S. Palma of Cebu inaugurated in the Basilica "Sto. Nino de Cebu", on the small island south of Manila, the Second Philippine Missionary Congress (NMC). The April 21-22 Congress is the culmination of the year of the *Missio ad gentes* and the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Christianity in the Philippines (1521-2021), which due to the coronavirus pandemic was extended by one year.

Archbishop Palma recalled that on Easter morning "Mary goes quickly to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection". "After 500 years," continued the Archbishop, "after listening and sharing, after receiving the gift of faith and embracing the Good News, we know that we have this spirit of enthusiasm, this spirit of joy not only to keep for ourselves, but to share with our brothers and sisters". "Because that is the mission," he said, urging people to "bring the good news" and "share it with others".

India - In the first months of 2022, 127 episodes of violence against Christians in India



(21-4-22) At least 127 episodes of violence against Christians in India were recorded in the first 103 days of 2022: this is stated in a report released by the United Christian Forum (UCF), an ecumenical organization based in New Delhi. In the text published on Good Friday, the body that monitors violence against Christians explains: "Today, April 15, more than two thousand years ago Jesus was persecuted and crucified on this day. The followers of Jesus are still persecuted in some parts of the world, including India, where groups of people spread hatred against minorities for their political gains",

underlines the Catholic A.C. Michael, national coordinator of UCF.

"The persecution of Christians in India is escalating, leading to systematic and carefully orchestrated violence against Christians, also through the use of social media, used to spread disinformation and foment hatred", said Michael, recalling that 502 episodes of anti-Christian violence were reported in 2021.

89 Pastors or parish priests have been beaten up and threatened with retaliation if they continue to lead prayers and liturgies. As many as 68 churches were attacked, 367 women and 366 children were injured. Out of 127 incidents, 82 were mass violence, carried out by a crowd of militants.

The so-called "Freedom of Religion Act" has been used to falsely accuse missionaries and Pastors of carrying out "forced religious conversions", explained Michael, a former member of the Delhi Minority Commission. To this day, he noted, no Christian has been condemned for forcing someone to convert.

Christians have not increased in number. According to the 2011 census data - the latest official - 79.8% of India's 1.38 billion inhabitants are Hindu, 14.2% Muslim and 2.3% Christian.

Costa Rica - The Bishops: "The resurrection of Christ opens the horizon for hope: hope for a better life and country"

(21-4-22) "After two years of Covid-19 pandemic, Catholics have again celebrated the mysteries of the faith in churches and in the streets. This fills us with joy and deep gratitude to the Lord because it allowed us to rekindle our spirit, to meet one another personally and to nourish our common hope", said the bishops of Costa Rica in their Easter message. The bishops emphasized that "the resurrection of Jesus Christ opens the horizon to hope: the hope for a better life and a better country; we hope that the pandemic will end and that we will be able to overcome a series of problems that, in particular concern our weakest brothers and sisters".

Brazil - The cry for help from the Yanomami communities and indigenous reservations

(21-4-22) "Faithful to its mystical and prophetic commitment to the cry of the poor and the earth, the Special Pastoral Episcopal Commission for the Fight against Human Trafficking (CEPEETH)

expresses its solidarity and commitment to the defense of community life of Yanomami communities and forests, especially in indigenous reservation areas; it repudiates and denounces with indignation all forms of exploitation and violence, especially sexual violence against women, adolescents and of children", reads the note published by CEPEETH" repudiating the violence against the Yanomami people".

The Hutukara Yanomami Association, quoted by CEPEETH, has described the dramatic reality in which the Yanomami communities of Amazonas, of Roraima live. It also points out that in 2021, mining increased by 46% in indigenous reservations. "The number of criminal attacks against Yanomami communities is alarming and desperate."

Bulldozers roll out in India's capital to raze minority properties

(21-4-22) Bulldozers rolled out on the streets of India's national capital New Delhi on April 20 to demolish allegedly illegal properties in a largely Muslim neighborhood before the Supreme Court called the action to a halt.

The Muslim neighborhood had on April 16 witnessed a saffron procession to mark the birth anniversary of the Hindu deity Lord Hanuman erupt into violence as the participants brandishing swords and sticks marched past one of the local mosques.

