

## CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

(CWLW)

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### Indian bishops reiterate concerns about eco-sensitive zones



(15-8-22) Catholic bishops have reminded the provincial government in the southern Indian state of Kerala to present people's concerns before the country's top court regarding the proposed buffer zones coming up around protected forests, parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

The Supreme Court of India on June 3 made the setting up of eco-sensitive zones (ESZs) of a minimum of one kilometer mandatory along the demarcated boundaries of every protected forest, national park and wildlife sanctuary across the country. The court had given three months to the federal and state governments to file their objections to the directive that

required eliminating all human activity in the ESZs.

An estimated one million people within Kerala live in areas that may be acquired to set up ESZs and the communist-led provincial government was expected to gather statistical data on them to present to the court for the purpose of seeking exemption from likely eviction, Bishop Jose Pulickal of Kanjirapally diocese said.

Thousands of those facing eviction are Catholics across several dioceses, especially in the hilly districts of Kerala. The government ordered the forest department to examine the concerns of the forest-dwelling communities but did little on the ground to address the real issue of large-scale displacement, Bishop Pulickal said.

### Vietnamese Catholics remember martyrs with passion

(15-8-22) Catholics in a northern province have been urged to remain true to their faith and take part in Church activities as a way to show respect to their ancestral martyrs.

On Aug. 12, thousands of people attended a special Mass to mark the 184th anniversary of the deaths of martyrs Anthony Nguyen Tien Dich (1769-1838) and Michael Nguyen Huy My (1804-1838) at Vinh Tri Church in Y Yen district of Nam Dinh province. Many of them came from neighboring parishes. Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hanoi who presided at the ceremony said that in the time of religious persecution in the 19th century, local Catholics were forced to reject their faith by crossing crosses, otherwise they would be condemned to brutal torture and death. The two martyrs categorically refused to abandon their religion and bravely accepted death.

### Indian Christians challenge bill against 'mass conversion'

(15-8-22) A group of Christians in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh has filed a petition in the state high court challenging a bill forbidding "mass conversions."

The state ruled by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) passed the Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2022, on Aug. 13. The state already has an anti-conversion law in place but with the latest bill, it has sought to ban mass conversion, described as two or more people converting at the same time while also raising the punishment for a change of religion through force or allurements to a maximum of 10 years from seven years.

"The state is going to hold provincial elections by the end of this year so the ruling BJP is trying to show people that it is serious about curtailing so-called conversion in the state," Reverend Sohan Lal, the Presbyterian of Christ Church in Shimla, told UCA News on Aug 14.

## **Philippines bans five 'subversive' textbooks**

(15-8-22) A state commission in the Philippines has banned five books for having content that allegedly violates the country's anti-terrorism law, triggering condemnation of the government's purported attempts to curtail free speech. These books encouraged terrorism and the destabilization of the government with references to the country's communist movement, the commission said. The authors issued a joint statement on Aug. 14 condemning the decision, saying the suppression of their work curtailed freedom of expression. They alleged that the move is tantamount to actions taken during the martial laws under dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., the father of the current president.

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## **Pope on Assumption: Mary takes us by the hand, inviting us to rejoice**

(16-8-22) On August 15, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Francis delivered an Angelus address to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square. "Do not forget God's style: proximity, compassion and tenderness," the Pope concluded. "Always close to us, with his style. Our Mother takes us by the hand, she accompanies us to glory, she invites us to rejoice as we think of heaven. Let us bless Mary with our prayer, and let us ask her to be capable of glimpsing Heaven on earth."

## **Cardinal details regime brutality in Myanmar**

(16-8-22) Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon has reported that the military Junta in Myanmar is "trying to intimidate the whole population." In an interview with Vatican News, the cardinal said that the regime hopes to overcome resistance by "the atrocities and intimidation that the military is carrying out." He said that more than 2,100 people have been killed in a brutal campaign of repression, and 15,000 jailed. Meanwhile, he reported, "Fifty percent of our people are in poverty and at least 8 million of them are in dire need for food security and there are millions displaced."



## **Nicaraguan government blocks religious procession**

(16-8-22) The government of Nicaragua refused to allow a religious procession through the streets of Managua, the nation's capital, on August 13. The Managua archdiocese, which has scheduled the procession and encouraged the faithful to "pray for the Church and Nicaragua," announced that authorities had said the event could not be held "for reasons of internal security." Ortega regime also prevents Marian image from being displayed in the Managua diocese.

## **18 children among dozens killed in Egypt church fire**

(16-8-22) At least 41 people died in a fire on August 15 at the Abu Sefein Coptic Orthodox church in Giza. Both Church and government officials believe the fire was accidental; Egypt's interior ministry said the fire was caused by a faulty air conditioner.

## **Cameroon's bishops object to new law allowing for artificial insemination, IVF**

(16-8-22 – Crux) New legislation in Cameroon allowing for artificial means of conception has been condemned by the nation's Catholic bishops as posing "serious ethical and doctrinal problems." The law enacted on June 29 allows married and unmarried couples access to Medically Assisted Reproduction (MAR), including artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, and gamete and embryo transfer. The couple must demonstrate that their inability to conceive is due to "a medically diagnosed pathological condition," or that they are suffering from a congenital disease likely to be transmitted to the child.

In an Aug. 8 statement signed by the president of the National Episcopal Conference, Archbishop Andrew Fuanya Nkea, the bishops condemned the “artificialization and unacceptable manipulations in the domain of Medically Assisted Reproduction.”

### **Nigeria: Priest, seminarian abducted near military checkpoint, ransom demanded**

(16-8-22) The abduction took place in Nigeria’s Enugu State, and the kidnappers demanded a ransom of 50 million Nigerian dollars (\$117,000).

