

## CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

(CWLW)

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26-12-22

### **Pope stresses forgiveness on feast of St. Stephen**

(26-12-22) In his Angelus audience on December 26, the feast of St. Stephen, Pope Francis exhorted the faithful to imitate the first martyr by being ready to forgive.

The Pope also called for a commitment to peace: “peace in families, peace in parishes and religious communities, peace in movements and associations, peace for those war-torn peoples, peace for the dear and martyred Ukraine.”

### **Work for solidarity: Cardinal Parolin encourages St. Egidio community**

(26-12-22) Speaking at an annual Christmas meal hosted by the St. Egidio community for needy people in Rome, Cardinal Pietro Parolin said that “we have so much need for solidarity and love in our world.”

The Vatican’s Secretary of State said that the luncheon— at which members of the St. Egidio community served the homeless, refugees, and elderly— was the sort of thing that “could be repeated and multiplied,” particularly during the Christmas season.

### **Homily of Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa for Midnight Mass, Christmas 2022**



(26-12-22) Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, preached the homily at Midnight Mass in Bethlehem. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas attended the Mass.

“Once again we meet each other here in Bethlehem, in this Holy Place, to thank, praise and celebrate the wonderful event of the Saviour’s birth,” he preached. “Today we are invited, as every year, to bow before this great mystery, which is also a proclamation of salvation and mercy ... First and foremost, it is a celebration of God’s revelation in history; it is the manifestation of divine intention towards mankind, which reaches its climax during Christmas.”

The Latin Patriarch also lamented rising violence in the region: “with our eyes, we see that violence seems to have become our main language, our main way of communicating.”

“The Palestinian issue, unfortunately, no longer seems to be the focus of the world’s attention,” he added. “This, too, is a form of violence, which hurts the conscience of millions of Palestinians, left increasingly alone and who, for too many generations, have been waiting for an answer to their legitimate desire for dignity and freedom.”

### **Christmas message 2022: Father Francesco Patton, OFM, Custos of the Holy Land**

(26-12-22) “Here the Son of God became incarnate in the night of the world” is the title of the Christmas message of Father Francesco Patton, the Franciscan superior of the Holy Land’s shrines, including the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

### **Cardinal Marx decries Patriarch Kirill’s support of war, weighs in on Synodal Way**

(26-12-22) In a wide-ranging interview with a Munich daily newspaper, Cardinal Reinhard Marx condemned the Patriarch of Moscow’s support of the invasion of Ukraine, called for a continued generous welcome of refugees in Germany, and defended his diocese’s efforts to address sexual abuse.

“The Pope is open at least to the fact that the [Synodal] Way continues,” Cardinal Marx added. “But he has to keep an eye on the big picture. As bishops, we want to work to ensure that the connection to the path of the whole Church continues to be possible.”

Cardinal Marx said that he sees the issues of priestly celibacy and the ordination of women to the diaconate as important, though ultimately peripheral to the “core of the problem” of people leaving the Church. Referring to himself as a one-time “traditionalist” who opposed altar girls, he mused, “I believe that I myself have developed.”

### **Ecumenical Patriarch expresses support for Ukrainians against Russian aggression**

(26-12-22) Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who holds a primacy of honor among the Orthodox churches, said in a video message to Ukrainians that “unfortunately, this year the message of the good news about Christmas echoes alongside the din of war and the clash of weapons in your fatherland, which is experiencing the horrible consequences of a provocative and unjust invasion.”

“This war, provoked by the aggression of the Russian Federation last February, is the worst European geopolitical and humanitarian crisis since at the end of the Second World War, with a negative impact on the environment and society worldwide,” he added. “For us Christians, all wars are the murder of our brothers.”

### **Major Archbishop thanks Pope for becoming ‘centre of universal solidarity’ with Ukraine**

(26-12-22) “Special thanks today from Ukraine goes to the Holy Father, Pope Francis,” Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said in his December 25 message, as he cited the Pontiff’s recent words and material support.

“Greeting you, Holy Father, on this holy day, we want to thank you for becoming the center of universal solidarity with the long-suffering Ukrainian people,” he continued. “Through such concrete gestures of Christian love, we feel that God is with us. We feel that we are not forgotten and abandoned in our misery. We feel that the Lord God is coming to be born today in Ukraine.”

In addition to lamenting the day’s Russian attacks, Major Archbishop Shevchuk expressed concern for those who “succumb to the temptation to celebrate Christmas without Christ, imitating various Western commercial, sometimes even ideological influences.”

### **Rohingya refugee boat lands in Indonesia after month at sea**

(26-12-22) A broken-down boat carrying 57 Rohingya refugees landed on Indonesia's western most coast of Aceh on 25 December Sunday after a month at sea, police said.

Thousands of the mostly Muslim Rohingya, heavily persecuted in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, risk their lives each year on long, expensive sea journeys -- often in poor-quality vessels -- in an attempt to reach Malaysia or Indonesia. "The boat had a broken engine and it was carried by the wind to a shore in Ladong Village in Aceh Besar (district)," Winardy, who goes by one name, said.