On April 20 morning, residents watched helplessly as the bulldozers razed to the ground a string of stalls and houses encroaching on the roadsides. The wall and gates of a mosque were pulled down amid rising tension as the rubble was carried away in waiting trucks, according to eyewitness accounts. Several Muslim residents and shopkeepers claimed they were being specifically targeted and not even given advance legal notice about the operation.

Catholic midwife honoured on Kartini Day in Indonesia

(21-4-22) A Catholic midwife who has served a remote Indonesian province for more than three decades was among 10 women honoured by the government during its 144th Kartini Day celebrations.

Yovita Mariati (54), a midwife from Sikka district in East Nusa Tenggara province, received the award at the state palace in Jakarta on April 21. Indonesians celebrate the day annually to commemorate the birth of their national heroine Raden Ajeng Kartini, hailed as a symbol of women's empowerment for promoting gender equity and women's rights during the Dutch colonial era. Yovita Mariati, a widowed mother of four, has served for more than three decades without getting paid for her services.



British PM arrives in India for hard sell on anti-Russia action

(21-4-22) UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson today arrived in India touting job-creating investment but facing long odds to get his reluctant counterpart Narendra Modi to back Western action against Russia.

Sri Lankan priests urge arrest of deputy police chief

(21-4-22) Sri Lankan Catholic priests have urged the inspector general of police (IGP) to arrest the senior deputy inspector general for failing to act on warnings from foreign intelligence agencies of a possible terror attack on Easter Sunday, 2019.

On the occasion of the third anniversary of the terror attack on three churches and hotels that claimed 269 lives and injured more than 500, Father Rohan Silva, director of the Centre for Society and Religion, called on IGP Chandana D. Wickramaratne to arrest Nilantha Jayawardena, former chief of the State Intelligence Service and deputy IGP, for his failure to act on the security alert from foreign intelligence agencies. Father Silva said if the police had arrested Jayawardena, they would have found the masterminds behind the attacks and moved the investigations in the right direction.

(21-4-22) On April 20, the three-member **Vatican delegation**, led by Monsignor Miroslaw Stanislaw Wachowski, the Vatican's undersecretary for relations with states, **arrived in Hanoi** to start a seven-day working visit to Vietnam.



Indonesian VP seeks Protestant help in building peace

(21-4-22) Indonesian Vice President Ma'ruf Amin has appealed to Christian churches in Papua to cooperate with the government to build peace and prosperity in the restive and impoverished region.

Ma'ruf Amin made the appeal during a meeting with the leaders of the Communion of Churches in Papua at his office in Jakarta on April 20.

He said the presence of the ecumenical body in Papua and West Papua

provinces should make it easier for the government to develop Indonesia's poorest region, which has been plagued by a separatist insurgency for decades. "The churches have an important role in promoting and implementing sustainable development in Papua and building peace and welfare," he told the Protestant leaders at the meeting.

22-4-22

Pope clears schedule for medical tests

(22-4-22) Pope Francis cleared his schedule on April 22 to undergo medical tests.

The Pope has been forced to curtail his activities recently because of health problems. He was not the principal celebrant at the Easter Vigil in St. Peter's Basilica, and sat down midway through his Urbi et Orbi address on Easter Sunday.

A painful knee—which Vatican officials have attributed to strained ligaments—has made it difficult for the Pontiff to move or stand, and he has been assisted in walking for weeks. Last July he was hospitalized for an operation in which surgeons removed about a foot of his colon. The Vatican has not disclosed any other medical problems.

Although he has admitted that his health is "capricious," and his schedule is therefore uncertain, the 85-year-old Pontiff has planned trips later this year to Lebanon and to Africa, and he has voiced his desire to travel to Canada.

Pope 'asked for our forgiveness,' Manitoba Métis Federation president says after Vatican meeting

(22-4-22) 55 members of the Manitoba Métis Federation met with Pope Francis on April 21.

David Chartrand, the Federation's president, said that "many were just crying in tears as they got their gift and their handshake from the Pope. And he stayed with us and he signed our self-government agreement ... that recognized the Métis as the self-government of the people of the Red River. So many things happened in that room. No doubt the interaction was magic."

Pope thanks Orban for taking Ukrainians, Orban invites Pope to Hungary

(22-4-22) On April 21, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met privately Pope Francis for 40 minutes at the Vatican and discussed refugees, with an apparent absence of the tensions that surrounded their meeting in Hungary last September.