### **Belarus: Catholic priest fined for ‘Ukraine, forgive us’ sticker on his car**

(16-8-22) Father Vasil Yahorau is a Ukrainian Greek Catholic priest who ministers in Belarus, an ally of Russia. The priest was arrested and fined \$490 for his bumper sticker.

### **Vatican reaches diplomatic accord with Sao Tome**

(16-8-22) The Vatican signed a diplomatic agreement on August 15 with the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, recognizing the legal status of the Church in the little island nation off the western coast of central Africa.

### **Cardinal Ranjith vows to continue struggle for the Easter Sunday victims**

(16-8-22) The 2019 Sri Lanka Easter bombings killed 269 people and injured over 500. “Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith says that even if the Galle Face struggle has ended, he will not give up his struggle to bring justice to the victims of the Easter Sunday attack,” the report begins.



### **Filipino nuns accused of 'financing terrorism'**

(16-8-22) A criminal case has been filed against 16 people, including several nuns, for allegedly financing terrorists and violating the Philippines' anti-terrorism law.

It was filed by the Justice Department on Aug. 15 with a trial court in Iligan City in Mindanao, accusing them of financing the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), which is branded a terrorist organization by the Philippine government.

The charges against the nuns, whose number and identities remain undisclosed, and the others, come days after the state-run Commission on the Filipino Language banned five textbooks for allegedly encouraging terrorism.

Justice Department lawyer Mico Clavano said that if the court agrees with the Justice Department, it can issue an arrest warrant against the accused, including the nuns. “The charge is terror financing, and the law provides that the offense is a nonbailable crime, they would go to jail while the trial is ongoing... It is what the law says,” Clavano added. If found guilty, the sisters would face up to 40 years in prison and a fine of between 500,000 to 1 million pesos (US\$10,000-20,000).

The Justice Department said that the charges were based on the testimonies of witnesses, namely two former members of the New People’s Army. “According to the witnesses, the sisters ... prepare a proposal to be presented to foreign funders. These foreign funders donate and give money to finance projects of terrorist groups,” the Justice Department claimed.

Human rights groups, however, said the Justice Department railroaded the filing of the case in secrecy before the accused could defend themselves. “Some cases take months or even years but the case against the sisters took only weeks. They were not given an opportunity to defend themselves because authorities knew they were not involved in any crime,” said Samahang Layko ng Pilipinas, a Catholic lay group in the Philippines. Members of the Church have often been accused by the government of helping communist rebels through their mission work.

## **Myanmar junta court jails Suu Kyi for six years**

(16-8-22) A Myanmar junta court jailed Aung San Suu Kyi for six years under 4 anti-corruption charges on 15 August Monday, a source close to the case said, taking the ousted leader's prison time to 17 years, who is now serving a 11-year jail term.

The Nobel laureate Suu Kyi, 77, has been detained since the generals toppled her government in a coup on February 1 of last year, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief period of democracy.

## **Alert sounds on Chinese Christian cult in Indonesia**

(16-8-22) Concern grows over Church of Almighty God luring people in Catholic-majority East Nusa Tenggara province

Indonesian authorities say they are monitoring a Chinese Christian cult suspected of trying to lure local Catholics in East Nusa Tenggara province. The Church of Almighty God (CAG) is aggressively recruiting new members, including women and children, through social media, said Gondolpus Nggarang, head of Manggarai district's National Unity and Political Agency. He said they are currently "conducting surveillance and monitoring people" suspected to have been exposed to the group. CAG, also known as Eastern Lightning, is believed to have some 3-4 million members in China. It is reportedly in the crosshairs of the Communist regime for its anti-government stance, while mainstream Christian groups view it as a radical fringe cult movement.

## **Rohingya demand security as UN rights chief visits Bangladesh camps**

(16-8-22) Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh on Tuesday implored the United Nations rights chief for protection after recent murders of refugee community leaders that have again left members of the stateless minority fearful for their safety.

Michelle Bachelet spent the day meeting with residents of the sprawling and squalid relief settlements housing nearly a million ethnic Rohingya who fled persecution in neighbouring Myanmar.



## **Indonesian diocese probes into priest cancelling wedding**

(16-8-22) Bishop Dominic Saku and Church officials of Atambua Diocese have begun an inquiry into the cancellation of a wedding that sparked outrage among Catholics in Indonesia's Christian-dominated East Nusa Tenggara province.

Social media posts expressed outrage over the priest cancelling the marriage reportedly because the bride and groom were focusing on the celebrations rather than spiritually preparing themselves for the Sacrament.

A video, which has been circulating on social media since the weekend, showed the bride crying hysterically surrounded by her relatives and friends inside the chapel after the parish priest, Father Agustinus Kau Lake, had reportedly left. Father Lake said he took it as their lack of inner preparedness for the wedding such as making a confession.

## **Filipino migrant Catholics help Macau's poor**

(16-8-22) Filipino migrant Catholics in Macau have lent their hands to feed hundreds of impoverished people who were hit hard due to a recent upsurge in Covid-19 pandemic and consequent strict restrictions. The Waraynon Association, a lay Catholic association of Filipino migrants founded last year, has offered food kits to about 500 non-resident workers in the city, Portuguese-language Catholic weekly *Jornal O-Clarim* reported.

The association drew funds from members of the Catholic Church and local benefactors and managed to help those in dire need of help.



### **Vietnamese pilgrims flock to Marian site after pandemic**

(16-8-22) More than 50,000 people including followers of other faiths and those from abroad attended major celebrations to mark the feast of the Assumption of Mary on Aug. 14-15 at the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang in Quang Tri province, after a gap of 2 years due to Covid pandemic.