"They said they have been drifting at sea for a month." Winardy added that police arrived at the beach after being informed by some locals that the boat had docked there. He said four of the men on board were sick and had been transported to a hospital.

(27-12-22) Rohingya refugees received emergency medical treatment after a boat carrying nearly 200 people came ashore in Indonesia on 26 Dec., authorities said, in the fourth such landing in the country in recent months.



### **Christmas day floods force thousands to flee homes in Philippines**

(26-12-22) Christmas Day floods in the Philippines forced the evacuation of nearly 46,000 people from their homes, civil defence officials said 26 December. Two people were killed and nine others

were missing after heavy seasonal rain inundated parts of the southern region of Mindanao, the officials added.

The disaster dampened celebrations on the mainly Catholic nation's most important holiday. "The waters rose above the chest in some areas, but today the rains have ceased," civil defence worker Robinson Lacre told AFP by phone from Gingoog city, which accounted for 33,000 of the 45,700 people evacuated from their homes. The coastguard said it rescued members of more than two dozen families in Ozamiz city and Clarin town at the height of the flooding.

### **Several foreign NGOs stop work after Taliban ban on women staff**

(26-12-22) Several foreign aid groups announced on Sunday they had suspending their operations in Afghanistan after the country's Taliban rulers ordered all NGOs to stop women staff from working. Their announcement prompted warnings from international officials and from NGOs that humanitarian aid would be hard hit.

"We cannot effectively reach children, women and men in desperate need in Afghanistan without our female staff," said Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and CARE in a joint statement. "Whilst we gain clarity on this announcement, we are suspending our programmes, demanding that men and women can equally continue our lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan."

The International Rescue Committee, which provides emergency response in health, education and other areas and employs 3,000 women across Afghanistan, also said it was suspending services.

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### **Patriarch Kirill sends Christmas greeting to Pope Francis, Protestant leaders**



(27-12-22) Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, has sent Christmas greetings to Pope Francis and Protestant leaders who celebrate Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar

The message came at the conclusion of a year in which the Pope and other Christian leaders criticized Kirill for his support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"Besides political and economic tribulations, which humankind has experienced for centuries, modern society is suffering a deep moral crisis," Patriarch Kirill said in his message. "That is why the Church should raise her voice and call people to follow Christ, Who is 'the way, the truth, and the life'" (John 14:6).

### **CRS official warns of rising global hunger, hails new US measure**

(27-12-22) "The passage of the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act reestablishes the US government's commitment to tackling hunger and malnutrition in all its forms, which is critical at a time when the number of people facing food insecurity has ballooned to more than 800 million people worldwide," said Bill O'Keefe, executive vice president of Mission, Mobilization and Advocacy for Catholic Relief Services, the US bishops' international relief and development agency.

### **Catholic bishops in Ethiopia hail peace agreement, urge stakeholders to work 'diligently'**

(27-12-22) At least 385,000 people have died in the Tigray War, which began in 2020. The two major parties in the war signed a peace agreement in November.

Ethiopia, an African nation of 110.9 million, is 60% Christian (41% Orthodox, 16% Protestant), 34% Muslim, and 6% ethnic religionist.

### **Final verdicts in Suu Kyi junta trial set for Friday**

(27-12-22) A Myanmar junta court will give its verdicts on five remaining charges in the 18-month trial of jailed civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Friday, 30 Dec., a legal source told AFP.

Suu Kyi has been a prisoner since the military toppled her government in February last year, ending the Southeast Asian nation's brief period of democracy.

The Nobel laureate, 77, has already been found guilty on 14 charges ranging from corruption to illegally importing walkie-talkies and breaching the official secrets act and has been jailed for 26 years. Rights groups have slammed the trial as a sham and wanted the junta to release Suu Kyi.

### **North Korea's ruling party begins key annual meeting**

(27-12-22) North Korea's ruling party has kicked off a major annual meeting with economic policy on the agenda, state media reported on 27 Dec.

Instead of a New Year's Day speech, leader Kim Jong Un in recent years has used the year-end plenary meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea as a platform to outline policies in key areas such as diplomacy, security and the economy.

The meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), began on Monday with Kim at the helm, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported, capping a year that saw Pyongyang conduct a record-breaking wave of weapons tests that sparked concern and warnings from South Korea, Japan and the United States.

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### **Pope asks prayers for 'very ill' Benedict XVI**

(28-12-22) At the conclusion of his regular weekly audience on December 28, Pope Francis asked for "a special prayer for Pope-emeritus Benedict," saying that the retired Pontiff is "very ill."

A spokesman for the Vatican later confirmed that Benedict's condition had become more serious: "In the last few hours there has been an aggravation of his health due to advancing age." However, he said that the former Pope's condition was stable.

The *National Catholic Register* reports that the retired Pontiff has experienced kidney failure.

### **Pope suggests celebrating Christmas with St. Francis de Sales**

(28-12-22) At his weekly public audience on December 28, Pope Francis recommended that the faithful use St. Francis de Sales as a model for the celebration of Christmas.