Pope has shelved plans to meet Russian Orthodox Patriarch

(22-4-22) Pope Francis has disclosed that he no longer expects to meet Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill in June.

Plans for a "summit meeting" have been disrupted because the Russian Patriarch has given clear support to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Pope told an Argentine newspaper interviewer that efforts to bring about his 2nd meeting with Kirill have been "suspended" because an encounter could "lend itself to much confusion."

"We stand by Ukraine," Ecumenical Patriarch says in Easter message

(22-4-22) Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who holds a primacy of honor among the Orthodox churches, said in his Easter message that “we stand and suffer alongside the pious and courageous people of Ukraine that bear a heavy cross ... It is unimaginable for us Christians to remain silent before the obliteration of human dignity.”

Philippines leads the world in baptisms

(22-4-22) In 2020, more people were baptized in the Philippines (1,603,283) than in all of Europe (1,533,666), according to the Archdiocese of Manila, citing figures provided by Archbishop Charles Brown, the apostolic nuncio. Mexico (1,537,710) and Brazil (1,126,152) had the second and third-highest numbers of baptisms.



Cardinal Dziwisz, former papal secretary, cleared of negligence on abuse

(22-4-22) Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, the longtime personal secretary to Pope John Paul II, has been cleared of charges that he was negligent in responding to sex-abuse allegations while serving as Archbishop of Krakow from 2005 to 2016.

A Vatican investigation into complaints found no evidence of wrongdoing, and that investigation is now closed, the apostolic nuncio in Poland has announced.

The investigation involved only the retired cardinal's leadership of the Polish archdiocese, and not his tenure as papal secretary. Cardinal Dziwisz has been criticized for earlier ties to prelates involved in abuse, including former cardinal Theodore McCarrick and the late Marcial Maciel, the disgraced founder of the Legionaries of Christ.

Peruvian prime minister insults cardinal

(22-4-22) Peruvian Prime Minister Anibal Torres, who recently praised Hitler's economic policies, insulted Cardinal Pedro Barreto, SJ, the president of the bishops' conference.

The bishops' conference issued a Spanish-language statement criticizing the prime minister for his remarks.

Moscow-affiliated Ukrainian Orthodox leader calls for humanitarian procession to Mariupol

(22-4-22) Metropolitan Onufriy, the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), called for an Easter ceasefire and a humanitarian corridor to the Russia-fallen city of Mariupol.

“The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, with the help of the episcopate, clergy, monks, and faithful, is ready to organize a prayer procession from Orikhiv, Zaporozhye Province, to the Azovstal plant in Mariupol to provide emergency assistance and evacuate civilians,” he said. “The march could also take out wounded soldiers and take away the bodies of the dead.”

Vatican publishes text on families and the synod

(22-4-22) The Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life has published an eight-page text, Points of Reflection for a Synodal Journey with Families.

“Families wish to walk along the synodal path as pastoral and ecclesial subjects, giving their contribution with their own experience of joy and suffering to the mission of the Church,” according to the Dicastery, led by Cardinal Kevin Farrell. “Therefore, a truly synodal journey must help the Church to be enriched by the evangelizing presence of families and to treasure the experience and style that families can offer.”

African cardinal: Homosexual marriage is an abomination

(22-4-22) Lamenting the “corruption of morals,” Cardinal Jean-Pierre Kutwa of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) said on Easter Sunday that marriage between a man and a man, or between a woman and a woman, is an “abomination.”

Côte d'Ivoire, a West African nation of 27.5 million, is 44% Muslim, 18% Catholic, and 16% Protestant, with 22% adhering to ethnic religions.

Kazakhstan - A path of unity and brotherhood: first meeting of the newly formed Bishops' Conference

(22-4-22) The newly formed Bishops' Conference of Central Asia will meet for the first time from April 26 to 30 in Nursultan, Kazakhstan. The new body was officially created in September, following a decree issued by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. At first it was going to include only Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, but, over the months, it was expanded to include Mongolia and Afghanistan and, probably, in the future it could also include Azerbaijan.