Six archbishops and bishops concelebrated Masses with the theme Mother Mary – Example of Synodality, joined by hundreds of priests from many dioceses.

Every year on the Feast of the Assumption, a special event is

held there in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who appeared here in August 1798 and promised to save local Catholics from the Vietnamese government's brutal persecution while the faithful hid in the jungle, now known as the "Sacred Land of La Vang". The Virgin helped the believers who lived in misery and fear, afflicted by disease and hunger.

This year, with the help of volunteers, pilgrims were able to set up tents on the site of the La Vang Sanctuary and use basic services such as electricity and water to attend on-site prayer vigils and Holy Masses.

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### **Lawsuit: Cardinal Ouellet accused of sexual assault; Pope Francis appointed investigator last year**

(17-8-22) Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Prefect of the Dicastery (formerly Congregation) for Bishops since 2010, has been accused in a Canadian lawsuit of sexual assault. Cardinal Ouellet was previously Archbishop of Québec, and the inappropriate kissing and touching of a female intern that was alleged in the lawsuit took place in 2008 and 2010.

The lawsuit states that the woman came to understand in 2020 that Ouellet's actions constituted sexual assault, that Pope Francis was informed of the allegation in January 2021, and that a month later the Pope appointed Father Jacques Servais, SJ, to investigate.

Both Cardinal Ouellet and Servais are longtime scholars of the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

### **Tempest in the Order of Malta: 13 national presidents call on Pope to halt changes**

(17-8-22) Longtime Vatican journalist Sandro Magister has published a "plea for a lawful and effective reform process to avoid a possible break-up of the Order of Malta," signed by the heads of the order in 13 nations.

### **Nicaraguan police force priest to celebrate Mass outside church**

(17-8-22) Police officers forced a Catholic priest to celebrate Mass outside a parish church in Nicaragua on August 16, as they sought to arrest the pastor for allegedly conspiring against the government.

The incident occurred in the Matagalpa diocese, where Bishop Rolando Alvarez remains under house arrest, with his residence surrounded by police.

### **Vatican's top communications official sees misuse of internet**

(17-8-22) The prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication has recommended that journalists and publicists "make a personal and collective examination of conscience" to assess how they are using the internet.

"How is it possible to be simultaneously hyper-connected and terribly alone," Paolo Ruffini asked in a speech to a conference in Seoul, South Korea. He lamented that "what ought to be a window on the world becomes a showcase for exhibiting personal narcissism."

### **Irish Synod report urges 'dogma-altering' changes**

(17-8-22) A report sent to the Vatican by the Catholic bishops of Ireland, summarizing discussions in preparation for the Synod on Synodality, calls for sharp changes in the Church's approach to homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, and priestly celibacy.

In a cover letter accompanying the report, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh says that the discussions highlighted "many challenges for the handing on of the faith in this country, including a need for inner healing and hope."

Ireland's former president, Mary McAleese, who took part in the discussions, said that the Irish report was "explosive, life-altering, dogma-altering, church-altering."

### **Leading South African bishop supports ordaining married men to priesthood**

(17-8-22) Bishop Sitembele Sipuka of Mthatha is president of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. In addition to expressing support for the ordination of married men, the prelate expressed concern that there are no African prelates who currently lead Vatican dicasteries.

### **Priest, seminarian freed in Nigeria**

(17-8-22) A member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost Fathers – Spiritans) and a seminarian kidnapped from the Catholic Diocese of Okigwe in Nigeria on August 12 have been freed.

In a Monday, August 15 statement, the leadership of the Spiritans in Nigeria has announced the safe release of Fr. Chinedu Nwadike and Seminarian Emmanuel Enwerechi Nwafor.

Fr. Nwadike who serves as the Deputy Registrar of Spiritan University Nneochi (SUN) and Seminarian Nwafor were reportedly kidnapped on August 12 by gunmen identified to be bandits along the Okigwe – Enugu expressway in Abia State. The duo are said to have been on their way to Enugu for an official assignment.

Their kidnapers reportedly established contact with Catholic institution allegedly demanding N50 million (US\$ 119,127.00) ransom for their release.



### **Kenya's faith leaders call for peace amid tension after declaration of presidential result**

(17-8-22) Deputy President William Ruto was declared winner of Kenya's presidential election with 50.5% of the vote. Opposition leader Raila Odinga vowed to challenge the result.

### **China - Devotion and gratitude of Chinese Catholics on the feast of the Assumption**

(17-8-22) From Beijing to the vast landscapes of Inner Mongolia, from the majestic Cathedral of the Redeemer in the capital to remote suburban communities, the Catholic communities of mainland China celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption with great devotion to the Mother of God. The prayer and the flower arrangement were a sign of filial love and special gratitude for supporting Our Lady in the life of faith of Christians and in the mission of evangelization, especially in these difficult times of pandemics, war, hunger and poverty.

On the day of the Assumption, no fewer than five Holy Masses were celebrated in the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Beijing. In Jiangxi province, the persistent heat did not deter believers, who went to church to celebrate their heavenly Mother with great joy and devotion. Many priests went to the local parishes to administer the sacraments to the faithful. Due to the pandemic, churches in Inner Mongolia only reopened on the eve of the Solemnity of the Assumption. In the Dong Tang church, the parish priest, who is of Mongolian origin, urged everyone to "always trust in the intercession of the Blessed Mother with a humble heart and to follow the Lord". Finally, all believers prayed for world peace, an end to the pandemic and the well-being of the people.