The Pope reminded his audience that the day marked the 400th anniversary of the death of St. Francis de Sales. He also announced that he had released an apostolic letter honouring the saint on that same day.

St. Francis de Sales "wrote a great deal about Christmas," Pope Francis observed, and his writing emphasized the simple but profound love shown by the Incarnation. The Pope continued:

God's love is not sugar sweet; Jesus' manger shows us that. It is not a hypocritical goodness that hides the pursuit of pleasures and comforts. Christmas is joy and celebration, certainly, but in simplicity and austerity.



### **Pope issues apostolic letter honouring St. Francis de Sales**

(28-12-22) Pope Francis has issued a new apostolic letter, *Totum Amoris Est*, for the fourth centenary of the death of St. Francis de Sales.

In the letter the Pontiff lauds St. Francis as an unmatched interpreter of the signs of his times, and an "extraordinary director of souls." He calls particular attention to the saint's *Treatise on the Love of God*, citing in particular one passage: "At the very thought of God, one immediately feels a certain delightful emotion of the heart, which testifies that God is God of the human heart."

### **In Benin, spread of jihadism is restricting the work of the Church**

(28-12-22) Benin, a West African nation of 13.3 million, is 45% Christian (23% Catholic), 28% Muslim, and 28% ethnic religionist. Because of the growing jihadist threat, Benedictine sisters have left one diocese in Benin for another.



### **'I saw Archbishop Romero on a stretcher,' cardinal recalls in book**

(28-12-22) Father Ariel Beramendi, a Bolivian priest, has published a book-length interview with Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez of El Salvador, who recently turned 80.

"I saw Archbishop Romero on a stretcher with his purple priestly vestments, lifeless, a serene face," said Cardinal Rosa, as he recalled the 1980 martyrdom of St. Oscar Romero. "When I went out into the streets, I heard celebratory fireworks in the affluent parts of the city."

### **'God also controls missiles': Ukrainian bishop speaks of Christmas miracle**



(28-12-22) Referring to a "miracle of Christmas," Bishop Stanislaw Szyrokoradiuk, the Latin-rite bishop of Odessa-Simferopol (Ukraine), spoke of an event that happened at a church in Kherson on December 23.

As parishioners, including children, were preparing the church for Christmas, two Russian missiles hit the church. The bishop said, "One fell and broke in two, the other got stuck in the wall. Neither one exploded. Is this not the grace of God? This means that if we pray, if we trust in God, God controls the rockets."

### **Africa – 'You came to this country with nothing and you will leave with nothing': the story of an exiled family far from home**

(28-12-22) Father Mauro Armanino, from Algeria's Niamey, tells the story of an African family in search of a dignified life. The priest of the Society for African Missions thus retraces the story of the holy family of Nazareth "increased by one". "On Christmas Eve something special always happens," writes the missionary. They arrived together from Liberia in Algeria, Francis, Mimi, and two small children. Awa, the girl, three years old, and he, the last one for now, called Success, born two years ago in exile. An old friend had advised dad Francis, an electrician by trade, to try to revive the light of his life in Algeria, though there was little chance of finding a well-paid job. Once in Algeria, they could not find a shadow of the friend in question, so Francis began working for minimum wage as a bricklayer on the construction sites of Tamanrasset. His wife Mimì, a hairdresser by profession, stays at home and invents cheap hairstyles for the immigrant women who populate the Algerian city. Perhaps to protect themselves from fate or simply to give themselves courage, they have given the little one the only name that could give them a future "Success". The event is not only what has happened, but above all what could happen: new life prospects for those who are exiled far from home".

Francis, like most migrants and refugees on Algerian territory, was identified and, lacking a residence permit, stripped of his belongings and deported with his family to the desert adjacent to the Niger border. "The usual mechanism of deportation and expulsion has characterized Algeria's immigration policy for years. You came to this country with nothing and you will leave with nothing", this is the motto that accompanies the export of "immigrant merchandise", although useful when it comes to exploiting it on work sites. Other threats lurked on the return trip made in a truck carrying onions from Niger to Benin, in the Atlantic Ocean."

There was no room for them anywhere in the city, and while they waited, they have been guests for some time at the main bus station in Rimbo. "They have established unsuccessful contacts with the International Organization for Migration, IOM, which for the moment has suspended new registrations for voluntary returns to the migrants' countries of departure. They live camped out in the waiting room on plastic-covered sponge mats offered by the travel company. A census of voluntary passengers will be carried out in due time, when the IOM offices reopen and are functional. Success was born in exile because his family, to save him from King Herod of the Misery, who wanted to eliminate him in his own country, had him born in Tamanrasset. For now, he is safe at the Rimbo bus station in Niamey."