Timor Leste - The Archbishop of Dili to the president: the Constitution must be respected, for a prosperous and peaceful nation

(22-4-22) "I hope that whoever is elected president returns to the state Constitution since it serves as a check on the country's capacity to operate properly", said Archbishop Dom Virgilio do Carmo da Silva SDB, of Dili, capital of Timor Leste, expressing optimism that the elected president can and should respect and support the country's Constitution. Timor Leste held the second round of presidential elections on April 19 and re-elected Jose Ramos-Horta, the independence leader and Nobel laureate - former president of the country from 2007 to 2012. The new president will be sworn in on May 20, the 20th anniversary of Asia's youngest nation.

"We must maintain the constitution and instill discipline in all residents to permanently convert our nation into a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic society", Archbishop Da Silva said after casting his vote in Dili. The President, he pointed out, must act "as a father figure for the country's people and be respected by all political groups. As head of the country - he said - there should be no differentiation in service based on supporters. "The president must act as universal leader". Archbishop Dom Virgilio hoped that "the new president will work hard to get the country out of poverty".



China - National Catholic Collection Day: "God always gives more than we think"

(22-4-22) "God always gives more than we think, we just have to put his teaching into practice with love", said the head of the economic affairs of the small parish of Huangshi, located in the province of Hubei. During the pandemic, all parish expenses (maintenance, water, electricity, etc.) are paid for by parishioners without any additional income. They even ended up in the red at times, but on National

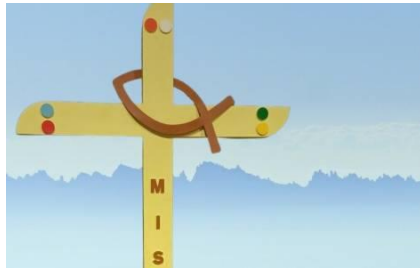
Catholic Collection Day, they donated 3,500 yen (equivalent to €500). Because, says the person in charge, "the deep faith and the teaching of Jesus gave us this conviction: God always gives more than what we think".

Peru - The Bishops to the President and parliamentarians: "Assume your responsibility for which you were elected!"

(22-4-22) "The Peruvian Episcopal Conference, aware of the reality that Peruvians live in all corners of the country, makes an urgent appeal to their political leaders to assume the current situation with greater responsibility: putting aside selfishness; agreeing on the political reforms that are necessary and taking radical measures against corruption. Power must be at the service of the people and not at the service of their representatives or those who claim this condition, beyond what is established by our legal and social system. Once again, the Peruvian bishops vehemently underscore, in a document published on April 21 under the title "Responsibility, stability and respect for governability, in favour of the Peruvian people," which follows several previous pronouncements of the Episcopate on the same topic.

Costa Rica - Great National Mission: the Missionary Cross will travel to all the dioceses

(22-4-22) The enthronement of a eight dioceses of Costa Rica will diocese of Puntarenas will begin mass. In this regard, Bishop mission will be carried out in the Province of Costa Rica. To a cross called the mission cross Dioceses. Puntarenas begins it with pleasure and love. I invite you to participate in this opening ceremony. The cross will arrive by caravan from Esparza and we will wait for it".



Missionary Cross in each of the start on 24 April, Sunday. The on Sunday, April 24 with a Oscar Fernández highlights: "A 8 dioceses of this Ecclesiastical inaugurate this mission there is that will be carried to each of the next April 24 and we will receive

Philippine bishop condemns campaign trail shooting

(22-4-22) A Catholic bishop in the Philippines has condemned a shooting by gunmen believed to be security guards in which five indigenous people were wounded while being accompanied by a presidential candidate to occupy what they claimed was ancestral land. The incident reportedly took place at a pineapple plantation in San Jose in Mindanao's Bukidnon province on April 19. They were being accompanied by presidential candidate Leody de Guzman, who was campaigning among farmers and indigenous people in the region. Bishop Noel Pedregosa of Malaybalay called the shooting unwarranted violence and said it was especially reprehensible for having taken place during the Easter season.

Myanmar junta frees arrested Catholic priest

(22-4-22) A priest from Pathein Diocese in Myanmar's Irrawaddy Division who was arrested by the military has been released following mediation by church officials. Father Richard Nay Zaw Aung was released on the afternoon of April 19, nine days after his arrest. "He was treated well during detention and questioning by the security forces," a clergyman from Pathein Diocese, which has a large Catholic population, told UCA News. Another church source said the priest might have signed a letter with some conditions prior to the release. Father Aung, who is an assistant parish priest, was among 13 people, including another priest, two seminarians and laypeople with some catechists, picked up during a raid at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Sharge village, Hinthada township, under Pathein Diocese. They were cooking meals for Palm Sunday celebrations. All except Father Aung were released after being questioned for several hours.