### **South Korea - Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang and Archbishop of Seoul wishes for reunification**



(17-8-22) The day will soon come when our people will glorify God together, overcoming, through the grace of God, the pains of separation and achieving total reconciliation and unification. Let us take Our Lady as an example, let us build bridges of faith, love and reconciliation": this was the wish expressed by Archbishop Peter Chung, Archbishop of Seoul and Apostolic Administrator of Pyongyang, in his Message for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On the feast of the Assumption, August 15, the Korean nation also commemorates the day Korea was liberated from

Japanese rule. Korea celebrates the Independence Day known as "Gwangbokjeol" which literally means "the festival of the return of the light". The Korean Church also organizes the annual "World Youth Pilgrimage for Peace" on these important holidays, which reaches the "Demilitarized Zone", the border strip between North and South Korea.

### **Chinese police raid Christian gathering, arrest one**

(17-9-22) Police in Chengdu, the capital of China's Sichuan province, have raided a Sunday gathering of the Early Rain Covenant Church and detained a leader, in what its members termed the latest act of violence against them by the authorities.

Some 30 officers of the state security police broke up the 50-member meeting on Aug. 14, accusing them of holding an "illegal gathering" of a "banned organization," Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported. The Christian gathering was inside a tea-house in Chengdu's Wuhou district. Police also arrested and detained Christian writer and translator Xing Hongwei for allegedly "assaulting a police officer," church members said. A church member known by his surname, Wang, said that police surrounded the group at the tea-house and recorded their personal details including ID numbers.

### **Indian govt denies persecution of Christians**

(17-8-22) India's federal government has sought dismissal of a petition that sought to end the persecution of Christians, saying there could be a "hidden oblique agenda" behind it.

In its affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court on Aug. 16, the government said there seemed to be an agenda behind filing "such deceptive petitions."

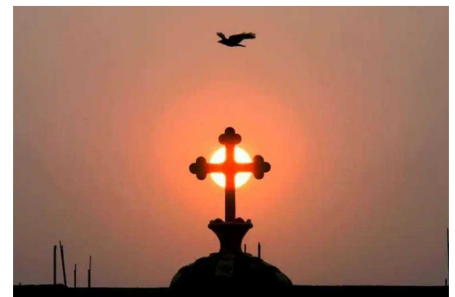
The government alleged that such petitions were meant to "create unrest throughout the country and perhaps for getting assistance from outside the country to meddle with internal affairs of our nation."

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore, the National Solidarity Forum and the Evangelical Fellowship of India, said that an average of 45 to 50 violent attacks against Christian institutions and priests were reported every month. A record 57 attacks were recorded in May, the petition said and sought urgent intervention from the top court.

Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta said the incidents of attacks can be taken care of by law enforcement agencies in the districts or provinces, or the affected parties could approach the respective high courts instead of the top court conducting an inquiry covering the entire country.

"None of the facts are either verified by the petitioner or by the so-called organizations who have prepared the reports [on the incident of attacks]," he said. He further denied the allegation in the PIL about the biased role of police in dealing with cases of persecution saying, "police had taken prompt action in numerous cases and conducted the necessary investigation as per rules."

Advocate Colin Gonsalves, who appeared for the petitioners, however, informed the bench of Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice A S Bopanna that 500 incidents of attacks were recorded in the year 2021 alone and sought more time to reply to points raised by the federal government in its affidavit.



The court has set a week for the concerned parties to file their replies and scheduled the next hearing for Aug. 25.

### **Catholic communicators seek ways to build peace**

(17-8-22) Catholic communicators from across the globe are discussing ways to build peace for a better world by using digital technology at their once-in-four-year gathering in the South Korean capital Seoul.

Modern digital technology could be used to alleviate loneliness and build love-based relationships for a better tomorrow, said Paolo Ruffini, the head of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication at the opening of the SIGNIS World Congress on Aug. 16.

SIGNIS is a global forum of Catholic audio-visual communication experts, recognized by the Vatican. Digital technology could be used both as a friend and a foe, Ruffini said in his keynote speech at the three-day meeting of some 300 media professionals from across five continents.



### **UN envoy begins talks with Myanmar junta officials**

(17-8-22) The UN's new special envoy for Myanmar set out for meetings with junta officials on Wednesday but did not respond to questions about whether she would seek to meet ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Noeleen Heyzer's visit to the crisis-wracked country, which began on Tuesday, "will focus on addressing the deteriorating situation and immediate concerns as well as other priority areas of her mandate," the UN has said.

### **Catholics offer prayers after Orthodox church fire in Egypt**

(17-8-22) Some Catholic leaders have joined the Coptic Orthodox Church in mourning the 41 people - including 18 children -- who died in a fire in Egypt's capital, Cairo.

According to news reports, at least 5,000 Coptic Christians were preparing for the morning liturgy Aug. 14 at the Martyr Abu Sefein Church in Imbaba, a suburban area of the city, when the fire started. The deaths resulted from an ensuing stampede and smoke inhalation.

Cardinal Souraphiel Berhaneyesus, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia, offered "my sincerest sympathies on the behalf of the Ethiopian Catholic Church and myself. ... "I assure you (of) our prayers to your church, the deceased and wish a full and speedy recovery to those who were injured."

In Germany late Aug. 14, Bishop Georg Bätzing, president of the German bishops' conference, said his prayers and thoughts were with the victims, reported the German Catholic news agency KNA.

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### **Vatican will not pursue abuse case against Cardinal Ouellet**



(18-8-22) The Vatican will not pursue charges against Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, who was accused of sexual misconduct.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni announced that Pope Francis has determined “there are insufficient elements to open a canonical investigation” of the Canadian cardinal, based on one woman’s complaint.

### **Pope entrusts ‘destiny of Europe and the world to the Black Madonna’**

(18-8-22) “In these days, thousands of pilgrims go on foot to the Jasna Góra sanctuary, praying for peace and reconciliation in the world,” Pope Francis said on August 17, referring to the Polish shrine where the Black Madonna of Czestochowa is venerated.