### **Ethiopia - Important agreement reached between the government and Tigrayan leaders**

(28-12-22) The talks held in recent days between a delegation from Addis Ababa and the leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Tigray (TPLF) regarding the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the northern region of the country have been defined by the local Ethiopian press as cordial and historic. After arriving in Mekelle on Monday December 26, 2022, the government delegation and Tigrayan leaders discussed a number of urgent issues related to humanitarian aid, basic services, trade and the withdrawal of Eritrean and Amhara forces. According to Getachew Reda, adviser to the president of Tigray, who also signed the peace agreement with the Ethiopian government on behalf of the TPLF, "fruitful talks were held and an important agreement was reached. We will continue to move forward as we face the challenges that lie ahead." The government has pledged to fully resume institutional services and repair infrastructure in all areas of the region. Ethiopia and the Tigray rebel forces have agreed to create a joint monitoring body to ensure that the peace agreement signed in South Africa on November 2, aimed at ending the bloody war, is respected by all parties. The terms of the agreement also include guarantees of humanitarian access and the entry of the Ethiopian army into the capital of Tigray. This is the first delegation from the Ethiopian federal government to visit the region, two years after the start of the conflict, to monitor the implementation of last month's peace agreement.

Also on Tuesday, December 27, the national airline, Ethiopian Airlines, announced its decision to resume flights to Mekelle, to allow families to reunite, facilitate business re-establishment, stimulate the flow of tourists and provide useful opportunities for the society. With flights scheduled to the region's capital every day, the airline said it will increase the frequency based on demand for the route.

Catholic bishops in Ethiopia hail peace agreement, urge stakeholders to work 'diligently'

At least 385,000 people have died in the Tigray War, which began in 2020. The two major parties in the war signed a peace agreement in November.

### **America - Let us never take our eyes off the children who live in poverty and are exploited**

(28-12-22) "Let us ask Jesus, just born in Bethlehem, to guard the newborn life of those who suffer the injustice of war and, as Pope Francis says, lose the ability to smile. Let us never take our eyes off the boys and girls who live in poverty, who are exploited at work and sexually". This is the appeal launched by the Commission for Life, Laity and the Family of the Argentine Episcopal Conference on the occasion of the feast of the Holy Innocent Martyrs, which is celebrated on December 28. With this feast, the Church remembers all those children whom Herod, in an attempt to eliminate the Child Jesus, orders to cruelly kill, (Mt 2, 15-18). The text released by the Argentine Episcopal Conference highlights that "in each Christmas celebration we renew our deep desire to care for life, to help it to be born and to grow."



### **UNSC urges Taliban to reverse restrictions on women**

(28-12-22) The UN Security Council called on the Taliban on 27 December to reverse policies targeting women and girls in Afghanistan, expressing alarm at the "increasing erosion" of human rights in the country.

In the latest blow to women's rights in Afghanistan since the Taliban reclaimed power last year, the hardline Islamist rulers banned women on 24 December from working in non-governmental organizations, sparking an international outcry. The Taliban have already suspended university education for women and secondary schooling for girls.

Several foreign aid groups announced on Sunday they were suspending their operations in Afghanistan.

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### **Benedict XVI's condition: serious but stable**

(29-12-22) Matteo Bruni, the director of the Vatican press office, told reporters on December 29 that Pope-emeritus Benedict XVI is “absolutely lucid and alert,” but his health remains precarious. The 95-year-old retired Pope “managed to rest well last night,” Bruni said. He concluded that “although his condition remains serious, the situation at the moment is stable.”

Pope Francis visited his predecessor on Wednesday, at the Mater Ecclesiae residence where the retired Pontiff has lived since his resignation. Bruni reported that Pope Francis had renewed his call for prayers for Benedict.

### **Papal message to Taizé youth: Amid war in Europe, ‘opt for trust in God’**

(29-12-22) Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, the Substitute (Sostituto) of the Secretariat of State, has written a message in the Pope’s name to the young people who are participating in the 45th Taizé European meeting in Rostock, Germany.

The Taizé Community, an ecumenical French monastic community, was founded by Brother Roger Schütz in 1940.

(29-12-22) **Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem condemns the storming of its land by Israeli radical group.** On December 27, Israeli settlers seized land owned by the Greek Orthodox Church in Silwan (Siloam).

### **DR Congo cardinal warns of plundering of Church land, calls for voter registration**

(29-12-22) The Democratic Republic of the Congo, a Central African nation of 105 million, is 95% Christian (52% Catholic), with 2% adhering to ethnic religions. Pope Francis is scheduled to make an apostolic journey there in late January and early February.

### **Leading UN human rights official meets Pontiff**

(29-12-22) Argentine diplomat Federico the United Nations Human Rights during his December 28 general warm words of praise to the Pope for work” of the UN body.



Villegas, the 2022 president of Council, met Pope Francis briefly audience—and subsequently offered “for acknowledging the important

### **Restrained Christmas celebrations in Jordan following killing of police official**

(29-12-22) Jordan, a Western Asian nation of 10.9 million, is 95% Muslim. Its ruler, King Abdullah II, has long fostered tolerance toward Christians in the region—and the nation’s Christian leaders called for restrained Christmas celebrations as a sign of solidarity with the king and fellow Jordanians during a time of national mourning.