Sri Lankan cardinal reiterates doubts about Easter attack probe

(23-4-22) Sri Lankan Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith has questioned whether recommendations of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Easter Sunday attack were not being implemented to protect the real culprits.

"The people of the country have doubts as to whether the current government is protecting the former president out of fear that their involvement in the Easter attack may be revealed," said Cardinal Ranjith at a ceremony in Negombo on April 21 to mark three years since the 2019 bombings. He said that the former president, intelligence units and the police concealed details of the impending attacks despite having prior knowledge and thereby failed to ensure public safety. Cardinal Ranjith said the release of former inspector general of police (IGP) Pujith Jayasundara and former defence secretary Hemasiri Fernando, who publicly acknowledged that they knew about the attack, was an insult to those killed and injured in the attack.

ASEAN slammed for 'hollow words' over Myanmar peace plan

(22-4-22) Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has failed to fulfill its pledges or take meaningful steps towards pressing the military regime to end its rights violations despite adopting a five-point consensus on the crisis a year ago.

Indonesian Supreme Court upholds key sex abuse decree

(22-4-22) A rights group has welcomed an Indonesian Supreme Court ruling to uphold a decree on preventing and dealing with sexual abuse in higher education institutions.

In a statement on April 22, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) said the ruling was "aligned with the principle of gender equality" and guarantees "the individual rights of all Indonesians to be free of harassment regardless of their gender."

The decree provides a wider definition of sexual violence, which includes verbal, physical and non-physical sexual assault as well as assault through information and communication technology. It also introduces an array of punishments for perpetrators in universities, including dismissal or expulsion.

24-4-22

Regina Coeli: Risen Jesus dispels our fears and unbelief

(24-4-22) Pope Francis delivered the homily at Mass on Divine Mercy Sunday presided over by Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. This was the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic, that Mass was celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica on Divine Mercy Sunday. There were 8,500 faithful, including around 300 Missionaries of Mercy called to Rome for the weekend.

Three times Jesus spoke to the disciples the words "Peace be with you," the Pope said in his homily, "Christians find that those words of God's mercy "give joy, then grant forgiveness, and finally offer comfort in every difficulty. Christ did not reproach them for what they had done, but showed them his usual kindness, purifying them by a forgiveness that is utterly unmerited. After having received God's forgiveness, said the Pope, the disciples were made "agents of reconciliation" in order to dispense "the mercy that they themselves had received."

Rather than rebuking Thomas for his unbelief, Jesus came to his aid and invited him to put his finger in His side. "He did not treat Thomas with harshness, and the apostle was deeply moved by this kindness. From a disbeliever, he became a believer, and made the simplest and finest confession of faith: 'My Lord and my God!'"

Pope Francis said that every believer can relate to Thomas' story and disbelief. Jesus comes to us too with "heartwarming signs of His mercy" and comforts us "by offering His wounds." Our experience of such mercy of God helps us to see the wounds of our brothers and sisters, the Pope added.

Pope at Regina Coeli: Jesus waits for us to seek Him

(24-4-22) At the Regina Coeli, speaking from the Apostolic Palace study window overlooking St Peter's square, the Pope recalled the day's Gospel that speaks about the first and second apparition of the Risen Jesus to the disciples in the Upper Room. He suggested we focus on the Apostle Thomas and Jesus. The Pope pointed out how Thomas represents us all, as we too struggle at times like Thomas wishing to actually see the Lord or seeking a concrete sign of the Lord's presence and love.

“It is better to have an imperfect but humble faith that always returns to Jesus, than a strong but presumptuous faith that makes us proud and arrogant.” In order to overcome our moments of weariness and crisis, we need to be reassured that the "the Risen Jesus wishes to return to stay with us," and only waits for us to seek him, Pope Francis said in conclusion.



Appeal for truce in Ukraine; pilgrimage in Cameroon

(24-4-22) The Pope again made an appeal for an Easter truce to the war in Ukraine, “the least and most tangible sign of a desire for peace.

Separately, the Pope threw his support behind a pilgrimage in Cameroon to reconsecrate the African nation to the Virgin Mary and pray for peace.