“Among them there are many Ukrainians who have found a hospitable home in your country,” he said to the Poles attending the audience. “We entrust the destiny of Europe and the world to the Black Madonna.”

### **Moscow archbishop: papal visit to Kazakhstan important for Russian Catholics**

(18-8-22) “The Pope’s journey is very important for the Russian Catholic faithful,” Archbishop Paolo Pezzi of Moscow said in reference to the upcoming apostolic journey to Kazakhstan. “We don’t know if and when he will be able to come and see us, and Kazakhstan is the closest country.”

### **Sri Lankan terror victims thank Pope for financial help**

(18-8-22) Pope Francis has given €100,000 (\$101,360) to survivors and families of victims of the 2019 Sri Lanka Easter bombings, which killed 269 people and injured over 500.

### **New cardinal says he is worried about ‘survival of Christianity’ in Nigeria**

(18-8-22) “Our ‘hot button issues,’ understandably different from [Germany and United States] concerns, are about the survival of Christianity, the life and safety of our people as well as the stability of the West African sub-region if Nigeria were to tip over,” said Cardinal-designate Peter Obere Okpaleke.

“For many years, Islamist fundamentalist groups held sway in some parts of the country,” he continued. “Recently, they have successfully mounted major attacks close to the national capital, Abuja.”

### **Sostituto denounces ‘ideological colonization’ as Dominican Marian jubilee concludes**

(18-8-22) Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, who coordinates the internal affairs of the Roman Curia, traveled to the Dominican Republic to crown the image of Our Lady of Altagracia and to offer a golden rose on behalf of Pope Francis.

The archbishop, who works as Substitute (*Sostituto*) of the Secretariat of State, denounced the “ideological colonization” that is seeking to transform Latin American culture. “We must be vigilant because this ideological colonization seeks to destroy the sacred value of human life, from its beginning to its natural end,” he said. “And it is persistent in trying to undo the importance of the family, as the fundamental cell of society, necessary for the healthy growth of peoples.”

### **DR Congo - Bishop André-Giraud of Matadi: Women religious are messengers of happiness**

(18-8-22) At a Mass for the celebration of the first profession, perpetual vows and silver jubilee of different nuns, Bishop André-Giraud Pindi of Matadi spoke on the solemnity of the Assumption, proposed Mary, specially in the context of the Visitation(Lk 1, 39-56), as a model for the nuns.





"Your presence, dear sisters, should put people at ease, your presence should relieve people. Every time we meet a sister, we say: how glad I am that this sister is coming to visit me... be messengers of happiness. If Mary is the model for your community, then you should follow Mary's example," said Bishop Pindi.

"The greatness of religious does not lie in the material goods that you have renounced, but in the vows of poverty that you have freely chosen. Your greatness - if you want to be a great sign - consists in living your consecrated life according to the

vows that you have made and that some will make today," the bishop said.

After 52 years of existence, the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Mary of Matadi has 91 sisters and 6 novices. The sisters work in pastoral care in almost all parishes of the Diocese of Matadi, and serve in the health and education sectors. Besides Matadi, they also work in Kisantu and Kinshasa as well as in various European countries.

### **Church pleads for donors amid Myanmar IDP crisis**

(18-8-22) Church officials in conflict-torn Myanmar are seeking help from donors as an increasing number of displaced people are in desperate need of aid.

They said the Church is facing a major challenge caused by a decrease in funding from donors to provide for the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) whose numbers are increasing day by day.

### **Christian lawsuit against Malaysian politician fails**

(18-8-22) A court in Malaysia has dismissed an appeal by two Christians seeking to restore a lawsuit against a hardline Islamist politician for defaming Christians about six years ago.

The Court of Appeal on Aug. 16 upheld an earlier ruling by the High Court to drop a charge of sedition against Abdul Hadi Awang, president of the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS)

Maklin Masiau and Lawrence Jomiji Kinsil Maximilhan, from Sabah state, filed a lawsuit in December 2020 against Hadi, accusing him of libeling Christians in an article published in *Harakah*, a PAS-run newspaper, in 2016.

In the article, Hadi, now 74, accused Christian missionaries of preying on poor and uneducated people in impoverished communities in states like Sabah by paying them off to convert to Christianity. Some 60 percent of some 3 million Malaysian Christians live in Sabah and Sarawak, and Sarawak remains the only Christian majority state in the country.

### **Timor-Leste Muslims reject Indonesian Islamic group**

(18-8-22) A top leader of Timor-Leste's minority Muslim community has turned down an offer from a leading Indonesian Muslim group to open its branch in his Catholic-majority country, fearing it would destroy religious harmony.

Haji Abdullah Inacio Antonio Soares, vice president of the government-recognized organization called Timor-Leste Muslim Community said he has rejected the offer from Indonesia's largest moderate Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama [NU].

### **Gang-raped Indian woman 'numb' after attackers released**

(18-8-22) A Muslim woman who was gang-raped as 14 other people were murdered during one of post-independence India's worst religious riots has said she is "numb" after her attackers were released early from prison.

In a case that drew global outrage, Bilkis Bano and two of her children were the only survivors among a group of 17 Muslims attacked by a Hindu mob in the western state of Gujarat in 2002. Bilkis was pregnant at the time and seven of those killed were relatives including her three-year-old daughter.

The attack took place when current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was Gujarat state chief minister. Eleven Hindu men were later sentenced to life in prison but were freed on 15 August, with the Gujarat government timing its announcement to coincide with celebrations for the 75th anniversary of India's independence.