### **Lebanon: Catholic schools are in ‘survival mode’**

(29-12-22) As Lebanon grapples with economic and political crises, the future of the nation’s 320 Catholic schools is at risk.

### **Leading South African bishop, in Christmas message, warns against immorality, overindulgence**

(29-12-22) “We will do well to remind ourselves about the real meaning of Christmas and appreciate it and shun those behaviors and attitudes contradictory to this season’s spirit,” the president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference, Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, said in his Christmas message.

He wrote, “There will be murders; crimes will be committed; many will be raped; excessive drinking and reckless driving will see road accidents shooting up; others will experiment with drugs and begin their journey into addiction; quarrels will be engaged in; there will be lawlessness and lack of consideration for others, all in the name of Christmas.”

## **Madagascar - In prayer for the victims of the tragic accident of Ampasimanjeva: the Bishop of Farafangana immediately on the spot**

(28-12-22) "It was Bishop Fulgence Rabemahafaly who promptly communicated to me the news of the accident in which five people lost their lives", Bishop Gaetano Di Pierro of Farafangana told Fides, who immediately went to the scene. The missionary bishop was referring to the tragic accident that occurred in Ampasimanjeva, in the diocese of Manakara, on December 27. The vehicle in which there were nine people, engaged in the Ampasimanjeva mission, suddenly left the road on the way back from a pilgrimage to Vohipeno. "According to what Bishop Rabemahafaly told me, continues Bishop Di Pierro - Dr. Martin Randriatiana, doctor and director of the Ampasimanjeva Medical Foundation hospital was driving, and Father Didier Razafinjatovo, Brother of Charity, was seating next to him. The doctor's wife, Dr. Nivo, four Sisters of Charity and two brothers, were all sitting in the back were also involved".

"Upon our arrival, we stopped at the scene of the accident where the police informed us that the doctor and his wife, Father Didier, as well as two Carmelite Sisters of Charity, Sister Justine Lalao and Sister Marie Louise, had died. The others were in precarious conditions and were all transported to the Salle d'oeuvre of Tanambao Church, Manakara", explained the bishop. "We immediately went to the room where the doctors with the help of the nuns were taking care of recomposing the bodies. Then I went to the hospital to visit the wounded: a Brother was still in a state of confusion, while the other was asleep. One of the sisters was fully conscious and told us what had happened, while the other was in a coma".

Bishop Di Pierro also confirmed that the Fathers of Ambalapahasoavana were already on site.

## **Argentina - Just as we have been united in sporting joy, we also face the different problems of society together**

(29-12-22) "We hope, for the coming year, to be able to renew attitudes and dispositions for democratic coexistence, leaving aside everything that increases divisions, endangers institutionalism and postpones the discussion of urgent issues in relation to poverty, social debt, education and the growth of the country": this is the wish expressed by the Argentine bishops, through the Executive Commission of the Episcopal Conference, in their message entitled "2023: an us that includes us and makes us all brothers".



The bishops of Argentina quote Pope Francis' message for the next World Day of Peace, January 1, which invites everyone to commit themselves to society and the planet, "creating the foundations for a more just and peaceful world, seriously committed to the pursuit of a true common good", (n.5). They then recall the celebrations of the sporting triumph of the national football team, during which the Argentines were able to "put aside differences and overcome divisions, in the exciting experience of common joy". Inspired by these attitudes, the bishops hope that during the new year which is about to begin, these provisions will be renewed in order to resolve together the various problems which afflict society with the sole objective of the common good.

## **China - When the "Union of Chinese students" of the Urbaniana University paid homage to Celso Costantini, the first Apostolic Delegate in China**

(29-12-22) "This publication aims not only to commemorate the 10 years since the arrival of Archbishop Celso Costantini as the first Apostolic Delegate in Beijing, but above all to commemorate the Pope's love for the Church in China". Thus wrote Don Vincenzo Zhao Wennan in the preface to the singular volume entitled "Acts commemorating the 10th anniversary of the arrival of Archbishop Celso Costantini in China (1922-1932)", written in 1932 by the then very active "Union of Chinese students of the Pontifical Urban University".



The future Cardinal Celso Costantini (1876-1958), forerunner of the dialogue of the Holy See with Beijing (see Fides 8/11/2022), was the first Apostolic Delegate in China from 1922 to 1933. In those years, Costantini managed to have the first National Council of the Catholic Church in China (Shanghai 1924) and to start the process of ecclesial "decolonization", fighting the stubborn remnants of the Protectorate and all the forms that continued to impose European features on the Catholic presence in the Far East, ending up presenting it as a religious correlate of western expansion into those lands. Thanks also to the commitment of Costantini, on October 28, 1926, the first 6 Chinese bishops ordained in the modern era were consecrated by Pope Pius XI in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. In 1927, Costantini also promoted the foundation of the Congregatio Discipulorum Domini (CDD), the first Chinese clerical religious institute. With his support, the first Chinese Catholic University, Fu Ren, now in Taiwan, was also born.