### **Pakistan - The Bishops urge the faithful to serve the country with devotion**

(18-8-22) "We must beautiful country; we, as contributed much to its years since Pakistan's politicians have played for the founding of Ali Jinnah, the country's enjoy equal rights and profess our faith. We, the majority, are called development of this country and for the betterment of the country as a nation.



give thanks to God for our a Christian community, have development over the past 75 independence. Our Christian an important role in the campaign Pakistan alongside Muhammad founder for a country where all where we can live freely and people of a religion different from to work together for the

Let us continue this journey of service to Pakistan with enthusiasm and devotion, without any discrimination based on race, caste, creed, and the message of the Founding Father to help the people of this country live in unity, peace and harmony", said Archbishop Sebastian Francis Shaw OFM, Archbishop of Lahore on the occasion of the recent 75th anniversary of Pakistan's independence on 14 August 2022 with reference to the Day for minorities, celebrated on August 11.

19-8-22

### **Cardinal Ouellet denies allegations of misconduct**

(19-8-22) Cardinal Marc Ouellet has issued a firm denial of "inappropriate acts" in an August 19 public statement.

In a civil suit filed in Quebec, the cardinal is accused by a young woman of unwanted physical contacts. The allegations do not involve actions that would ordinarily be regarded as abusive—let alone criminal. Cardinal Ouellet said that he sees "the interpretation and dissemination of these allegations as sexual assaults defamatory."

The cardinal's statement follows a Vatican announcement that "there are insufficient elements to open a canonical investigation" based on the woman's charges.

### **Pope calls for friendship toward all in message to Rimini meeting**

(19-8-22) Pope Francis has sent his greetings to the 43rd annual Friendship Among Peoples meeting in Rimini, Italy, and called upon Christians to pursue "a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all."

In his message, which was conveyed by Cardinal Pietro Parolini, the Vatican Secretary of State, the Pontiff invoked the parable of the Good Samaritan, saying that it "is not just about generosity," but about a man capable of "recognizing Christ Himself in every abandoned or excluded brother or sister."

### **Wuhan hosts 'official' national assembly of Chinese Catholics**

(19-8-22) The director of the State Religious Affairs Bureau said that the Church in China has "strengthened its ideological and political leadership, adhered to the principles of autonomy and independence of the Church under the banner of love of country and religion, [and] promoted the establishment of a Chinese ideology and theology," according to the report.

### **UN: China's mistreatment of the Uyghurs amounts to modern-day slavery**

(19-8-22) The Chinese government has detained over a million Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang (map). A new UN report found that "given the nature and extent of powers exercised over affected workers

during forced labor, including excessive surveillance, abusive living and working conditions, restriction of movement through internment, threats, physical and/or sexual violence and other inhuman or degrading treatment, some instances may amount to enslavement as a crime against humanity, meriting a further independent analysis.”

### **Burkina Faso cardinal calls for support of victims of jihadist attacks**

(19-8-22) Burkina Faso, a West African nation of 21.4 million, is 56% Muslim, 23% Christian (15% Catholic), and 20% ethnic religionist.

“In June, assailants massacred at least 160 people, including 20 children, in the village of Solhan,” *Crux* reported. “It was the deadliest single attack since jihadists started attacking the country in 2016.”

### **Nigerian journalist who criticized government faces legal charges**

(19-8-22) A Nigerian Catholic journalist who criticized the government’s failure to protect Christians from terrorist attacks has been arrested and charged with “cyberstalking.”

Luka Binniyat had written that an official in the state of Kaduna had been used by the government “to cause confusion to cover up the genocide going on in Christian Southern Kaduna.” The official, a Christian, had described the bloodshed as a “clash” between local groups.

### **Sri Lankan priest involved in protests granted bail**

(19-8-22) The Sri Lankan protests, which began in March, led to the resignation and flight of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July. Father Amila Jeewantha Peiris has been charged with “being part of an unlawful assembly, obstructing public employees from performing duties, and criminal assault,” according to the report.



### **Nigeria - "Confiscate the assets of human traffickers": the campaign also promoted by the Catholic Church is underway**

"Confiscate the assets of human traffickers". This was stated by the Bishop Anselm Umoren, the Auxiliary of Abuja, who together with the president of the Justice, Peace and Development Commission of Abuja, lawyer Damian Dodo, and the director of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Arinze Orakwue, has called on the Nigerian National Assembly to provide the legislative framework for the courts to seize the assets of human traffickers. According to the appellants, this will not only weaken criminal networks in the fight against human trafficking in the country, but will also create space for victims of crime to be compensated for the damages they have suffered.

### **Hong Kong - Presented the diocesan contribution to the synodal journey of Hong Kong**

(19-8-22) After 10 months of extensive and intense consultation, the diocesan Ad hoc Consultation Committee for the Synod on Synodality, in the diocese of Hong Kong, has just completed and published the summary report of the first consultation phase. The report has already been sent to Rome.

### **India - India between insecure freedoms and religious polarization**

(19-8-22) "The government and society have not been sensitive to religious minorities: Muslims and Christians suffer delays in many areas of development, while poverty continues to affect the economy and unemployment. We have failed to make the right demands on governments, both at the state and federal levels. We are experiencing a deficit of democracy and freedom", says Jesuit Father Lourduraj Ignasimuthu, professor of mass media at Andhra Loyola College, in Vijayawada, State of Telangana, south India.

Reflecting on the 75 years of independence, which the Indian nation celebrated on August 15, the Jesuit points out that the country faces enormous challenges on several fronts: social, political, cultural and economic. "Religious minorities, such as Christians and Muslims, have suffered several

targeted attacks by hard-line Hindus over the years. In this regard, the democratic process is extremely deficient".

Analysts agree that the current "religious polarization" has led to the loss of life in several incidents of community violence in various parts of the country.

According to Walter Fernandes, Director of the North Eastern Social Research Center, in Guwahati, Assam state (northeast India), "in recent decades there have been advances in the economy, education, health and politics, while inequalities have increased. Democratic and secular values experience ups and downs. We have to reinvent a secular and democratic India."

Seventy-five years after independence, at a critical moment in the country's history, "one has to ask: whose true freedom is it?", says the Jesuit Fr. Cedric Prakash, activist and promoter of human rights. "Freedom is very limited in India, at all levels. Millions of Indians are still not free. This is the sad and painful reality," he says. "It is time for everyone to do something substantial and significant to change this serious and painful reality immediately," concludes Father Prakash.



### **Nicaraguan bishop arrested in pre-dawn raid**

(19-8-22) Nicaraguan police arrested Bishop Rolando Alvarez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua, in a raid on the diocesan chancery in the early-morning hours of August 19.

Bishop Alvarez had been living under effective house arrest since August 5, when police closed off access to the chancery, leaving the bishop and several other priests and staff members isolated inside. Officials of the National Police entered the chancery building around 3 am on August 19, taking the bishop and his companions into

custody. The bishop, an outspoken critic of the Ortega regime, has been charged with "inciting violence" against the government.

Nicaragua's National Police later confirmed that they carried out "an operation which permitted the recuperation of normalcy for Matagalpa's citizens and families." The police statement said the others in the office were taken to Managua.

### **Indian Catholics challenge bishops' temporal powers**

(19-8-22) A group of lay Catholics has moved India's top court pleading for a democratic system of governance for managing the temporal properties of the Catholic Church.

The Kerala Catholic Church Reformation Movement (KCRM), which has been active as a corrective force in the Church since the 1990s, has questioned the powers of bishops to alienate Church properties. The KCRM has moved an application before the Supreme Court seeking to be made a party to two appeals filed by Catholic bishops to challenge an August 2021 order of the state's high court restricting their powers to administer their spiritual faculties. The top court has agreed to hear the matter in detail at its next hearing on Sept. 7.

The KCRM wants legislation to manage Church properties saying that in the absence of such legislation, "the Catholic population is subjected to clerical authoritarianism based on some obsolete provisions of Canon Law."

The Kerala High Court in its order had held that Catholic bishops, notwithstanding the Canon Law, had no powers to alienate landed assets of their dioceses because their "powers are confined to religious and spiritual matters."

### **Filipino nuns deplore 'terror financing' charge**

(19-8-22) Catholic nuns from the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP), a missionary religious order in the Philippines, have denounced a criminal charge by the state accusing them of financing terrorism and violating the country's anti-terrorism law.

The nuns issued a statement on Aug. 18 to denounce the criminal charge filed by the Department of Justice three days ago. The statement says the nuns have been forced to defend their position as the allegation of terror financing was the “demonization” of their missions in the Philippines.

The Department of Justice filed a criminal charge against 16 individuals, including five nuns from the congregation, for a non-bailable offense of allegedly giving and soliciting funds for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People’s Army (NPA), on Aug. 15.

Meanwhile, Bishop Arturo Bastes, retired bishop of the Sorsogon Diocese said that by charging the nuns the state intended to send a “chilling warning” to silence Marcos and Duterte dissenters in the Catholic Church.



### **SIGNIS World Congress stresses media role in conflict resolutions**

(19-8-22) Catholic communicators have appealed to media professionals to protect the human rights of civilians in conflict zones, support the victims of war and help resolution of conflicts.

The media professionals made the call at the end of their Aug. 14-18 gathering in the South Korean capital Seoul.

Some 300 media professionals from across five continents discussed the theme ‘peace in the digital world’ at the SIGNIS World Congress, the once-in-four-year gathering. Hundreds joined the sessions online.

“We urge media practitioners and citizens to take action to protect the human rights of civilians caught up in war and conflict zones,” said the Vatican-recognized global forum of Catholic audio-visual communication experts.

### **State-backed Chinese Catholic gathering begins**

(19-8-22) Catholic bishops, priests and religious from across China have started a state-sponsored once-in-five years national conference in the presence of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, stressing the importance of adhering to government policies on religious affairs and strengthening patriotism.

The 10th National Congress of Catholicism in China began in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in central China on Aug. 18, says a notice on the website of the state-run Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC).

Some 345 Catholic bishops, priests, and religions representing 28 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities are attending the three-day assembly.



### **Many flee as Myanmar military pounds Kachin village**

(19-8-22) More than 2,000 people from Se Zin village in Myanmar’s northern Kachin state have fled from a village where at least 300 houses affecting an estimated 500 households were set ablaze as a result of military air strikes, according to the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs weekly report on Aug. 16..

Fighting has intensified between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the combined forces of the military and the Shanni Nationalities Army (SNA) in Hpakant township, jade-mining region of

Kachin state, since late July after the KIA raided the latter’s camps near Se Zin village.

During a meeting with military chief Min Aung Hlaing on Aug. 17, UN special envoy for Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, urged him to halt all violence, support a political path back to civilian rule and democracy and allow the deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi to return home and to meet her.

## **Caritas Vietnam supermarkets benefit people in need**

(19-8-22) Thousands of people in sticky situations in a northern city have been provided with free basic needs with dignity by a Caritas charity mini supermarket.

On Aug. 15, Caritas in Hai Phong marked the first anniversary of the establishment of the Chan Thien Zero Dong Mini Supermarket at Hai Phong Bishop's House. "Chan Thien" means "truth and goodness."