### **China - On January 1, 2023, all churches and places of prayer in Beijing will be open**

(29-12-22) The news has just reached Agenzia Fides that all the churches and places of prayer in Beijing will be open on January 1, 2023. The faithful of Beijing are immensely grateful to the Lord for this decision.

The Christian faithful, deeply tried by the latest wave of the pandemic that is invading the country, feel equally fortified in their faith also thanks to this news made public today 29 December by

the archdiocese of Beijing.

"All churches and places of prayer in Beijing will be reopened in an orderly manner from January 1, 2023. Priority must be given to Mass and the Sacraments" - informs the archdiocese.

The press release also contains some practical indications, such as the increase in the number of masses and the reduction of the duration of time to allow a greater number of faithful to participate by booking.

"Bishop Giuseppe Li Shan dispenses the elderly, the seriously ill and people infected with Covid from Sunday mass. All health provisions are in place to protect the faithful".

### **Pakistan court frees rapist after marrying deaf victim**

(29-12-22) A Pakistan court freed a rapist after he married his victim in a settlement brokered by a council of elders in the northwest of the country, his lawyer said on 28 December. The decision has outraged rights activists, who say it legitimizes sexual violence against women in a country where a majority of rape goes unreported.

Dawlat Khan, 25, was sentenced in May to life imprisonment by a lower court in Buner district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province for raping a deaf woman. He was released from prison on 26 December after the Peshawar High Court accepted an out-of-court settlement agreed by the rape survivor's family.

"This is effectively the court's approval of rape and facilitation of rapists and rape mentality," Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir, a lawyer and human rights activist, said of the Peshawar court decision. "It is against the basic principles of justice and the law of the land which does not recognise such an arrangement," she told AFP. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said it was "appalled" by the ruling.

### **Bangladesh opens first metro line in capital**

(29-12-22) Bangladesh's sprawling capital inaugurated its first ever metro rail line on 28 December as authorities work to ease congestion that has throttled growth and inflamed tempers in the gridlocked metropolis.

Dhaka is one of the world's most densely populated cities, and daily commutes along its car-clogged roads are a source of constant frustration for its 22 million people.

Local researchers say the capital's economy loses upwards of \$3 billion each year in lost work time due to traffic jams, often worsened by regular street protests and monsoonal downpours. The new elevated train network has been in development for nearly a decade and is slated to grow to over a hundred stations and six lines criss-crossing the city by 2030. Wednesday saw the start of operations on a section of the first line connecting a neighbourhood on Dhaka's periphery with the city centre, built with a \$2.8 billion price tag and largely funded by Japanese development funds.

### **Death toll from Philippine floods, landslides rises to 33**



(29-12-22) One person died and three others were missing in the southern Philippines after being hit by a landslide, police said Thursday, taking the nationwide death toll from recent rains to at least 33. Authorities were still searching for more than two dozen other people missing after heavy downpours over the Christmas weekend caused flooding and landslides across central and southern regions. The weather turned bad over the weekend as the disaster-prone nation of 110 million people prepared for a long Christmas holiday.

Hundreds of houses have since been destroyed and more than 5,000 hectares (12,400 acres) of crops wiped out by rains that have forced tens of thousands of people into evacuation centres, the national disaster agency said.

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### **Indian bishop, 2 cardinals face charge in sex assault case**

(30-12-22) Three Indian bishops have been accused of not taking action against Father Vincent Pereira, a priest of the Diocese of Pune who has been arrested for an alleged sexual assault of a 15-year-old boy. The priest has been accused of abuse multiple times.

They are Bishop Thomas Dabre of Pune; Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, a member of the Pope's advisory Council of Cardinals; and Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão of Goa, the president of the Conference of (Latin Rite) Catholic Bishops of India.

### **Indonesian president makes unannounced Christmas visit to cathedral, calls for tolerance**

(30-12-22) The visit to a cathedral by Indonesian President Joko Widodo is significant because Indonesia has more Muslims than any other nation. The Southeast Asian nation of 275 million, the world's fourth most populous, is 80% Muslim and 12% Christian.

### **British woman arrested for praying outside abortion clinic charged with 'intimidation'**

(30-12-22) A woman arrested by British police faces charges of "protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users" for standing still and praying silently outside an abortion facility. Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was arrested in Birmingham, UK, on Dec. 6.

Video footage of her arrest was published on social media. The video shows an officer asking Vaughan-Spruce if she was praying, to which she answers: "I might be praying in my head."

Following a further exchange with police, the 45-year-old was arrested and interrogated. Vaughan-Spruce is the director of March for Life UK.

She was charged Dec. 15 with four counts of breaking a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) around the abortion facility. A PSPO is intended to stop antisocial behavior. The terms of the PSPO include prayer under 'protest,' which is banned within the 'buffer zone' around the clinic. Vaughan-Spruce is accused of "protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users" for standing still and praying silently inside a buffer zone. At the time of Vaughan-Spruce's arrest, the abortion facility outside which she was standing was closed.