Father Joseph Nguyen Van Vang, head of Caritas in Hai Phong, said that the mini supermarket was founded last year to offer the bare necessities of life to those adversely affected by tough restrictions on travel to contain the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic. Father Vang said although "zero dong" mini supermarkets in other places were closed after the prolonged pandemic was controlled, the mini supermarket run by Caritas in Hai Phong still operates to meet the needs of many poor people. Caritas in Hai Phong said that poor people are given a "gift voucher" worth 200,000 dong (US\$9) each and they can buy rice, instant noodles, salt, sugar, fish sauce, oil cooking, and other goods according to their needs from the mini supermarket. It said so far Caritas in Hai Phong has given 3,710 vouchers to people in need. Father Vang said to ensure all disadvantaged people are served, Caritas workers also "transport and sell goods" to people in remote areas and a leprosarium. After the ceremony, 190 poor people and 60 orphans were given vouchers to buy goods from the mini supermarket.

20-8-22

## **DR Congo - Violence in the east of the country: at least 21 dead in attack on gold mine in Bigaragara**

(20-8-22) "Various armed groups led by former leaders of the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) named Makanika, Sematama, Mitabu and their allies have carried out another massacre of civilians and miners in the Bigaragara gold mine. The mine is located located in the region of Mutambala (Fizi plateau, province of South Kivu in eastern DRC)," reads a statement from the Soci t  Civile Hauts Plateaux de Milimba, sent to Fides.

At least 21 people were killed in the attack: 7 found on the same day of the assault (17 August) and six in the bush in the days that followed, while a further eight were found charred in their homes. The 21 dead are nine women, six children and six men. 414 houses were set on fire in the raid.

Scores of internally displaced people fled the violence in different directions.

## **Canada - In Brampton: Park named after Catholic Pakistani Minister Shahbaz Bhatti**

(20-8-22) In the Canadian city of Brampton, near Toronto, a public park has been named after Clement Shahbaz Bhatti (1968-2011). The Catholic Pakistani politician was killed by terrorists on March 2, 2011 in Islamabad. The mayor of the Canadian city of Brampton, Patrick Brown, presided over the ceremony, during which the "Shahbaz Bhatti Park" was inaugurated. "Shahbaz Bhatti was a true symbol of religious freedom. We will never forget Shahbaz's legacy, courage and sacrifice," Brown said in his speech. "He gave his life to promote a Pakistan where the rule of law, justice, freedom and equality are principles that are respected and lived".

"This park honours his legacy and serves as a reminder of the importance of interfaith harmony, acceptance and inclusion in communities like Brampton," said a City Council statement dedicating the Davenfield Circle green space to the Pakistani minister.

Shahbaz Bhatti was the first Catholic MP to be appointed Federal Minister for Minority Affairs in the Pakistan People's Party-led government in 2008. IBhatti was killed for his criticism of the blasphemy law and for his defence of the Christian woman Asia Bibi, accused of blasphemy wrongly convicted and sentenced to death.



## **Asia - The mission of the Church in Asia: 50th General Conference of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences**

(20-8-22) On August 22nd, at the Shrine of Blessed Nicholas Bunkerd Kitbamrung in Bangkok, Thailand, the General Conference of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) will open. After being postponed for two years due to the pandemic, the Federation marks this year its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The FABC was founded in 1970, on the occasion of Pope Paul VI's visit to Manila, when the Asian Bishops met for the first time.

The Bishops intend to strengthen collegiality and reflect, pray and discuss what it means to be "Church in Asia", starting from the Second Vatican Council, up to the challenges of today. Guidelines for the coming years should also be discussed and developed.

21-8-22

### **Pope at Angelus: Enter the 'narrow door'**

(21-8-22) Speaking on 21 August to pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Angelus, Pope Francis recalled the day's Gospel reading for the Sunday liturgy when someone asks Jesus if only a few people will be saved and He responds, "Strive to enter through the narrow door" (Lk 13:24). This image of a narrow door could scare us, implying that only a few elect or perfect can be saved, the Pope suggested; but, he said, Jesus confirms that people from everywhere will "recline at table in the kingdom of God," thereby affirming that while the door is narrow, it is open to everyone.

The Pope explained that in Jesus' time, the image of the narrow door most likely referred to a reality to which His contemporaries could relate: At night, the gates of a city would be closed except for the smallest door, which was then the only way to enter and return home. Jesus in the Gospel says: "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved" (Jn 10:9). The Pope said in this way Jesus tells us that to "enter into God's life, into salvation, we need to pass through Him, the only way, to welcome Him and His Word."

### **Pope expresses sorrow for Nicaragua, says dialogue should be basis for a respectful coexistence, the world's concern, Pope's closeness to Ukraine**

(21-8-22) With words full of pain, Pope Francis spoke out at Sunday's Angelus about the events of recent weeks in Nicaragua, where the Church, its priests and bishops, the media, and NGOs have been caught up in a series of harassing and persecutory actions because they are suspected of supporting the opponents of Daniel Ortega's Sandinista government. The latest victim is Bishop Rolando Alvarez of Matagalpa who is under arrest. The said: "I would like to express my conviction and my hope that, through open and sincere Pope dialogue, the basis for a respectful and peaceful coexistence can still be found."

The United Nations has raised concerns of a serious "obstruction of democratic and civil life" in Nicaragua, while the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) have warned of "persecution" and "criminalization." They all call on the Ortega government to protect universal human rights and to return freedom to those arbitrarily detained.

For the 13th consecutive time since June 5, again from the window of the Apostolic Palace following the recitation of the Angelus, Pope Francis recalled the "immense" suffering Ukraine is bearing: *"Let us persevere in our closeness and in prayer for the dear Ukrainian people who are experiencing immense cruelty."*



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