"If Isabel had been loudly campaigning against climate change on the street, she would not have been charged for breaking the PSPO," said Jeremiah Igunnubole, legal counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF UK). She is to appear before the Birmingham Magistrate Court on Feb.2.

### **Citing fatigue, French bishop announces 6-month sabbatical**

(30-12-22) Bishop Thierry Brac de la Perrière, 63, has governed the Diocese of Nevers since 2011. He said that he asked the Pope for a sabbatical because of fatigue and approaching "burnout": "I need a time of rest, a spiritual reprise ... to be able to better perform my duties."

### **Polish archbishop criticizes presidential veto in Christmas sermon**

(30-12-22) Under pressure from protests, President Andrzej Duda of Poland vetoed a bill whose purpose was to protect students from LGBT indoctrination. In his homily at Midnight Mass, Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski of Kraków, Poland's second-largest city, criticized the veto.



### **Vatican - Missionaries killed in the year 2022**

(30-12-22) According to information gathered by Agenzia Fides, 18 missionaries were killed in the world in 2022: 12 priests, 1 religious man, 3 religious women, 1 seminarian, 1 lay person. This year the highest number of missionaries killed is registered in Africa, where 9 missionaries were killed (7 priests and 2 religious women), followed by Latin America, where 8 missionaries were killed (4 priests, 1 religious man, 1 religious woman, 1 seminarian, 1 lay person). In

Asia 1 priest was killed. From 2001 to 2021, according to data in our possession, 526 missionaries have been killed in the world.

We use the term "missionary" for all the baptized, aware that "in virtue of their Baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples. All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization" (EG 120). The little information on the life and circumstances that caused the violent deaths of these 18 men and women missionaries offer us images of daily life, even if in particularly difficult contexts, marked by violence, poverty, lack of justice and respect for human life. Other people who were with them often shared the same fate as the missionaries. Priests killed while they were going to celebrate Mass with the community they led, to break that bread and consecrate that wine that would have been food and life for so many faithful. A religious woman doctor killed at the diocese health centre, ready to save the lives of other people, and who knows how many she had already saved in the past. A missionary killed during an assault on the mission: instead of thinking about saving her own life, she was concerned about the safety of the girls housed in the dormitory. Another layman, a pastoral worker, killed on his way to the church to lead a liturgy of the Word for the faithful of that area, who did not have a resident priest.

### **Nigeria - The "re-birth" of two of the three priests kidnapped before Christmas, in prayer for the third still hostage**

(30-12-22) Two of the three priests kidnapped before Christmas, over a period of five days, were released within a day of each other. It is Father Mark Ojotu, of the diocese of Otukpo, in the eastern state of Benue, kidnapped on 23 December. Fr Sylvester Okechukwu, of the diocese of Kafanchan, Kaduna State, is also released.



There is still no news regarding Father Christopher Ogide, kidnapped on December 17 in Umuopara, diocese of Umuahia, in the southern region of Abia.

### **Eritrean authorities free Catholic bishop after 75 days**

Eritrean authorities have freed Catholic Bishop Fikremariam Hagos Tsalim after 75 days in prison. Bishop Tsalim, the 52-year-old bishop of the southern part of Eritrea, had spent Christmas in a cathedral in Asmara, the Eritrean capital. A video emerged Dec. 28 showing the bishop being greeted by priests and women religious in the cathedral in Asmara, the Eritrean capital. Archbishop Tesfamariam of Asmara was present at the meeting. Authorities also released a priest from the epararchy the bishop in the Adi Abeto.



Earlier, reports indicated the Vatican had accelerated diplomatic efforts to gain his release. The detention came under the government of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki, who has been in office since 1993. Eritrea, a nation in the Horn of Africa, gained its independence from neighboring Ethiopia in 1991. The country has no functional constitution or national elections. Although the government had not given reasons for the arrests, observers said they believe Bishop Tsalim was detained for criticizing forced youth recruitment for the war in the neighboring Tigray region of Ethiopia. The war has since ended with the negotiation of a peace agreement. He had also reportedly questioned the government's seizure of church-owned schools and clinics.

31-12-22

### **Benedict XVI, "humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord," has returned to the Father's House**

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has returned to the Father's House. His heart stopped beating at 9.34 AM (Rome time) on Saturday morning in his residence at the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery, which the 95-year-old Pope emeritus had chosen as his residence after resigning from the Petrine ministry in 2013.



The note from the director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, released in the morning says further: From Monday, January 2, 2023, the body of Benedict XVI will be lying in state in St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, where the People of God will be able to pay their last respects to the great Pontiff, giving thanks to the Lord for having given him to His Church.

During a briefing in the Holy See Press Office, the director also reported that the funeral will be held in St. Peter's Square on Thursday, January 5, 2023, at 9.30 AM. Pope Francis will preside over the funeral of the Pope Emeritus. Bruni also said the Pope Emeritus received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick on Wednesday, 28th, at the end of Mass in the Monastery, in the presence of the Memores Domini, the consecrated laywomen who had assisted him daily for many years.

### **Key dates in the life former pope Benedict**

(31-12-22) Key dates in the life of Joseph Ratzinger, the former pope Benedict XVI who died on Saturday aged 95:

- April 16, 1927: Born in Marktl am Inn, a small town in Bavaria in southern Germany, and named Joseph Ratzinger.



- 1941: Forced to join the Hitler Youth.
- 1951: Ordained a priest.
- 1977: Named archbishop of Munich and becomes a cardinal.
- 1981: Heads the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, once known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition. The post gives him ultimate responsibility to investigate abuse cases.
- April 19, 2005: Elected pope, succeeding John Paul II, and takes the name Benedict XVI.
- January 2006: Publishes his first encyclical "God is love", followed by "Saved by hope" in November 2007 and "Charity in truth" in July 2009.
- September 2006: Angers the Muslim world with speech in which he appears to endorse the view that Islam is inherently violent. He apologises afterwards.
- February 11, 2013: Announces his resignation, which takes effect on February 28. He is the first pope to resign since the Middle Ages. Becomes pope emeritus.
- January 20, 2022: Begs forgiveness, but issues a strong denial, after a report for the Munich church authorities says he failed to stop paedophilia by priests while he was archbishop between 1977 and 1982.
- December 31, 2022: Dies in the Vatican aged 95.

### Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi jailed for total of 33 years



(31-12-22) Ousted Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to another seven years in jail as her long series of trials ended on Friday 30 Dec., with the Nobel laureate now facing more than three decades behind bars.

A prisoner of the military since a coup last year, Suu Kyi, 77, has been convicted on every charge levelled against her ranging from corruption to illegally possessing walkie-talkies and flouting Covid restrictions. Suu Kyi -- sentenced to a total of 33 years following 18 months of court proceedings that rights groups have dismissed as a

sham -- appeared in good health, a legal source familiar with the case told AFP.

1-1-23

### As New Year begins, Pope Francis says, 'Mary gives us hope'

(1-1-23) Mary's Motherhood is a "fundamental datum of faith," but also "a marvellous fact": "God has a Mother," Pope Francis explained, "and is thus bound forever to our humanity, to the point that our humanity is His humanity."

In his homily for the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Father noted that this truth has "mostly entered the hearts and minds of the holy People of God" through the invocation in the dearly loved prayer, the Hail Mary. "To this invocation, the Mother of God always responds," the Pope said. "She hears our petitions; holding her Son in her arms, she blesses us and brings us the tender love of God made flesh."

The Pope said, "The year, which opens with the celebration of God's Mother and our own, tells us that the key to hope is Mary, and that the antiphon of hope is the invocation, 'Holy Mother of God!'" And, he added, "Today we entrust to our Blessed Mother our beloved Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI so that she may accompany him in his passage from this world to God." Pope Francis called on the faithful to



pray to Mary “in a special way for her sons and daughters who are suffering and no longer have the strength to pray,” as well as for all those suffering conflict and war.

At the beginning of the new year, he said, “let us devote some time to seeing, to opening our eyes, and to keeping them open before what really matters: God and our brothers and sisters.”

### **Pope at Angelus: We thank God for the gift of Benedict XVI**



Speaking to the crowds gathered in Saint Peter's Square on New Year's Day, Pope Francis recalled that the start of the new year is entrusted to Mary Most Holy, whom the faithful celebrated as Mother of God. He invited everyone to invoke her intercession, especially for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who died Saturday morning. The Pope encouraged everyone to look to Mary, whom we contemplate on this day, and ask how we can learn from her experience and how we should move forward in our own lives in the new year.

In today's liturgy, we note how Mary does not speak, but welcomes the mystery she is experiencing in her heart. The language proper to Mary, the Pope observed is "maternal," as she tenderly cares for the Christ Child, showing her greatness, humbly and silently, with the Child at the centre of everyone's attention.

Mary's example reminds us that if we wish the new year to be good and for hope to take root, we must abandon actions that are only self-serving, and "learn the language of love, which is to 'take care of'," which counters the languages of egoism, the Pope explained.

We must be committed to caring for one another and our own lives, he added, which means using our time well in caring for our souls, creation, our neighbours and our brothers and sisters in need call on our care and compassion.

Recalling today's World Day of Peace, the Pope underscored the importance of the need to regain "awareness of the responsibility that has been entrusted to us to construct the future." We need "a spirit of responsibility and compassion" and solidarity to confront the crises in our lives and societies, especially in the face of the tragedy of war, said the Pope.

Following the recitation of the Angelus prayer, the Pope once again wished the thousands of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square his best wishes for the New Year. The Pope renewed his support for all efforts being used to stop wars, which are even now sowing death and destruction, not only in Ukraine but throughout the world. The pandemic also showed us that "no one can save himself or herself alone, but that together we can pursue the paths of peace and development," he added.



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**May the New Year 2023 be a year of peace, of brotherhood, free from pandemic**